

AI and our Human world

12th May 2026



AI Forum
New Zealand
Te Kāhui Atamai Ihiko o Aotearoa

Adult and Community
Education

ace
a o t e a r o a

Thinking about the future....

A bit about the AI Forum

Thinking about the future...

...and what we have been doing about it

Leading AI for a thriving Aotearoa

Innovative + Responsible + Inclusive

The AI Forum brings together Aotearoa's artificial intelligence community.

We are passionate about advancing the AI ecosystem through connections, advocacy, growing talent and collaboration.

We promote the economic opportunities raised by AI, supporting great applications and adopters.

We work to ensure that society can adapt to the rapid and far-reaching changes that AI technology will bring.



Te Kāhui Atamai Iahiko o Aotearoa

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The AI Forum in numbers 2026

Founded in 2017, we have built a reputation across industry, academia and government as a trusted partner. In 2025 we have 8 Working Groups dedicated to creating work valuable to all of Aotearoa. We bring AI to life with stories featuring our members and their work. We produce influential reports and submissions. We run and amplify other local and national events that support the growth and collaboration of the AI ecosystem.

20+

Submissions

Engaging on key relevant topics
GLOBAL: Contributors to International AI Safety Report (Bletchley Park Agreement) 2025 & 2026

24+

Events

in 2025
 Celebrating the work of our contributors, raising AI awareness, literacy, conversations and adoption

5th

Annual AI Summit

Approval rating above 70%
 400+ delegates with 20% Active participation
 1st Aotearoa AI Awards
 Leadership Workshops

25+

Key Reports / White Papers

Living white paper
 AI Blueprint
 AI Productivity

9

Key Working Groups

Delivering vital context for future govt policy and practical help for organisations adopting AI

5th

Hackathon Festival

Annual NZ-wide Hackathon
 Creating safe places for all to play
 Solving UN Sustainability Goals
 2025: 400+ participants / 9 venues

200+

VOLUNTEERS in 2025

Creating content and contributing to building Leading AI for a thriving Aotearoa

5

Dedicated Websites

AIForum.org.nz
[AI Governance](#)
 AICreativeindustries.nz
 AIHackathon.nz
 Aotearoaai.nz (AI Summit)

2026 Highlights

9 Working Groups

- AI Blueprint for Aotearoa + 7 Focus areas: AEC, Creatives, Education, Environment, Health, Social License, Sustainable AI
- Kahui Māori Atamai Iahiko (Advisory Panel)
- Pacific Advisory Forum
- Gen AI – telling the stories of Gen AI in NZ
- AI Governance – [AI Governance](#), working through guidance on the thorny issues.
- Architecture Engineering & Construction (AEC)
- AI for the Environment
- People – Social License, HR, Disability
- Education

Key Outputs

- Encouraging inclusive and thought leading conversations
- Plan to refresh our independent productivity research
- [AI Governance](#) providing best in class frameworks and toolkits for free - for all
- AI Blueprint for Aotearoa – refreshed May 2026
- Gen AI ‘living’ white paper available now
- Upskilling Workshops for senior decision makers
- 3rd annual AI Creativity Summit and AI Film Festival
- 5th annual NZ-wide AI Hackathon Festival, 3-10 August
- 5th annual AI Summit 8-9 September
- 2nd annual Aotearoa AI Awards
- Bringing AI to life - telling our member’s stories at events, in reports, submissions and in the media
- Invited contributor to International Ai Safety Report
- Industry engagement for NZIAT \$70m AI funding

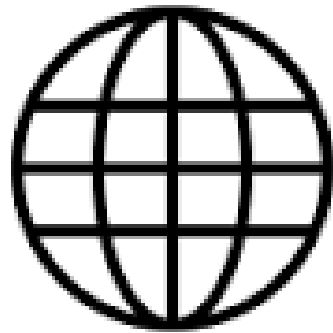
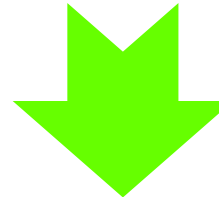
Thinking about the future....

