

# Ron McCallum Debate

## Transcript

AIER Ron McCallum Debate 2024 Halloween Special

*Artificial Intelligence at Work – Trick or Treat*

31 October 2024, Wesley Conference Centre, Sydney

Please note, timecode references are to the video recording, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2H0vqhtMJcl>

### Participants:

- The Hon Murray Watt MP, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, by video address
- Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, by video address
- Emeritus Professor Ron McCallum AO, Patron, Australian Institute of Employment Rights
- Justice Adam Hatcher, President, Fair Work Commission
- Michael Harmer, Chairperson, Harmers Workplace Lawyers and President, AIER
- Bill Simpson-Young, Chief Executive, Gradient Institute
- Anna Boucher, Associate Professor, Sydney University, VP – Independent, AIER
- Liam O'Brien, Assistant Secretary, Australian Council of Trade Unions
- Helen Cooney, National Assistant Secretary, SDA
- David Marr, Commentator, Journalist, Author, Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance
- John Ritchotte, Senior Labour Relations & Collective Bargaining Specialist, International Labour Organization
- James Fleming, Executive Director, Australian Institute of Employment Rights

**00:00:13,400**

**James Fleming:** Good evening everyone and welcome to the 14th annual Ron McCallum debate on Industrial Relations, the Halloween special. Tonight's debate topic is artificial intelligence at work: trick or treat?

As artificial intelligence develops, it can seem scary at times, in that uncanny valley, like Frankenstein's monster, between living and dead, human and nonhuman. Is it friend or foe? Here to help us or to replace us? Some are calling AI the dawn of a new age of unprecedented prosperity; others consider it more dangerous than nuclear weapons. Will AI exacerbate existing inequalities and biases, or cure them? Will it cause mass job displacement and unemployment, or improve job quality and get rid of boring work? Will it upend the very nature of the economy and mean we don't need to work at all? We'll debate these things tonight and more.

So welcome to our live audience at the Wesley Conference Center in Sydney and also to the 400 or so people joining us online around the country. I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet and to pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. I'm James Fleming, the executive director of the Australian Institute of Employment Rights.

The Institute aims to promote better industrial relations in the public interest and is inspired by the structure of the International Labor Organization. So we try to promote new and bold ideas for debate and IR reform and to encourage fundamental labor standards and social dialogue between unions, business, and government. We put on events like this,

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we write submissions, and we publish the Journal of Work and Ideas. We put some of our ideas for how regulation can keep work fair and also keep ahead of technological change like AI in our latest book, "A New Work Relations Architecture," and we're giving copies of that away to everybody who's in attendance tonight if you'd like one. And if you like what we're doing and you want to support us, please consider buying a copy for a friend. You can purchase it half price from our website with the discount code "Debate2024." And please consider joining The Institute as a member or subscribing to our mailing list.

So a big thanks to our esteemed debate participants and keynote speakers and to our main sponsors tonight, Harmers Workplace Lawyers, who help make this debate possible. We've also got a lucky door prize tonight and thank you to Murray Proctor and his colleagues at Franklin Athanasellis Cullen Lawyers in Queensland for sponsoring tonight's prize, which is a \$200 book voucher from Booktopia. So I actually used AI to pick someone at random from the registration list and the winner is Linda Hauser from the Queensland Nurses and Midwives Union. So congratulations Linda, we'll get that voucher to you.

So now turning to tonight's proceedings and the order of events, we're going to explore the immense promise and spooky dark side of artificial intelligence and work. And we're going to do it by first showing you a three-minute film we've produced introducing the topic. Then you're going to hear from John Ritchotte at the International Labor Organization, and apologies, he's joining us from Geneva, but we've had a technical difficulty and we're not getting vision from him, so that will just be by audio. Then you're going to hear from the Minister for Workplace Relations, Senator Murray Watt, and then the Shadow Minister, Senator Michaelia Cash, and then you'll hear from our beloved Patron Emeritus, Professor Ron McCallum.

After that, we'll get into the debate, which will be between a panel of union leaders, workers, business representatives, and experts. And each of the six panelists in that debate will get to make a five-minute introductory speech before the debate proper begins. And that debate will be moderated by the president of the Fair Work Commission, Justice Hatcher, and he'll introduce all of our panelists tonight.

So to get started, let me introduce Ron McCallum, after whom the debate is named. So Ron has been the AI's Patron for many years and he's one of Australia's most well-regarded law experts and one of the world's leading disability Advocates. He's a past chair of the United Nations committee on the rights of persons with disabilities. He's also the first totally blind person to have been appointed to a full professorship in any field at any university in Australia or New Zealand. He's a former professor and Dean of law at Sydney University and he was Senior Australian of the Year in 2011.

The first of our keynote speakers is going to be John from the International Labor Organization. John Ritchotte has been with the ILO since 1999 and he currently works as a senior specialist in labor relations and collective bargaining. So please note the proceedings are being recorded and we'll upload this online afterwards. So now I'd like to go ahead and play the three-minute film. This year we thought we'd let AI make the film and parts of it are, I think, startlingly good and others are quite glitchy and weird. So have a lookout for the senior citizen on fire, for example. Anyway, see what you think...

