

Senate Select Committee on Adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Attorney-General's Department

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David Shoebridge asked the following question:

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: amica has been extended recently to include parenting disputes. Often, tragically, in parenting disputes, issues of family violence arise. How does amica ensure that concerns about family violence are properly addressed in any proposals it makes about parenting arrangements, pickups, drop-offs? How does it do that?

Ms Priestly: I would say that it's best suited to couples who are still amicable and who wish to work out their arrangements relating to their children, property or finances between themselves. It's not intended for couples who have complex property or financial arrangements or where there's family violence.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I just went through and had a look at it, and it just took me through a bunch of prompts. And then, at the end of those, basically I would determine whether or not it's appropriate to invite my partner or former partner or whoever to engage in the process. I didn't see a bunch of prompts about those kinds of issues, and nor would I think that having one party to a relationship self-certify about that would be particularly good. Can you shed any light about how those kinds of protections are put in place on amica?

Ms Priestly: I don't have any further information available to me, Senator, so I'll have to take questions on notice.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Do you accept that, particularly in parenting disputes, having answers about that before you roll out an AI platform for parenting disputes is kind of critical?

Ms Priestly: I don't know what consultation or what questions or process may have been undertaken to rollout the amica. I just don't have that information with me or the officials with the relevant information here, so I'll need to take those questions on notice, Senator.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: This is one of the primary uses of AI that your department refers to. It's in a space where you would have thought these questions would be front and centre and be able to answer in an exchange like this. Can you explain why that information isn't here? If you're talking about using AI in parenting disputes and property disputes, surely answers like this would be, I would imagine, deeply entrenched and fully responded to and thoroughly considered by the department.

Ms Priestly: It's not in my division's area of responsibility. We have other colleagues in the department that look after family law, so I can take these questions back to them and respond to them on notice.

Ms Fitch: Senator, I might be able to add two pieces of information which are helpful to some degree. To reiterate, what I think Ms Priestly said, amica was developed and is operated by the Legal Services Commission of South Australia, so the Attorney-General's Department's role is not quite as direct as I think you might assume. And also, we understand you asked about where the data is stored. I understand that the amica privacy policy states that information is held in data centres within Australia and managed by Amazon Web Services.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: And are people informed about that when they're entering their data on the website, that it's going to an external corporate service to hold those incredibly intimate personal details that I described earlier?

Ms Fitch: Senator, without having looked closely at the accessibility or details of the privacy policy closely myself, yes, I understand that information is available transparently to individuals when considering whether to use the service.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Perhaps you can provide details about how that is communicated to individuals on notice?

Ms Fitch: Very happy to do that.

The response to the question is as follows:

amica.gov.au provides information and education about the process to determine if amica is right for them. Furthermore, the amica tool has an onboarding process that includes screening questions to assess whether the tool is appropriate for the parties involved, including specific questions about safety and family violence. Additionally, amica utilises two-factor authentication via SMS and email validation to provide enhanced security for parties at risk of coercion.

The Privacy Statement is available via the website and available to everyone. This statement provides information about the storage of data and disclosure. The Terms of Use provide information in relation to Consent to Contact and Limitation of Liability. Users are made aware of these statements during the onboarding process and must accept prior to progressing.