



30 January 2026

To: The Hon. Jacinta Allan MP, Premier of Victoria

The Hon. Danny Pearson MP, Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs

Cc: Mr Richard Welch MP, Shadow Minister for Industry, Manufacturing, Innovation and AI & the Digital Economy

Subject: AI Mission Statement - Human Rights, Harm Prevention, and Safe Use of AI

Dear Premier and Ministers,

I am writing to provide formal feedback on the Victorian Government's *AI Mission Statement* and the supporting material published by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions.

I recognise the Government's intent to position Victoria as a centre for AI development and deployment, and I support the use of emerging technologies to improve public services, strengthen participation, and support economic activity.

That said, after reviewing both the Mission Statement and the accompanying online material, I remain concerned that economic growth and adoption are treated as the dominant priorities, while harm prevention, human rights, and misuse risks are addressed only in broad or indirect terms.

The current framing places strong emphasis on uptake, capability, and investment confidence. What is less clearly articulated is how the State intends to prevent AI systems from being deployed in ways that reinforce inequality, legitimise discrimination, or automate harm at scale.

AI systems shape decisions, access, visibility, and power. Once embedded, their effects are difficult to unwind. Without explicit limits, risk thresholds, and accountability mechanisms, tools intended to improve efficiency can instead entrench harmful practices simply because they are automated, convenient, or commercially attractive.

From a human rights standpoint, digital rights are human rights. This requires AI policy to move beyond aspiration and address foreseeable harm directly, particularly where impacts fall most heavily on children, women, people with disabilities, and other groups already exposed to disproportionate risk in digital environments.

A credible AI mission for Victoria should state plainly that:

- technology must be used to broaden opportunity, not compound disadvantage
- economic benefit does not override safety, dignity, or equity
- some AI applications warrant restriction or heightened scrutiny regardless of market value

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- government has an obligation to prevent AI-enabled harm, not merely manage consequences after the fact

Strengthening the Mission Statement in this way would not impede progress. It would place Victoria on firmer footing by reducing long-term social cost, strengthening public confidence, and signalling that AI deployment in this State is guided by clear limits as well as ambition.

Thank you for considering this feedback. I would welcome further engagement, including participation in consultation or advisory processes focused on safe, accountable, and rights-respecting use of AI.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Barnbrook

Founder, Away from Keyboard Inc.

About the author

Sarah Barnbrook is the Founder of Away from Keyboard Inc., an Australian registered charity focused on preventing digital and AI-enabled harm through rights-based policy, safety-by-design advocacy, and early intervention. Her work sits at the intersection of AI governance, digital safety, and human rights, with a particular focus on technology-facilitated abuse and the impacts of emerging technologies on women and children. Her approach is informed by lived experience as well as governance expertise, shaping a prevention-focused understanding of how quickly harm can occur when vulnerabilities are overlooked and safeguards are absent.

She is an accredited United Nations delegate to the Commission on the Status of Women and has been invited to return in 2026 to contribute to multiple panels examining emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. She serves in multiple advisory roles with the National Council of Women Victoria, including Human Rights; ICT and Social Media; Rural and Regional Women; Youth; and Communications. She is a member of UN Women and the United Nations Association of Australia, holds individual and organisational UNAA membership, contributes to internet harms research through the Commonwealth Women's Network, and participates in international AI governance through the International Association for Safe & Ethical AI and the Women in AI Governance Human Rights Committee.

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