[Film plays]

00:05:23,759

*Shadows lengthen, jack-o'-lanterns flicker, and a chill wind whispers through the streets. It's Halloween, a night of tricks and treats, where the line between reality and fantasy blurs. But this year, a new kind of fear is creeping in, a fear more profound than any ghost story: the robots are coming. Not just for factory floors, but for offices and white-collar jobs too. Artificial intelligence is rapidly learning to perform tasks once thought to be exclusively human. The threat of displacement looms large, casting a shadow of uncertainty over the future of work. Stephen Hawking's words echo in the darkness: "The rise of powerful AI will either be the best or the worst thing ever to happen to humanity." Are we facing a future of unprecedented prosperity or a descent into technological unemployment? A trick or a treat?*

*Nick Bostrom, in his book "Superintelligence," paints a stark picture of AI's potential dangers, urging us to consider the existential risks before it's too late. Will AI truly liberate us from mundane tasks, freeing us to pursue more meaningful work? Or will it render us obsolete, replaced by algorithms and robots? The promise is immense: increased productivity, groundbreaking discoveries, and solutions to some of humanity's most pressing challenges. But at what cost? As we*

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*stand on the precipice of this AI revolution, we are faced with more questions than answers. How do we ensure a just transition for workers? How do we prevent bias and discrimination from being encoded into our algorithms? And how do we safeguard our privacy in an increasingly surveilled world?*

*Tonight, we delve into these questions and more in our Halloween special debate. Join us as we explore the eerie landscape of AI and work and try to discern the tricks from the treats. This Halloween, the future of work is being rewritten.*

**00:08:01,280**

**James Fleming:** I told you bits of it were strange. Okay, now I'd like to go ahead and welcome John Ritchotte from the ILO. Over to you, John. Welcome.

**John Ritchotte:** Thank you very much, James. And apologies again for the technological problem. Emeritus Professor Ron McCallum, Justice Adam Hatcher, president of the Fair Work Commission, dear participants, it's a great honour to join you this morning from the ILO. That was a fascinating clip that we just watched. The topic of artificial intelligence has naturally become one of great importance to the ILO due to its impact on the world of work, excuse me, as well as to governments, trade unions, and employers around the world. The ILO Director-General has proposed to our governing body to incorporate the issue into our next program and budget, which is our most important document guiding our work for 2026 and 2027, as a dedicated outcome that the ILO will pursue. This would include, for example, support to member states and workers and employers organisations to promote the inclusive and effective governance of the digital economy.

Of course, the ILO's research and policy work on these topics is not waiting until 2026. I would like to make a few points on what we have learned thus far and reflected also in the clip that we just saw. With regard to research findings, whether the impacts of artificial intelligence are positive or negative depends on how, having a voice in its design, implementation, and use. The evidence thus far shows that artificial intelligence outcomes are more positive when workers and their representatives are consulted during the adoption of the technology. And potential downsides are the further undermining and identification of trade union representatives under certain circumstances and its use in anti-union discrimination.

When we look at the policy implications with regard to freedom of association and collective bargaining at the enterprise and sectoral level, it implies a need to engage in collective bargaining as a first form of reflexive regulation. We already see collective agreements shaping AI principles and regulations in industries such as logistics and entertainment, often ahead of legislative measures. With regard to existing laws and regulations, for example on discrimination, these should apply as well to artificial intelligence and should be implemented and used.

Nevertheless, in terms of a broader regulatory environment, there are areas that need to be examined. For example, a right to information and consultation on the functioning of algorithms and on the use and privacy of data; the protection of the right to organise and action against surveillance; the right to bargain collectively on technological change and its implications for the workplace; and access to justice and to remedy, including in AI supply chains. And finally, of course, we find that social dialogue is key to the development of regulatory frameworks on artificial intelligence and platform work at the national level.

On that note, I would also like to draw your attention to a September 2024 joint statement of the Labor 7 and Business 7, which are the representatives of trade union and employers organisations of the G7 group of countries, entitled "Shaping the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence Through Social Dialogue." It contains a substantial amount of detailed policy guidance on the topic.

Finally, I would like to conclude by recalling that the next International Labor Conference in June 2026 will feature a very prominent discussion on decent work in the platform economy with a view to potentially developing a new international labor standard on this topic. As with governments, trade unions, and employers organisations around the world, the government of Australia, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry have all provided replies to the questionnaire sent out by the ILO, which is the first step in shaping the potential future labor standard. It promises to be a fascinating discussion. Thank you very much for your attention. Over to you, James.

**00:13:42,360**



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**James Fleming:** Thanks, John. And great to get a bit of a snapshot of what's happening globally from the ILO level. Now we'll hear from the Minister and the Shadow Minister.

**Senator Murray Watt:** Good day, everyone. I'm Murray Watt, Australia's Employment and Workplace Relations Minister. Thanks very much for having me as part of this year's Ron McCallum debate. I'd like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands we're all gathered on and pay my respects to Elders past, present, and emerging. As a former employment and industrial lawyer, I recognise the incredible contribution of Ron McCallum to Australian and international labor law. So it's a real honour to present to you today.

And I should also make the obligatory declaration when discussing AI: No, I did not use AI to write my speech today. I'll let you decide if that's for better or for worse. As you'll no doubt discuss today, artificial intelligence has the potential to offer a lot of benefits to employers and workers, but it can also open a can of worms for workplaces adopting it. There are examples of AI being used to enable greater productivity, support people into work, and create new or higher-paying jobs. In some cases, it's also keeping people safer at work by not putting workers in risky situations. But at the same time, AI does present its own set of risks and challenges. Generative AI, like previous waves of automation, will likely lead to some workers being displaced and others needing to adapt as their jobs are augmented by AI. It also has the potential to exacerbate inequality.

