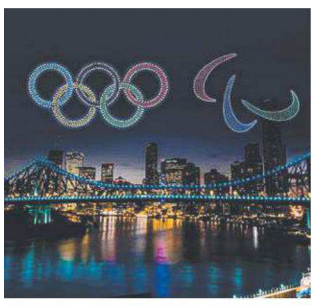


An artist's impression of the Brisbane drone show.

Spirit of Games in lights

Stephanie Bennett

A spectacular 500-strong drone show illuminating the iconic symbols of the Olympic and Paralympic Games over Brisbane's Story Bridge will set the stage for the city's "9 Years To Go" celebrations later this month.

The free display set to be held on the evening of July 22 is one of several events across the city marking the major milestone on the road to the 2032 Games.

It is also the first time Australia will have the Olympic Rings and Paralympic Agitos on prominent display since the Sydney 2000 Games.

Brisbane 2032 president Andrew Liveris said Brisbane and Queensland were now the "official home of the Olympics and Paralympics in Australia", and joined a number of Olympic and Paralympic sister cities across the world that made history hosting the Games.

"What better way to celebrate 9 Years To Go than inviting the whole community to be part of a once-in-a-lifetime moment, where people can 'meet' the Olympic Rings and Paralympic Agitos first-hand," he said.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said the milestone date meant Australia was one year closer to a "life-changing event that will place our beautiful country as the epicentre of the sporting world".

"Our 9 Years To Go event again places community engagement with Brisbane 2032 at the forefront as this will be a Games for the people of Brisbane, Queensland and Australia," she said.

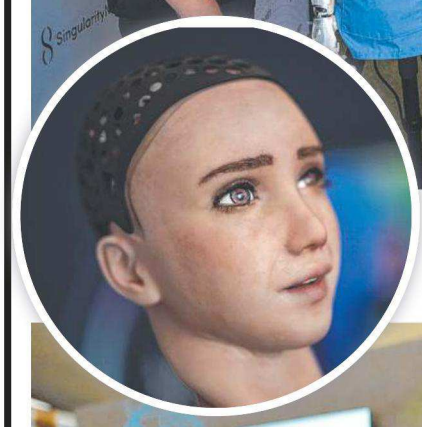
Paralympics Australia president Jock O'Callaghan said the presence of the Paralympic Agitos in Queensland was significant.

"Agito, in Latin, means 'I move'. The Paralympic Agitos ... symbolise the power of the Paralympic Movement."

