

Burleigh resident Dr Kelvin Ross says AI could help road rage on the Coast

Forget fears of a robot rebellion, the truth is AI could soon pose the solution to one of our city's worst problems. Burleigh's own 'AI Nerd' explains ...

By Ann Wason Moore

It's called red-light rage ... and it's the curse of the Gold Coast.

Whether heading down the Highway or accessing our arterial roads, it seems motorists can rarely string more than a minute of actual drivetime before hitting yet another set of traffic lights.

Red traffic lights, that is.

Ironically, for a city defined by surf, our uncoordinated intersections make it impossible to ever achieve that golden dream of a green wave.

But the move towards Artificial Intelligence could soon create actual movement when it comes to our city's traffic.

Google's AI project Green Light has already been rolled out in a dozen cities around the world, and early numbers showed its AI-powered recommendations for traffic light timing have cut as many as 30 per cent of stops and 10 per cent of emissions.



Dr Kelvin Ross, executive manager of Queensland AI Hub, with his Tesla and personalised plates 'AI Nerd'. AI is coming to the Gold Coast - from synching our traffic lights, to monitoring for sharks, to taking over the classrooms. Picture Glenn Hampson

And Burleigh resident Dr Kelvin Ross, director of the Queensland AI Hub – which aims to accelerate AI adoption by bringing together industry, research and government, said it was only a matter of time before Gold Coast motorists could literally be streets ahead thanks to similar AI technology.

The Tesla driver, with personalised plates 'AI NERD', said whether it was shark surveillance at our beaches or better crime prevention and safety standards in our suburbs, there was plenty of reason to celebrate this new tech revolution.

However, while he certainly does not believe in an imminent robot rebellion, Dr Ross warned there was good reason to take precautions, as well as making and enforcing regulations about AI ... and soon.

In fact, he said there was something of a global arms race happening in terms of both promoting and protecting new developments.

And he said Australia was lagging behind, which was bad news for our city's burgeoning technology industry.



Why AI could help road rage statistics on the Gold Coast

“Tech regulation is always slower than tech advances,” said Dr Ross, also the chief technology officer for Datarwe, which works with real-world data for AI-enabled medical innovation, and chairman of technical consultancy KJR.

“Certainly we don’t want regulations that stifle innovation, but we also want to ensure that we have guardrails for our own safety, that’s how we can really drive growth. Right now there isn’t that security and that can make people too scared to move forward.

“There are pockets of innovation in Australia, and I’m proud to say that the Gold Coast is one, especially when it comes to start-ups. I do some angel investing with them but the challenge in Australia is trying to access that large-scale global audience.

“Unfortunately, the country as a whole tends to lag compared to the US or UK or EU. Plus our governments have a tendency to invest in resources rather than tech.

“(Former Prime Minister) Scott Morrison actually said we should ‘buy not build’ tech, that we should adopt not create. That’s a terrible attitude and a guarantee to be left behind.

“We’re fortunate in Queensland that the government has invested in the AI Hub, but we really have to push just what AI can do for us, while also making sure that we remain in control of AI.”



Dr Kelvin Ross, executive manager of Queensland AI Hub, with their customised drone.. AI is coming to the Gold Coast - from synching our traffic lights, to monitoring for sharks, to taking over the classrooms. Picture Glenn Hampson

One of the areas that most concerns Dr Ross when it comes to AI is education.

Queensland joined other states this year in banning ChatGPT from state school classrooms, but a recent meeting of Australia’s education ministers formally backed a national framework guiding the use of the new technology.

However, Dr Ross warned that simply reversing the ban was not enough.

“We need to be a leader in this space for the sake of our own children,” he said.

“It’s the same old argument we had about calculators decades ago ... the technology is here and you can’t pretend it’s not, so you have to embrace it or be left behind.



Dr Kelvin Ross, executive manager of Queensland AI Hub, with their customised drone.. AI is coming to the Gold Coast - from synching our traffic lights, to monitoring for sharks, to taking over the classrooms. Picture Glenn Hampson

“The workplace that today’s students will graduate into will expect them to know how to use ChatGPT, we need to change the way we are thinking about assessments to reflect that.

“They can skip those first few steps we had to do, same as when calculators came in, so don’t test them on that. Test them on the next step ... critical analysis of the data.

“Anyone can use ChatGPT, but how do you use it responsibly and effectively. That’s what we need to learn – and what we need to teach. We all need to rethink the way we think.

“The schools and the students that figure this out first are the ones who will most succeed.”

Dr Ross said the ‘future’ AI jobs had already arrived – including here on the Gold Coast.

Indeed, according to LinkedIn, one of the hottest job postings of late has been ‘prompt engineer’, a career that pays six-figure salaries, doesn’t require a degree in computer engineering, or even advanced coding skills.

Instead, the role is all about training the emerging crop of AI tools to deliver better responses to questions that real people pose.

