



IMAA

Artificial Intelligence Guiding Principles

2025

IMAA: Artificial Intelligence Approach

The Australian media sector continues transforming significantly, with Artificial Intelligence (AI) becoming increasingly ingrained in its ecosystem. AI's influence on the industry is undeniable. From advanced media optimisation and programmatic buying to the evolution of generative AI tools and automation, our software, processes, and operations are reshaping.

For media agencies, these advancements offer opportunities to enhance efficiency, expand capabilities, and improve the experiences of their customers and target audiences. However, they also bring forth complex challenges, risks, and ethical considerations that require collaborative, industry-wide solutions.

This diversity is particularly evident across the IMAA's membership base, where agencies experience the AI shift differently. Some are exploring bespoke integrations and tools, while others are at the beginning of their AI journey. Despite differences in technical expertise, resources, and adoption rates, the IMAA unites its members under a shared objective: to embrace AI ethically, transparently, and in ways that serve the best interests of the industry, clients, and audiences.

Background

The IMAA's 2024 'Indie Census' highlights the continued growth of independent media agencies over the past 12–24 months, despite persistent economic challenges. This growth underscores the unique strengths of independent agencies: their agility, creativity, deep local knowledge, and strong client relationships grounded in transparency. With these human-led advantages as a foundation, the IMAA views AI not as a replacement for these strengths but as a tool to amplify them. To sustain success and uphold our reputation, we must confront AI-driven opportunities and challenges as a unified collective.

In light of ongoing global and national discussions around AI regulation and policy, expert consultations suggest it is still too early to impose rigid rules or a formal "Code of Conduct." Premature action risks limiting flexibility and adaptability in a fast-changing landscape. However, given AI's transformative potential and the feedback and concerns raised by our members, the IMAA is committed to proactively addressing this space.

This document introduces the IMAA's Guiding Principles for Generative AI as a foundational framework for independent media agencies. These principles serve as a starting point to reaffirm our collective mission and values, promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing across the sector. Built on inclusivity and adaptability, the framework is designed to evolve, incorporating ongoing feedback and insights from members to reflect their experiences.

Our aspiration is clear: to empower IMAA members to leverage AI responsibly, ensuring that Australian independent media agencies remain at the forefront of a cohesive, innovative, and ethical industry approach.

Our aim

Through this document, the IMAA seeks to:

1. **Set the IMAA's vision for Artificial Intelligence:** define a collective vision towards AI that resonates and aligns with all members and our shared purposes.
2. **Establish a role of the IMAA to help members in addressing Generative AI:** Articulate a position for the IMAA to support, represent, and steer its members amidst AI-driven complexity, changes and potential industry disruptions.
3. **Create 10 Guiding Principles for Generative AI in Australian independent media agencies:** Create guiding principles for Generative AI use that will assist members in navigating AI use safely and ethically and ensure we protect and grow our collective strengths.

1. Set the IMAA's vision for Artificial Intelligence

The IMAA aims to empower its members with the collaboration, alignment and tools to ethically embrace AI in a way that enhances our core strengths and collective values to deliver on our three primary purposes:

- i. Collaboratively solve the shared challenges of Australian independents – so they can more effectively compete, win, and grow.
- ii. Levelling the playing field to ensure that independent agencies are treated equally and offered the same opportunities.
- iii. Support the Australian economy by promoting the benefits of choosing a 100% Australian-owned independent agency.

2. Establish a role of the IMAA to help members in addressing Generative AI:

1. Collaboratively solve challenges:

- i. Provide forums to share learnings, collaborate and deliver resources and guidance towards upskilling staff with AI-related education, knowledge, insights and understanding.
- ii. Engage with industry experts to keep ahead of industry insights and learnings and seek guidance to provide members with learnings and resources to help them navigate technological shifts.

2. Level the playing field:

- i. Protect the reputational advantages of choosing independent agencies by aligning on principles and promoting our ethics, trustworthiness and transparency across AI-influenced processes as a competitive advantage.
- ii. Support the Australian economy.
- iii. Create initiatives that align with Australian values and promote the benefits of choosing 100% Australian-owned independent agencies in the face of international businesses using AI to enter the market and win share or the threat of in-housing services by clients.

