

Commissioner for Children

Health: *Personalised Medicine*

As biotechnology advances, today's children will be able to personalise their healthcare when they are tomorrow's adults. Genetic testing will be able to map out an individual's risk factors from birth to old age, while designer drugs will be manufactured to work specifically with each citizen's genetics and lifestyle.

But do people really want to know that they are likely to get a fatal disease twenty years in the future? How can we ensure that everybody has access to this medicine? And who will own the rights to our genetic data? As Commissioner for Children, I urge the government to work on these policy areas now.

Society: *AI Friends*

Now we know artificial intelligence is possible, we have to plan for the consequences. Computers may or may not become sentient, but we can be sure that within twenty years they will be smart enough to *seem* like a real companion.

By the late 2030s, children will grow up with a personalised AI 'friend' that is always loyal, never judges, and educates as it plays. At the same time, their parents needn't worry about a lonely old age – a robot nurse will be able to chat to them about old times even while it monitors their health.

But what impact will these easy friendships have on real human-to-human interaction? Will it be murder to erase someone's AI buddy? And how will we know whom to trust online, when it becomes difficult to tell who is human and who is not?

Culture: *Fluid Identities*

As one of the youngest Time Commissioners, I am proud to say that my generation has already launched a social revolution. Many people today can present as whichever gender or personality best represents them, and this is only likely to increase. By the 2040s, people will be able to look like any human, animal or object they want in fully-realised virtual worlds. More than that, new genetic medicines will allow daring fashionistas to push their look beyond human norms and maybe even add animal parts to their bodies.

Already, some people today are uncomfortable with what they see as 'unnatural' identities. If things move too fast, will there be a backlash where *any* social or biological engineering of our identities becomes illegal? Who among the social radicals of today will be the conservatives of tomorrow?

Climate: *Food insecurity*

Today's generation are working to turn climate change around, but too slowly. In twenty years, extreme weather and desertification will have rendered significant parts of the world's farmland unusable, while the global population will have risen to 9 billion. Politicians don't like to say it, but we know this means that food will be more expensive and harder to get.

As Commissioner for Children, it is my job to start thinking *today* about the food sources of tomorrow. The next generation will get used to eating insects, krill and seaweed, as well as looking to some of the foods that indigenous Australians ate for thousands of years. Real meat will be too carbon-intensive, and only eaten on special occasions. Luckily, laboratory-grown meat will be there to take its place.

How do we convince people to change their diets? What about new cooking shows! 'Bugs For Breakfast'?

Justice: *Climate justice*

Many of today's climate criminals will still be alive in twenty years. As Commissioner for Children, I represent the generation who will grow up with climate disasters triggered before they were born, and they will want someone to blame.

Ecocide, 'the destruction of the environment', is not currently a crime - though there are attempts being made to change that. But today's worst polluters can no longer pretend they don't know the fatal impacts of their actions.

Even if their actions are not currently illegal, there are precedents in international law to seek justice. There was no legal concept of a 'crime against humanity' until World War II, but that did not stop us setting up international tribunals afterwards to charge people with exactly that. Whole countries went to war, but it was the leaders who were found guilty.

But is that the precedent we want to follow? Should we lock up today's fossil fuel CEOs when they are old, or declare an amnesty and forgive ourselves for all contributing to climate change?

Environment: *The Great Cleanup*

Living in the 2040s will be like waking up the morning after a great party that got out of control. The world will be covered with empty bottles, rusting cars and microplastics. From the bottom of the oceans to the top of Mount Everest there will be a layer of poison waste.

The bright side? Nine billion people keen to roll up their sleeves and get to work. By 2044 we will need to give the whole planet a vacuum. Cellulose nets to sieve microplastics out of the ocean, organic machines like floating jellyfish to suck carbon out of the atmosphere. And all Australians will need to help too, with genetically-engineered bacteria in our compost heaps that will chomp up grandpa's old mobile phones and turn them back into fresh soil.

It will be the biggest Clean Up Australia day ever! But by the end of the century, we can live lightly on a green planet that is healthier than it has been for three hundred years.