We are in the age of Monsters



Lucky Gunasekura
CEO, miso.ai

WE ARE HERE



THE KNOWN



**THE AGE OF
MONSTERS**



THE UNKNOWN

"I think the potential of what the internet is going to do to society, both good and bad, is unimaginable. I think we're actually on the cusp of something exhilarating and terrifying.... it's an alien life form!"

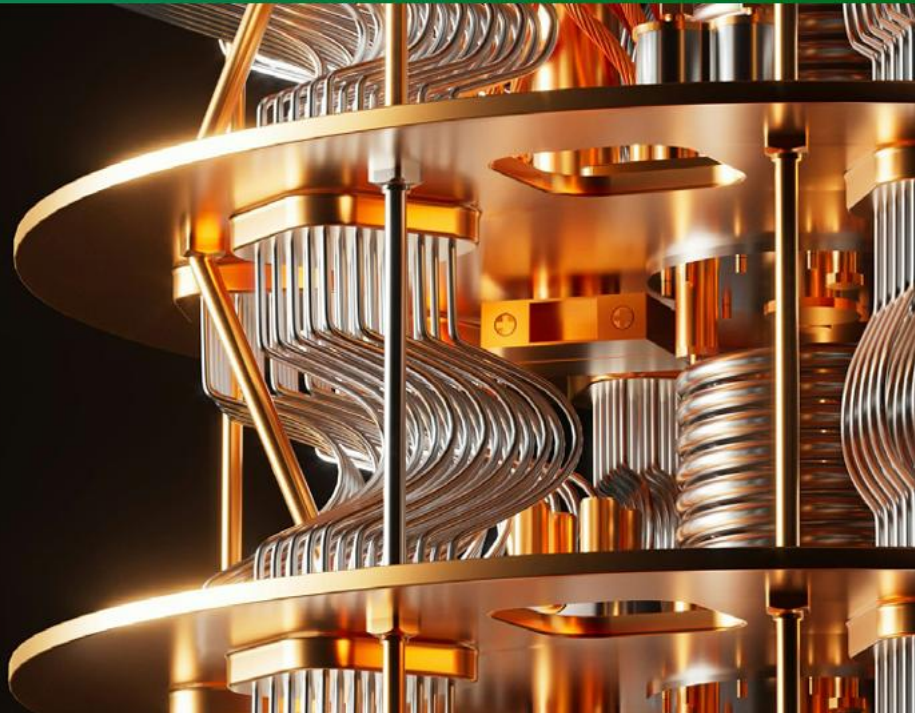
David Bowie speaking to Jeremy Paxman, 1999.

How should we prepare?

AI Blueprint for Aotearoa

May 2026

AI Blueprint for Aotearoa, May 2026



*“In 2030, Aotearoa New Zealand is a global leader for **innovative, responsible and inclusive** AI, and is globally recognised for harnessing the power of AI **for the benefit of us all.**”*

- SOCIAL LICENSE
- EDUCATION (AI LITERACY)
- GOVERNANCE
- ENABLING REGULATIONS
- SUSTAINABLE AI

What should we prepare for?

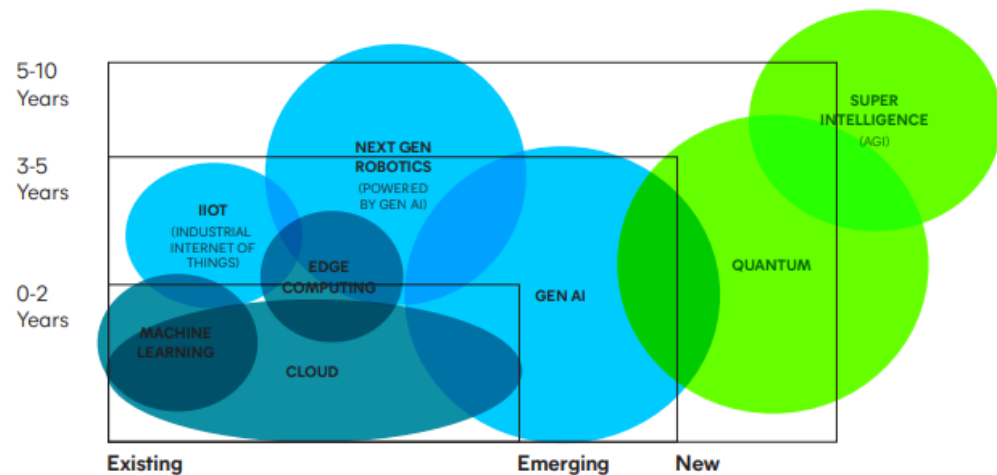


Table 1: Three Horizons Technology View, July 2024. An interpretative snapshot based on knowledge at the time, not an empirical representation.