When AI is used to automate the management of workers, there is a risk that people are treated like parts of the machine and the needs of the individual worker can get lost. It can make biased and discriminatory decisions and those decisions can be life-changing when they relate to things like hiring and firing. And AI also lacks transparency and accountability, which can create risks for employers and workers when things go wrong. Now, I'm sure you'll come up with some thought-provoking ideas on each side of this debate today.

Now, there's no doubt that more broadly, technology is changing how workplaces operate. And while a lot of the decisions about whether to embrace it sit with employers, it's vital that workers are consulted about technology adoption and its impact and involved in decision-making around it. Of course, governments also have a role in making sure technology is helping, not harming. We need to ensure that workers' rights are prioritised and protected. And we're doing that as a government in a range of ways by delivering more secure jobs, safer workplaces, and closing the gender gap.

Back in 2018, I chaired a Senate inquiry on the future of work and workers. While some of the themes we looked at remain the same, there has been a huge advancement in the way that technology is being used in the workplace. And that's a good reminder that as policymakers, we can't rely on "set and forget" approaches to policy. Thanks to that rapid pace of change, we need laws and programs that are responsive to change and that provide a contemporary framework of rights and responsibilities.

That's why the Albanese government recently passed laws to give workers the right to disconnect. A few decades ago, being contacted outside work hours looked very different. Today, we recognize the need to update the expectations to counter burnout and address the amount of unpaid overtime that had crept into workplaces or people's homes. Technological advancements are also the backbone of many gig workers' jobs: food delivery services, ride-share, and many others, for example. A digital platform might use an algorithm to allocate tasks to workers and to determine prices for those tasks. As a result of this shift, our government made changes to workers' rights through our Closing Loopholes legislation to deliver minimum standards for the industry.

Moving specifically to AI, one of the ways our government is working in this space is by ensuring that Australia's laws protect people and businesses from potential risks. Through my colleague, Minister Husic, our government has released draft mandatory guardrails for the safe and responsible use of AI in high-risk settings. This is to make sure that the development and deployment of AI systems by organisations are being tested and are transparent, with clear accountability when things go wrong. We've received around 300 submissions and we're currently considering them before announcing the next steps.

My predecessor in this portfolio, Tony Burke, also requested the House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training look into the digital transformation of workplaces. That inquiry is considering how to harness the opportunities of AI while managing the risks to workers, and it will report back next year. And finally, we've tasked Jobs and Skills Australia to undertake a capacity study on generative AI and its implications across the labor market and skills

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system. This will help determine how skills requirements will change over time, which occupations will be most affected, and how we can get more Aussies into digital jobs.

So, in summary, we recognise the potential benefits of AI to businesses and to workers, but that shouldn't come at a cost to rights and conditions. That means we need to ensure that we minimise the risks through providing appropriate protections for workers. Best of luck with the debate today. I look forward to hearing your views as we all shape these protections and take advantage of the benefits that AI can provide. Thanks a lot.

**00:19:59,720**

**Senator Michaelia Cash:** Ladies and gentlemen, I'm delighted to contribute this keynote address to the Ron McCallum debate for 2024. The topic of the debate, AI: trick or treat, is extremely apt, and not just because it's being held on Halloween. Today, we stand on the brink of a transformative era: the age of artificial intelligence. As we look to the future of work, we're confronted with a landscape rich with possibilities, yet fraught with challenges. The rapid advancement of AI technology has sparked dreams of improved job quality and enhanced wages. And yet, it has simultaneously ignited fears of job displacement, unemployment, and widening inequalities.

The recently released Council of Small Business Organisations Australia Small Business Perspective report says that AI has the potential to transform productivity and innovation, increase profits, and position small businesses to solve Australia's productivity crisis. The report says that despite the rapid uptake in some parts of the small business community, many business owners are concerned at the astonishing speed of AI growth and capabilities, as well as the potential risks they present. COSBOA and other industry leaders are calling on the government to collaborate on a comprehensive framework to ensure Australia and the small business community benefit from AI's transformative opportunities. And they're right.

The questions we must confront are profound. How can we harness the immense potential of AI whilst mitigating its risks? And what governance structures and guardrails must we establish to ensure a responsible and equitable transition into this new era?

Let's begin by acknowledging the optimism surrounding AI. There's a genuine belief that AI can automate mundane tasks, enabling workers to focus on more creative, strategic, and fulfilling aspects of their jobs. This potential to enhance productivity can lead to higher wages and improve job satisfaction. Imagine a world where tedious data entry is handled by intelligent systems, allowing employees to channel their skills into innovation and customer engagement. Yet, while this vision is promising, it's crucial to balance it with a sober assessment of the risks. As we consider the future of work, we must prioritise strategies that not only embrace technological advancements but also protect and uplift our workforce.

To mitigate these risks, we must invest in re-skilling and up-skilling initiatives. Employers and governments must collaborate to ensure that workers are equipped with the skills needed for a rapidly changing job market. This requires a commitment to lifelong learning, where education systems adapt to include digital literacy and critical thinking from an early age. Moreover, we should explore new models of work, including gig economies, that can provide flexibility and new opportunities for individuals across various sectors.

