

Digital Sisters AI for Good Report

**Understanding AI literacy
and digital inclusion:
How we can use AI for good**

Foreword

By the time you have finished reading this report the world you exist in will have changed. Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is revolutionising the way we live, learn, work and play.

Digital Sisters: AI for Good is a collaborative effort delivered by Good Things Australia and supported by Telstra and Microsoft, aimed at better understanding the intersection of AI and digital inclusion and trialling approaches to building AI literacy, particularly for women. With the broadscale public use and understanding of AI still in its infancy, this research with tech experts, community workers, academics and government has been fascinating. In each conversation, we learnt something new about the benefits and risks of AI, alongside how people are using AI for good. We extend our appreciation to all the participants who generously shared their time, expertise and insights.

What we know from this work, is that in itself, AI will not fix the digital divide and there is a real risk, that unless we support the 1 in 4 people in Australia who are digitally excluded, the digital divide will deepen as a result of the speed of technological developments currently underway.

Yet there are some really important benefits to AI and opportunities for increased connection through the use of tools that AI powers like translation, voice to text and ability to help people better understand the kind of support they need. So, AI isn't all about improved productivity and

creating funny cat pictures, it can be about social connection and civic participation.

But in order for that to happen, we need to bring the best of our expertise together and have a real conversation about what kind of society we want to create and how we make sure that no one gets left behind. This research underscores the significant digital inclusion barriers faced by women, particularly those from migrant, refugee, and low income backgrounds.

The imperative for digital literacy, especially in the safe utilisation of AI technologies, has never been more urgent.

In a world characterised by rapid advancements in AI and emerging technologies, our dedication to closing the digital divide so no one is left behind remains unwavering.



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Our team acknowledges that we meet and work on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past and present.

*Image credit: Urtakerte/Heart indigemoji
Artist: Dreamtime Ladie by Kathleen Kemarre Wallace with Graham Wilfred*

Executive Summary

Good Things Australia, in collaboration with Microsoft and Telstra, is proud to present the research and consultation findings of our pioneering digital inclusion project, *Digital Sisters: AI for Good*. This initiative focuses on enhancing AI literacy among women, particularly those from migrant and refugee backgrounds, to build their skills and confidence in using emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Project Overview

To be able to deliver an AI literacy program with relevant learning resources, and support materials, we first needed to better understand AI, AI literacy and the intersection between AI literacy and digital inclusion.

The Good Things team conducted research through surveys to our network of community partners and consultations involving over 56 organisations and individuals from various sectors, including government, academia, technology, social impact sectors. We also spoke to women who will be learning about AI literacy as participants in our Digital Sisters program. Bringing together representatives from these varying stakeholders, our insights were further refined during a cross-sector roundtable held in early May.

Given the infancy of broad community use of AI, we hope that this report will contribute to the knowledge base on the intersection of AI and digital inclusion, helping us to understand the risks and benefits that AI has for ensuring a fully digitally included Australia.

Key Findings

The key findings of this report are available as a snapshot document, [click here](#) to view this snapshot document

Awareness and interest in AI

- Whilst levels of awareness, knowledge and experience using AI technology vary between the stakeholder groups we spoke to, there is a wide recognition that AI has existed for many years and is increasingly being integrated into digital tools that people use in their everyday life.
- Generative AI's introduction to the public has catapulted AI into conversations across many communities, but this is not necessarily the case for those who are digitally excluded or early on their digital literacy journey.
- Only 40% of the Good Things network of community partners reported community inquiries about AI, these being predominantly from students and young people.
- Across our consultations all stakeholders saw there were benefits of using AI tools in particular to support improved access to digital services through translation and voice to text tools.
- Yet, risks of AI use and ethical concerns around AI development were also highlighted. These included increased risk of online harm and scams, data privacy concerns, ethical issues with AI development and bias in existing tools, the digital divide being increased, and potential loss of existing skills and jobs.

Defining and Developing AI literacy

- 71% of the Good Things network agreed it is important for their community to learn about AI
- Migrant women we spoke to from our Digital Sisters program expressed their enthusiasm to learn how AI can be harnessed.
- AI Literacy was widely understood as having the skills and knowledge to effectively, responsibly and safely use AI tools and is made up of intersecting literacies including digital, data, information, and language literacy.
- The development of AI literacy needs to incorporate key areas of understanding including:
 - What AI is and where is it already used in society
 - What do I want to do and which AI tool will support me to do that e.g. "I am looking for a tool to translate materials."
 - How to use those tools, e.g. "How do I ask the right question (prompt engineering) to get the tool to do what I want it to?"
 - Checking the validity of the responses that Generative AI tools produce
 - How to stay safe in the world of AI - including understanding what information should and shouldn't be put into public AI tools.

- In addition to how to use AI tools, it was raised that understanding how to spot AI created materials was essential, in particular understanding the use of deep fakes in scams or misinformation used to influence decisions and actions.

“Shadow work, or work that is being done by AI without anyone other than the user knowing that the work was done by AI is huge”
- Corporate

- In delivering AI literacy programs, stakeholders suggested that the best way would be to deliver AI literacy content within a broader context such as existing digital literacy programs.
- Content should be practical, relatable and culturally appropriate, helping people practice using everyday AI applications and relevant to the problems the person is trying to solve.

AI and digital inclusion

- AI does not overcome the key barriers to digital inclusion. Barriers to AI engagement mirror those for people who are digitally excluded: low digital ability, affordability, access to technology, and regional disparities. Some noted the risk of AI widening the digital divide, as the use of AI will speed up technological advancements and use, leaving those who are not included now, to be left further behind.
- AI does have the potential to overcome some barriers to technology use through enhanced accessibility features, enabling personalised learning, and improving efficiency in life and the workplace – a personal AI assistant was talked about often.
- Yet, the majority of stakeholders agreed that a person needs to have basic digital and literacy skills to use AI powered tools and devices. This may include the ability to turn on a device, use a keyboard to write a prompt or navigate voice to chat functions.
- There was shared uncertainty about what continued AI adoption in society will mean for digital inclusion. Whilst it was recognised that it has the potential to further exacerbate the digital divide amongst vulnerable groups, there was reasonable agreement that AI has the ability to positively impact efforts toward digital inclusion through tools that allow users to speak to, rather than type, or tools that translate information into other languages or support communication.

Future of AI

The speed at which new AI tools and technologies have increasingly been developed and deployed means that it is difficult to predict how exactly it will impact society in the near and distant years. Yet most people indicated they did see this as a transformative technology that will shape our world and it is up to us to decide whether this is for good or bad.

Many stakeholders shared concerns about how AI will impact the workplace, education and social connection, in particular for future generations if AI is not designed and used safely, responsibly or inclusively.

Along with these concerns, almost all shared a vision of AI being used for good. Some see AI as a powerful tool for inclusion, through its ability to create opportunities for individuals and support us to solve big global problems like climate change, whilst others see its potential to optimise and increase services to vulnerable communities and make workplaces more efficient.

Key Recommendations

1. AI Literacy development is essential for all

- AI literacy content should be developed and delivered in context where possible as part of broader digital literacy programs to ensure comprehensive skill development.
- Teaching people how to think critically about information is a key area of focus in AI literacy, but this needs more work and exploration to understand the right approach and resources needed.
- It is helpful to have AI literacy as a separate literacy for now to allow focus, but in the future it will likely be delivered as part of broader digital literacy.
- AI literacy content should prioritise practical, relatable, and culturally appropriate approaches and explore tools that address everyday needs and benefits.
- AI literacy learning for people who lack confidence using technology should occur one-to-one or in small groups to ensure personalisation is possible and that people can learn by trying out different tools that meet their particular needs.

2. Collaboration across sectors

- Collaboration across all sectors (industry, government, social impact and academia) is needed to ensure that everyone has access to appropriate AI tools and learning opportunities.
- Social impact organisations need access to free or affordable AI tools that currently require paid subscription to ensure they are using the best and most reliable AI tools can offer.
- Social impact organisations are well placed to support people to build their AI literacy because of their contact with people most in need, but they need resourcing and training to build their knowledge and confidence in how to do this.
- Social impact organisations are well placed to support development of responsible AI due to their strong focus on human-centred and inclusive design. Yet participation in the design of AI requires resources and training for the social impact sector to support development and leverage AI tools effectively and safely.

3. Ongoing policy development and more research is needed into the impact of AI on the community.

- Digital Inclusion needs to be a key policy platform for all technology companies, state and federal governments to ensure AI does not exacerbate the current digital divide.
- Creating the society we want to live in requires ongoing focus to ensure people are not only able to engage with AI but are safe when they do. This requires a combination of regulatory approaches and ongoing education.
- To engage in public discourse on AI's benefits and risks, ensuring inclusive policy development to support digital inclusion.
- More in depth and ongoing research is needed on the impact of AI, particularly on vulnerable communities.
- AI literacy development is in early stages and approaches to building knowledge and use should be supported by evaluation and research.

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Introduction

This report has been developed by Good Things Australia with support from Microsoft and Telstra, as part of the *Digital Sisters: AI for Good* program. The purpose of the program is to support women, particularly those from migrant and refugee backgrounds, to build their skills and confidence to use emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI). This report presents the findings from research and consultation with technical experts, academia, corporates and government stakeholders, community organisations and women in the community over four months in early 2024. The aim of this consultation and research was to better understand AI and AI literacy, so we can design and test learning programs and content that will support women in the community to engage with this new technology in a way that benefits their lives. As a result we explored:

- 1. Definitions of AI and AI literacy**
- 2. Current and future use of AI** - including opportunities and challenges that the social impact sector may face in using AI to fulfil their mission
- 3. What AI means for digital inclusion** - the impact of AI on people who are digitally excluded and what would help people to keep up as tech changes
- 4. Responsible AI and the ethics of use**

Before the commencement of consultations, research was completed within existing literature to define 'Artificial Intelligence'. This broad search was completed as we recognised early that there was no singular definition of AI or AI literacy, rather it is defined within the context or setting in which it is being used. It was also important for us to distinguish Generative AI on its own as much of the conversation about AI in the current climate and our consultations centred around this form of AI, resulting from its explosion into consumer and workplace environments.