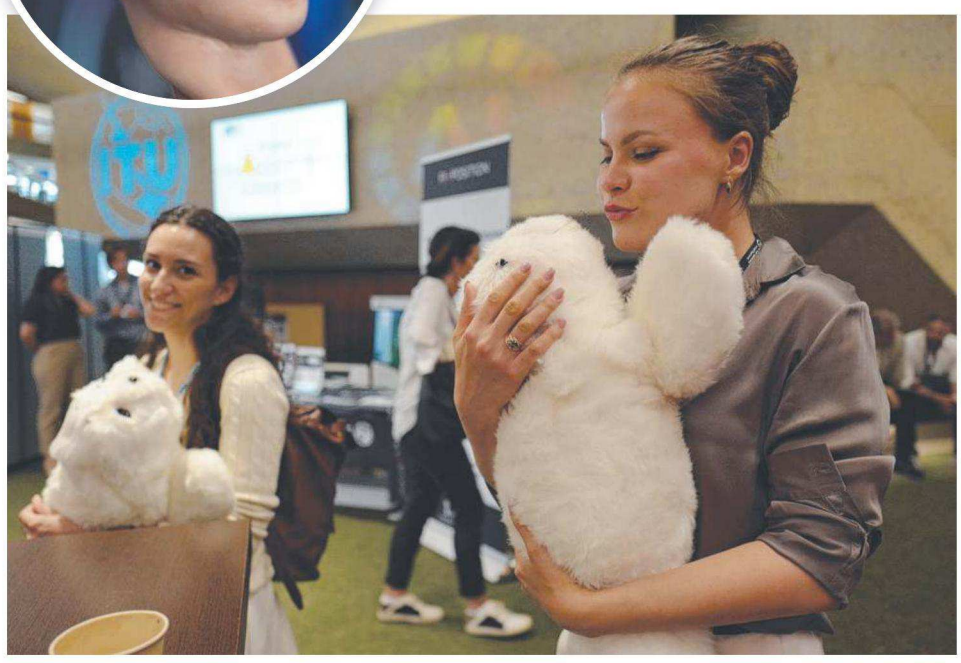
From digital twins to robot surgeons

BOTS & DOCS: IT'S A HEALTH REVOLUTION

Associate Professor Johan Verjans at University of Adelaide's Australian Institute for Machine Learning at Lot 14. Picture: Ben Clark



The future is already here ... this month's AI For Good Summit In Geneva showcased healthcare assistant robot "Grace", above and left, and kuddle seal robot Paro, a medical device for non-pharmacological therapy, below



Brad Crouch

Artificial intelligence is sparking a healthcare revolution that will create jobs, cost jobs, free clinicians from repetitive tasks and eventually may lead to robot surgeons, a leading expert in the field says.

It will turbocharge diagnosis of rare diseases and even sound the alert before diseases appear as people get personal healthcare computer assistants and even "digital twins".

The forecast comes in the wake of a major medical journal article reporting a team of healthcare professionals – assessing online responses – judged a chatbot's responses to patients' questions as better than those from doctors, not only for a diagnosis but for empathy with the patient.

The notion of a better bedside manner "from a bot than a doc" raises images of robot surgeons wielding scalpels, a scenario Johan Verjans says may happen one day.

"If a human can do it, a robot could do it eventually," he says. "Almost anything that can be done by humans can be done by computers. Sooner or later."

Associate Professor Verjans is a consultant cardiologist at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and Dr Jones & Partners, deputy director for Medical Machine Learning at the Australian Institute for Machine Learning in the University of Adelaide, and platform leader AI at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI).

As interest in AI surges amid competing claims it will be a massive boon for humanity or see self-aware robots take over the world, Dr Verjans says there is huge potential for AI to free up clinicians for their core work by taking over repetitive tasks, from drawing graphs to dictating letters.

Dr Verjans notes that AI can already do things in healthcare humans cannot.

"AI can detect gender from the eye," he observed. "If you ask ophthalmologists to do that they are not capable of doing that."

He says the ability of AI to use large amounts of data to detect subtle patterns has huge potential to detect and diagnose rare conditions which may stump humans.

"The diffuse pattern area will help us detect disease earlier, maybe in a pre-disease state," he said. "Because if you can measure everything you might be able to detect heart disease earlier, lung disease, maybe even cancer."

Strict regulations in healthcare will keep safety brakes on the looming revolution which paves the way for things like "digital twins" – the "normal,

75 in cable car rescue

QUITO: Dozens of people have been rescued after being trapped for nearly 10 hours on one of the world's highest tourist cable cars in Ecuador.

Seventy-five people were brought to the ground, all "safe and sound", in an operation involving firefighters and the police, the municipality of Quito said.

They were trapped after the system was paralysed due to an electrical problem.

Forty-eight people stuck at the system's uppermost terminal at an altitude of 4000m were brought to safety. Seventeen were rescued from gondolas stuck on the line, while another 10 came to the ground after the system restarted.

The cable car travels a distance of 2.5km between two terminals, the lowest at an altitude of 3100m above sea level.

Firefighters rescue passengers in the cable car cabins in Quito.

China fines fintech giants $2b

BEIJING: Chinese regulators say they have fined fintech giant Ant Group $1.5bn for "illegal acts" and handed an affiliate of rival Tencent a $620m penalty, adding that a long-running crackdown on tech firms was about to end.

