News Release

20/06/2025 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Age Assurance Technology Trial publishes twelve preliminary findings ahead of full report.

Canberra, ACT, Australia

The Age Assurance Technology Trial (AATT), an independent evaluation of digital age assurance systems, has today published twelve preliminary findings following legal, ethical and stakeholder review processes. These preliminary findings indicate that age assurance can be done in Australia privately, robustly and effectively in alignment with the international standards used during the Trial and with no significant technological barriers to implementation.

The Trial, led by the Age Check Certification Scheme (ACCS) with support from testing partner KJR, has been evaluating a range of age assurance approaches, including age verification, age estimation, age inference, successive validation, parental controls and parental consent. These technologies were assessed across various deployment contexts and risk profiles, considering privacy, inclusivity, data security and user experience.

Key Preliminary Finding:

> **"Age assurance can be done in Australia and can be private, robust and effective."**

This finding underscores the readiness of Australian service providers and technology partners to meet age-related access requirements in both online and offline environments. It also highlights the potential for age assurance systems to operate without unnecessary friction or disproportionate privacy impact, provided they are implemented with appropriate safeguards.

The Trial will shortly complete procedural fairness checks with trial participants identified in the report and is aiming to present a final report to the Minister for Communications by the end of July. Our aim in

releasing the twelve preliminary findings now is to provide stakeholders, participants and interested parties with early sight of the broad outcomes that the Trial is likely to include – whilst also accounting for the fact that the full Trial report consists of ten parts and hundreds of pages of analysis, information and data about the technologies under test.

Tony Allen, Project Director of the AATT, said:

> "The preliminary findings indicate that there are no significant technological barriers preventing the deployment of effective age assurance systems in Australia. These solutions are technically feasible, can be integrated flexibly into existing services and can support the safety and rights of children online. Our goal is to assess whether the technology works and can be deployed - not to make policy decisions about whether or how it should be used."

The trial team are very grateful to the 53 organisations that have participated in the trial (a full list of which is available at Home - Age Assurance Technology Trial).

Andrew Hammond, Deputy Project Director and software analytics lead at KJR, added:

> "We saw thoughtful, responsible practices from many providers and clear signs of a vibrant and innovative sector. The results demonstrate that the technology itself is ready, though there is still work to be done to ensure best practice in deployment, governance and inclusivity."

The AATT's work is independent of government policy decisions. Final recommendations and implementation frameworks will be determined separately by the Australian Government and relevant regulators.

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Age Assurance Technology Trial – Key Findings

1. Age assurance **can be done** in Australia - our analysis of age assurance systems in the context of Australia demonstrates how they can be private, robust and effective. There is a plethora of choice available for providers of age-restricted goods, content, services, venues or spaces to select the most appropriate systems for their use case with reference to emerging international standards for age assurance.
2. Our evaluation **did not reveal any substantial technological limitations** that would prevent age assurance systems being used in response to age-related eligibility requirements established by policy makers. We identified careful, critical thinking by providers on the development and deployment of age assurance systems, considering efficacy, privacy, data and security concerns. Some systems were easier for initial implementation and use than others, but the systems of all technology providers with a technology readiness level (TRL)[1] of 7 or above were eventually capable of integration to a user journey.
3. We found that the **practice statements** provided by age assurance providers with a TRL of 7 or above fairly reflected the technological capabilities of their products, processes or services (to the extent applicable to the project's evaluation criteria). Some of the practice statements provided have needed to be clarified or developed during the course the trial, but we observed that they offer a useful option for transparency of the capabilities of the available age assurance systems. Those with a TRL below 7 will need further analysis when their systems mature.
4. We found a **plethora of approaches** that fit different use cases in different ways, but we did not find a single **ubiquitous solution** that would suit all use cases, nor did we find solutions that were guaranteed to be effective in all deployments. The range of possibilities across the trial participants demonstrate a rich and rapidly evolving range of services which can be tailored and effective depending on each specified context of use.
5. We found a **vibrant, creative and innovative** age assurance service sector with both technologically advanced and deployed solutions and a pipeline of new technologies transitioning from research to minimum viable product to testing and deployment stages indicating an evolving choice and future opportunities for developers. We found private-sector investment and opportunities for growth within the age assurance service sector.
6. We found robust understanding of and internal policy decisions regarding, the **handling of personal information** by trial participants. The privacy policies and practice statements collated for the Trial demonstrate a strong commitment to privacy by design principles, with consideration of what data was to be collected, stored, shared and then disposed of. Separating age assurance services from those of relying parties was useful as trial participants providing age assurance services more clearly only used data for the necessary and consented purpose of providing an age assurance result.

[1] The technology readiness level is explained at Technology readiness level - Wikipedia.