3. The IMAA's 10 Guiding Principles for Generative AI in Australian Independent Media Agencies

1. Set a strong ethical foundation:

AI solutions should uphold standards of fairness, inclusivity and transparency, and respect national human rights and cultural values.

Impact: Trust, accountability and transparency are major benefits offered by Independent media agencies, yet as few as one third of businesses have guidelines and systems in place to measure AI usage. A recent APAC study by HubSpot shows that despite few organisations having formal AI policies in place, 51% of leaders admit they personally use AI at work, a stat that's likely even higher amongst their team-members. As a result, it becomes unclear to know and understand how AI is actually used to shape decisions and create outputs in client work. In 2025, it's essential for IMAA members to clarify their stance on AI, set internal guidelines, and establish oversight. By doing so, we set the standards to ensure that AI reinforces—rather than erodes—the ethical foundations of their media practices.

2. Aim for human-centric amplification

AI should be approached as a tool to augment and enhance human potential, not replace it. AI should be harnessed to improve human creativity, agility, capacity and capabilities.

Impact: The increasing accessibility, capability, and appeal of AI Agents is set to become a major talking point in 2025. Agents that can autonomously handle tasks and take actions can significantly improve productivity— with Gartner projecting that by 2028, 33% of enterprise software applications will include agentic AI, up from less than 1% in 2024. While this evolution holds promise, it also risks diminishing human judgment, creativity, and the nuanced strategic thinking that agencies bring to their clients. To maintain a human-centric approach, IMAA members should explore agentic systems for repetitive, low-sensitivity tasks, with a focus on freeing teams to contribute higher-value thinking. These tools should ensure that AI amplifies, rather than replaces, human potential and aligns to ongoing updates in Australian privacy regulation, especially to automated decision making processes.

3. Maintain transparent processes

Agencies need to be transparent with clients and customers about their AI processes.

Impact: In the year ahead there is rising distrust, anxiety and cynicism towards AI and data from the public. It's therefore essential that IMAA members stay ahead of the curve by actively disclosing where and how they use AI with clients and customers. Roy Morgan reports that Australians are more distrustful of corporate Australia than ever, and a new 2024 Salesforce study has found 76% of customers believe companies are reckless with their data. As awareness of AI grows, companies will face greater pressure on their practices, resulting in higher security on the practices of their partners.

Agencies should transparently attribute AI-generated content, share clear policies with clients and offer easy access to information about their practices. Where relevant, privacy policies and contractual agreements should include this AI use. By leading these conversations and demonstrating openness, agencies can make sure they maintain the trust and take a leadership role with clients.

4. Provide continuous learning and collaboration

Agencies are encouraged to regularly share insights, challenges and solutions, and leverage the collective intelligence of the IMAA to stay abreast of AI advancements and best practices.

Impact: A recent AWS study on AI skills in APAC shows that 75% of companies struggle to find the AI talent they need, and 79% lack the know-how to train their workforce. At the same time, employees across all generations—87% of Gen Z, 88% of millennials, 79% of Gen X, and 68% of baby boomers—are eager to acquire AI skills if supported by their employers. With 93% of employees believing that developing AI capabilities will enhance their careers through improved efficiency, job satisfaction, and advancement, there's a clear mandate for continuous upskilling.

For independent agencies, this skills gap is both a challenge and an opportunity. Reducing training to manage costs may be tempting, but underinvestment risks losing top talent to well-resourced competitors. Meanwhile, global holding companies often struggle with slow processes and cultural inertia, giving IMAA members in 2025 a brief window to move quickly, implement new tools, and measure their impact. In this environment, proactive AI training and knowledge-sharing can create a competitive edge.

5. Ensure equal opportunities

The approach to AI should focus on creating a level playing field for all Australian independent media agencies, regardless of their size and resources.

Impact: It's critical that AI initiatives represent everyone who uses and informs them. In 2025, ensuring equal access to AI skills is critical to creating a level playing field for independent agencies. A new global Randstad study reveals a stark 42-point gender gap in AI proficiency (71% men vs. 29% women), with women 5% less likely to receive AI training and feeling less prepared when they do. Men are also 10% more likely than women to use AI for problem-solving. Without careful attention to these inequalities, AI tools risk reflecting and reinforcing existing biases and worsening future pay-gaps.

To prevent this, managers must provide equal opportunities for all employees—regardless of gender, age, or background—to develop and refine their AI capabilities, ensuring fairness and inclusivity as these technologies shape the industry's future.