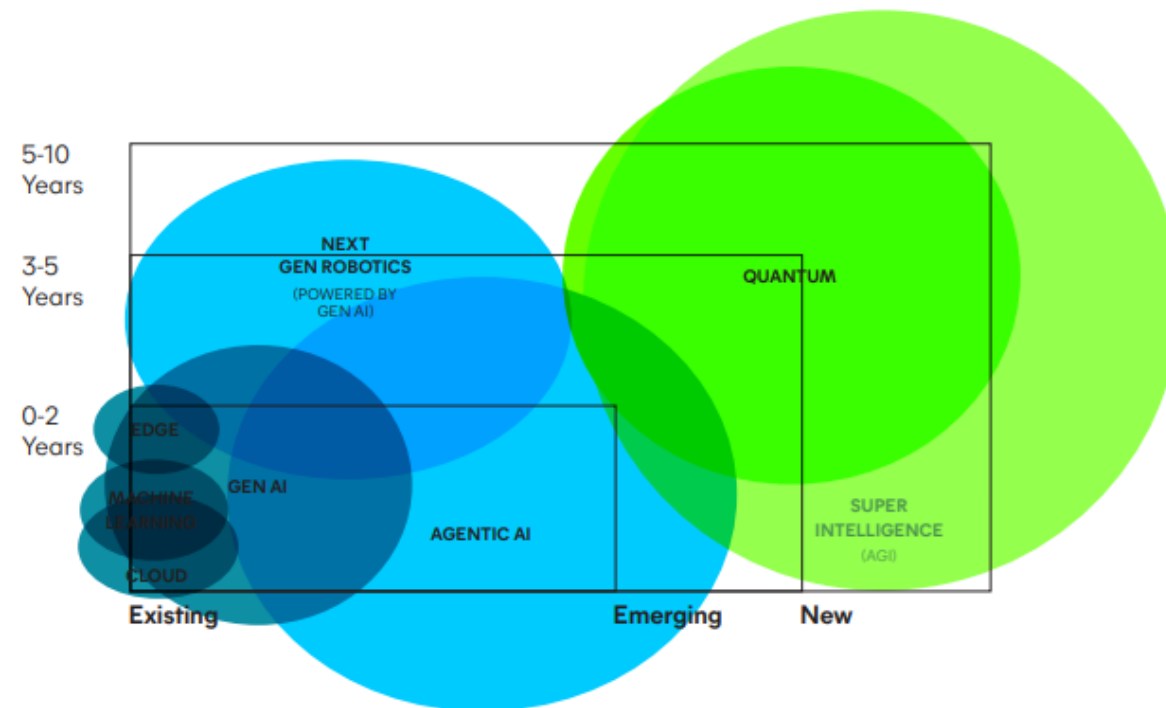


Table 2: Three Horizons Technology View, February 2026. An interpretative snapshot, based on current knowledge and not an empirical representation

AI has sped up development of new technologies:

- In 2025 Agentic AI came out of the lab and onto the streets (in less than a year)
- Next Gen Robotics is here (well in China and Japan anyway...)
- Significant Quantum impacts now expected to be 2-3 years away (not 5-10 years)
- This has condensed the expected timeline for Super Intelligence (AGI)

Agentic AI



Agentic AI leapt from the Lab into everyday use in 2025

With tools like ambient scribes now embedded in parts of our healthcare system, what's possible in 2026?