A crucial area of discussion, of course, is the governance and oversight of AI technology. Many experts express concerns about the current lack of adequate regulation surrounding AI development and deployment. There is no doubt that the regulation of AI poses as one of the 21st century's greatest public policy challenges. As we integrate AI into our workforces, we need frameworks that guide its ethical use. This includes establishing standards for transparency, accountability, and fairness in AI systems. Any AI policy framework ought to safeguard Australia's national security, cybersecurity, and democratic institutions without infringing on the potential opportunities that AI presents in relation to job creation and productivity growth. Businesses must not only comply with any regulations but also champion responsible AI practices, ensuring their technologies are used to enhance human potential rather than undermine it.

In conclusion, the future of work in the age of artificial intelligence holds tremendous promise, but it also requires our vigilance and action. By committing to re-skilling, addressing inequalities, and instituting robust governance, we can create a workplace that not only thrives on technological advancement but also prioritises human dignity and opportunity. Government should work with businesses, the job creators of our economy, to shape a future where AI empowers us,



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enhances our work, and uplifts our communities. Together, we can ensure that the future of work is not just defined by technology, but by shared values of fairness, inclusion, innovation, and increased productivity.

**James Fleming:** I'll now hand over to Ron McCallum. The stage is yours, Ron.

**00:26:12,240**

**Ron McCallum:** Thank you, James. Good evening all. I'm humbled that this is the 14th Ron McCallum debate and I wish to thank all the panel, and particularly my dear friend Michael Harmer and Harmers Workplace Lawyers, and President Adam Hatcher, president of the Fair Work Commission. And I thank the Minister and the Shadow Minister for their incisive remarks. In his latest book called "On Leadership: Lessons for the 21st Century," Tony Blair makes the point in Chapter 18 that governments and all politicians must come to grips and understand, and uses the keyword, generative AI, because of its capacity to do good or to do evil.

Where did it all begin? We begin with algorithms. What are algorithms? They are coded messages which are sent to computers to show them how to operate. They're named after Algorithmi, and I'm using his Latin name here, or Latinised name. He was a 9th century Persian mathematician who came to fame by rewriting the Ptolemaic mathematics of the 1st century AD, or in the Common Era. Algorithms have about them an algebraical quality in the manner in which they can issue very complex commands. You don't need me to go through the history of computers onwards from Alan Turing onwards. We now have microchips, microprocessors, but more particularly, we have huge storages of data. And with big supercomputers, we can use what we might call large language models which will allow the obtaining of information, etc.

These large language models, to use an analogy because I've just become a grandpa, when we have babies, we talk to them and they make their wishes known. But it takes a while for the neurons to operate and for them to understand language and then to realise that they can make fantastic demands, particularly of Grandpa, using language. And that is what we call generative AI. And that occurred as recently as 2022. So we now have an expanding loop where AI can give us answers, make suggestions, and it will only get better. And it will cause enormous problems in the workplace. But I'm a great friend of technology and artificial intelligence because it's helped many of us, persons with disabilities.

Now, I can't see and both of those are plastic inserts. I'm not having you on. So I thought, should I use artificial intelligence to tell me what's out there. [App: *Area Explorer*.] We're going to use Area Explorer, which is an American app for blind people, and we're going back to a large computer, supercomputer, somewhere in California.

No. No. How do I make a photograph here? Got to stand up to do this. All right. I think we're going to have problems. No, it won't. I'm really sorry it hasn't worked. That's a great pity. And I, but it really does work. And we did it this afternoon and it told me who was sitting in the front row. It is quite amazing and I'm really sorry it hasn't worked, but it just shows what can happen with artificial intelligence. I sometimes, it works, sometimes it doesn't. I'm going to pass to the president of the Fair Work Commission. Thank you, President.

**00:31:00,720**

**Justice Hatcher:** Right. Well, good evening everybody. Obviously, we're here to talk tonight about artificial intelligence and particularly how it might interrelate and affect the world of work and workplace relations. And of course, I think as James has started off with, in the title of the session, we've got this dichotomy between trick or treat, or what I call utopia or dystopia. And of course, Ron, in terms of the technology that's now available to him, has perhaps pointed to some of the utopian elements. I just want to paint a little scenario of perhaps a dystopian element.

So let's imagine you have a major corporation. It puts AI cameras, it runs a delivery, parcel delivery workforce. It puts AI-driven cameras in the vehicles of the workers and it says this is for safety reasons. In reality, what the cameras do is they collect granular data about workers' location, their behaviours, their work intensity, their performance, and a whole lot of other things. And then it gets that data and it runs it through an algorithm which determines what hourly rate the worker should be paid and how much work should be allocated to them. In short, it's used to determine, for each individual worker, this is not collective, it's per person, the minimum rate they can be paid for the maximum output and profit. Ineffectively, it works out which workers are the most desperate for the work and then pays them less for doing more.

Now, is this an imaginary nightmare? No, it's happening right now in the United States. It's got a name and it's called algorithmic wage discrimination. The major corporation also has a name, and if you want to find out what that is, read

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Volume 123 of the Columbia Law Review. So that Atlantic data is designed to demonstrate that what we're talking about is more than just potential. This is having major effects on the world of work and employment rights. And we can expect that to hit Australia fairly soon. So the future is now, and that's what I want us to all talk about tonight.

