

**Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett**  
**Next GenAI Hackathon 2026**  
**Thursday 26 March 2026**  
**Cockburn Bowling and Recreation Club**

---

Good morning everyone.

Welcome to the Next GenAI Hackathon for 2026.

I acknowledge the Whadjuk people of the Nyungar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, and I pay my respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to First Nations people here today.

It is a pleasure to be here for the inaugural Next GenAI Hackathon and to see so many bright young minds gathered together today.

I welcome the students and teachers from Lakeland Senior High School, John Curtin College of the Arts and Rossmoyne Senior High School.

Thank you also to the industry mentors joining us from ASC, Austal, Babcock and BAE Systems, as well as our facilitators from ClearAI.

Events like this highlight the power of partnership – bringing together schools, industry and local government to invest in the next generation.

The world is changing rapidly.

Technologies like artificial intelligence are transforming how we work, how we solve problems and how industries operate.

But at the heart of every technological breakthrough is something very human:

**Curiosity.**

That curiosity is exactly what today is about.

Hackathons are exciting because they challenge you to think differently.

Today, you'll be working in teams, exploring a real-world problem, testing ideas and building a solution in just a few short hours.

That requires creativity, collaboration and resilience, skills that will serve you well in any career you choose.

And you couldn't be doing it in a better place.

The City of Cockburn is home to globally significant industries in defence, marine engineering and advanced manufacturing.

The companies represented here today are working on projects that have national and international significance and impact.

It's not hard to imagine that some of the future engineers, innovators and leaders in those industries may well be sitting in this room.

I want to commend all of you for stepping outside your comfort zones and taking part.

I would also like to thank the mentors and businesses who are giving their time today.

By supporting initiatives like this, you're helping build the future workforce and strengthening our local innovation ecosystem.

To the students: make the most of the day.

Ask questions.

Share ideas.

Challenge yourselves and each other.

The City of Cockburn is proud to support initiatives like the Next GenAI Hackathon because they help cultivate the next generation of thinkers, creators and problem-solvers.

I look forward to seeing the solutions you develop today.

Thank you, and good luck to all teams.