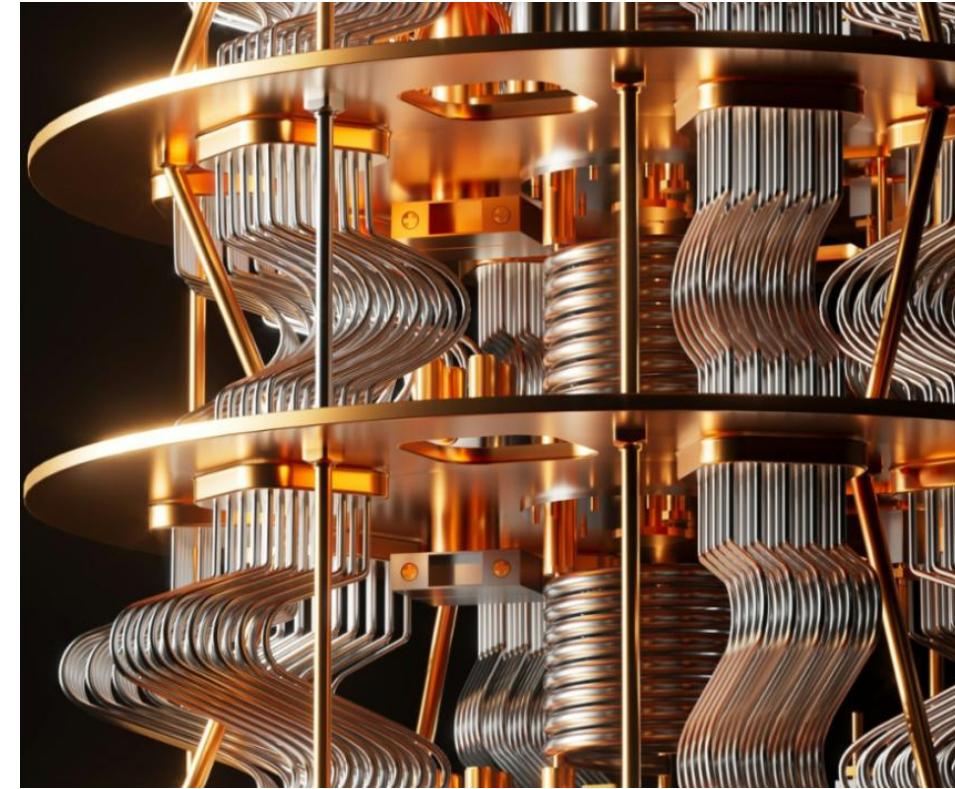
Autonomous Workflows: Agentic AI systems capable of completing autonomous, multi-step tasks.

Connected to Scribes (*and under human direction*) this integration transforms the passive scribe into an active, intelligent partner in the consulting room. Agents could:

For medical professionals: Order diagnostics, follow up appointments, prescriptions, billing.

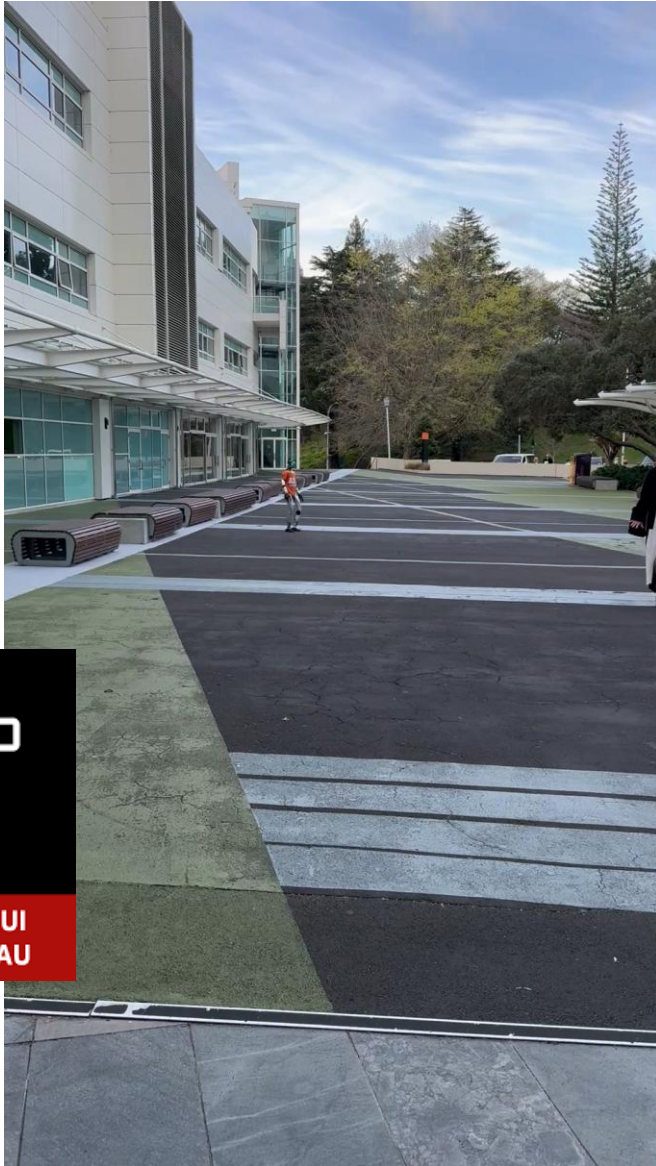
For the patient: Able to answer a million questions, diarise follow up care, be the reminder for drug regimes, and monitor health and wellbeing through conversation.

