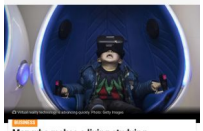

Virtual reality technology is advancing quickly. Photo: Getty Images

Technology

Man who makes a living studying rollercoasters says virtual reality could replace real theme park rides

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AS theme parks look to retrofit rides with virtual reality capability, a Queensland rollercoaster academic claims they are embracing technology the very technology that could put them out of business.

Malcolm Burt, aka Dr Coaster, wrote his PhD on why roller coasters exist, and has consulted for theme parks around the world.

He is working on a second PhD on what is needed to create the ultimate VR theme park and said rapid advancements in software and hardware may threaten the future of real amusement parks.

QUT academic Malcolm Burt is helping to design the world's first virtual reality waterslide.

"VR can trick the brain into believing you are 'present' in an experience, and this is something being explored by all sorts of entertainment industries including sport," he said.

"It's a safe way to experience an adrenaline rush but I think there are some worrying potential consequences.

"For example, it won't help the global obesity epidemic and theme parks are usually something you experience with family and friends. VR has the potential to isolate."

On the Gold Coast, both major theme park companies have introduced virtual reality elements to existing thrill rides — including Dreamworld's Mick Doohan-retrofit Skyfliter and Movie World's Batman-themed Arkham Asylum.

Warner Bros Movie World has installed virtual reality technology on its Arkham Asylum ride, notable Batman villain Joker and Scarecrow's close pals with Scarecrow's CEO Craig Anderson. Picture: Steve Pohlner

Villain Roadshow Theme Parks CEO Clark Kirby, who oversees Sea World, Movie

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