Australian context

- Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to an engineered system that generates predictive outputs such as content, forecasts, recommendations or decisions for a given set of human-defined objectives or parameters without explicit programming. AI systems are designed to operate with varying levels of automation. (Dept. Industry, Science and Resources, 2023)
- Machine learning are the patterns derived from training data using machine learning algorithms, which can be applied to new data for prediction or decision-making purposes (Dept. Industry, Science and Resources, 2023)

International context

- An AI system is a machine-based system that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments. Different AI systems vary in their levels of autonomy and adaptiveness after deployment (OECD, 2023)
- A system that is designed to operate with elements of autonomy and that, based on machine and/or human-provided data and inputs, infers how to achieve a given set of human-defined objectives using machine learning and/or logic- and knowledge based approaches, and produces system-generated outputs such as content (generative AI systems), predictions, recommendations or decisions, influencing the environments with which the AI system interacts (European Union, 2022)

Generative AI:

- “Generative AI” refers to a type of machine learning model that can generate new data (including, but not limited to, text, images, video, and audio) based on the patterns and structures learned from large sets of existing data. (Common Sense Media, 2023)
- Generative AI models generate novel content such as text, images, audio and code in response to prompts. (Dept. Industry, Science and Resources, 2023).

This report will detail the individual and community perspectives on how AI literacy may be built through inclusion into existing digital skills support, and the considerations that should be made with respect to more vulnerable and marginalised communities. A number of key recommendations have been drawn from our research and consultation findings, of which we hope can be taken and applied by individuals, communities and organisations both inside and out of a digital inclusion context.

Given the infancy of broad community use of AI, there is limited research or academic papers on the impacts on AI on vulnerable communities or how to support people to benefit from new AI tools to overcome barriers to inclusion. We hope to contribute to the knowledge base on the intersection of AI and digital inclusion, helping us to understand the risks and benefits that AI has for ensuring a fully digitally included Australia.

Consultation approach

A nationwide consultation was conducted by Good Things Australia from February to May 2024 to gather stakeholder views on AI use in the community and what is needed to support people to build AI literacy. The consultation approach involved participation from individuals from government, academic, technology and the social impact sectors. The Good Things Australia network of community partners organisations also heavily participated in our consultations. Our network is made up of 4000 community organisations including computer clubs, libraries, migrant and refugee community services, community colleges and other social impact organisations who help us reach people most in need of digital inclusion support.

Sector	No. of organisations represented
Academic	10
Corporate	5
Government	3
Good Things Network	44
Social Impact (non-for profit)	11
	73

To ensure our research had input from diverse industries and people with different levels of AI knowledge and use, our consultation activities were held with a broad and nationwide stakeholder groups. A series of research questions were developed for each group of stakeholders, and a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data collection was utilised through surveys, interviews and group workshop sessions. The consultation sessions were held across Australia between February and May 2024 and facilitated by Good Things staff. These included:

Activities	Respondents
Two national surveys	795
Individual participant consultations	6
One roundtable discussion	15

A full list of participating organisations can be found in [Appendix 1](#)

Consultation activities

Consultation with migrant women

Five migrant women from India and Nepal joined Good Things staff and two Digital Mentors from Boroia Multicultural Services for an in-person consultation in Western Sydney. All of the women who participated have been receiving digital skills and literacy training and support through the Good Things Digital Sisters program. These women had a particular interest in learning digital skills for work, including building confidence and their ability to use the Microsoft office suite.

Even though this group of women have more advanced digital skills than others in the Digital Sisters cohort, three women had not heard the term 'AI' nor knowledge about what it is or how it is used. One woman had heard about AI before with little knowledge, and another woman stated she had small experience using Chat GPT during her studies. A section of the consultation was dedicated to discussing what AI was and where it already existed in the lives of the women, after which all women agreed they had been using it daily without knowing.

The women were able to suggest examples of AI after hearing more about it, including AI being used to predict potential spam calls in their phone, Smart home devices such as Alexa and predictive text built into document and communication software.

Participants shared their excitement about the potential benefits of AI, such as making tasks easier and using their skills in new ways, however also expressed concern about potential impacts, including the possibility of job loss and the need for AI skills to secure employment. With all women being mothers, there was considerable discussion around what the continued adoption of AI means for the future of their children. They shared concerns about how AI might result in the potential loss of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy and for their children and how it may be difficult to know how much AI is influencing their school work.

Drawing from their previous experiences learning digital skills through Digital Sisters, the women stated they prefer hands-on, practical learning when it comes to learning about and using software, with step-by-step demonstrations and the opportunity to practise simultaneously on their own devices. They also expressed a preference for having resources such as printed instructions or cards to take home with them for further practice.

At the end of the consultation they asked, "When can we start learning?"



Consultation with migrant women at Boroia Multicultural Services

Consultation activities

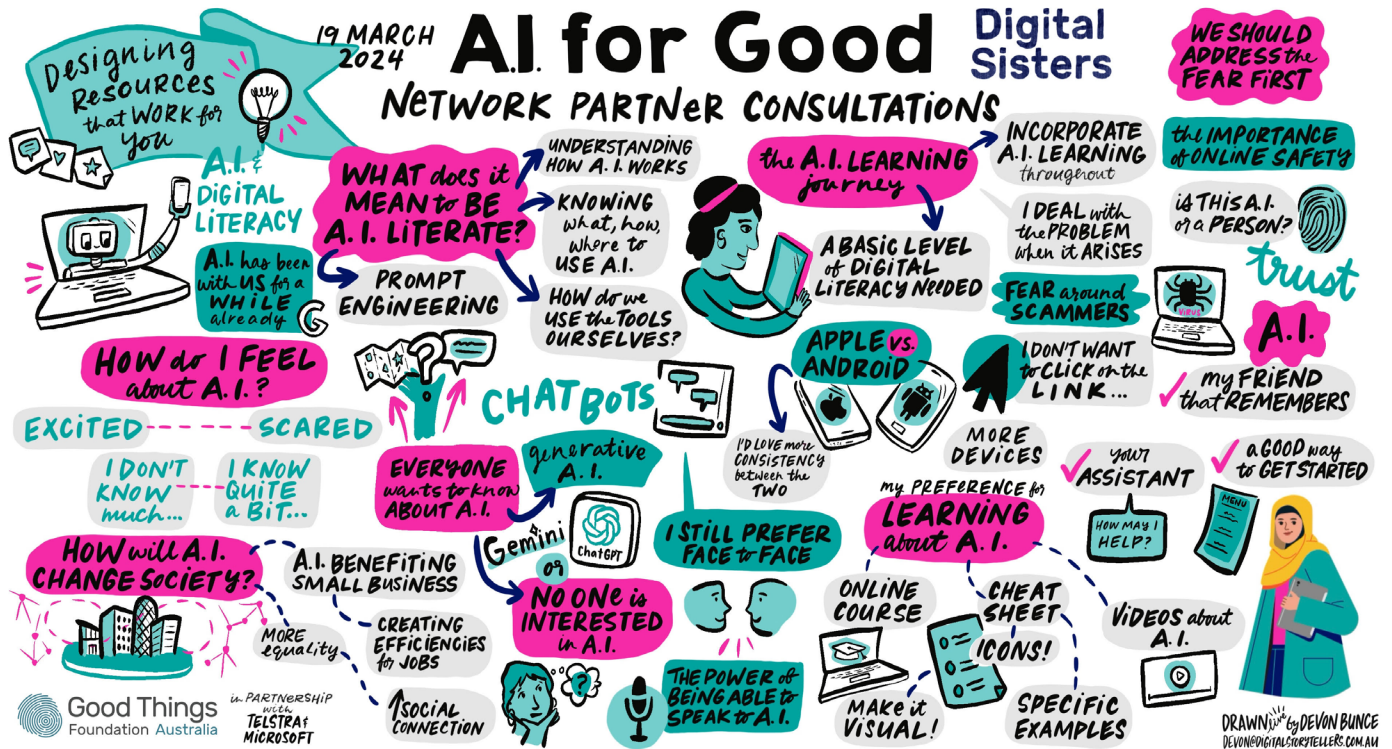


Illustration completed by Devon Bruce (visual scribe) during a Network Partner consultation

Data analysis

Consultation feedback was recorded through video and AI tools were also used to notetake and summarise meetings where possible. Insights were captured in a range of formats including:

- Notes from workshops, mostly provided by participants
- Transcripts from meetings, workshops and roundtable discussions
- Responses from Network Surveys (quantitative only)

Qualitative data was then processed by individual comment or quotes, sorted thematically and manually analysed by frequency against the determined research questions. Generative AI tools were also used for a small amount of qualitative analysis, including to generate definitions and provide high level findings from raw data.

Findings

The section of the report presents the findings drawn from feedback captured throughout our consultation activities and some external literature. It has been organised according to the research topics and questions that guided each consultation. Where external research is used in this section of the report it will be directly referenced.

