



**STOP
CREATIVE
THEFT**

“I want to talk about theft - because that’s what it is.”

For these machines, it’s not just about replacing the work and disregarding our workforce. In order to do that, they have to steal the work that is created by human creators.”

**Media, Entertainment
& Arts Alliance Chief
Executive, Erin Madeley**



The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance is blowing the whistle on the business model of the big Artificial Intelligence (AI) companies – including OpenAI, Meta, and Google – as *theft*.

Millions of images, songs, articles, and films have been scraped without consent or compensation and are being used to train AI. Corporations are then using these AI tools to replace their workforces with automation products.

ChatGPT is already being used to substitute the work of journalists at Australian media outlets. AI music generators are being used to produce synthetic music and distribute it on platforms like Spotify, driving down the payments that originating artists receive from the platform. AI voice generators are being used to replace voice actors, while applications like Adobe Firefly are being trained on datasets consisting of First Nations' work, which go on to generate fake Indigenous art and merchandise.

This practice is threatening wages and conditions in an already precarious sector of the economy, where many workers struggle to make minimum wage.

In some cases, AI is threatening entire industries. Clickthroughs to news websites have already declined as generative AI search is rolled out across search platforms. This is further undercutting revenue in an already struggling sector.

So, while AI advocates are spruiking the technology's capacity to "democratise" the production of creative work, it is undercutting the financial incentives that underwrite the sustainability of these very sectors that do enormous public good and underpin Australian cultural life.

Put simply, this is theft. And it's not a victimless crime – we all suffer.

AI theft is unacceptable: it devalues original work, diminishes Australia's unique culture, and is a serious threat to important institutions like the media.

This is why MEAA is calling on the Government to implement strong laws to stop AI theft.

We can stop AI theft.

MEAA is calling for measures to protect the work of Australia's journalists, artists and creators.

Introduce an AI Act and AI regulator.

Economy-wide legislation and regulation will ensure strong protections for workers and consumers, and deliver a comprehensive, clear, enforceable, and internationally aligned approach to AI.

Impose a levy on AI developers who have used unlicensed copyright content abroad.

AI developers that have engaged in theft of copyrighted content abroad must uphold Australian creators' entitlement to fair compensation as a condition of doing business in Australia. This fund should be used to directly compensate creators, guaranteeing that it can't be siphoned off by third parties.

Ensure all content used to train AI is subject to prior consent and compensation.

Any use of copyrighted content to train AI must be subject to licensing agreements with rightsholders, of which the full benefit must flow to original authors and creators. Governments should not create loopholes or exceptions in Australia's copyright system that would allow companies to circumvent these obligations.

Mandate public disclosure of all materials used to train AI.

Creators have the right to know when their work has been used to train AI. The only way to do this is through the public listing of all works that AI companies have used.

Reserve copyright for human-made works.

Copyright protection should not be extended to works predominantly or exclusively made by AI. A very high threshold must be set before any work that is created with the assistance of AI tools can be afforded copyright protections, and even then, copyright protection should not be extended to any aspect of a work that has been generated using AI in part or whole.

Watermark AI-generated content.

All AI-generated content must be labelled through a robust technical mechanism like watermarking to ensure audiences are informed about any potential or actual engagement with AI-generated content.

Protect performers from unauthorised digital replicas through a system of moral rights.

Any use of a performer's biometric data to construct 'digital replicas' of their voice or likeness must be protected from unlicensed exploitation via a system of nontransferable moral rights.

Enact an enforceable system of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP).

First Nations' traditional cultural modes of production and performance must be protected from AI-facilitated imitation through a system of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP). These protocols must be incorporated into existing legislation, including copyright law, to ensure proper enforcement.

Protect creators' discernible style from being passed off or copied by AI.

There must be general protections for creators to prevent their style being copied or 'passed off' without authorisation or payment. Copyright and intellectual property law should protect against AI-generated outputs that clearly connect to a discernible artist, writer, or musical style.

Stamp out anti-competitive behaviour in the AI industry.

Ensure that the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission is alert to any anticompetitive behaviours arising in the AI sector, particularly mergers, investments, and acquisitions, as well as bargaining inequalities arising between rightsholders and AI platforms, especially where these may induce the former into inequitable licensing agreements.

Enact a GDPR-style right to limit the collection, use, or sharing of personal data on digital platforms.

Users should retain the right to opt out of the use of any content shared on platforms being used to train AI.

Stopping AI theft means saving Australian industries, jobs and livelihoods.

Our own work is being used to teach machines to replace us. I put years of my life and all the skill I can muster into my writing. It's my living and book after book, article after article, is being stolen.

- David Marr, journalist and author



I had my voice stolen by AI. It affected my mental, emotional, and financial health and I'd hate for this to happen to anyone else.

- Cooper Mortlock, voice actor

I worked hard to get to the point where I was able to live comfortably off my work as a voice actor and I was incredibly proud of that.

I thought I was on track to be able to pay off my HECS debt but since AI, the work has dropped off a cliff. Now I sell self-storage to pay my rent, and we're back to just scraping by.

- Thomas Burt, voice actor



We know that our members are not alone in their concerns about AI, with research by the Australian Media Literacy Alliance finding that almost three-quarters of Australians believe strong laws are needed to manage the risks of AI.

To find out more about MEAA's campaign to Stop AI Theft, go to meaa.org/stop-ai-theft.





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