Title:	Generative Artificial Intelligence Policy
Type:	Council
Adopted:	26 June 2024
Record No:	
Attachments:	Nil

Acknowledgement of Country

Murrindindi Shire Council is proud to acknowledge the Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the traditional owners of the land we now call Murrindindi Shire.

We pay our respects to First Nations leaders and elders, past, present and emerging, who are the keepers of history, traditions, knowledge and culture of this land.

We commit to working in collaboration with traditional owners of this land in a spirit of reconciliation and partnership.

1. Purpose

To provide guidance on the responsible and ethical use of generative Artificial Intelligence to support best practice in the delivery of Council services.

2. Rationale

This policy recognises the rapid evolution and increasing uptake of emerging technologies. It enables appropriate usage of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) within the organisation, whilst protecting data from unauthorised exposure. Council fosters an innovation culture that allows the responsible use of AI to help deliver effective and efficient services and meet community needs in an environment where risks are assessed, and ethical standards upheld.

3. Scope

This document applies to Councillors, employees, contractors, and service providers.

Adherence to this policy is mandatory across all Council operations involving AI.

4. Definitions

Reference Term	Definition
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Technologies that mimic human intelligence to perform tasks, learn from experience and improve over time.
Artificial Intelligence Tools (AI Tools)	Software and applications that employ AI to generate or assist in generating content, solutions, or decision-making processes.
Generative AI	AI technology that generates new content or curates existing content, including text, images, music, code, and more, based on the data the technology accesses.

Public Generative AI Tools	Any Generative AI tool that is available to the public that takes user input and uses generative AI to create output. Examples include: ChatGPT, MidJourney, Bard, and Microsoft Co-Pilot (previously referred to as Bing Chat Enterprise).

5.   Policy Statement

5.1   AI statement of Intent

Murrindindi Shire Council is dedicated to working with the community and key stakeholders to ensure the use of AI reflects our shared values, privacy standards and the rights of individuals to fairness and privacy and serves the best interests of the community.

We understand that the rapid pace of artificial intelligence and technological change can outpace our society's ability to fully understand inherent risks. However, we also appreciate the enormous opportunities these advances present to innovate and improve services; and we don't want our community to miss out.

We are committed to the ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence where it will improve outcomes for our community through innovation and improved service efficiency, effectiveness, and quality in line with our Community Vision, values and strategic objectives.

Our use of artificial intelligence is transparent and designed to protect the privacy and security of our employees, customers, and the public. We take steps to mitigate biases to ensure balanced, fair, and inclusive outcomes. Individuals retain responsibility for the decisions they make and the documents and information they produce.

5.2   How AI is used at Murrindindi Shire Council

Council encourages the use of AI where:
- Its application is consistent with our Community Vision, values and strategic objectives.
- It will improve outcomes for our community through innovation and improved service efficiency, effectiveness and quality.
- It can be used safely, ethically and securely and there are no risks that confidential, private or otherwise sensitive information will be revealed.
- A risk assessment has confirmed that the benefits sufficiently outweigh any negative consequences in line with Council's Risk Appetite and there is a net benefit to council (including development and implementation costs, and staff time).
- Processes are implemented to mitigate the risk of bias and misleading or incorrect information being used to make decisions.

Council restricts the entry of information into public AI Tools that:
- Is not already public.
- Would not be made public according to the Public Transparency Policy.
- Has an Official Sensitive or Protected Sensitive label, in accordance with Council's Protective Data Security Plan.

5.3   Principles to guide the use of AI

The following principles for the use of AI have been developed with reference to the Australian Government's Interim Guidance of Government use of public generative AI tools, November 2023. These principles must be adhered to when using AI:

- Human, social and environmental wellbeing – AI will only be used ethically where it produces benefits for individuals, society, the economy and the environment.

- Accountability – Decision making remains the responsibility of the Council and staff. Wherever AI is used, Council will be able to explain, justify and own the decisions made, advice provided, and documents and information produced. Generative AI material must be reviewed, before it is used, by a person with the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to critically assess the information, its accuracy, completeness and any bias.

- Transparency – Council will include the following disclaimer statement where applicable: *This document may contain AI-generated content. Murrindindi Shire Council is committed to ensuring the accuracy and reliability of all information provided, with thorough review and verification processes in place.*

- Privacy protection and security – All public generative AI tools store information externally beyond our ability to control access or privacy. Accordingly, we will only enter information into AI tools that is already public or would be acceptable to be made public in line with the Public Transparency Policy. The entering of confidential, private or otherwise sensitive information into an AI Tool, particularly a public generative AI tool, is not consented.

- Awareness of bias - Generative AI tools are typically trained on broad sets of data and may reproduce biases present in this data and/or incorrect, misleading, unfair or prejudicial information. Accordingly, we will ensure that generative AI outputs are scrutinised to ensure accuracy and fairness and that Council initiatives and documents are inclusive.

Information produced by AI that is incorporated into a Corporate Record must comply with the Information Management Policy including sensitivity labelling, storage, security and retention.

5.4   Support for staff

Given the pace of technological change, it is acknowledged that staff have varying degrees of familiarity with AI and understanding of how it can be used to support improved outcomes for the community.

Council is dedicated to investing in staff development, including in relation to technologies and AI and commits to:

- A continuous learning and adaptive approach to AI and innovation.
- Supporting staff to develop their ability to use AI safely and ethically to improve outcomes.
- Incorporate technology and AI awareness training into workforce development training programs.
- Build organisational capability to critically analyse AI outputs and the limitations and benefits of the technology.
- Engage with staff on AI awareness, innovation, opportunities and threats.
- Collaborating with staff and the sector to develop a detailed AI Framework to guide the ethical, legal, and effective use of AI as the technology evolves.

6.   Related Policies, Strategies, and Legislation

- *Local Government Act 2020 (VIC)*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (VIC)*
- *Public Records Act 1973 (VIC)*
- Council's Public Transparency Policy
- Council's Privacy Policy
- Council's Information Management Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Artificial Intelligence – Understanding Privacy Obligations, OVIC (under public consultation)
- Interim guidance on government use of public generative AI tools (November 2023), Digital Transformation Agency, Australian Government

7.   Council Plan

This policy is consistent with the Council Plan 2021-2025 Strategic Objective 5.1.5 'Maintain transparent, inclusive and accountable governance practices'.

8.   Management and Review

The Manager of Governance & Risk is responsible for the oversight, implementation, and periodic review of this policy to align with evolving AI technologies and regulatory requirements.

The policy will be reviewed annually in recognition of how quickly the technology is changing. Staff will be consulted during the review process.

9.   Consultation

This policy was formulated with input from best practice documents and insights from similar policies adopted by public and private sector organisations. A staff survey was conducted to seek insights and feedback on this policy, and staff will continue to be consulted during each annual review process.

10.   Human Rights

This policy is aligned with the requirements under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, particularly the Right to Privacy (Section 13).

11.   Gender Impact Assessment

This policy has been developed with consideration of the criteria which inspire equality under the *Gender Equality Act 2020.*

Council acknowledges the recognised biases in AI technologies, including gender bias, and emphasises the need to actively consider and implement strategies to mitigate these biases to ensure Council operations and services are balanced, fair, and inclusive.