Defining AI

Recognising there are a range of definitions of Artificial Intelligence, all participants were asked to define AI in their own words. We heard that it is difficult to define AI as it is dependent on context and existing knowledge and exposure to AI. The definition has continued to evolve over time alongside the technologies themselves. Despite this, we found the most common terms, examples and contexts defined by participants were:



AI Definition Word Cloud

Majority of participants we spoke to recognised AI as a 'machine', 'computer' or 'technological' system, with many further identifying it as 'applying human intelligence' or 'human processes' to the system. Many stated AI used 'data' and specifically 'large amounts of data inputs' to produce 'outputs' - which included 'tasks', 'processes', 'goals' or 'objectives'.

"AI is implementing Human Intelligence in Machine"
- **Network Partner**

"I think AI is the simulations of human intelligence processes by machines - ie voice recognition, speech recognition and information gathering" - **Network Partner**

'Generative AI' and 'content generation' appeared frequently, in particular referring to AI's ability to produce content such as images or information. Generative AI was also mentioned across multiple stakeholder groups in the context of it changing the way we view AI, and that it has made AI more visible and accessible.

"Gen AI has changed the way we society views AI in the last 15 months - the difference is that everyone now has access to the tools"
- **Academic**

Frequently mentioned characteristics of AI included descriptions of it as an 'assistive tool', 'predictive' and 'self-learning.' Stakeholders from corporate or technological companies more commonly described AI as 'transformative' or a 'technological advancement', noting that it is changing the way we do things resulting from the speed and scale at which we can complete tasks.

"It's an assistive tool, with bursting capability, and a way for us to do what we want to do at a higher, faster and elevated scale."
- **Corporate**

Participants across stakeholder groups noted that AI was 'part of daily life' and 'embedded everywhere' though not always visible to everyone. Technology companies and Government stakeholders we spoke to stated that AI has been around for decades and forms part of the technologies we have used daily. As noted previously the introduction of Generative AI has made AI more visible, accessible and usable by people without technical knowledge. However, when we spoke to migrant women participants who were currently learning digital skills through our Digital Sisters program, we found only:

- Two of 6 women had heard of AI with one knowingly using AI before, specifically referencing having used ChatGPT when completing a diploma.
- For the women who had not heard of or used AI before, when provided examples of AI technologies such as Google Maps and Translate, content algorithms on social media apps and voice to text technology, they recognised that they were using AI daily without knowing.

"The public would be very surprised to know how much AI is in use" - **Government**

"I think for people to understand where [Generative AI] has come from. It's also really important to be saying AI has been around for a long time, and these are the kind of examples of how it's already used to stop people from being scared of it"
- **Corporate**

Comments from some stakeholders noted AI's perception within society, recognising that 'fear and hype' particularly within an Australian context was shaping the way we view AI technologies. Whilst not explicitly mentioned by our Network when defining AI, 'fear and hype' were later noted as barriers preventing people from engaging with AI through this consultation.

"The media treats AI very differently in Australia compared to other parts of the world" - **Government**

Commonly appearing quotes and comments relating to definitions of AI centred around the difficulty to define AI due to ‘many definitions existing’ or it being ‘dependent on the context.’ Those in our network who were unable to define AI linked this to their ‘little knowledge’ on the subject.

*“I have no ideas about AI and excited and interesting to learn about it” - **Network Partner***

*“It’s a highly debated topic, there are many definitions” - **Social Impact Organisation***

Following finalisation of our consultations, we utilised Microsoft Co-pilot to analyse the qualitative data provided by our respondents and produce a new definition for AI:

“AI is the ability of technology to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as understanding natural language, recognizing patterns, and making decisions. It is increasingly becoming embedded into various aspects of daily life, improving accessibility and breaking down barriers for users. AI serves as a guide to navigate the digital world, offering personalised content and operating at high speed to assist users in many aspects of their lives”

Current use, interest & perception

Our network

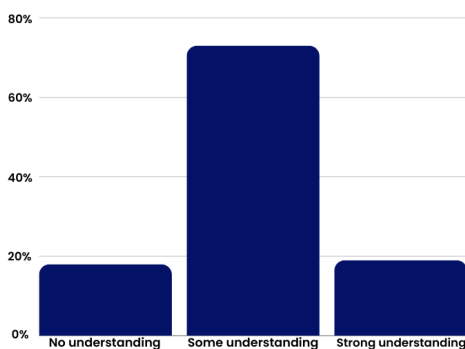
Only 40% of our Network stated that someone in their community had asked them about AI in the last 6 months.

In our December 2023 Network survey we featured four AI questions collecting data from a broad audience of 453 community organisations who are currently delivering digital skills training and support to individuals across the country. We asked our community partners:

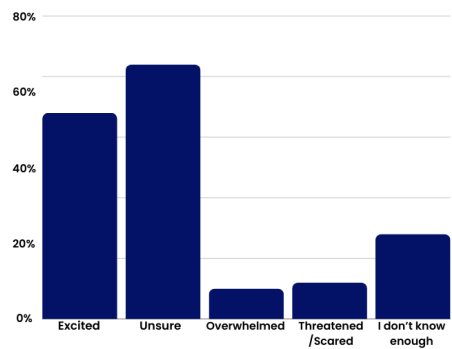
- Is anybody asking about AI in their community, and if so who?
- Was their community interested in learning about AI?
- What AI topics are their community interested in?
- Were they supporting people to learn about AI?

55% of respondents stated that nobody in their community had asked them about AI in the past 6 months, in addition to 5% being unsure. However, 70% of our Network stated it was important for their community to learn about AI.

What best describes your understanding of AI? (N= 448)



What best describes how you feel about AI? (N= 448)



In contrast to the wider Network survey results, the majority of the partners we spoke to in our online consultations indicated they had commenced delivering AI related content. Clearly these organisations, by participating in consultations on AI, have shown an interest in the topic. For those delivering content already, many were simply introducing AI or trialling AI focused sessions with participants within existing digital skills support and training sessions. Other Network Partners indicated that they had not commenced delivery of AI content yet, with some planning to deliver content in the future or advising they need to educate their staff, volunteers and digital mentors about AI before running sessions in their community.

"We delivered (a) trial session for elderly women during the digital literacy session last year. We used ChatGPT as it can be a great virtual assistant" - Network Partner

"No not (delivering) yet - we are still grasping (AI) as a concept and what the tools are ourselves, ie developing our own literacy, let alone with clients" - Network Partner

When consultation participants were asked who in the community had shown interest in AI, students of all ages were identified most frequently, followed by older people and young people. Consultation data also indicated that whilst older people were showing interest in AI, this may have been skewed by the representation of organisations attending from the Be Connected Over 50's digital literacy program. On inspection of the quotes and comments that indicate interest in AI from older people, responses relate to 'everyone' or a 'diverse range of people' or that only a small group of overall participants have shown interest.

"I find it's a diverse range of people asking . I've had conversations with teenagers, parents and seniors. But mostly it's been the younger age groups" - Network Partner

Participants were asked to list AI topics they are receiving questions about:

- "What is AI"
- "AI scams"
- "How can I use AI?"

A considerable number reported those enquiring about AI held fears or concerns about AI, with participants tending to be scared or sceptical of its use with some stakeholders associating this with media influence. Some comments provided suggest that this fear building within the media may also contribute to why communities are actively not showing interest in learning about AI. Other frequently mentioned topics of interest included 'Using Chat GPT' and using AI as an 'education assistant'. It was noted in a few comments that interest tends to be shown towards specific AI applications or platforms such as Chat GPT over the term 'AI' itself.

"No one is asking - they tend to be scared of it" - Network Partner

During our in-person consultation with migrant women, after learning briefly about what AI is, participants showed interest in learning more about how they can use AI in their daily life, with particular focus on how their children were interacting with it.

Some Network Partners indicated that they had started using AI in their organisation and work, most commonly for 'administrative tasks', whilst those who were not actively using AI reported seeing or hearing of Generative AI used commonly throughout the non-for-profit sector, in schools and other businesses to support workload. On an individual basis, many reported hearing AI used for 'language support' i.e translation, 'job seeking' and 'content creation'.

*"Yes, we use AI applications a bit in business, administration, marketing and social media." - **Network Partner***

"Not really using it as an organisation. What happens with the data we input in it? Wouldn't want to put private information or business sensitive information in it"
- **Network Partner**

AI In the workplace

Outside of our Network, we heard mixed responses regarding community and business interest in AI.

For Social Impact organisations we spoke to, there has been strong adoption of AI technologies whether it has been on an organisational or individual level. Organisations are using it to support data analysis and Within Australia and New Zealand, figures show that 69% of non-for-profit organisations are currently, or planning to use AI tools in the next 12 months (Infoxchange, 2023). AI interest has overtaken cyber-security with some organisations exploring the possibilities for its use in service delivery and business processes.

In contrast, we also heard from other social impact organisations that a focus on AI is not possible as a result of lack of technology infrastructure and significant work that needs to occur to bring this and their data collection approaches up to date before AI will be useful, supporting communities and consumers AI does not appear to be a largely discussed topic.

Whilst some organisations acknowledge AI technologies have been used long before the emergence of Generative AI, the use has made them more accessible.

*"Shadow work, or work that is being done by AI without anyone other than the user knowing that the work was done by AI is huge" - **Corporate***

In government, the use of Generative AI tools is being tested in specific contexts and departments but not widely authorised for use across the public service. Where corporate partners we spoke to are investing significant money and time in implementing AI systems to improve efficiency, communication and customer service.

Whether this is authorised use or not, workers are using Generative AI to support their work. On an individual level, 84% of Australian workers now use Generative AI in the workplace, a figure above the global average (Microsoft Work Trend Index, 2024).