Kevin



Willow: Google's working model
Quantum computer

AI in the Physical World



AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

What are we doing about it?

Embracing mātauranga Māori

Dr Karaitiana Taiuru, Chair of the AI Forum's Kāhui Māori recently released perhaps the world's first Indigenous Peoples AI Framework for understanding and describing the nature of an Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Drawing on mātauranga Māori, tikanga Māori, and te reo Māori, the framework is encapsulated in the whakatauaiki:

“He Tangata

He Karetao

He Ātārangi”

(A person, a puppet, a shadow).

Each term describes a distinct and important dimension of what an AI is, its social presentation, its operational nature, and its epistemological origin.

Embracing the principles of Te Tiriti of Waitangi | Treaty of Waitangi is key to innovative, responsible and inclusive AI in Aotearoa.



5 Pillars



01. New opportunities

Understand new and evolving capabilities, expose new opportunities and support responsible adoption.



02. Increasing capabilities and scaling innovation

Enabling innovation at scale by providing access to enabling tools, services and sustainable infrastructure.



03. Enhancing adoption and managing risks

Encourage responsible, inclusive and enabling AI regulation, governance development and use – so we can build trust and societal confidence; and innovate without unnecessary barriers.



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04. Building talent

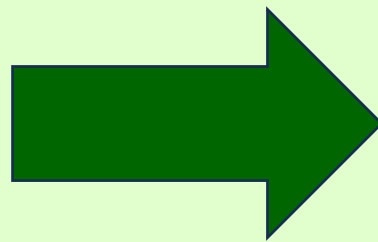
Ensure our people have the capabilities to design, develop and use AI effectively through inclusive education pathways that upskill our existing and future workforce.



05. Global reach

International connectedness through standards, regulations and collaborations—and leading with our strengths.

Markets – reinforce existing markets and build new ones.





04. Building talent

Ensure our people have the capabilities to design, develop and use AI effectively through inclusive education pathways that upskill our existing and future workforce.

Promote AI in education:

- AI literacy and critical thinking alongside opportunities for skills development.
- Inclusion for teachers and students in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- Academia

Support the upskilling of our existing workforce:

- Tertiary led
- Industry led (for example, Spark NZ)

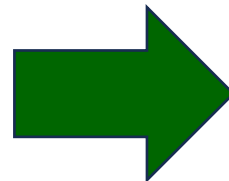
Talent attraction and retention that helps to build our capabilities:

- Research and Development
- Build and deploy
- Implementation and integration
- Recognition and rewards (for example, Aotearoa AI Awards)

Education Working Group



Dr Geri Harris
AUT



Ana Ivanovic Tongue
academyEx

Day of AI Aotearoa: Bringing AI literacy to classrooms across the motu

- Launched March 2026
- Supported by MIT RAISE, Day of AI Australia, EPIT, TENZ, Westlake Girls High School, and NZCER
- Gives schools a practical, culturally grounded way to teach AI literacy at scale.

