

OBAN · ASFA 2026 INNOVATION PAVILION

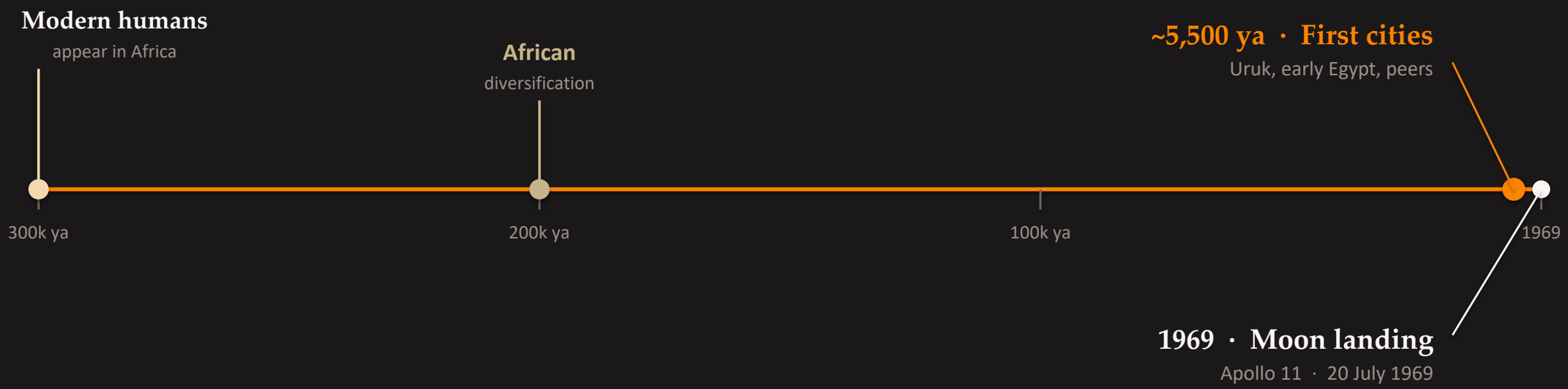
AI, superannuation administration and a hinge in human history

Something enormous is happening.

We keep talking about AI as if it were another product cycle. Step back far enough — not years, not centuries, but tens of thousands of years — and it looks like one of those rare moments when the rules of human history change.

FIGURE 1 · LINEAR TIME

Three hundred thousand years on a straight line.



Egypt, China, Rome, the Renaissance, industry, the internet, the phone in your pocket — crushed into the far tip of that line.

THE CALENDAR TEST

If humanity were one year, cities arrive at Christmas.