Benefits of using AI

All stakeholder groups engaged in our consultation were asked what they saw as the benefits AI could bring to individuals, communities and the workplace. Themes were categorised as follows (listed in order of frequency occurring):

- Accessibility and Inclusion
- Enhanced interaction or participation
- Supporting education and learning
- Efficiency and productivity in the workplace
- Technology and Tools (referring to specific AI functionality within technology)
- Creativity and Innovation
- Information Access & Management
- Health and Wellbeing

Accessibility and inclusion

Accessibility and Inclusion were most mentioned as benefits of AI from the consultations. It was commonly noted that AI can help everyone, but exponentially support those with low literacy or low English levels to better engage with technology and society. Accessibility was raised as a benefit by all stakeholder groups, noting AI features such as voice assistants and Generative AI are already making technology easier to use for people living with disability or individuals with low literacy or English.

We heard a specific example of the Centre for Inclusive Design supporting co-design and the development of a culturally appropriate AI translation tool for deaf Aboriginal people to support communication between individuals, communities and the justice system.

Enhanced interaction and participation

The second most frequently mentioned benefit of AI identified mainly by academic and social impact groups was 'Interacting with services'. This benefit was highlighted as accessing support services with complimenting benefits such as access and management of personal documents, translation and keeping clients engaged with services using AI technologies where human interaction isn't possible. Other benefits appearing within this category were noted as AI supporting 'community participation' and 'communication' through improving information sharing regarding community and social activities and removing existing communication barriers that prevent people from engaging. Increased agency was also noted as a benefit of AI adoption, allowing individuals to seek and understand information on their own allowing them to make decisions independently.

Online translation tools have been powered by AI technologies for decades now, and many of the groups we consulted with highlighted it as a big benefit to individuals and communities. Particularly within the context of our Digital Sisters support migrant and refugee women, we have heard the improvements to translation tools have meant voice assisted features and web page translators have helped to support individuals navigate resettlement in Australia, better engage with the community and seek employment opportunities.

"Keeping people engaged with services when they don't have access to human resources - so they don't fall through the cracks." - Social Impact Organisation

AI supported learning

'Personalised content' was a frequently mentioned benefit, mostly used in the context of education. Specific examples of how AI could support the personalisation of content included personalising lesson plans for teachers or acting as virtual tutors for students.

Other learning benefits identified through our consultations included the improvement opportunities for reading, writing and education generally. It noted that AI technologies could help to reduce the workload on teachers and in the case of the Good Things network, digital mentors, by enabling faster personalisations of lesson plans. Additionally, AI can be used to spark curiosity and learning in individuals of all ages, simplify and break down information in educational settings and serve as a

virtual tutor for students at all levels. For the migrant women we spoke to, they showed a keen interest in how AI platforms such as ChatGPT might be able to help them assist their children with homework.

"Using AI means low literacy doesn't have to hold students back from learning"
- **Academic**

"Innovation in education - personalisation of lesson plans, make it easier for teachers, speed up learning around new subjects" - **Social Impact Organisation**

"AI technologies offer a new way to "spark" people's interest in learning. Then sustain their interest in learning, by making the problem solving relevant to their issues." - **Network Partner**

Efficiency and productivity

Productivity and efficiency benefits were mentioned by participants across all stakeholder groups. The top two themes within this category were 'reducing workload' and 'increasing productivity', with time spent on tasks that can be automated being the most mentioned way in which this benefit could be achieved. Our network identified the opportunities for small businesses to capitalise on AI, giving them much needed extra resources to support their growth and development. 'Automated decision making' was a less common term used but some participants noted that with less time by individuals and workplaces spent on doing arduous tasks or making decisions can free resources for more important or human facing activities.

"It's the key to the four or even three day working week" - **Corporate**

"In the environment of policy and service delivery, (there is) no question that there will be some aspects that will allow for better processing of people's engagement. AI can ensure that more resources available are spent on tasks and functions that require human interaction" - **Social Impact Organisation**

Other benefits

A number of specific AI technologies and tools were referenced as providing benefits to individuals and communities such as apps, chatbots, spam detection and voice to text functions. Specific apps and platforms referenced for their benefits included Maps, Translate, Chat GPT and voice assistants that were noted to help individuals complete everyday tasks faster and easier. Social organisations in particular noted that chatbots are an effective tool at providing individuals anonymity and a low-pressure environment when seeking support for sensitive issues. Additionally, AI was noted as a way to make technology generally easier to use. Creativity and innovation, whilst not a common theme highlighted the opportunities to support product development and content creation. Others noted the health and wellbeing benefits of AI technology, including AI companions that support other interventions and have the potential to support reduction in loneliness within communities and AI being used in medical settings to support early detection of diseases and support treatments. Finally, a number of academic and social impact stakeholders noted the potential of AI to support individuals and families to access and manage important personal documents digitally and get more reliable information on support services available to them when they are in vulnerable situations.

"In a family violence context, always having documents with you, and not necessarily needing to ask someone for access in emergency scenarios."
- **Academic**

Risks

All stakeholder groups engaged in our consultation were asked what they saw as the risks of AI for individuals, communities, business and society as a whole. Themes included:

- Negative societal and community impacts
- Online Safety and Data Privacy Concerns
- AI Ethics and Governance
- The Digital Divide
- Skill Loss

Negative societal and community impacts

The top identified concern mainly raised by Government and Social Impact organisations was the risk of AI negatively impacting already vulnerable communities or minority groups with specific mention of low income and culturally diverse people. Quite often this concern was raised in tandem with the use of AI for automated decision making, where it may cause individuals and communities to miss out on important services, job opportunities as a result of models that further favour those with more power and agency. In a similar concern, the risks of a lack of involvement from minority groups in the product design, decision making and use of AI technologies with the bias designed into tools making them less relevant and potentially damaging. The potential impacts of biased data existing in AI models were mentioned by Academic and Government stakeholders who noted if these systems are used to make decisions around job candidates, loan approvals or community investments projects it may put minorities at a further disadvantage. Social impact organisations, in particular, suggested the need for diverse voices to be represented in the design and development of AI tools.

"We need to be careful that minority groups are represented in the AI"
- **Social Impact Organisation**

"What is the impact of AI on communities who don't interact with AI?"
- **Social Impact Organisation**

Other societal concerns raised in particular by the migrant and refugee women and social impact organisations we spoke to was the potential for job loss where AI is introduced into the workplace. This was not solely raised with respect to AI replacing people, but also as a result of more jobs requiring digital and AI skills leaving those who do not possess the skills at a disadvantage when job seeking.

One migrant woman we spoke to shared her personal experience where after 10 years out of the workforce, she has struggled to find employment as many jobs require digital skills that she lacks or is out of practice with. She showed particular concern at how AI's rapid adoption in society might make her prospects of finding a job even more complicated. The women also pointed out that even with extensive education, people might find jobs taken over by automation or AI, which increases competition and requires people to have to learn even more new skills.

A range of stakeholders including the migrant women we spoke to showed concern for the impacts of AI on the educational outcomes for children and young people. The women who were all mothers of young primary school aged children noted that whilst they could see the benefit technology can bring to education, there is a risk that the children miss out on developing important literacy and numeracy skills if they rely too much on technology and AI. Some indicated their concern that their children could become lazy, because of the use of such tools. Skill loss itself both in literacy and cognitive skills as a result of an overreliance on technology was raised by all stakeholder groups, worried that by the time young people reach tertiary education or enter the workforce they will lack the capacity to read and write in the way that we must do today.

"Kids think everything is on computers. We don't know what will happen in the future." - Female migrant

"I can just imagine if by university, you're struggling with how you write and you start to use AI. There's actually no writing development from then on, or similarly, from school, I do worry about that." - Academic

Discerning truth in the world of deep fakes - critical analysis of information

The second highest risk raised throughout our consultations was the inability to critically analyse information, and in particular AI generated content. This was supported by a number of people who mentioned misinformation and disinformation through the creation and dissemination of AI generated content. Many are worried that the ease with which AI supports the generation and spread of content on the internet and in the community, that without media literacy and critical thinking skills individuals may accept false or misleading information as truth which can cause harm. An example of this happening in the United States was the use of AI to manipulate a video of Joe Biden to make it appear as though he was making transphobic comments (Reuters, 2023). Both written and visual content were mentioned with respect to misinformation and disinformation. With the internet increasingly being the main source of information for communities, participants we spoke to are worried that synthetic or generated data will become oversaturated and this content has the ability to influence the way in which individuals view the world.

"Lack of media literacy is a risk - ability to critically analyse information generated by AI" - Academic

"People in rural and regional communities are particularly at risk of feeling disconnected through misinformation as they rely on the internet for information" - Social Impact Organisation

Privacy and safety

Social Impact Organisations and Academics in particular noted the risks associated with privacy and data when using AI. For individuals and even companies who don't understand how AI uses and tracks data they can be more vulnerable to instances of their personal or sensitive data being stolen or used to cause harm. Social impact organisations noted there are risks particularly in the social impact sector that staff may look to use AI tools to support their work and put sensitive case notes or personal information on clients into the systems.

"Buy and large people haven't necessarily changed behaviours despite data leaks or concerns of privacy" - Academic

All of the people we spoke to identified the safety of AI as a major risk. The top concerns about AI safety related to how it will impact online safety and further complicate already existing scams or fraudulent behaviours. The women from the Digital Sisters program we spoke to emphasised they were very concerned about their children's safety when using AI. These concerns were shared by social impact organisations who fear that AI algorithms and data models could lead children towards harmful topics or content. It was also highlighted that AI generated content and deep fake images have the ability to be used as a weapon against individuals, and in particular women are more at risk of this type of harm. A 2019 report by Deepttrace showed that 96% of all AI generated videos were pornographic, with a more recent example of this targeting celebrity Taylor Swift (Deepttrace, 2019).