“kit-in-a-box” and train-the-trainer model - any school can run the programme:

- no specialist expertise required
- adapting it to their reality
- a single day, four lessons, eight blocks, one learning area or many.

Early impact: shifting mindsets

- Students are moving from seeing AI as a “magic helper” to understanding it as a system they can question, check, and critically evaluate.
- Confidence in explaining AI jumped from **20% to 64%** in primary settings and **50% to 82%** in secondary.
- Foundational shifts in how young people understand the technology shaping their world.

Register at www.dayofainewzealand.com to access the resources

Support by contacting the team at dayofainewzealand@gmail.com



Susana Tomaz,
Day of AI New Zealand



Educators educating educators: EPIT AlinEd Community of Practice

The AiEdCoP has become a vibrant and inspiring national community where educators across Aotearoa New Zealand come together to explore AI with curiosity, courage and care. Supported by Teacher Development Aotearoa and EPIT, the community has grown to more than 580 members, with over half actively participating, an exceptional level of engagement.

Through webinars, shared resources and rich professional discussion, educators are building confidence in practical classroom use while also tackling big questions of inclusion, ethics and equity. AiEdCoP is not only growing capability, it is strengthening connection, leadership and educator voice in shaping the future of AI in education in Aotearoa.



Education Partnership
& Innovation Trust

Brendon Shaw and Tim Gander
AiEdCoP

Our natural advantages

AI and Cultural Intellectual Property

Māori communities in Aotearoa New Zealand view AI with both interest and concern.

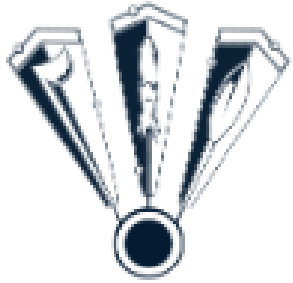
While AI offers opportunities to amplify mātauranga Māori and Māori data - both considered taonga (treasures) - it also raises risks of misappropriation and loss of data sovereignty (or ownership).

This conundrum and the thinking that is going into addressing it is leading to novel solutions, like those developed by:

Tohu Media, a system for identifying and tagging of online content (like a digital fingerprint)

Maui Studios – here in Christchurch – creating gaming environments that educate quietly educate

Anthony Butters – able to create animation shorts that tell stories in Te Reo – and quietly teach

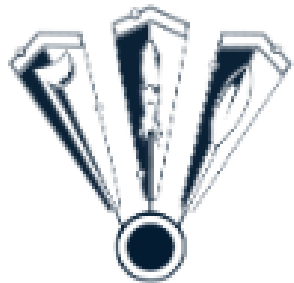


**Digital
Natives
Academy**

Find your Talent Build your Mastery

PATHWAYS INTO HIGH VALUE JOBS | SKILL DEVELOPMENT

PATHWAY ILLUMINATION



Digital Natives Academy

92%



of our learners transition onto work, education and training.



91.7%

of our Level 2 learners graduated in 2025



75%-80% Attendance Rates (well above the national average)



94.4%

of Māori learners at Level 1 graduated in 2025



92.3%

of Māori learners at Level 2 graduated in 2025



Our natural advantages



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Anthony Butters at [Pēnei Productions](#) – AI has enabled Anthony to create animation shorts that tell stories in Te Reo – and quietly teach

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Education is a sector in transition

AI Blueprint for Aotearoa

May 2026

AI is fundamentally changing both the purpose of education and how it is delivered

Adoption is slow and steady, while learner needs are evolving rapidly.

Many educators feel uncertain about their changing roles.

Entry-level workforce expectations have shifted and there is an urgent need to rethink what work-ready graduates actually need.

Workplace learning is increasingly critical; upskilling the existing workforce is essential to economic growth and ensuring the benefits of AI are shared equitably across society



Education – What is our vision?

AI Blueprint for Aotearoa

May 2026

“By 2030, New Zealand will be a global leader in equitable, AI-enabled education. All educators will be equipped to create inclusive, adaptive learning environments. Every learner will be empowered to use AI critically, ethically and responsibly in a changing world.”

