

AI IN AUSTRALIA

The Ugly, the Bad and the Good

Navigating the future with our values

David Mather · July 2026 · 25–1440 minutes

Starter Questions

Safeguards — with AI, VR and robots converging, what protects the “no harm to humans” doctrine?

Scale — how many AIs and AI agents are currently documented across the planet?

Users — how many of us are using them? Paid and free subscriptions, signed-in and casual users.

The “Ugly” Reality: Deception

\$100

all it cost the ABC to clone a federal senator's voice with AI

90 sec

of audio was enough to fool the senator's own colleagues

Fooled the people who know her best — ABC Verify cloned Senator Jacqui Lambie's voice (with permission) using a cheap online tool.

Scammers don't need a senator's voice — they need your son's, your granddaughter's.

The raw material is everywhere — voicemail greetings, Facebook videos, a grandchild's TikTok.

The target is trust itself — in a country built on trusting your mates.

The Scamdemic: Targeting Seniors

\$88.8m

lost by Australians 65+ in 2025
(Scamwatch)

26.5%

of all reported losses — from 17% of the
population

-26%

drop in national losses as awareness
grows. It works.

The classic AI-era scam — a call, a distressed voice: “Grandpa, it's me, I've been in an accident, please don't tell Mum.”

The tell — urgency plus secrecy. Those two together are ALWAYS the giveaway.

THE ONE RULE If a “grandchild” rings asking for money: hang up, and call back on the number you already know.

Privacy — and the Lost Human Touch

Your data trail

You are the product — “free” tools are paid for with your location, contacts and habits.

Chatbots remember — treat them like a postcard, not a sealed letter. No medical or financial details.

Oversharing helps cloners — public videos and voice posts are raw material.

Small habits protect — review privacy settings once a season; refuse permissions an app doesn't need.

“Your call is important to us...”

People replaced by chatbots — banks, utilities, government. Fine for a balance; not for someone confused, bereaved or in crisis.

The fair go test — is it fair that those who most need help are least able to navigate the machine?

You can always ask for a person. Say “operator” or press 0. It's not rude — it's your right.

From Logic to Explosion

1950s · The dreamers — “artificial intelligence” is coined. Big ideas, tiny computers.

1990s · The data explosion — the internet arrives; suddenly there's something for machines to learn from.

2012 · Machines that learn — computers get fast enough to teach themselves, quietly, in labs.

2022 · Everyone's hands — ChatGPT reaches 100 million users in two months. The genie is out.

Seventy years of muddling along, then a sprint. Parliaments move in years — AI now moves in months. Our laws are still jogging to catch up.

Who's Being Left Behind?

The digital divide — “just use the app” assumes everyone is online. Everyone isn't: patchy regional coverage, devices that cost real money on a pension, and people who simply don't want a smartphone. Keep a phone number, a paper form, a person.

Growing minds — if AI writes the essay, when does the thinking muscle get its workout? Taught well, it's a patient tutor. Grandparents are the antidote generation: ask a grandchild to EXPLAIN what they made.

The workforce — routine brain-work is being automated faster than people can retrain. We've seen this movie (ATMs, containers, PCs) — jobs changed shape, but the transition hurt real people.

Fair — or honest? — AI learns from our past; if the past was unfair, it repeats it at speed. And it writes fake news faster than we can read it. Old rule: apply the Aussie pub test.

Reframing the Tool: The Super-Librarian

AI isn't a brain. It's a super-librarian — it has read a vast library and fetches answers in seconds. Brilliantly useful, occasionally off the wrong shelf, and never the one in charge.

It retrieves, you decide — it offers options and drafts; judgment, taste and wisdom stay with you.

Confident ≠ correct — it answers smoothly even when wrong. An eager assistant, not an oracle.

A tool for empowerment — letters, recipes, travel plans, tech help. It works for you, on your terms.

Machine Speed, Human Judgment

94%

accuracy referring 50+ eye diseases —
Moorfields × DeepMind

5×5 m

fires that small now spotted from space by
AI satellites

10 min

to predict a fire's spread — CSIRO Spark,
used in 5 states

Human in the loop — the AI marks its evidence on the scan; the specialist reviews it and makes the call. Never the replacement.

And it's coming here — AI-assisted eye scans, mammograms, skin checks and X-rays are rolling out in Australian clinics.

A second set of eyes — it flags what fatigue might miss at 5pm on a Friday. The doctor still decides.

Defending Australian towns — the same pattern, machine speed plus human judgment, is fighting bushfires right now.

Already Working For Us

CommBank “Project Coral” — AI fixes outdated code, freeing 7,800+ engineers for creative work.

Bunnings “Buddy” — turns a deck build into step-by-step guides; conversions more than doubled.

Coles — 109 million AI predictions a day keep 26,000 products on the shelves.

Venezuela earthquake — 600 volunteers + an AI app mapped the damage in 4 days for rescuers.

And me — 7 client websites and 22 WordPress plugins built in 2 months with Claude (250+ hours). Many revisions — but fewer problems than humans, and the design stayed mine.

Writing the rulebook — Australia: AI Ethics Principles 2019 · AI Safety Standard 2024 · national adoption guidance 2025.

Independence, Community — and Staying Safe

Living well at home

Voice-controlled homes — “turn on the hallway light”: fewer 2am falls, more confidence.

Watchful, not intrusive — fall-detection that alerts family only when something's wrong.

“Call Sarah” — and a granddaughter's face appears. Telehealth and video shrink 400 km to nothing.

Start with one thing — one smart speaker, tried with a cuppa and a helper.

Your safety toolkit

Stay curious — the confident user is harder to fool than the fearful one.

Urgent + secret = scam — hang up, call back on the number you know. Set a family safe word this week.

Guard your keys — no password, PIN or code to ANYONE who rings you. Never, ever.

Ask for help — there's a helper in every family and every village. (You're looking at one.)

It was never AI versus humans.

It's about using these tools to protect what we value.

Independence

in our own homes

Fairness

a fair go for all

Community

looking out for our mates

Technology is a tool — **but you are the defining master.**

qykzoo.com/ai_talk/