"We need to ensure AI sees a child as an individual that has individual rights - how do we ensure what's being generated by AI is age and gender appropriate?" - Social Impact Organisation

AI Ethics and governance

'Biassed data' was also identified as a significant concern. Though raised by all stakeholder groups, in particular social impact organisations flagged the risk of AI models and systems being created using biased data. It was recognised that whilst bias is not a creation of AI, it is difficult to remove bias from the historical data on which generative AI models are built, can perpetuate stereotypes and create power imbalances within the community. This was also raised in conjunction with automated processes where if decisions are made in communities or workplaces by AI systems that use biased data there is considerable risk of minorities missing out on opportunities or being further excluded. An example can be seen through Amazon who encountered bias existing within their HR systems that used machine learning. The AI systems Amazon built used previous hiring and successful applicant data to determine preferred candidates which were found to favour men over women (Reuters, 2018).

Another major risk raised by consultation participants focused on the premature adoption of AI technologies without an understanding of how to use it. This was raised in the context of organisations rushing to use it to boost productivity and save on resources before having an understanding of how AI works, what data is used for and may risk putting sensitive data into using public AI tools. A lack of governance within organisations and companies who choose to develop or use AI technologies was also highlighted as a risk. It was recognised that some of the harms previously mentioned such as data leaks and marginalisation of vulnerable communities could occur if AI technologies are adopted too fast without planning or procedures in place to mitigate risks in organisations, noting the non-for-profit sector is particularly at risk. A lack of governance or regulation was also noted as a potential risk impacting product quality assurance, or ensuring that AI technologies work equally well for everybody that uses them.

"Because AI is premised on the past (it's inherit nature is to draw from existing sources) - it may mean further biases are entrenched in the models"
- Social Impact Organisation

"Businesses are rushing to find ways to make money from it - but don't know how to use it" **- Government**

Responsible AI

After discussing the risks of AI with participants, we asked them to provide their thoughts and definitions on responsible AI. This could include suggestions, examples, characteristics or principles of responsible AI.

- Many participants suggested that companies who are developing AI tools need to apply: human centred design
- safety by design
- inclusive design principles
- developers need to include involvement and input from end users to ensure all ethical considerations have been made in the design process

This needs to have the goal of ensuring no or minimal impacts befall vulnerable communities whether they engage with AI tools or not.

Transparency, accountability, trust, explainability, agency and user responsibility were terms all raised in the context of Responsible AI. These terms were raised by participants to be applied throughout the

design process all the way to the point where an end user is engaging with an AI tool. There was also acknowledgement that this is an emerging space, and that there needs to be rules and safeguards in place to ensure all parties are responsible for their actions pertaining to AI design and usage.

*"Need a consistent mechanism that ensures where AI is being operated, built, and developed and used for social services it is doing the right thing" - **Corporate***

*"For the Design of tools - human centred design is key with people who are going to be affected or users" - **Academic***

Regulation and policy

Globally, governments are taking steps towards developing legal frameworks to ensure the safe and responsible use of AI. Internationally, there has been a mix of approaches taken with respect to AI regulation. The European Union has utilised a risk-based approach to develop their first AI Act, with its aim to *"foster trustworthy AI in Europe and beyond, by ensuring that AI systems respect fundamental rights, safety, and ethical principles and by addressing risks of very powerful and impactful AI models"* (European Union, 2024). Countries such as the United Kingdom and Switzerland are not introducing specific AI regulation, but rather reviewing and amending existing laws to address and accommodate for AI. In an Australian context, the Government has published an interim response to its broad consultation on safe and responsible AI where it has outlined considerations and possible approaches to AI regulation. In the interim report, the Government has stated they are considering the introduction of mandatory safeguards and guardrails for the development and use of AI in high-risk settings, voluntary safety standards and watermarking for AI generated content for industry and undertaking work to review existing laws in the context of AI (Australian Government, 2024).

We heard most consistently through our consultation that the biggest challenge that lies within the regulation of AI is the fast-paced, broad and global environment where these technologies and tools exist as well as their capabilities are constantly changing. Many stakeholders we spoke to noted that any legislation developed for the design, use and development of AI is at risk of becoming out of date quickly, or even by the time it passed in Parliament. Despite these challenges, the resounding consensus was that there needed to be some form of legal framework introduced to support safe and responsible AI, though opinions on how this could be achieved differed. Opinions particularly diverged when it came to the approach that would best fit within an Australian context with some suggesting that voluntary standards would not be sufficient to ensure user protections whilst other respondents agreed that regulation is only necessary in high risk situations. Some individuals also suggested that regulation was best placed within existing law, rather than the creation of AI specific rules. However overall, there was consistency in responses regarding a priority in legislation needing to be given to user protections, including their privacy and safety when using or being exposed to AI.

"Remain optimistic about the potential for AI to level the playing field if we have the right policy settings - good governance is really important"
- Social Impact Organisation

*"The alarming developments and pace of AI means we need to at least try to regulate in some ways" - **Academic***

*"There is a need for regulation at the use level, specifically targeting harmful uses of AI rather than regulating access to the technology itself." - **Corporate***

AI and social impact sector

As highlighted earlier in this report, there has been varying levels of AI adoption within the social impact sector. Some organisations are actively exploring ways AI can be harnessed for good, some are still in the process of building their technological knowledge and capacity generally without AI, whilst for others AI has not appeared on their radar. There is a broad spectrum of digital capability and experience for social impact organisations in Australia which is largely impacted by size and resourcing. We know that for some smaller and localised community organisations, whilst there is interest to adopt and integrate technology and AI into their processes and service delivery, it is often determinant on their ability to access and secure funding and resources. We asked our stakeholders to explore the opportunities that AI presents for the sector, as well as suggest what some of the barriers may be that prevent organisations from adopting AI in the first place.

Opportunities – We have heard already that AI can provide significant productivity and efficiency benefits to the workplace, and this remains true for the social impact sector.

Social impact organisations already grapple with limited resourcing and spend significant amounts of time completing administrative tasks that can take away from time spent face to face with clients. Stakeholder groups across the board noted the cost savings and resource boosts AI adoption could provide, if social impact organisations have the opportunity to explore, learn about and implement the right AI tools. However, as noted earlier in this report there are risks associated with a shift towards using AI too early without safeguards in place and guidelines for when and how AI can be used and when it shouldn't be. Eg. It's not a good idea to get public AI tools to write sensitive case notes for clients.

We heard from Corporate, Social Impact Organisations and Academics that AI technology shows potential to ease the strain for the social impact sector by providing more tailored access to information and support pathways for vulnerable individuals and communities. An example we heard about is Justice Connect's AI project, where a language processor is being built to aid people to easily search for and obtain legal help online, in addition to connecting them to the most appropriate supports (Justice Connect, 2024). By introducing non-invasive AI technologies into apps or devices, support services may be able to recommend or suggest information or referrals on sensitive topics such as financial support, domestic violence or mental health based on what someone's search data. Similar to the discussion in an education context earlier in this report, the ability to personalise content may mean social impact organisations are better able to tailor their support or case management to an individual's context or needs, ultimately helping to maximise positive impact. AI was also noted to support better data analysis to help organisations better understand the communities they work with and how best to provide targeted interventions or preventions.

Another opportunity highlighted for non-for-profit work was the potential to harness AI's predictive capabilities to support early and follow up intervention support to clients. International examples were raised demonstrating organisations using AI to predict homelessness with clients based on behavioural data collected from ongoing support from service providers. It was also suggested similar predictions could be used to identify clients who may be at risk of exiting a program, allowing support workers to follow up with them and maintain engagement.

"AI can predict when people are going to make significant changes in their lives, such as escaping a violent relationship or seeking financial help. Why not use AI for something powerful?" – Academic

Barriers – Whilst exploring the potential opportunities AI could bring to the social impact sector, a number of barriers were also identified that may hinder adoption of these tools and technologies

A major barrier identified for social impact organisations was around cost for paid AI tools that allow for private databases protecting sensitive client information. Cost can also be a barrier in terms of the time to explore different tools to find the best one for an individual's needs. It was also noted that regular usage of these tools would need to occur to justify a monthly cost per staff member who was utilising paid AI technology.

*“Challenge for Non-for profits is the cost of these products”
– **Social Impact Organisation***

The rapid pace at which new AI technologies are being introduced and changing means that there also needs to be sufficient resourcing in social impact organisations to set up and manage its integration within the business. Findings from Infoxchange's Digital Technology in the Non-for-profit sector show that within Australia and New Zealand, only 38% of non-for-profit organisations have a technology plan or digital transformation strategy in place, and only 33% agreeing data regularly guides decision making in their organisation suggesting that many may not be ready to embrace AI technology in their everyday work (2023). This is despite figures in the same report highlighting adoption of AI tools had doubled between 2022 and 2023 in the sector (Infoxchange, 2023). Further insights into how social impact organisations and individuals are using these AI tools and for what outcomes would be beneficial to understand how the wider sector can leverage AI in their organisations. We also heard there is a risk that social impact organisations may get left behind particularly if they are regionally or remotely based, or are already experiencing lag with building digital skills and literacy within their workforces.

*“We have encountered organisations that are reluctant to embrace generative AI, even though there are significant gains to be had” – **Corporate***

AI Literacy

One of the key goals we set out to achieve during our consultations was to understand the definition of AI literacy and how this can be used to support people in the community to learn about AI. Our initial research showed that there is no widely accepted definition for this emerging term, so we asked all of our stakeholder groups ‘What does it mean to be AI literate?’ particularly focusing on the perceived competencies that make up AI literacy, and its potential intersection with other existing literacies including general, digital, data, media and information literacy.

