Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools

Melbourne Catholic schools working towards integrating artificial intelligence into teaching and learning

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) is working towards integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into education practice across its 296 schools, engaging teachers and experts to ensure AI is used responsibly and effectively to enhance learning.

Director of Learning and Regional Services, Dr Mary Oski said MACS took an early position in January not to outright ban or block ChatGPT, the first well-known application of a large-language model freely available for user interaction.

'We take a "safety first, learning always" approach to new technologies, consistent with our holistic view of education, embedding them where appropriate to enhance relationships and learning', she said.

Against this backdrop, Dr Oski said, a year on, MACS' priority is to ensure its teachers are digitally confident before further considering how AI can be best used for learning.

'The MACS Student and Learning Technologies team has been working directly with digital learning leaders in schools to better understand how teachers and students are already experimenting with content creation and assessment design using AI.

'How AI is built can be learned in the Mathematics or Technologies curriculum, but student use across the curriculum must be guided by digitally confident teachers, which is a major body of work we have underway.

'There are legitimate concerns about AI, with issues such as academic integrity, plagiarism checkers and ethical use of others' work where no consent has been given, particularly in the creative industries.

'We want to be sure our teachers are well trained in their responsibilities with regard to ethics and standards, in addition to copyright and privacy legislation.

'This work will also be guided by the national framework recently approved by education ministers.

'AI has been described as the most significant technological development since electricity – its applications are boundless.

'Our MACS 2030 vision for Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne is for every student to be inspired and enabled to flourish and enrich the world.

'It's vital for our students and teachers that we take a future-focused view of the potential of AI, but in a way that ensures they are able to benefit from it safely and ethically', Dr Oski said.

AI and cybersecurity are the focus of the Catholic Network Australia (CNA) national forum to be opened by MACS Executive Director, Dr Edward Simons in Melbourne tomorrow (10 November).

MACS operates 296 Catholic primary and secondary schools, educating more than 114,000 (or around 20% of all) students.

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