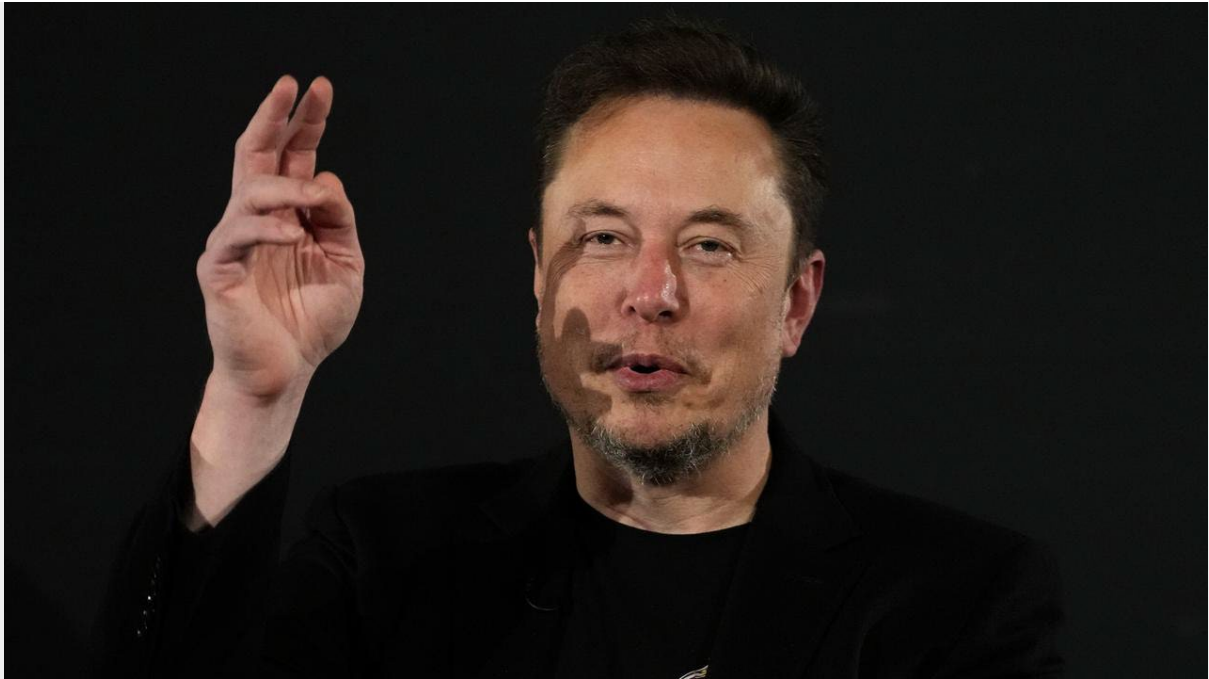
However, entrepreneur Elon Musk, co-founder of ChatGPT creator OpenAI, recently warned that AI would eventually eliminate the need for all jobs – and Dr Ross agreed that AI would one day be the ultimate disruptor.

“In previous generations, technology created more jobs, but this will be a very disruptive technology,” said Dr Ross.

“Regardless of whether it displaces jobs, we’re in for a huge transition. It’s hard to imagine just what it will look like, but we know that already the first changes are here with the rise of the prompt engineers.

“They didn’t exist a year ago, but now we have them right across the city. It doesn’t have to be part of a tech company, just any business that uses AI – and the reality is that most of them already do.”

In fact, aside from our future hope for traffic lights, Dr Ross said AI was being used across the city.



Sunak discussed AI with Elon Musk in a conversation that is played on the social network X, which Musk owns.(Photo by Kirsty Wigglesworth – WPA Pool/Getty Images)

From monitoring bushfires to conservation practices, he said even more applications were imminent.

“We can train AI models to do stuff like recognise sharks in the water using drones and that can alert lifesavers and beachgoers,” he said.

“As climate change occurs we can also monitor the changes in our environment, all of that painstaking things that would take humans hours – and which we’re not very good at – AI was literally made for those tasks.

“I think another really important area for the Gold Coast, which has always been a safe city, is how AI can help in terms of crime prevention and security. Of course, we don’t want a police state and that’s why we need these regulations to make sure that working towards public safety doesn’t turn into something more sinister.

“For me, the really important area for AI on the Gold Coast is using it within the Health and Knowledge Precinct, bringing together the research at Griffith University with the hospital and medical innovators, we can really make a difference.

“The work of AI is great with the data collection and analysis, let’s give the doctors more time to do what they do best, and which no computer could replace.

“Really, the whole idea is to make humans better – and even more human – by using AI.”

The reality is that artificial intelligence is here to stay, regardless of whether we’re ready to give it the green light.

And when it comes to early adopters, at least Dr Ross knows he’ll have Gold Coast motorists on AI’s side.