Defining AI literacy

Through our consultations, we found five key common themes that were attributed to AI Literacy. In order of frequency occurring, these themes were:

- Critical thinking and analysis
- How AI works
- Digital literacy
- How AI can be used
- What is AI?

The ability to use AI Other less mentioned themes included the ethical use of AI, how data and information are used in AI (including data and information literacy), risks associated with AI use, the limitations of AI and media literacy. To a lesser extent, we heard suggestions that perhaps AI literacy was not something that needed to be defined on its own but rather encompassed knowledge and skills found elsewhere that can simply be applied to the use of AI technology. In order of frequency occurring, these themes were:

What is AI? How is it used? How does it work?

Across all stakeholder groups, AI literacy was defined as having the knowledge and understanding of what AI is, how AI tools and technology work and how they are used, even if only at a basic level.

Knowing ‘How AI works’ was the second most occurring theme appearing in response to our requests for participants to define AI literacy. Most participants suggested that to be able to use AI and get access to the benefits it brings to everyday life, you must first know enough about the systems that underpin the technology (i.e machine learning, data inputs and outputs and algorithms). Explored further in our content development section of this report, it is noted that whilst this knowledge is important for users of AI, it needs to be taught in simple and non technical terms. How AI works was often mentioned by participants in tandem with knowledge on “What is AI” in the context of AI literacy and ‘How it is used’.

*“AI literacy is a basic understanding of the technological and statistical mechanisms underlying AI. Ideally in as non-technical way away as possible - which is always probably the most difficult part. How do you communicate technical ideas to non-technical people and make them accessible?” - **Corporate***

‘What is AI’, ‘How is AI used’ and ‘Ability to use AI’ were also recurring themes within AI Literacy. Though mostly being mentioned by our Network, these three themes appeared across all stakeholder groups usually in complement of each other. Comments were raised in relation to the knowledge of what AI is as many recognised that many individuals are not aware of AI, and if they are aware they don’t necessarily realise where AI is already used within society. It was also suggested that it is critical to know about what AI is to be able to use it effectively, valuably and with agency.

“Currently we need AI literacy - its useful at this point in time with the Generative AI boom - it’s helpful as it gives a name to a phenomenon - the need to help people learn how AI works” - Academic

Being able to use Generative AI was suggested to be a component of AI literacy, and the use of it to perform tasks and generate information and content that you can successfully use. Along with the ability to use AI, understanding its application, how it can be used or benefits it can bring to individuals was also suggested to be important as it helps sell the why to users and make the tools relatable and interesting.

“AI literacy is the ability to understand what AI is, how to use it and how to optimise its use.” - Network Partner

“You don’t have to be a plumber to understand how to use a toilet, so you don’t have to fully understand how AI is built in order to use it” - Social Impact

Digital literacy

Digital Literacy was the third most appearing theme in our conversations regarding AI Literacy across all stakeholder groups. Most commonly, it was indicated by all stakeholder groups that digital literacy and skills are required before someone is able to learn about or engage with AI. There was also the suggestion that AI literacy may just become part of digital literacy in the future. We explore this theme more in depth in section 4.3 of our findings where analyse the intersection between AI literacy and digital literacy.

Safe & ethical use of AI

The final major theme that arose during discussions on AI Literacy was the ability to safely and ethically use AI. This was frequently spoken about in the context of understanding the risks associated with AI, the limitations of AI tools and how to ethically and responsibly use AI. Having an understanding of the ethical use of AI was often mentioned alongside a technological knowledge of how AI works, with some respondents emphasising this is best learned through practical experience. For the migrant women we spoke to, it was emphasised that they would like to learn how to keep their children whilst online or using AI tools.

“Understanding what is AI, the principles of its operation, ability to navigate and use, effective prompts, understand the ethics of AI and limitations of AI” - Network Partner

Critical thinking and analysis

To be AI literate, we heard that being able to use critical thinking or apply critical analysis when using or viewing content that may be AI generated was key. This was highlighted across all stakeholder groups, and raised in the context of information discernment. Other ways this was phrased was “understanding what is real and what is not” or “how to be cynical”. It was also highlighted that critical analysis needs

to not only be applied to AI generated content and information, but the tools and technologies themselves. Other comments made within this subject included the importance of being able to recognise when you are speaking with AI or a real person and assess the credibility of information or facts presented online.

*“Need to have critical thinking - ability to analyse something is more important than ‘AI Literacy’.” - **Social Impact Organisation***

*“AI literacy means the individual’s personal knowledge of what artificial intelligence is and the safety around using it. How to look out for deep fake AI and other forms of AI used for gain.” - **Network Partner***

Using AI to define AI literacy

Microsoft Co-pilot was utilised to analyse the qualitative data provided by our respondents to suggest a new definition for AI Literacy. It came up with:

“AI Literacy refers to the understanding and skills needed to effectively and ethically interact with AI technology. It encompasses the ability to discern reliable information from AI services, critically evaluate the usability and adaptability of AI-powered devices, and understand the ethical considerations of AI’s application in society. AI Literacy also involves recognising the potential for AI to provide a natural language interface for technology, making it more accessible and communicative for all users.”

Learning about AI

A significant portion of our consultations particularly with Network Partners was spent discussing the practicalities of supporting people to learn about AI and AI literacy, with our ultimate goal to create resources and content that can support organisations to deliver sessions to communities. We focused on a number of key questions within the learning context including:

- What are the minimum digital skills required to use AI?
- What point in the learning journey should AI be introduced?
- What do you see as the priority areas for AI learning content development?
- What types of AI content are needed, and how should it be delivered?
- What cultural considerations should be taken into account when developing content?

Participant experience

The number one theme that arose from our consultation’s focus on participant experience was the need for people to have ‘basic digital literacy’ to engage with AI. This was particularly prominent in network responses where it was highlighted skills such as the ability to use a device, keyboard and experience navigating the internet were considered essential before AI can be introduced. The ability to utilise search engines was also recommended as an important skill, particularly in the context of learning about Generative AI. Whilst it was agreed that these skills are needed, it was widely

acknowledged that AI is starting to remove some of these barriers and make technology easier to use, eg. using voice to text tools, rather than typing. This may mean that these barriers may not exist in a few years time.

"Basic digital literacy is necessary for using AI, but AI is becoming more accessible and user-friendly over time." - Network Partner

"We have some people that are still struggling with 'left-click' vs. 'right-click' vs. 'double-click' and may have very poor typing skills so it's a leap to then understand or use A.I." - Network Partner

There were a strong number of respondents from our Network who stated that there should be a place at the beginning of the learning journey for AI. Many said it could easily be integrated into existing digital skills support sessions particularly when introducing search engines or using the internet for sourcing information. Some participants also suggested that because AI is already integrated into most technologies we use daily, it is important to make people learning digital skills aware of this.

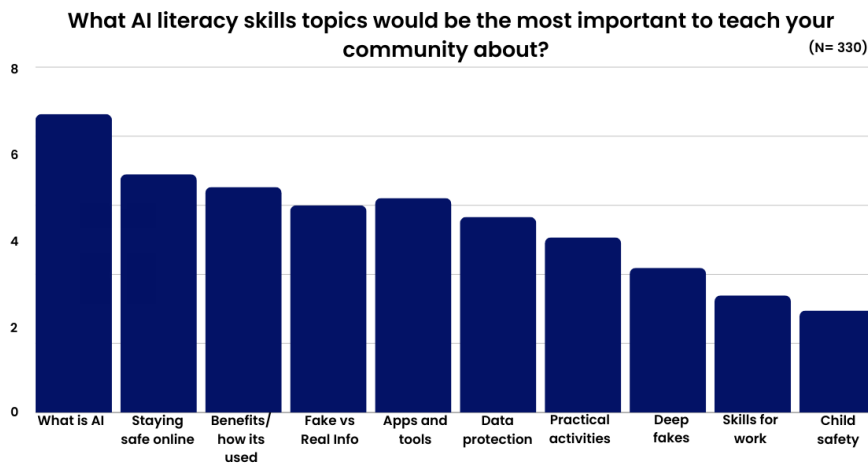
"Given how much AI is present in the digital world, I think it absolutely has a place to exist from the beginning. For example, google browser is something you will introduce which actively uses AI as search engine" - Network Partner

General literacy was also identified as required to use and understand AI. It was also raised in the context of being able to use Generative AI to write a prompt. Respondents noted that to be able to use Generative AI effectively, you need to be clear and specific in your prompt and that people with lower levels of literacy may not be able to do this successfully.

"If it's for language and information support like Chat GPT, new users would need to have the required language and literacy." - Network Partner

Priority areas for AI learning content

We surveyed our broader network to gather their thoughts relating to AI content development. We asked respondents to answer two questions by ranking their responses in order of importance to them. The first question pertained to the topics important for our network's communities to learn about, with results below.



In addition to the survey, we asked representatives from our Network in online consultations for their views and suggestions on what topics within AI we should give focus to when developing content for the *Digital Sisters: AI for Good program*. Many of the topics we heard as essential for teaching AI literacy to participants were raised again in the context of content development. In order of frequency mentioned, the top suggestions for content development included:

- Relating AI to everyday life
- The benefits of AI
- Examples and case studies
- Where AI exists
- How it is used

The top three suggestions were often found to be linked with each other. We commonly heard that it may be more successful to introduce AI as a tool that is embedded in everyday life that can provide benefits through making tasks and online activity easier for individuals. By relating AI to everyday life and demonstrating real examples of use within the community may help to spark interest in individuals who otherwise would not consider using it. These suggestions were implemented in our face-to-face consultation with migrant women, who after hearing examples of how they were already using AI and new ways they could engage with it showed excitement and eagerness to learn more. For these women, there was particular interest shown in how AI might be able to assist them in;

- finding employment
- completing tasks around the house such as cooking
- creating meal plans and shopping lists
- getting assistance to complete forms and documents.