Now, Michael's assembled a stellar cast of speakers, as he usually has, and I'll just introduce every speaker at the outset to save time. So on my far right, we have Bill Simpson-Young. So he's the chief executive of the Gradient Institute, which, according to its website, which I looked at this afternoon, is an independent, non-profit research institute that works to build safety, ethics, accountability, and transparency into AI systems, and develops new algorithms, training organisations operating a system, and provides technical guidance for AI policy development. Now, I think Bill's the only actual tech head on the panel. He's had a massive world of experience in terms of providing advice to major technology companies, government research institutions, including the CSIRO. And he's also taught IT innovation at the University of Sydney. He's been appointed to the federal government's interim AI expert group.

Then we have Helen Cooney. So Helen's the national assistant secretary of the SDA. Helen literally started on the shop floor, having been employed in a wide range of retail outlets, and became a workplace delegate for the SDA. She's since worked as a policy, strategy, and governance advisor for state and federal governments, in the university and community sectors, and also in our own business, before returning to the SDA and to a current senior role.

To my immediate right is David Marr. He's a multiple Walkley Award-winning journalist. For many decades has been one of Australia's leading commentators on legal, political, social, and cultural affairs. He is the author of a biography of Patrick White, among other books. And more recently, "A Killing for Country," which is an account of the frontier wars in the 1800s in Queensland. And he's written for a wide variety of media publications. And of course, you've also seen him on many shows on the ABC.

**00:35:29,480**

In no particular order, we have Dr. Anna Boucher, who is the associate professor and chair of the discipline of Government and International Relations in the School of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Sydney. She's a global migration expert as it intersects with public policy and comparative politics. And her research covers immigration, gender, racial diversity, inequality, and labor market and regulatory change, as well as school selection of migrants. And she's also written a range of books and publications and advised the Australian government.

On the far left, we have Liam O'Brien, who's the assistant secretary of the ACTU. He's held that position since 2018, and before that came from the Australian Workers Union, where he represented workers across a wide variety of industries. In his current position, Liam's responsible for leading the union movement's policy, industrial, and campaigning work on health and safety and workers compensation matters. And he's also responsible for the portfolio of skills and vocational education and training, and is a member of a lot of important work safety bodies.

And finally, Michael Harmer, who, of course, probably doesn't need any introduction since he's here every year. But he's, of course, the founder and chairman of the eponymous Harmers Workplace Lawyers, one of Australia's leading employment law firms. He's been a fixture in the Australian industrial relations landscape for, is it 40 years, Michael? Can't possibly be so long since you look so youthful. And he's been involved in too many significant employment cases to name. And he's also, of course, the president of the Australian Institute of Employment Rights.

So we'll invite each speaker to start now. Each speaker is going to have, how long? Six minutes.

**Ron McCallum:** Can I have one more shot?

**Justice Hatcher:** Yes, you can. Learn more.

**[Area Explorer App]:** *Quick Capture and Send. Quick Cap. Area Explorer. Loading Area Explorer. Back button. The image appears to be taken from a stage or podium looking out into an auditorium. The auditorium has several rows of red chairs, some of which are occupied by people. On the stage, there is a screen displaying a person who seems to be appearing via video call. The room is well-lit with overhead lights and there are exit signs visible on the walls. The overall atmosphere suggests a conference or presentation setting.*

**Ron McCallum:** Thank you. There we are. Thank you.

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**Justice Hatcher:** Thank you. All right, so we'll start with Bill Simpson-Young.

**Bill Simpson-Young:** Hi, everyone. So I'll just say a little bit more about my background so you know where I'm coming from. I'm a techie, as Adam said. I started in AI back in the mid-'80s. I started studying AI in the mid-'80s. I did a course at university called Artificial Intelligence. The textbook was called "Artificial Intelligence," right? It's been around for that long. In the late-'80s, I started working in a job where, on machine learning. Machine learning is, if you're not aware of machine learning, it's the technique that's usually used to train an AI model. And so I was actually working with the job where my job description was Machine Learning Research Assistant at University of Sydney, where one of the first commercially successful machine learning engines was built. I was building systems that were doing things like looking at mushrooms and being able to tell whether it was toxic or not based on training it.

And if you're not aware of AI these days, in AI, most systems, there's a lot of different variety of AIs, but usually at the heart of it, it's all about building up a model where you're learning from the data using machine learning. And then, which, and that process is what leads to a lot of the risks. What I want to do in the time I've got is just talk about, try to make nine points, if time allows, that are worth taking into account when thinking about AI.

So first, AI is not one thing. I talked about this core or property it has, but the types of AI, there's a huge amount of different types of AI out there and different applications of AI. AI's been used for decades for spam filters and processing your letters and reading the address off the letters. It's been around for a long time. Those forms of AI are very well understood, very predictable. The risk profiles are pretty well known. And then you've got the more recent AI models, which are large, built from internet-scale data, massive amounts of compute, massive amounts of money and energy, and so on. Now, the difference between those is massive. And when people talk about AI and they're trying to talk about those, that leads to all sorts of problems. And so you end up getting a situation where you get arguments about AI will or won't do this. Some people are thinking about old-school AI, some people think about new AI or future AI. So it's really hard to reach agreement if you use a term like AI. So it's worth, you know, being more specific.