6. Provide safety, reliability and confidence

An agency's AI tools should be rigorously tested and secured to safeguard from potential vulnerabilities.

Impact: In 2025, AI-driven cyber threats will intensify as malicious "agents" exploit vulnerabilities with greater speed and precision. Deepfakes, identity theft, and fraudulent transactions will become more common, forcing agencies to raise their security standards. Simply allowing team members to sign-up and 'experiment' with third-party tools like Co-Pilot, ChatGPT or apps that record and store sensitive meeting notes offer appealing ways for hackers to collect data and information that can be used against businesses. By establishing clear security protocols, performing regular checks, and emphasising responsible use, IMAA members can ensure their AI investments remain valuable assets, not liabilities.

7. Ensure strong data privacy and protection measures

Agencies should prioritise data privacy and protection by adhering to national regulations and establishing internal guidelines, while also training their teams on best practices for handling data.

Impact: The Australian government is updating and introducing stronger regulations around privacy. The November 2024 Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Bill introduces regulatory changes that independent media agencies in Australia should understand and implement to ensure compliance. Key provisions include the establishment of a statutory tort for serious invasions of privacy, enhanced enforcement powers for the Australian Information Commissioner, and requirements for transparency in automated decision-making processes with requirements to include details into privacy policies. The Bill builds upon previous government actions, including increased penalties for serious privacy breaches and enhanced powers for the Australian Information Commissioner.

This legislation represents the first stage of the Australian Government's commitment to strengthening privacy protections, with further reforms expected in the next 12 to 18 months.

To remain compliant and competitive, media agencies should audit how information is stored and train employees on what can be shared with AI tools or how data should be anonymised.

8. Align actions to Australian values and net social outcomes

Agencies should ensure their AI-driven operations support the Australian economy & are tailored to resonate with the nation's unique media landscape.

Impact: Agencies should harness AI to amplify narratives that resonate with Australia's unique cultural and media landscape, driving outcomes that are both commercially successful and socially responsible. With 94% of advertising decision-makers acknowledging the critical role of data for success, it's vital to ensure AI initiatives respect Australian sensitivities, including the 75% of Australians prioritizing privacy over personalization. By embedding data privacy and ethical handling of customer data into AI strategies, agencies can address concerns like the 41% of Australians uneasy about transparency and foster trust. Ensuring campaigns not only comply with regulations but also proactively reflect national values, such as fairness and community benefit, strengthens both client relationships and societal impact.

9. Ensure client collaboration and responsiveness to feedback

Agencies should set opportunities for open dialogue and respond to feedback and guidance from stakeholders.

Impact: Transparent and open collaboration with clients is crucial to the success of AI-driven operations. Regularly consulting stakeholders, responding to their feedback, and adhering to client-specific AI policies—like upholding NDAs and privacy standards—builds trust and ensures mutual alignment. With 72% of Australians viewing undisclosed data usage as a misuse of their information, agencies must clearly communicate how AI tools are utilized and how data is managed. This two-way dialogue allows agencies to create more targeted, ethical, and effective campaigns while reassuring clients and audiences that their concerns are heard and addressed. Responsive collaboration ultimately enhances the credibility and adaptability of AI applications in dynamic markets.

10. Take proactive stances on regulation and policy

agencies should stay informed on wider policy discussions, and regularly seek to update and implement new processes.

Impact: Agencies need to stay ahead of the curve by monitoring and adapting to evolving AI-related regulations and ethical considerations. Proactively documenting AI usage and approvals can future-proof operations against shifting legal landscapes while building credibility with clients and regulators. As the industry increasingly prioritizes privacy and ethics, agencies must reflect this by implementing transparent processes that address consumer concerns, such as the 75% of Australians valuing privacy over personalization. Engaging in wider policy discussions and updating practices accordingly ensures compliance and helps set industry benchmarks. This forward-thinking approach not only mitigates risks but also positions agencies as leaders in ethical AI adoption.

Conclusion

The IMAA's 10 Guiding Principles for Generative AI offer a comprehensive framework to guide Independent media agencies through the evolving landscape of AI. These principles emphasise the importance of ethical practices, transparency, and safeguarding trust by setting clear standards for AI usage. By prioritising fairness, inclusivity, and responsible data handling, they ensure that AI enhances rather than undermines the values that set independent agencies apart. Additionally, fostering equal opportunities and providing continuous learning empower agencies to address the AI skills gap, enabling their teams to remain competitive and innovative while navigating rapid technological change.