"We need to relate it to everyday life and how it can be used. I like what someone else said about how we are already using it and have been for many years. That makes people realise it is a good thing. We need to keep things simple at the start so as to encourage people to try it." - Network Partner

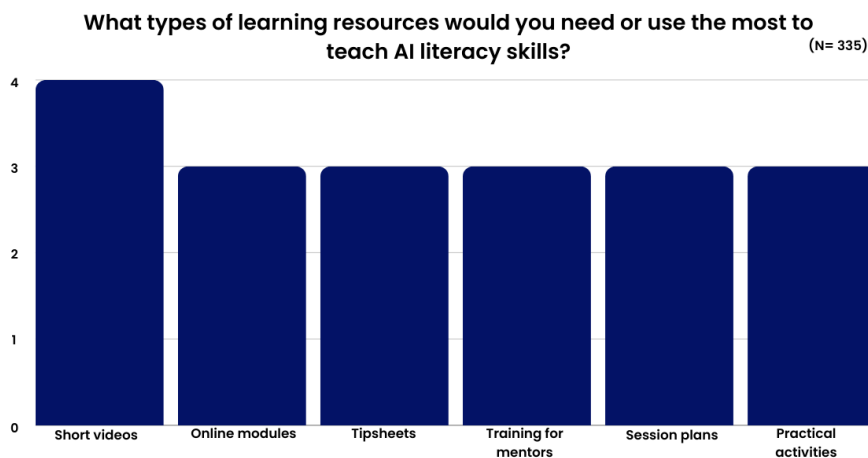
“1. How people are currently exposed to A.I. and don’t realise it.
 2. How they can benefit from A.I.
 3. How to protect yourself from others using A.I. in nefarious ways”
 – **Network Partner**

Other less frequently mentioned suggestions for content development included challenges and risks of AI, how to stay safe when using AI, understanding how data and information is used and how to protect your personal information, specific focus on AI tools and apps and presenting AI in a positive light through mythbusting or responding to fears and concerns. Data literacy and agency was most commonly raised by social impact organisations as being a key part of AI literacy.

“Basic digital literacy is necessary for using AI, but AI is becoming more accessible and user-friendly over time.” – **Network Partner**

“We have some people that are still struggling with ‘left-click’ vs. ‘right-click’ vs. ‘double-click’ and may have very poor typing skills so it’s a leap to then understand or use A.I.” – **Network Partner**

Types of content and delivery



In our consultations, the most common raised suggestions for the types of content that should be developed for AI learning reflected what we heard through our Network Survey. These included videos, pictures, presentations and demonstrations, translated resources.

We also heard that any content created should be designed with the following considerations:

- Simple language with no technical jargon
- Content that can be integrated into digital literacy sessions
- Fun and engaging
- Practical activities
- Easy to understand
- Short or light content

The preference mode of delivery for AI skills and literacy building was either in small groups or one-to-one support, all face to face. The migrant women we spoke to said they like to learn digital skills in small groups supported by a Digital Mentor who gives them step-by-step guides in a presentation style format where they can follow along whilst practising on a device. This format was raised by our network as well, as many noted that their communities learn best by doing as trying to learn things online can be challenging with a wealth of information that can also become outdated quickly. Others also suggested that they could integrate AI content into non-digital skills sessions where they may offer cooking classes or other community programs.

"Being able to learn on a device in real time is key" - Network Partner

"Embed it into every day digital skills programs, not a special subject."
- Network Partner

AI & Digital Inclusion

With AI tools, in particular generative AI tools becoming increasingly available to the public in the past two years, it is uncertain what impacts this will have on digital inclusion in Australia. Our third consultation goal was to explore this intersection further, and identify potential opportunities and risks AI brings to digitally excluded individuals and communities. As we heard in our network survey and early findings in our consultation, many of the communities we already work with at Good Things are not talking about AI at all yet, however 71% of our Network agreed that it is important for their community to learn about AI. With AI being the biggest technological transformation affecting the world, understanding the impact on digital exclusion is key to ensuring that no one is left behind.

Although AI has the potential to enhance accessibility, support personalised education, and improve efficiency in the workplace, it does not overcome the key barriers to digital inclusion. Barriers to AI engagement mirror those for people who are digitally excluded: low digital ability, affordability, access to technology, and regional disparities. Some noted the risk of AI becoming a tool to widen power imbalances.

Barriers

We asked all consultation groups to identify barriers that individuals and communities that may prevent individuals and communities to engage with AI. We found that these barriers remain identical to those that affect digital inclusion. The number one barrier identified was 'low digital literacy', with the majority of respondents also stating that to be able to use AI in the first place individuals need to have basic digital skills such as the ability to use the internet or a device. Additionally, the fast paced advancement of AI and technology were also noted as the third highest barriers to using AI. This barrier was mainly raised by Network Partners who suggested that updates to tools and changes to technology mean that the education they impart onto their participants becomes quickly outdated, making it particularly difficult for people with low digital literacy to keep up.

"People need to have digital skills to be able to use the systems in the first place"
- **Social Impact Organisation**

"Constantly changing - the features of the tools change almost daily so screenshots/videos for training become outdated very quickly." - **Network Partner**

Cost was the second highest identified barrier across all stakeholder groups, referencing it as preventing low income individuals and households not being able to get access to paid AI tools. A lack of access to devices and the internet was mentioned alongside cost barriers as well, predominantly by network partners. Regional and remote communities were also identified as having additional barriers to using AI as a result of a digital lag that already exists in these regions. Regional and remote barriers were most commonly raised alongside a general slow technology uptake in addition to a 'lack of trust', was

a theme which appeared a number of times on its own. 'Lack of awareness and a 'low literacy or numeracy' or 'language' were the remaining often mentioned barriers often being commented on together by participants as a list of barriers.

"AI is particularly lagging in regional/remote areas as digital transformation is slow"
- **Network Partner**

"Low literacy and numeracy, little or no access to technology, cost of apps or data, family commitment prohibiting access to training" - **Network Partner**

Benefits for digital inclusion

Earlier in this report the benefits of adopting and using AI were discussed, however throughout our consultation we also further explored what direct benefits it will bring to digital inclusion efforts. The key themes we heard in this area of our consultation centred around improving the accessibility of technology for people with disabilities and people with low English or literacy levels.

It was recognised particularly by our Network that AI technology is already helping to make technology easier to use for people with disabilities, older and culturally diverse populations through tools that utilise voice to text, text to speech and translation. With AI using machine learning to continually improve its platforms and tools, many of our network partners and the social impact organisations we spoke to suggested that some technologies may start to become easier to use as many devices and platforms integrate mechanisms allowing users to speak or type simple requests. For migrant and refugee communities translation tools, including those with camera integrations continue to become easier to use no longer requiring users to have to type in a sentence to receive a translation. For the migrant women we spoke to in our face to face consultation, there was excitement at being able to use AI to support them in their everyday lives, including completing important forms and documents with an app to help them translate words with one click.

"AI is user friendly, and arguably easier to use than computing systems" - **Corporate**

"Making the use of technology easier and faster"
- **Network Partner**

Risks for exacerbating digital exclusion

There was shared uncertainty about what continued AI adoption in society will mean for digital inclusion. Whilst it was recognised that it has the potential to support better engagement with and learn how to use technology, a number of respondents we spoke to shared concerns that the rapid adoption of AI will further exacerbate the digital divide amongst vulnerable groups. This was highlighted as a high risk if vulnerable communities are not represented or involved in the design of AI tools or in the tools themselves. Our consultations did however indicate many agree that AI literacy and skills can be taught alongside other digital skills, some even suggesting it should be introduced at the beginning of the learning journey to help ensure people don't get left behind.

*"For people who are vulnerable, there is an elevation of risk, they have less power and are not in the room to make decisions" - **Social Impact Organisation***

It was also suggested that AI has the potential to widen power imbalances impacted by the increasing cost to access tools and the internet, bias and stereotypes that exist in AI models and some communities being more at risk of experiencing harm or adverse outcomes from a lack of online safety awareness and protections.

The women we spoke to highlighted the concerns they have as parents and their need to be aware of the dangers presented by online and AI spaces where their children visit. For those parents who are less skilled or confident to use technology the concern is increased as they feel that they have no real way of knowing what their children are doing online and the harms that could come to them or how to guide them in the use of current or emerging technologies. Although this is a broader issue and not necessarily as a result of the use of AI, AI tools have again highlighted the importance of how parents need support to be able to guide and support their children in the online world.

*"You cannot build a child's AI literacy without also doing that for their parent caregiver and their teacher because that is their little world. It needs to be a united voice and I think that's a gap" - **Social Impact Organisation***

Roundtable

In May 2024, we held a Roundtable as part of the *Digital Sisters: AI for Good* program with the purpose of bringing together key stakeholders from across varying industries to discuss the outcomes of the consultations into AI literacy and digital inclusion. Interim findings from consultations were presented at the Roundtable before the discussion was opened up to attendees to further explore the themes we had heard from our broad stakeholder group. The roundtable was attended by a number of organisation representatives who had been involved in consultations as well as other stakeholder groups from technology and corporate companies, philanthropic and social impact organisations, Government, Academia and the Good Things Australia network.

