

# Artificial Intelligence

You may have noticed we have updated the rules of competition to ban generative AI in our assessment competitions. In case you do not understand the reasoning behind this, I have put together this information for you.

- This article is written to help members understand what AI is and why it is necessary to ban it from use in our club competitions.
- At the time of writing, our parent organisation, The Federation of Camera Clubs (NSW), has proposed some very severe measures to deal with members submitting AI generated images in camera club competitions, including a ban of up to three years in FCC related competitions.
- AI will have an ever-expanding presence in future society and will have a huge impact, for better or worse, upon the arts, including photography.
- AI is a sophisticated technology with a very broad reach, and it is developing so rapidly that this piece may well be out-dated or inaccurate by the time it is read.

## AI is already embedded in current image editing tools.

- The term “AI” is now, rightly, or wrongly, claimed to be behind myriad recent improvements to the numerous built-in editing tools we have come to know and appreciate.
- “AI” appears to be a catchphrase used by Adobe, Luminar and other software companies to suggest their products are cutting edge or best available and worth switching to or upgrading.
- The type of AI employed by traditional editing tools (masking, healing, cloning etc). is fundamentally different from the new “Generative AI” precisely because these traditional editing tools rely solely upon source material from the same image in which it is being employed.
- As far as our club is concerned, we are quite relaxed about continuing to use and encourage any editing methods that rely on source material created by the author him/herself.

## Generative AI is not acceptable.

- Generative AI is so-called because it “generates from scratch” new elements from a source external to your image, in other words, from a vast trove of internet data.
- Generative AI does not require or use any one source image to provide these new elements. Therefore, it avoids copying existing material belonging to another author and cannot be accused of plagiarism.
- Ask, or rather prompt Adobe Express, Adobe Firefly, Midjourney or DALL-E (to name a few) to make an image from scratch by typing a command into the program and it will generate, from scratch, (not copy) a new image.

## Example

You have taken a photograph of a lake at sunset with your camera, but you think the image would look nicer with a boat in it (perhaps because some judge once glibly suggested something along those lines). Unfortunately, there was no boat at the time the picture was taken.

- You could add a boat, but you do not have suitable boat image for compositing, and you don't necessarily have the skills to make a realistic composite. You decide to use generative AI and enter a suitable prompt.
- The generative AI software goes to work. It knows from countless previous searches amongst millions of images across the internet, what a boat looks like and then generates that boat and adds it to your image.
- You initially get a 'generic' boat and may need to progressively 'refine your prompt' if you wish to distinguish between a steamship and a yacht. There is a skill involved but it is not a photographic skill.

## Why is AI not acceptable to the Camera Club movement?

- The most important core function of camera clubs is to foster and develop our members' artistic, creative, and photographic skills.
- Editing your image through "Generative" AI methods is not in the spirit of bettering yourself as a photographer, which is really the point of becoming a photographic club member.
- Consider, for a moment, the essence of photography and what separates a photograph from the wider community of images (paintings, drawings etc). As described by Roland Barthes in his book *Camera Lucida*, a photograph is incontrovertible evidence of something "that-has-been". In other words that subject was in front of a lens at some point in time, no matter how short or how long ago. This is not the case for paintings and drawings and certainly not the case for AI generated images.
- Whilst AI can reasonably be considered an art form in its own right (like paintings and drawings) AI can and will never be able to replicate that moment in time that proves "something-has-been" because it was never there to experience that moment because it has no being, no consciousness and no personality. Not now and not ever.
- A photograph should be about the experience the photographer had with the subject or environment when he/she created the image that proves something was and did exist.
- We encourage competition, but we must not allow members to gain advantage by submitting AI generated or enhanced images in direct comparison with genuine photographs, with the exception of those traditional editing tools referred to above.
- Our club rules have always stated that a member must be prepared to state that an image is entirely their own work. The resultant image referred to in the example above contains your lake but not your boat. You can no longer honestly claim the image to be all your own work.
- AI is not the culprit but attempting to fool an audience or a judge into believing an AI generated or enhanced image is a genuine photograph is dishonest and has no place in our club.