By aligning with Australian values and advocating for transparency and collaboration with clients, the principles protect the reputation of independent agencies as ethical and trustworthy leaders. They encourage agencies to take a proactive approach to regulation and policy, staying ahead of industry shifts while building credibility with clients and stakeholders. Together, these actions position IMAA members to harness AI's potential responsibly, strengthening their collective role in shaping the future of the media industry and contributing to the broader Australian economy.

Tools and Resources:

[AirStacks Free AI Essentials Workshop](#): book a free 1-hour virtual session with your team to understand the impact, learn practical skills and develop your AI roadmap.

[Australia's Chief Scientist: Generative AI: Language models and multimodal foundation models](#)

[Australian Government: Positioning Australia as a leader in digital economy regulation: Automated Decision Making and AI Regulation](#)

[Australian Government's AI Ethics Principles](#)

[eSafety commission report](#)

[The World Economic Forum: The Presidio Recommendations on Responsible Generative AI](#)

[Guidelines regarding use of generative AI \(ChatGPT\)](#)

[McFee: ChatGPT's Impact on Privacy and How to Protect Yourself](#)

[Maddox: The Dr\(obot\) will chat\(GPT\) with you now: Mitigating the risks of an AI System](#)

[IT Brief Australia: How to use generative AI like ChatGPT – In a safe way!](#)

[National framework for the assurance of artificial intelligence in government \(June 2024\):](#)

<https://www.finance.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-06/National-framework-for-the-assurance-of-AI-in-government.pdf>

[- australia's-ai-ethics-principles: https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/australias-artificial-intelligence-ethics-principles/australias-ai-ethics-principles](#)

[- A Directors Introduction to AI \(AICD / UTS 2024\): https://www.aicd.com.au/content/dam/aicd/pdf/tools-resources/director-resources/a-directors-introduction-to-ai-web.pdf](#)

[Policy for the responsible use of AI in government \(September 2024\):](#)

<https://www.digital.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2024-10/Policy%20for%20the%20responsible%20use%20of%20AI%20in%20government%201.1.pdf>

[Voluntary AI Safety Standard \(August 2024\): https://www.digital.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2024-10/Policy%20for%20the%20responsible%20use%20of%20AI%20in%20government%201.1.pdf](#)

About AirStack:

As a leading AI agency in Australia, AirStack merges human creativity, strategy, and innovation to empower businesses across APAC with AI automation and augmentation. We specialise in arming your team with skills, strategies, tools, and workflows that save time, cut costs, and drive growth. We're made up of strategists, technologists and creatives with deep experience working across media, communications and full-service agencies. Leveraging our expertise in sector-specific use cases and best practices, we help you identify pain points and inefficiencies that are limiting your team's full potential. We then devise strategies and create prototypes and bespoke tools, all designed to ethically and safely enhance ROI and drive positive change.

We believe that the transformative power of AI should be available to everyday Australian businesses - not just large global enterprises. Here's how we can work with you to unlock new capacity, creativity and capabilities in your team:

- **The AirStack AI Workshop:** Understand the impact of AI and develop an actionable roadmap. We'll equip your team with insights and practical skills and align on developing a clear roadmap on which you can take action. Available to IMAA members in January and February 2023 as a free 1-hour virtual session or a tailored 2.5-hour in-person team sprint.
- **AI Strategy & Consulting:** Partner with us to map and evaluate your AI use cases, craft team policies or best-practice guidelines and plot out an ROI-focused plan.
- **AI-Enhanced Tools & Workflows:** Rapid prototyping, development and measurement of AI-powered tools and automation designed specifically for media and creative agencies.

<https://www.airstack.ai/>

About IMAA:

The IMAA was established in February 2020 as a new, national industry body that represents Australia's independent media agencies. The IMAA promotes the benefits of working with independent media agencies, building awareness and respect for the sector, creating a knowledge-sharing forum and helping build the Australian economy by supporting 100% Australian-owned businesses.

<https://www.theimaa.com.au/>



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info@theimaa.com.au

www.theimaa.com.au