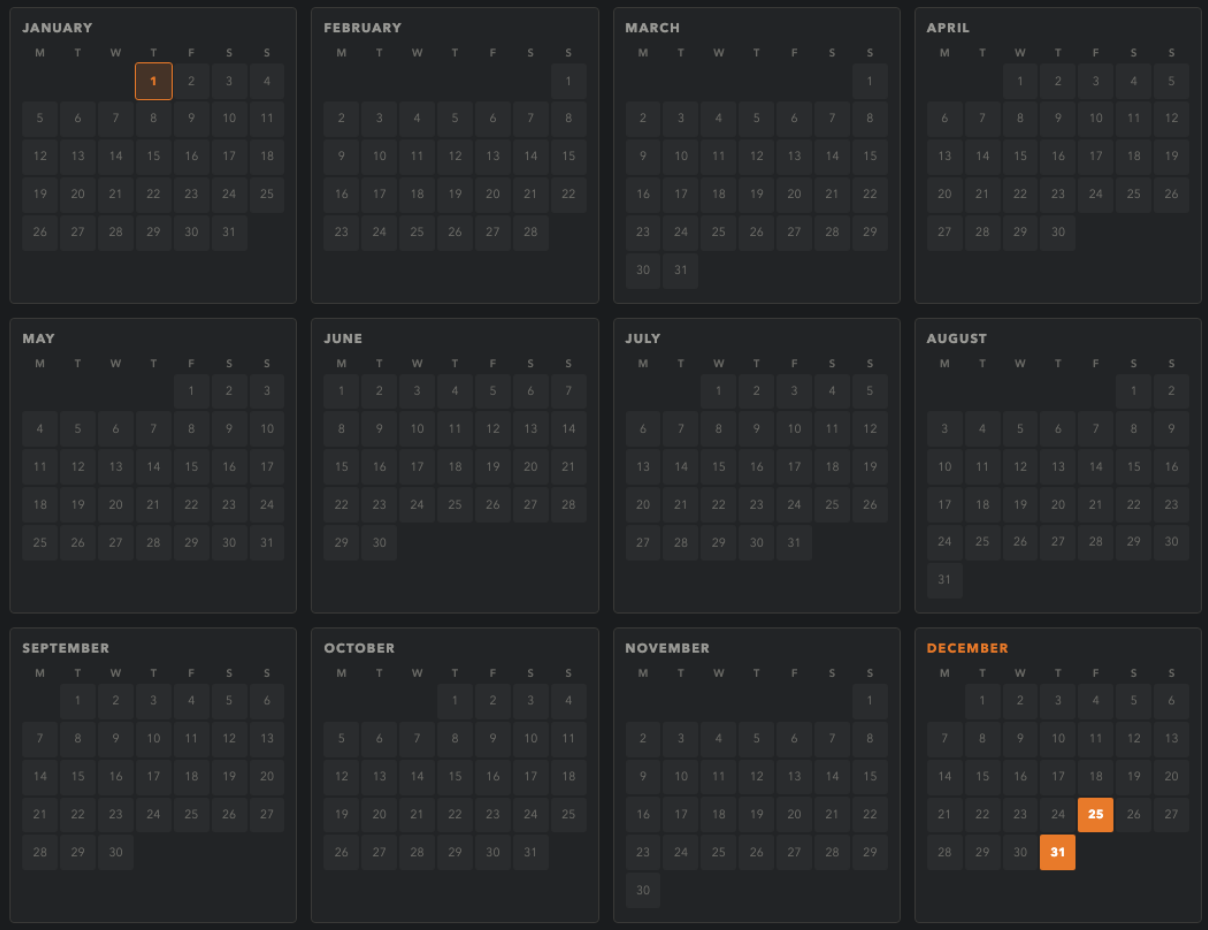
1 January · we appear

25 Dec · first cities · 31 Dec night · Moon

1 JANUARY
Modern humans appear.

25 DECEMBER
The first cities. *Urban history begins in Christmas week.*

LATE 31 DECEMBER
Human beings walk on the Moon — *roughly the last hour before midnight.*



That is arithmetic, not poetry. For more than ninety-eight percent of the time modern humans have existed, there were no cities.

THE HINGE

Then we offloaded memory. Now we offload cognition.

ABOUT FIVE THOUSAND YEARS AGO

Cities, writing, states, surplus. Intelligence could accumulate through institutions. Knowledge outlived the person who discovered it. Power scaled beyond the tribe.

WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW

We are offloading analysis, code, language and decisions onto machines. Not another app cycle — a new substrate for power and memory. Still early. Already difficult to unwind.

Leverage is shifting toward those who can direct these systems — and away from those locked to old skill sets

THE STATUS QUO

Our Industry had two paths. The same thirty-year problem.

LEGACY SYSTEMS

Most of them more than 30 years old.

ISSUES

Designed before SuperStream, the modern internet, smartphones and the cloud. Batch plus manual intervention. Unique data models — every message transformed.

COSTS

High maintenance. Limited room to improve. Replacement is multi-year and multi-million, so funds keep running cores well past useful life.

RISKS

Payday Super on a 1980s processing model. Stuck — or another high-risk rewrite. Key-person and vendor dependency on dying platforms.

OUTSOURCED ADMINISTRATION

Someone else's system. Someone else's roadmap.

ISSUES

The fund does not own the admin. Scale is the administrator's only efficiency lever — usually on the same 30-year cores. Extra hubs and clearing houses because standards were resisted.