Achieving this vision requires a collaborative education ecosystem built around personalised, adaptive learning that motivates learners, prepares them for their futures and promotes human growth and purpose.

We need to develop AI as education tools that increase engagement and enrich lives.

Universal access to AI literacy and tools is a non-negotiable goal for 2030
Universal access to AI literacy and tools is an economic and social imperative to prevent widening the digital divide.

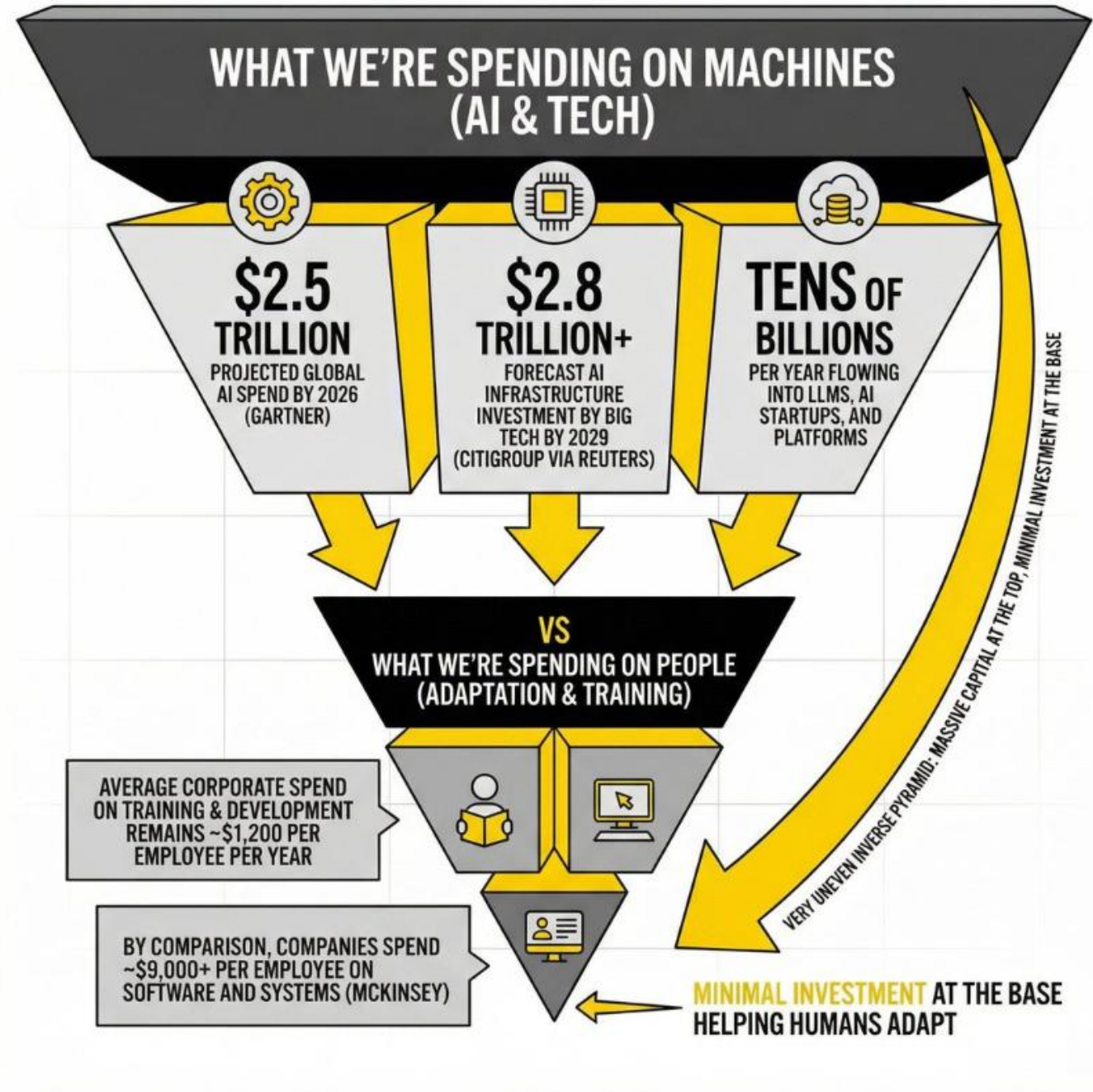
Education – Why is it so hard?

