



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

**Digital Sisters
AI for Good**

Report Snapshot

Project Overview

Good Things Australia, in collaboration with Microsoft and Telstra, is proud to present the research and consultation findings as part 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). 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 and 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.



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*

Snapshot of Key Findings

Awareness and interest in AI

Despite varying knowledge, experience and awareness of AI 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. Migrant and refugee women we spoke to did not know what AI was despite using it daily, and we also heard that the wider public does not know much about where AI exists or how it is being used.

Key benefits of AI:

- Translation
- Voice to text
- Accessing information
- Removing communication barriers
- Personalised content

Key risks of AI:

- Unethical AI practices
- Increased harm and scams
- Digital divide increased
- Loss of jobs



60% of the Good Things network of community partners reported that nobody in their communities is asking them about AI

Defining and developing AI literacy

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. AI literacy programs should be embedded and delivered within a broader context such as existing digital literacy programs.



71% of community organisations agreed it is important for their community to learn about AI

We asked AI to analyse our consultation data and define AI literacy:

“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.”

Key areas of understanding

What is AI?

How does AI work?

Where does AI exist?

How can I use AI?

Is this AI generated information correct?

How do I stay safe when using AI?

Key barriers:

- Low digital skills and literacy
- Cost
- Fast paced and changing technology
- Regional and remote
- Lack of trust

Key risks for digital exclusion:

- Digital exclusion is exacerbated
- Widening of power imbalances
- Increased harm online
- Parents unable to protect children from online harms



A person needs to have basic digital and literacy skills to use AI powered tools and devices, although AI tools can help to overcome some barriers using technology

“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

“People need to have digital skills to be able to use the systems in the first place.”

- Social Impact Organisation

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.

Concerns for future, how will AI impact...

The workplace? Social connection? Education? Future generations?

AI for Good

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.



42% of community organisations reported feeling unsure about AI

“I 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

Consultations & Roundtable

Consultation with migrant women

Five migrant women from India and Nepal joined Good Things Foundation staff and two Digital Mentors from Boronia 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 Good Things' Digital Sisters program.

Three women had not heard the term 'AI' nor had 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.

After some discussion about where AI already existed, the women agree they were using it daily unknowingly and were able to suggest examples of AI, including AI being used to predict potential spam calls on their phones, 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, particularly in relation to education.



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

Roundtable

In May 2024, we held a Roundtable, 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 Foundation Network. The Roundtable summary, agenda and attendee list can be found in our full report.

At the roundtable there was a strong call to action from the group that AI literacy education 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 and we should look to community based approaches to encourage a broader scope of learning.



Key Recommendations



AI literacy development is essential for all

- AI literacy content should be developed and delivered in context and 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.



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 not-for-profits to support development and leverage AI tools effectively and safely.



Ongoing policy development and research

- 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.
- We need to facilitate and engage in public discourse on AI's benefits and risks, ensuring inclusive policy development that supports 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.



Good Things Australia