Ant operates Alipay, the world's largest digital payments platform, which boasts hundreds of millions of monthly users. It was one of the most prominent targets of a sweeping crackdown on the country's tech sector.

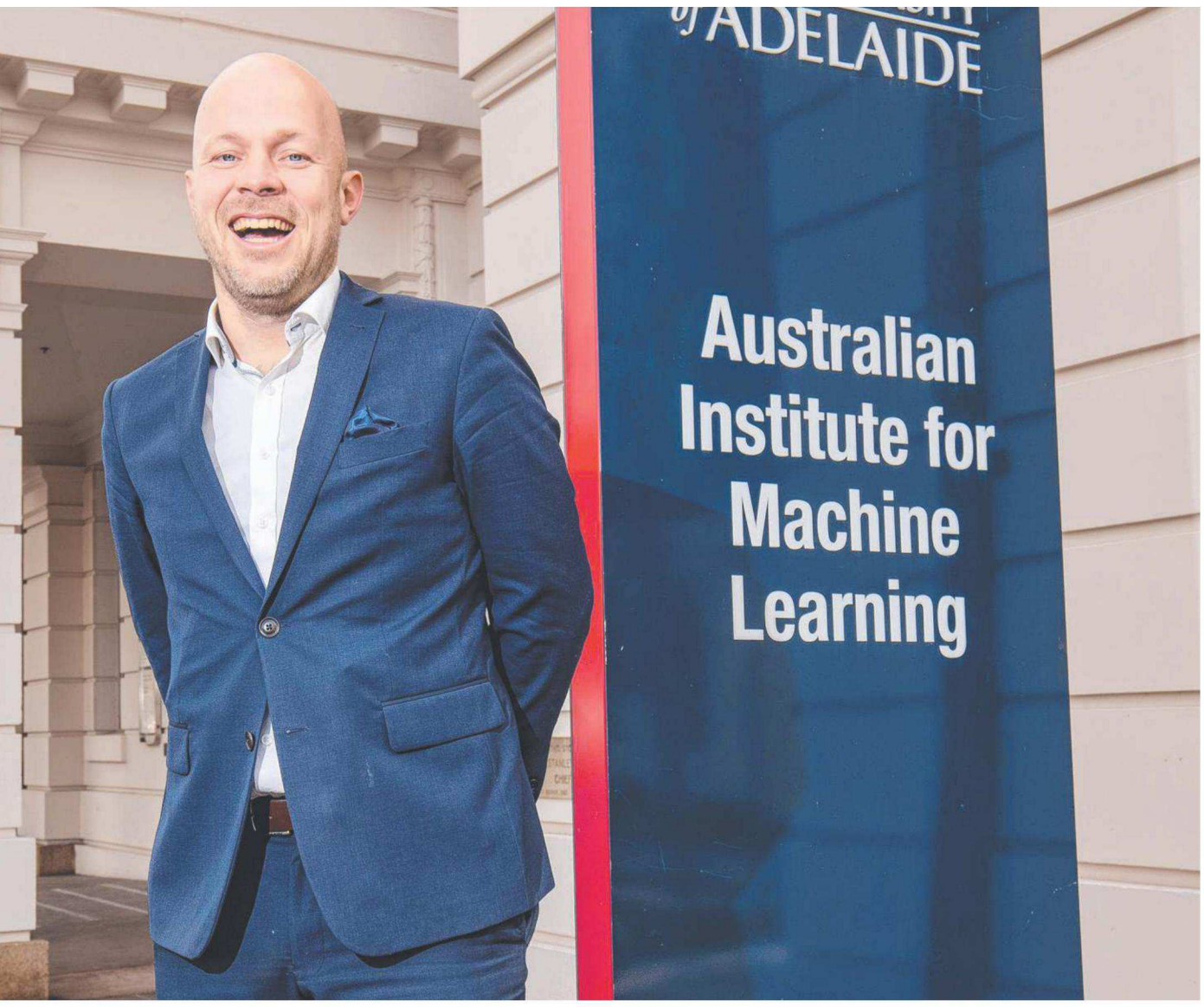
The China Securities Regulatory Commission said the penalty against Ant Group "included the confiscation of illegal income. It said that "at present, most of the outstanding problems in the financial business of platform enterprises have been rectified".

