THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Governing Immersive Tech

Supporting proactive, public-interest governance of immersive and other emerging technologies

Virtual and augmented reality, spatial computing and AI-enabled wearables are fast entering everyday life across education, healthcare, workplaces and public spaces, raising new challenges for privacy, surveillance, safety, consumer protection and democratic accountability.

Governing Immersive Tech (GIT) is an Australian Research Council Discovery Project at the University of Sydney. It builds the independent evidence governments need to act before harms become entrenched, supporting responsible innovation while protecting Australians' rights and safety.

Work to date

Since launching in 2025, GIT's three research streams have informed government, industry and public debate.

Smart glasses, consent and gender-based harms

What we found

Analysis of **more than 1,000 smart-glasses videos** documented widespread non-consensual recording and risks to privacy and consent.

Impact

Partnership with Teach Us Consent; national coverage on ABC Radio National, Channel 7, Channel 9, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and more.

Child safety on Roblox

What we found

Misleading and deceptive monetisation targeting children, and user-generated spaces recreating real-world violent and sexual crimes.

Impact

Policy briefings for the ACCC, the eSafety Commissioner and international regulators. Coverage in *The Guardian*, AAP and SBS News.

Disability and inclusion in VR/XR

What we found

Research with disabled VR users, disability service providers and industry experts identified barriers to participation.

Impact

Practical recommendations for inclusive XR design, and a field-wide review so accessibility is built in from the outset.

Future work

As immersive technologies converge with AI, GIT is expanding to the next generation of emerging technologies.

Neurotechnology

Privacy, cognitive safety and informed consent in brain-computer interfaces

Physiology of social media

Physiological and mental health impacts of platforms and AI-mediated environments

Wearable AI

Always-on sensing, surveillance, public safety and biometric data

Cryptocurrencies and prediction markets

Market manipulation, gambling-like harms and information integrity

Australia's AI infrastructure

Democratic governance of critical infrastructure amid dependence on global tech providers

Chief investigators

Joanne E. Gray

Associate Professor of Media & Communications; Editor-in-Chief, *Policy & Internet*

How law, policy, design and economic structures shape digital power, and public-interest approaches to governing AI, platforms and emerging technologies.

Ben Egliston

ARC Discovery Early Career Research Fellow; Senior Lecturer in Digital Cultures

The political economy of digital media and emerging technologies, including platforms, videogames and AI.

Marcus Carter

Professor of Design; ARC Future Fellow; founder, Sydney Games and Play Lab

Human-computer interaction, games and virtual reality. His Future Fellowship examines the monetisation of children in digital games.

Further reading

Books

Governing Social Virtual Reality: Preparing for the Content, Conduct and Design Challenges of Immersive Social Media

Gray, Carter & Egliston
Palgrave Macmillan, 2024

Fantasies of Virtual Reality: Untangling Fiction, Fact, and Threat

Carter & Egliston
MIT Press, 2024

The Limits of Immersion: Disability and Virtual Reality

Egliston, Carter, Clark, Goggin, Zhuang, Tan & Gray
Bristol University Press, 2026

Commentary and coverage

ABC Religion & Ethics, 2025
The militarisation of immersive technology: where will it lead and at what societal cost?

ABC Religion & Ethics, 2026
Seeing like Meta: Smart glasses and the ethics of augmented reality

ABC Religion & Ethics, 2026
Why smart glasses are the Trojan horse of unbridled digital harm

ABC News Daily, 2026
Are AI glasses watching you?

The Conversation, 2026
Smart glasses are going mainstream. Do current privacy laws protect us from the risks?

Women's Agenda, 2026
Smart glasses are giving men a new way to secretly film and harass women: research

SBS News, 2026
Kmart's $89 glasses can record what you see. But what happens next?

404 Media, 2026
Researchers show how Meta's 'pervert glasses' are used to harass women

The Sydney Morning Herald, 2026
'Specs offenders': $89 Kmart glasses spark privacy nightmare

The Guardian, 2026
This man was secretly snapped by someone with smartglasses. He's not alone in calling that a violation of privacy

Nine News, 2026
Calls for legislation against smart glasses misuse

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