COSTS

Per-member fees that do not fall with your own efficiency. Change as extras. Each extra provider is another touch-point clipping the member.

RISKS

Lock-in: leaving is another multi-year programme. Capability walks out of the fund. Your product waits in someone else's queue.

Both paths were rational when a modern admin was a multi-year, high-risk programme. That is no longer the only arithmetic of modern superannuation administration.

Can you simply get AI to write you a Super Admin System?

In theory, yes. In practice, maybe ...

AI-LED APPROACH

- Assemble a small team of experts
- Assemble all artefacts, specifications and links
- Set the AI to work … and hope for the best
- Review the AI’s output
- Test, test and test again

HYBRID APPROACH

- Assemble a small team of experts
- Assemble all artefacts, specifications and links
- Take proven design concepts and modernise them
- Use AI as the engineering and software team
- Test, test and test again

Our team has been building super administration systems since 1986, and we tried both approaches.

What we found

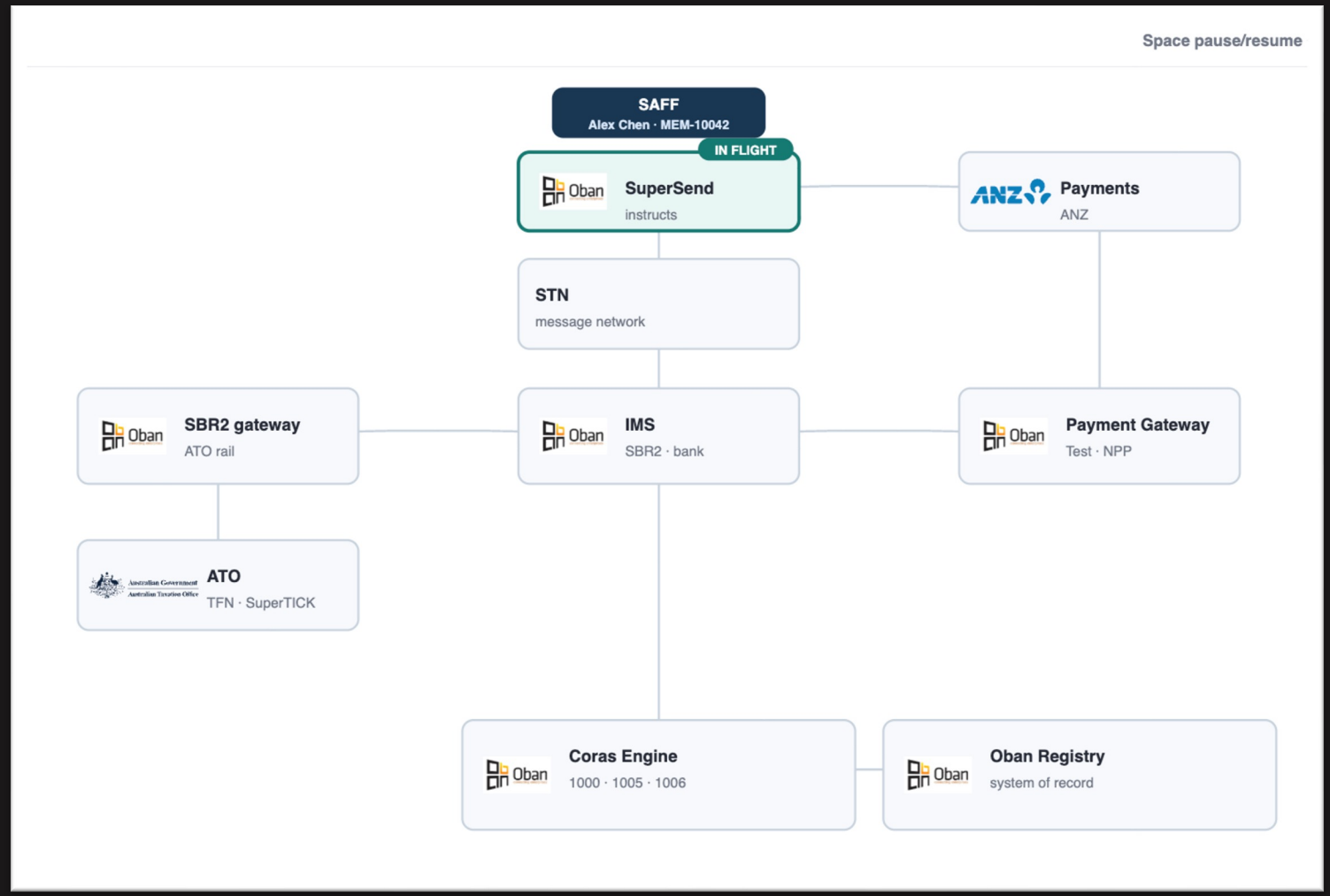
- Both approaches worked
- The hybrid approach worked better for what funds need today
- So far (and this may change), AI is:
  - A brilliant engineer, programmer, actuary, accountant and artist, easily matching the output of very skilled people
  - Unlikely to deliver a solution people want to use without significant human input
  - A brilliant tool and technician, not a solution in itself
  - A savant without judgement: extraordinary skill, no sense of what matters



