

Ageing in the age of AI

WE'RE ALL AWARE of the rapid pace of technological change across all aspects of society, particularly in relation to developments in artificial intelligence.

And there is no doubt 2025 will see technological innovation and advancement that has an impact on the lives of every Australian. While many older adults have embraced technology in some form, such as internet banking or keeping connected to family and friends via Zoom or similar apps, many remain unconnected.

Research shows the two biggest factors driving this digital divide are cost and user confidence.

Some targeted initiatives attempt to support older Australians to gain the confidence and skills needed and relieve some of the financial costs. These include subsidised programs such as the Assistive Technology and Home



Anita Westera, president of the AAG

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Modifications Scheme. And the e-Safety Commissioner’s Young Mentors program that connects older people with students.

However, more is needed to support older people to access affordable technology and gain the knowledge and skills to confidently go online. Involving older people on consumer panels about new technologies and user experience would ensure older voices are heard and considered.

Funding through government, community and philanthropic grants to support research and initiatives that consider the experiences of older people will also positively impact the lives of older Australians, address the digital divide, and create a more inclusive and equitable society for all ages.

Among existing streams, the Australian Association of Gerontology Research Trust is proud to financially support innovations that seek the input of older Australians, such as the work of Dr Wei Qi Koh to co-design a pet robot to support people living with dementia.

Projects that use a collaborative approach encourage the involvement of older people in the development of new technologies, and legitimise the opinions of older people and their lived experiences as tech users.

We call on researchers, policymakers and aged care sector leaders to work together to ensure technology is accessible to all Australians and that older Australians are not left behind as we enter this new age of AI.

And of course, we wouldn’t be the AAG if we didn’t also highlight the need for these emerging technologies to be appropriately monitored and evaluated to ensure the needs and interests of all people are met, particularly those at the receiving end of care-related innovations. ●