The level of investment in tech verses humans is astronomically biased towards tech – while this may change over time...

People change takes time – and most AI adoption is about people change.

Upskilling our people is essential to our success in adopting AI successfully and creating opportunities for career mobility.

A ‘She’ll be right’ attitude is not enough – under investment increases the risks dramatically for both for businesses and our society.



Education – What's possible?

Our education sector has an opportunity to move beyond legacy systems and organisations toward a true ecosystem approach—spanning public and the private sectors, across all age groups and levels of capability

Personalising learning to individual needs, equipping learners for AI-enabled workplaces, supporting curriculum integration and opening pathways for lifelong learning that adapt as the world does.

Accessibility and a move from general education to an education that adapts to people, taking account of different backgrounds and abilities including neurodiversity and physical differences.

Remember...



Yes, AI will give you superpowers, but....

AI does not make you curious or give you taste, judgement or understanding of human context.

Access to AI tools does not automatically create meaningful work. Craft, process and intent still matter.

So, as generated content becomes abundant, human originality, trust, judgement and craft become more valuable, not less.

Thank you



AI Forum

NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Atamai Iahiko o Aotearoa

Policy directions....



- We have a dedicated Social License work stream that envisions an Aotearoa where AI trust, value and empowerment are underpinned by transparency, governance and education
 - Public AI literacy through real stories and community engagement
 - Reliable measurement via national baselines and international benchmarks
 - Māori data sovereignty embedded through Te Ao Māori principles, and
 - Authenticity through content provenance and watermarking solutions
- Our 2026 priorities focus on establishing a national baseline for social licence measurement, supporting public engagement alongside the Human Rights Commission, and championing consistent AI standards across legislation and industry
- Workforce planning, skills development and equitable access to opportunity are central – ensuring AI adoption enables meaningful work and broad participation rather than concentrating benefits or deepening inequality



- We refreshed our [governance](#) toolkits and guides in October 2025, creating free resources for all
- We also create safe spaces to experiment – including our annual AI Hackathon Festival – to support responsible, inclusive AI adoption across Aotearoa
- AI adoption in New Zealand is growing with data supporting productivity gains, but trust has not kept pace – persistent concerns around privacy, security, bias and transparency place the country in a high-use, low-trust position
- The next phase of AI adoption will be shaped by how effectively organisations and government address trust, skills and governance
- New Zealand’s Indigenous AI leadership through Te Ao Māori governance, data sovereignty frameworks and Kāhui Māori is a globally recognised strength – with solutions developed here having value far beyond our borders

Enabling Regulations



- Transformative technologies have historically accelerated through safety standards, not in spite of them – from electricity to transport, trust has been the catalyst for widespread adoption
- Early public fear of new technology is a recurring pattern – electricity was once seen as a dangerous force, with consumers too afraid to operate light switches
- Safety innovations like Bertha Benz’s braking system and Elisha Otis’s elevator safety device didn’t limit progress – they unlocked entirely new possibilities, from faster cars to skyscrapers
- Guardrails and proportionate regulation build public confidence, enabling innovation to move further and faster with broader societal support
- Applying this same logic to AI, clear standards and genuine industry collaboration can build the trust needed to drive responsible investment and experimentation
- New Zealand is playing an active international role, including contributing to the International AI Safety Report and helping draft the newly adopted ISO AI standards



- AI sustainability is a system-level challenge that goes beyond energy use and emissions to encompass economic resilience, data sovereignty, social licence and long-term national capability
- New Zealand faces unique pressures as a small market with structural reliance on international compute and data partners, making sustainability and sovereignty especially critical
- We are hosting discussions in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch to surface Aotearoa's potential as a world leader in sustainable AI.
- The AI Governance Working Group is developing a practical Sustainability guide to provide accessible, actionable guidance for organisations navigating the sustainability dimensions of AI adoption
- Addressing the environmental, economic, social and governance dimensions of AI together will help make the technology sustainable, resilient over the long term, and trusted in the fullest sense