How Oban uses AI to improve industry processes

We use AI:

- To test existing and new ideas, very quickly
- As the engineer and programmer that builds the solution
- As the tester, running thousands of tests that would take months or years by hand
- To build a real-world working model of our industry: the Model Office (MoT)



IN PRACTICE

One member's year, run end to end in the Oban Model Office



Year · 1 July 2025 → 30 June 2026 — 29 of 29 steps

	Start	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan · TTR	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	30 Jun
In	48,250.00	960.00	960.00	960.00	960.00	960.00	960.00	960.00	960.00	960.00	960.00	960.00	960.00	0.00
Tax	0.00	-144.00	-144.00	-144.00	-144.00	-144.00	-144.00	-144.00	-144.00	-144.00	-144.00	-144.00	-144.00	0.00
Fees	0.00	-12.02	-12.10	-12.21	-12.34	-12.40	-12.52	-12.66	-12.66	-12.73	-12.77	-12.78	-12.82	0.00
Pension	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-500.00	-500.00	-500.00	-500.00	-500.00	-500.00	0.00
Growth	-228.07	75.98	-194.00	-39.22	199.71	-361.49	119.67	209.42	-286.48	199.14	47.18	-214.29	-42.58	103.78
Bal	**48,021.93**	**48,901.89**	**49,511.79**	**50,276.36**	**51,279.73**	**51,721.84**	**52,644.99**	**53,157.75**	**53,174.61**	**53,677.02**	**54,027.43**	**54,116.36**	**54,376.96**	**54,480.74**

In **$59,770.00** Tax **–$1,728.00** Fees **–$150.01** Pension **–$3,000.00** Earnings **–$411.25** Balance **$54,480.74**

Waiting · Running · Done · checks pass · Failed

Notifications

When	Kind	PRN	Amount	Text
26 June 2026, 1:05:45 pm	debit	TTR-55000164-20260626	$500.00	TTR pension · member 55000164
25 June 2026, 9:00:00 am	credit	CTR-LC261026125403-997cd4	$960.00	Employer SG · 1 contributions
26 May 2026, 1:05:43 pm	debit	TTR-55000164-20260526	$500.00	TTR pension · member 55000164
25 May 2026, 9:00:00 am	credit	CTR-LC261026125403-c762d4	$960.00	Employer SG · 1 contributions

29 of 29
steps run and checked, from joining to year end

$3,000
TTR pension: 6 × $500, each paid out through the Payment Gateway

Every figure
checked against independent arithmetic

A model of the industry, not a slide

AI might be the pen that replaces the chisel, but it's not yet the author

• In ancient Rome, an inscription took two kinds of skills:

- The **lapicida**, a highly skilled stonecutter, who carved the letters into the stone
- The **ordinator**, a master scribe, who laid out and chalked the letters on the stone before the carver ever began

Be the **Ordinator**, not the **Lapicida**.