7. The systems under test **performed broadly consistently across demographic groups** assessed and despite an acknowledged deficit in training age analysis systems with data about Indigenous populations, we found no discernible difference in the outcomes for First Nations and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other multi-cultural communities using the age assurance systems. We found some systems performed better than others, but overall variances across race and gender did not deviate by more than the permitted tolerances set out in IEEE 2089.1.
8. We found **opportunities for technological improvement** including improving ease of use for the average person and enhancing the management of risk in age assurance systems. This could include through one-way blind access to verification of government documents, enabling connection to data holder services (like digital wallets) or improving the handling of a child's digital footprint as examples.
9. We found that **parental control and consent systems can be done** and can be effective when first introduced, however, we found limited evidence that they:
    - could cope with the evolving capacity of children (particularly through adolescence),
    - were able to enhance the rights of children to participate in the breadth of digital experiences,
    - were effective and secure in the management of a child's digital footprint.
10. We found that the systems were **generally secure** and consistent with information security standards, with developers actively addressing known attack vectors including AI-generated spoofing and forgeries. However, the **rapidly evolving threat environment** means that these systems - while presently fairly robust - cannot be considered infallible and must be continuously monitored and improved. Privacy compliance must be similarly monitored.
11. We found some concerning evidence that in the absence of specific guidance, service providers were **over-anticipating the eventual needs of regulators** about providing personal information for future investigations. Some providers were found to be building tools to enable regulators, law enforcement or Coroners to retrace the actions taken by individuals to verify their age which could lead to **increased risk of privacy breaches** due to unnecessary and disproportionate collection and retention of data.
12. The standards-based approach adopted by the trial, including through the **ISO/IEC FDIS 27566 Series,** the **IEEE 2089.1** and the **ISO/IEC 25000** series (the Product Quality Model) all provide a strong basis for the development of accreditation of conformity assessment and subsequent certification of individual age assurance providers in accordance with Australia's standards and conformance infrastructure.

FAQs – Age Assurance Technology Trial Preliminary Results

Q1: What is the Age Assurance Technology Trial?

The Age Assurance Technology Trial (AATT) is an independent, standards-based evaluation of digital age assurance technologies. It examines how different technical approaches (such as age verification, estimation, inference, parental controls and parental consent) can help manage children's access to age-restricted goods, content and services in Australia. The Trial was commissioned to assess the technological feasibility, privacy considerations and readiness of these methods, but it does not make policy recommendations.

Q2: Who is conducting the Trial?

The Trial is being conducted by the Age Check Certification Scheme (ACCS), an independent organisation with expertise in age assurance and compliance testing. ACCS is working alongside KJR, a software analytics and testing specialist and other technical and subject-matter experts to deliver the evaluation.

Q3: What are these 'preliminary findings'?

The preliminary findings are a set of twelve observations based on the first phases of the Trial's evaluation. They highlight broad patterns and trends seen across all the technologies under test. These findings are not policy recommendations or final conclusions, they are intended to provide transparency and early insights to stakeholders and the public. The preliminary findings may change in the final report.

Q4: Will these preliminary results include technical details or product-specific findings?

No. The preliminary findings will summarise high-level observations only. More detailed technical assessments, including vendor-specific performance data, will be included in the Trial's final report, which will be released after fair opportunity to respond has been provided to trial participants on their individual findings. This is standard practice in a technology trial drawing conclusions about the performance of individual products.

Q5: When can we expect the final report?

The final report, including detailed findings, technical testing outcomes and comprehensive analysis, is being delivered to Government shortly and is expected to be published later in the year.

Q6: How do these findings fit with existing or emerging standards?

The Trial's methodology is aligned with emerging international standards, including ISO/IEC FDIS 27566-1 (Age Assurance Framework) and IEEE 2089.1 (Age-Appropriate Digital Services). These standards emphasise principles like data minimisation, proportionality, inclusivity and privacy protection - values that underpin the Trial's approach.

Q7: Are there any policy implications from this release?

The Age Assurance Technology Trial is not a policy-setting exercise. The trial is about assessing whether or not age assurance **can** be done, not whether or not it **should** be done. Decisions about whether and how to implement age assurance are a matter for the Australian Government and relevant regulators.

Q8: Who has been engaged with during the project?

The Trial have established a Stakeholder Advisory Board bringing together a wide range of perspectives on age assurance (both positive and negative) and has developed its findings considering feedback from these stakeholders, the trial participants, the Australian Government, eSafety Commissioner, Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, Standards Australia, JAS-ANZ and other interested parties.

Editors can find our more information about the trial at Home - Age Assurance Technology Trial. This includes the full project plan and the evaluation proposal detailing more information about how the team have approached the trial.

Interview Requests

Please contact our media team at media@ageassurance.com.au to make arrangements for any interviews.