**00:40:23,800**

Secondly, but having said that, for the rest of what I'm talking about, I'll be talking about large language models, as Ron was talking about, which is sort of where things are at and where things are going, or foundation models more generally, is what they're called. So the second point is, AI capabilities have advanced massively in the last two years, last few years, and they're going to continue changing. So don't think of AI being what it is now. You know, if you think of AI as being ChatGPT, you think of AI as being Microsoft Copilot, you, that's, that's not, that's useful for today, it's not useful for a couple of months from now. It is changing very quickly. And so anything you think about the future, if you downplay the capabilities or power of AI, don't, because anything can happen.

The third point I want to make is that AI does have a potential, you know, massive potential for positive impact on the world. You just have to look at examples like Google DeepMind's AlphaFold. You know, this was solving the problem of how you build a 3D protein structure from amino acids. It used to take years to do one protein. Now you, they've done 200 million, which is pretty much all the known proteins have now been mapped into 3D structures. And that's now being used to create new drugs and so on. All very new, just over the last few years. Now you've got, now they've had to stop, hold conferences. We're all about protein discovery, because now you just press a button and discover it. What you've got now is you've got 2 million researchers, scientists around the world now using those tools in 190 different countries. So a lot of science has just been radically changed in the last couple of years. And that will lead to massive, you know, good things. So there's a lot of good things happening.

Education will be transformed. New South Wales is doing a lot of good work in that area with the New South Wales EduChat that's been trialed in 50 schools. The way in which, it's not just about giving access to ChatGPT, it's about helping people on their learning journey. And you'll see a lot of really good things coming in education.

The fourth point I want to make is that with foundation models, these large language models, new capabilities emerge without being designed in. So when people train these big models with large amounts of data and large amounts of compute, you end up getting capabilities like document summarisation, translation between particular languages, that no one actually designed. It's just in the data and these capabilities emerge. And so sometimes, you know, these big companies, they build these models, they release them, and sometimes they don't even know about capabilities until a few months later. So this is, there's a lot of uncertainty about the actual capability, a lot of uncertainty about how they



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actually work, why they do what they do. And that is still a scientific problem people are trying to solve. And we're working on that, along with many others. You know, how do you actually understand how they work? How do you understand the risks they have?

The fifth point I want to make is, although, I've got 30 seconds more, although those new capabilities do emerge, those capabilities aren't necessarily ethical. So you get this capability, really powerful capabilities, but they're not necessarily ethical, they're not necessarily accurate. So that leads to lots of risks. Sixth point, AI is likely to outperform humans in most cognitive tasks. If you look at all the charts, you can see these charts of, over time, particular functions being done better by AI. It used to be image understanding, language understanding. Maths is now pretty much at that point. A couple of weeks ago, or a month ago or so, an AI model got a silver medalist in the Math Olympiad. I'll just finish off now.

So the main thing to know is, if you're going to be successful in the future, you need to be able to supervise machine learning, supervise AI systems. Having skills at supervising AI systems is going to be a key skill. They're going to be there. And what's really important is how good you are at supervising AI systems. It will be... I'll come back to that later.

**Justice Hatcher:** All right, Helen. Do you want to go next?

**00:44:03,599**

**Helen Cooney:** 38% of Australians are stocking up on candy in the hope that small children might trick or treat in their neighbourhood tonight. And I suspect I was the majority of that 38% off to buy candy, knowing full well that no children will be knocking on my front door. The theme of tonight is a retail one. My industry profits from American cultural materialism. They are not candies, they are lollies. But it is my intent that my industry does not deliver American-style industrial outcomes. To those of you champing at the bit to tell me that Halloween is Irish, not American, I say this: it is also my intent that we do not have Irish-style digital and taxation outcomes. Tax is something that retail workers and their employers pay.

One of the most twisted things about trick-or-treating is that the tricks can be a treat and the treats can be a trick, as young women are taught: "A moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips." This is Gates' law. As long ago as 1996, Bill Gates wrote: "We always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next 10. Don't let yourself be lulled into inaction." In the case of social media, that is exactly what we did. We let the social media blood run free. We've let social media spread misinformation, compromise our privacy, enable bullying, and play into our loneliness. We need to act on AI because, call it machine learning, deep learning, or whatever, AI is already operational in every industry.

My first contention is that the profound transformation is already underway. Major retailers are opening automated distribution centres and automated customer fulfilment centres. For Coles, it's part of a \$1 billion investment, and for Woolworths, through Primary Connect, the checks are similarly sized. Skills and commensurate wages are needed to support the transition to automation or part automation because rice getting caught in those machines is extremely expensive. A billion dollars is a lot of money, and I recognise that retailers need return on their investments, but make no mistake, they will gain in sales as has been the result of each evolution to date of the cash register and the back dock.

There is a need to share the benefits of improved productivity. The SDA had success in bargaining, and now is the time to increase minimum wages in line with improved productivity arising from technological advances. That is to say, the benefits of digitisation should be shared with workers alongside community and shareholders.

My second of three contentions is that AI might not be human, but it is a human creation needing human oversight. You probably see the frustration caused by hit-and-miss digital image processing when it tries to read your fruit at an automated checkout. That frustration does escalate, but the computer can't see that. SDA members do what you won't see so much is the algorithm-led rostering. There is a need for roster justice where workers don't play Hunger Games for shifts and work and care don't collide. Changes to section 65 of the Fair Work Act have helped, but there is more to be done. Rostering apps are used in the context of minimum cost rostering, which means when staff are sick, those on shift have significant workload increases. Workers should not be subject to last-minute changes to their hours, and they should be consulted on their rosters.