The roundtable provided the opportunity to further discuss the project's findings, with attendees confirming many of the consultation outcomes. We also heard the following key points introduced:

- AI literacy needs to encompass a rights-based focus empowering people to know when they should or shouldn't be engaging with AI.
- Barriers identified preventing people from engaging with AI include a lack of user protection, safeguards and gaps in laws that can leave people vulnerable to losing agency over their personal data.
- From a First Nations lens, in addition to the barriers highlighted above, it was emphasised that language is also a key barrier with the huge diversity in language and culture across 240 different nations and up to four languages being spoken in some communities alone. As yet, AI has not been trained to translate into all of these different languages, so the benefit of AI as a translation tool does not exist for First Nations people.
- We can't underestimate the impact of digital exclusion and the role this has in preventing parents from being able to understand AI, including the affordability of, access to and ability to use technology.
- Parents are concerned about their children's online safety but are unsure about what they can do to safeguard it. This is resulting in anxiety and a lack of confidence within parents, who feel unable to protect their children because they think their children have a stronger knowledge about AI and technology than they do.



Photos from Roundtable held in May 2024

Future of AI

We asked all participants in the Future of consultations and roundtable to look forward in time to share their predictions, hopes and concerns for AI in the future.

For many the future is unknown or hard to predict, acknowledging that AI is revolutionising technology and society as a whole at an extremely rapid pace. It was consistently noted that AI will increasingly be used by individuals, workplaces, institutions and communities across the globe and has the potential to create a significant amount of change to the way we live, work, study and participate socially and economically. In particular, many saw AI as a catalyst of change for work both in a positive and negative light.

Many share concerns about how AI will impact the workplace, in particular worried about how it may impact job security for individuals, in particular those on lower skilled jobs that are more easily automated, and for those without the ability to use AI the likelihood of missing out on jobs. At the other end of the spectrum, many share hopes that AI will create opportunities in the workplace, making us more efficient at our jobs and ultimately altering the 9-5, 5 day work week that is currently the norm or many.

*"It will change the world of work and how we get things done. I am hopeful that it will free us up to be able to spend more time with actual people. If AI can do all the tedious tasks" - **Network Partner***

*"Need to position people for future jobs that include AI. It's not new for industry to shift and for work to look different" - **Network Partner***

*"We are enabling ourselves to take the next step, or in some ways, steps towards a better human existence. AI to me is the key to the four day working week. In fact, let's call it now, the three day working week" - **Corporate***

Other fears and concerns shared by respondents related to education and social connection, in particular for future generations if AI is not designed and used safely, responsibly or inclusively. Academics and social impact organisations in particular emphasised the need to learn in partnership with AI now so as to minimise the impacts to vulnerable communities. This takes the form of community and sector education, addressing existing power imbalances and ensuring a diverse and inclusive AI conversation involving minority groups. Concerns for what impact AI will have on the Digital Divide were also echoed in many social impact organisations final comments.

*"AI is integrating with more aspects of the way that we live and work - we will need to be able to learn how to do that well and influence the way it works" - **Academic***

Many acknowledge that the advancements occurring in AI and the change that follows will have significant and broad impact on society, but also highlight that we have experienced change on this level in history before. Social impact organisations in particular noted that the introduction of the internet and other technologies before it have significantly altered the way in which we live and work, and suggested AI will have a similar trajectory. What is different about the introduction of AI in comparison to the internet is the speed at which it is being introduced and taken up across the world.

It was suggested that we don't have to look back too far in our history to see important learning both positive and negative that we can apply in an AI context. Additionally, many respondents were sure that in a few years time, AI won't even be a term defined on its own, rather we just speak about the technologies and tools it is embedded in because it will be familiar and become the norm.

*"It becomes less about '(AI) is magic' and we don't understand it, it just becomes embedded in everything we do" - **Social Impact Organisation***

*"Looking back historically any technological advancement has hype around positive and negatives - it eventually just becomes part of life" - **Social Impact Organisation***

Almost all stakeholders we spoke to agree there is a strong opportunity for AI being used for good. Some see AI as a powerful tool for inclusion, through its ability to create opportunities for individuals, whilst others see its potential to optimise and increase outputs to vulnerable communities and on addressing issues such as climate change, whilst also making workplaces more efficient. Others recognise AI as a mechanism to reduce participation and learning barriers, levelling the playing field for individuals and communities to better engage with educationally, digitally and civically.

*"I would love to see AI be the driver of far greater democracy and empowerment and involvement in decision making" - **Social Impact Organisation***

*"I am optimistic that in Australia we will be able to champion the cause of inclusion within AI" - **Government***

At the roundtable there was a strong call to action from the group that this is a collective responsibility rather than an individual one. We cannot expect people to be able to access, engage and learn about AI on their own, there needs to be support. We also need to ensure we don't simply rely upon school education as a way to teach individuals rather look to community based approaches to encourage a broader scope of learning.

Conclusion

The conversations that we have held as part of this research have been fascinating and about way more than technology or literacy. They have been about humanity, what we value, what we want for ourselves, our communities, our future generations and for our world and how technology can support that.

What is clear is that AI is transforming how we live, work and learn and we need to bring everyone on this journey. With the explosion of Generative AI tools like ChatGPT on to the world in late 2023, AI is now more accessible than ever, yet we are still in the infancy of understanding how AI can and should be used in different contexts. While large and well resourced companies are trialling its use to improve efficiency and productivity, those with more limited resources in small business or the social impact sector are at risk of being left behind.

In addition, with 1 in 4 people in Australia still digitally excluded there is also a significant risk that the digital divide could increase, so we need to ensure that we meet the basics of access to affordable technology and building digital skills and confidence as a priority.

AI tools are helping to overcome some barriers to use of technology and they have the power to support greater inclusion, as long as key inclusive and safety by design principles are used in their development.

We have discovered that, although the definition of AI Literacy is not consistent, it is clear that to use AI tools effectively, multiple literacies are required. This goes beyond just how to use a particular AI tool and includes basic digital skills, how to ask a great question to get the answer you are looking for, how to critically analyse information and understanding the world of data and how it's used to produce responses. And in doing all of this, we need to ensure people see the benefit for their lives by making it contextually and culturally relevant, simple and easy to understand.

There is a need to engage people across all parts of Australian society in the discussion around the use of AI and how it is changing the way we live, learn and work. However, this is not just about individuals learning how to use AI. There needs to be a coordinated effort across government, tech, business, philanthropy and social impact sectors to support all people to engage in new technologies and provide the guardrails that will keep them safe.

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At Good Things we are future-focused digital inclusion leaders, advocating, partnering, educating and innovating to ensure no one is left behind in the digital world. Our diverse network of community organisations and the people they support are fundamental to our work. Their voices, knowledge, insights and experience are at the centre of Good Things program design, learning delivery and advocacy.

This report should be attributed as the Understanding AI literacy and digital inclusion: How we can use AI for good report. The report is available on the Good Things Australia website. Good Things Australia would like to thank everyone who contributed to this report. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

ABN: 92 618 363 974

Appendix 1 | Consultation Participants

Network partner organisations

- Support Asian Women's Friendship Assoc Inc, ACT
- Russian Ethnic Community Society, NSW
- The Tec Exec Pty Ltd, NSW
- Digital IQ, NSW
- National Council of Women NSW Inc, NSW
- Boronia Multicultural Services NSW
- The Place: Charlestown Community Centre, NSW
- Macquarie Community College, NSW
- Central Coast Community College, NSW
- Society of Australian Genealogists, NSW
- The Flagstaff Group, NSW
- Campbelltown Public Library, NSW
- The Neighbourhood Hub, QLD
- CQUniversity, QLD
- Tamil Senior Citizens' Assoc Inc, QLD
- Bundaberg Regional Libraries, QLD
- Arise Women Support Assoc Inc, QLD
- Open Hands Community Care Ltd, QLD
- SeniorNet Ipswich, QLD
- Digital Literacy License, QLD
- Muslim Women's Association S.A, SA
- Tea Tree Gully Library, SA
- Libraries SA
- Artworks Community Studio, SA
- Citizen Tasmania, TAS
- Healthy Shack Tech, TAS
- Glenorchy City Council, TAS
- Libraries Tasmania, TAS
- River Nile Learning Centre, VIC
- Outlook Community Centre, VIC
- Sikh Community Connections Inc, VIC
- Yarraville Community Centre, VIC
- Whittlesea Community Connections, VIC
- Migrant Information Centre, VIC
- Frontier PC Tutoring, VIC
- Connected Libraries, VIC
- Mount Barker CRC, WA
- Mercy Community Services Limited, WA
- Esperance Public Library, WA
- Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Assoc., WA

- Pollinators Inc, WA
- Kwinana Public Library, WA
- Cyber Intell, WA
- Switched on Seniors, WA

Academia

- Professor Anthony McCosker – Swinburne University of Technology
- Dr Kim Osman – Queensland University of Technology
- Professor Michael Dezuanni – Queensland University of Technology
- Lauren Perry – UTS Human Technology Institute
- Associate Professor Tanya Notley – Western Sydney University
- Peter McDonald – Centre for Social Impact, Flinders University
- Professor Kaisa Väänänen – Tampere University, Finland
- Dr Claire Naughtin, CSIRO's Data 61
- Dr Sarah Bentley, CSIRO's Data 61
- Leslie Lobel, AM, UTS

Government

- Professor Didar Zowghi – CSIRO's Data 61
- Donna Forlin – CSIRO's Data 61
- Office of the eSafety Commissioner

Technology & corporate

- Microsoft
- Telstra
- Future Skills Organisation
- Raava
- PWC

Social impact organisations

- Australia Digital Inclusion Alliance
- Australian Council of Social Service
- Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
- Australian Library and Information Association
- Asylum Seekers Centre
- Centre for Inclusive Design
- Alannah Madeline Foundation
- The Smith Family
- Infoxchange
- Inclusion Australia
- The Y Australia



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