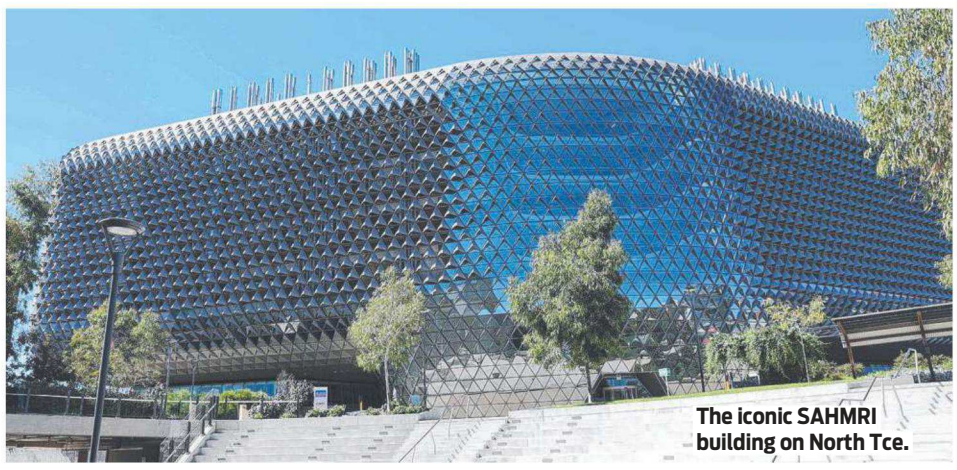
Alibaba shares were up 3.44 per cent in Hong Kong after reports the fine was coming, with analysts saying investors saw the punishment as a sign the crackdown was ending.

Ant said it would "comply with the terms of the penalty in all earnestness and sincerity".

The government has sought to rein in runaway personal debt and chaotic lending in the private sector, and upstart Ant's growing profile was viewed as a challenge to vested interests in the country's state-dominated financial sphere.

and super-quick diagnoses




The iconic SAHMRI building on North Tce.

healthy" you based on your health data, which can be checked against a digital version of your latest data to detect anything slightly amiss.

It also opens up options for computer health "personal assistants" to keep an eye on your health at home, or automatically select cohorts at risk for hospital admission, readmission or even dying.

AI may also see changes to routine visits to the GP.

"GPs will be enabled to become more super-specialist," Dr Verjans says. "They will be able to treat the easy things that specialists typically do now.

"And I think specialists will become even more specialised because a lot of the easy tasks will be done by the patient or the patient with the GP."

There will be pitfalls along the way. Dr Verjans noted computers make mistakes – as do humans. An AI personal healthcare assistant may misdiagnose a heart attack leading to a person staying at home instead of calling an ambulance – but also may end up "sending too many people with chest pain to the hospital where a GP would have said 'no, that's just a muscle on your chest'," he said.

He is currently involved in a world-first clinical trial using AI to assist in assessing chest pain in a hospital emergency department.

"A torn muscle of the chest is difficult for a computer to distinguish from a real heart pain. Eventually there will be automation in the background that will be seamless and hopefully will be faultless, or have a fault percentage that is acceptable compared to human faults."

Dr Verjans noted Adelaide is well placed to capitalise on the AI health revolution thanks to factors ranging from its statewide imaging service and statewide public hospital electronic medical record system to the state's political stability and the Adelaide BioMed City precinct.

"We have big pharma companies coming to Adelaide because we have a track record in world-leading AI expertise," he said.

"Also, they like a 'one-stop shop' in a state with a population that is not too big and not too small to help solve disease problems.

"We are all going to have much more powerful tools that significantly will increase what a person is capable of doing, but also raises the bar on what a person needs to do to be a productive member of society."