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Which brings me to my third and final contention, that consultation is needed as AI proliferates. In some UTS and Essential research that was highlighted, a retail worker said to them, "We don't get updated about anything, and if it is, it's normally a rumor about what's going on. We don't actually get told what it is, how does it work, how is it going to affect us, how is it going to benefit us?" For anyone who has any workplace health and safety expertise, this quote should send chills down your spine. Human oversight is needed to avoid AI blowing up systems of work and us noticing too late to prevent injuries. Thank you. I look forward to the questions.

**Justice Hatcher:** Right, David.

**00:48:45,359**

**David Marr:** Right. I work at the ABC, but I'm here this evening to speak only for my union, the MEAA. I've been scraped. That biography of Patrick White took me six years. It's been hoovered up to teach AI how to think. It was done without my permission and with no return to me. A biography of Garfield Barwick that took three years of my life, scraped without permission, no returns to me. This is theft. I put years of my life and all the skill I can muster into my writing. It's my living, and book after book, article after article, is being stolen.

The business model of the big Silicon Valley tech companies developing AI is theft. Our own work, and this is what makes it worse, our own work is being used to teach machines to replace us. Don't tell me you can't write an algorithm to calculate my tiny, tiny cut of the immense profits of AI. No task is too complex or subtle for AI. They can learn to pay their bills. We writers, journalists, authors, poets, playwrights, screenwriters live under the protection of that great 18th-century invention, copyright. Something as bold is needed from government now to save us from the tech companies gobbling up our work. If it is to be used by anyone else, let them barter for it. Let them pay.

At stake are rights other than copyright. Moral rights, for instance, the right to be acknowledged as the author of work, the right to your own voice, the right to your likeness, so easily, both so easily copied by AI these days. Last year, over 11,000 Hollywood screenwriters struck for five months, largely to prevent film and television companies dumping them and turning to AI. The outcome was far from perfect, but not for the first time, Hollywood, of all places, has dramatized the conflicts that lie ahead.

AI has arrived. We can't legislate it away. We know it is going to do immense good. We know it will change the way journalists and writers work, as it will change the work of lawyers and doctors and accountants, and much of this will be good. None of the professions, at least the respectable ones, will be untouched by AI. Of particular worry for writers and journalists are the license agreements that allow Instagram and Twitter and Adobe to use for training purposes anything posted on their platforms. It's non-negotiable, so you'll have to decide whether to lose the audience those platforms bring by withholding your work or hand it over knowing it's going to be used in the work of learning to imitate the world, machines learning to imitate the world.

But it is possible to regulate the use of AI. The MEAA is calling for laws requiring disclosure of data used to train AI and enforcing the right of creators to consent and be paid for their work. We call it the three Cs: consultation, consent, compensation. Little understood, perhaps, is the challenge of AI to training. We learn to be journalists doing the bread and butter work that AI can now do effortlessly. The same is true for lawyers and accountants. How do we learn if machines can do the chores that once taught us our profession? I can't tell you how many dull years of hard work it goes into turning someone into Laura Tingle or Annabel Crabb.

Surveyed a few months ago, 86% of journalists said they were extremely or moderately concerned about the rise of AI. We are as worried about the spread of misinformation and deliberately harmful content as we are about the theft of our work and the future of our jobs. In other words, we're approaching this as citizens as well as journalists. So many ways we all once had of knowing the truth are falling away. Photographs are a cinch to fake and have been for ages, actually. Ditto documents, but now film is just as easy. In the age of AI, we can no longer trust our eyes. So much about AI will be magnificent. It can be tamed, and it must be, by governments, on behalf not only of writers and journalists, but all those who have developed the essential skills of a civilized society. The task will take courage and ingenuity. It will take more than simply dialing up a chat box and asking, "How can we reign you in?"

**Justice Hatcher:** Uh Liam, do you want to go next?

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00:54:00,079

**Liam O'Brien:** Absolutely. Thank you. Um, I want to build on some of the comments made so far and in particular those that Helen made and point out that we are on two fundamental pathways before us. Or, in keeping with tonight's tradition and the spirit, there are two doors which we can open, one that reveals treats and another that brings us tricks.

On the positive pathway, there is one where a worker's voice is meaningfully involved in decisions made around the introduction and use of AI. And it's where workers are meaningfully consulted, where workers are supported with skills and training that will enable them to embed their knowledge and experience in the development and design of AI systems. It's one where the productivity gains that workers create through their skilled use of AI systems are returned to workers in improved wages and conditions. And it's one where AI is used to elevate the quality of work and life.

But there is also the negative pathway, and it is a pathway that we are on right now. It is here where AI systems are simply being used to automate work with the objective of displacing workers and suppressing wages. AI systems are being used to worsen the quality of work through work intensification and where AI systems are used to intrusively surveil workers and to take away their basic rights to privacy and personhood, or as David points out, to outright steal from workers.

We can see these risks already. Earlier this year, McKinsey released a report that predicted that 1.3 million workers in Australia could be displaced by the introduction of AI systems in the workplace by just 2030. They estimate that it's actually women workers, lower paid workers, and workers with fewer educational qualifications who will disproportionately be affected. These will worsen inequality in our labor market.