Screen threats for our children

Porn, violence toll of tech

Nathan Davies

AN Adelaide author and educator says she regularly sees South Australian children acting out sexually explicit and violent scenes they've seen online, and that more needs to be done to protect them from the influence of the internet.

Karen Keavy, who specialises in helping children and adults recover from abuse and neglect, said schools needed staff who could deal solely with issues arising from technology.

Ms Keavy said she was deeply disturbed by recent reports from a western suburbs mother who said her 10-year-old daughter was threatened with rape by male classmates.

However, she said such incidents weren't isolated, and parents, schools and the government needed to take the influence of unsupervised internet use far more seriously.

"It's horrific, it really is," Ms Keavy said. "I've been teaching for 20 years and counselling for eight. I'm in an out of schools all the time, working one-on-one with kids as a counsellor.

"They are seeing adult content – the average age that a child first sees pornography is seven."

Ms Keavy said children were the product of what they had seen, heard and experienced and that in too many cases they were left to their own devices on screens.

She said society was changing at a rate never seen before, and it was tough for parents and educators to keep on top of everything children watched.

"But we need to keep up with that technology, we need to be really vigilant about what kids are viewing online," Ms Keavy said. "There are websites like esafety.gov.au where parents can go for advice on filters and what to do if your child has viewed disturbing material."

Karen Keavy

Ms Keavy said more funding and resourcing needed to be available to schools.

"Training teachers is really important, but teachers are also under the pump," she said.

"We're playing catch-up on the basics like maths and literacy after Covid, and things like teaching protective behaviours falls by the wayside, which is really sad.

"It is expected that this curriculum is taught, but the wording used is that children are 'exposed' to it. So, in many cases, it becomes a box-ticking exercise.

"We need far more comprehensive education than that. In the mid-1980s, SA was a leader in the field of protective behaviours, consent and sex education. Sadly, this is not the case today.

"I think this is probably beyond the scope of teachers today. I think we need experts in schools. The government, to their credit, have put wellbeing officers into schools, but I think we need go further."

Ms Keavy said that beyond pornography and violence, the internet had an impact on many other aspects of youngsters' lives, from reducing attention spans to the prevalence of body issues.

"It's a challenging issue, but it's absolutely necessary," she said. "We have to help these kids."

An gunman in the West Bank.

Calls for peace just trigger more violence

NABLUS: Three Palestinians were killed yesterday in the occupied West Bank, a day after the United Nations urged a "meaningful political process" to stem renewed violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israeli forces killed two Palestinian fighters when a firefight erupted during an Israeli raid on the northern West Bank city of Nablus, Israeli and Palestinian officials said.

The Palestinian health ministry announced "two martyrs and three injured as a result of the occupation (Israeli) aggression on Nablus". The Israeli army reported no injuries among its forces.

The army said it had entered Nablus to arrest two individuals wanted over a shooting this month targeting Israeli police at a West Bank settlement that resulted in no casualties.

The Palestinian health ministry in a statement identified the two dead as Khairi Shaheen, 34, and Hamza Maqbul, 32. The army said they "were killed following an exchange of fire with security forces".

"During the activity, weapons which were used by the terrorists were confiscated," the army added.

Witnesses said Israeli troops entered Nablus and surrounded a house in the Old City, a stronghold of armed Palestinian groups, before calling on those inside to turn themselves in.

The Abu Ali Mustapha Brigades, the armed wing of the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), claimed Shaheen and Maqbul as its members.

Later, a third Palestinian, 24-year-old Abdel Jawad Hamdan Saleh, was killed during a demonstration against settlements in the village of Umm Safa, north of Ramallah, the Palestinian health ministry said. The village has been a flashpoint for frequent clashes between its residents and Israeli settlers.

The deaths come amid a rising tide of violence.

Israel on Monday launched its largest operation in years in the West Bank, which it has occupied since 1967.

Twelve Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were killed during the large-scale raid on Jenin refugee camp.