We've also seen big corporate players use these systems to undermine workers' jobs, rights, and conditions. Just a few weeks ago, the Commonwealth Bank announced its intention to slash jobs and replace human beings with chatbots. The first the union representing those workers at the bank heard about this was when it appeared in the pages of the Australian Financial Review. Here, workers' voices weren't being heard. They weren't even being sought. If serious action isn't taken to ensure workers' voices are heard, then this will be a spooky future that awaits many workers, one where AI isn't a powerful tool for workers and instead it's a grim reaper in search of jobs to destroy. And this isn't just bad for workers. These undermine the very public trust in AI systems and tech more broadly. It leads away at the already meagre social license that AI and big tech have.

But it's not inevitable that this is how AI will be used. We have the ability to shape the future to create a more positive scenario that I mentioned at the start. It will require a strong and meaningful worker voice in all decisions made about the introduction of AI into workplaces. This isn't a radical idea, but it is an important one. Earlier this month, Daron Acemoglu and Simon Johnson of MIT were awarded the Nobel Prize for economics. In their work, they argued that given that workers will be profoundly affected by AI, they should have a voice in its development. Now, some employers get this. Recently, QUS signed an agreement with the FSU that defines AI, provides guarantees over the use of worker data, and ensures consultation will take place over the introduction of AI systems. This shows that workers and employers can work together to overcome the challenges of the AI transition.

The union movement is eager to work collaboratively to chart a path to this better future, but at the centre of this must be the needs and rights of workers. We must have a fundamental right to a voice in the AI transition so that it's not just Jeff Bezos, or dare I say Elon Musk, and heaven forbid the Commonwealth Bank, making these big decisions. The right to skills and training support provided in the workplace throughout careers is to ensure workers are not left behind by these AI systems and that we're able to readily adapt and upgrade. The right to enjoy the benefits of productivity gains that will not be created through new technologies by themselves, but by workers bringing their skills, their knowledge, and their creativity to the use of these technologies.

Depending on what door we knock on, we take a trick or a treat that awaits. But what is really important is that we get to decide which door it is. Thank you.

**Justice Hatcher:** Uh, Anna.

00:58:58,920

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**Anna Boucher:** Thanks. Um, AI tools can analyse vast amounts of information quickly and they provide actionable insights that improve decision-making processes. It's therefore not surprising that they've become important in HR processes, and this provokes issues that are perennial in the workplace, including bias and fairness in hiring, promotion, and performance evaluation. The potential negative effects of AI in the workplace can be at the sector level, enterprise specific, or individual, such as bias or unfairness in individual decisions around hiring and unemployment. Algorithmic decision-making, ADM, and discrimination is my focus. Bias, unfairness, opacity, unpredictability are all core issues that can arise at an individual level through ADM.

Discriminatory outcomes can be a product of social sorting that can occur through ADM methods. And because ADM is often created by designers from certain ethnic, gender, ableist, or social backgrounds, therefore reflecting their own biases as creators, or the input data that they use, um or for instance, assumptions underpinning algorithmic formula, all of this can lead to biased outcomes. For instance, input data in large data models is rarely tested on First Nations people. Discrimination can be hard to prove if undertaken by a machine and not a human, and the burden of proof can be hard to displace in ADM discrimination.

According to AI legal expert, Natalie Schear, ADM can engage in a form of so-called proxy discrimination. For instance, postcode may be used, and this can be a proxy for either social class or ethnic background, yet those attributes can be hard to trace in an algorithm. It is long established that ADM can demonstrate bias in hiring and other forms of HR management, including in international corporations. Um, but also pre-application, for instance, recruiters use predictive methods on LinkedIn to identify the best candidates for positions and then engage in a quick CV pre-screen. And some of these methods can reinforce prior job outcomes in their algorithms.

In their article, *Discriminated by Algorithm*, Kirchner and Vogel argue that ADM-based HR selection can overlook relative opportunity. For instance, people with career breaks. ADM has been demonstrated to raise heightened risks for people with disability applying for a job, and they are rarely involved in the development of such tools. Roles identifying bias in hiring is challenging at the best of times, but can be even harder when ADM is involved. A study done by Amazon, they developed a recruitment tool like the one I've mentioned on LinkedIn that ranked candidates from 0 to 5. It was trained on 10 years of input data that was largely of men, given their dominance in the tech sector. The algorithm penalised CVs with the word "woman," and it focused on CVs with verbs used more by men than women, so-called aggressive masculine language such as "executed" and "captured." So there's a hot tip, use "executed" in your CV.

Amazon tried to address these flaws, but it was impossible to ameliorate them. On the other hand, AI may also draw a light on workplace bias. It can reduce bias in selection by analysing all applications for an equal amount of time, whereas humans can focus in on one application for more time. A study by Emsi Burning Glass scraped the entire website job application processes and career trajectories on LinkedIn and Seek in the United States, and it demonstrated systemic gender bias in some companies in terms of promotion. And it then published that data in the *Wall Street Journal*, and the companies contacted Burning Glass and got insights about how to improve gender equality and the advancement of women in their companies. So that's an excellent example of the kind of big data analysis that AI can generate about the workplace. It would be impossible for individual coders to achieve.

Some AI tools are so risky that anti-discrimination law experts argue they should never be used in the workplace, such as face recognition. And one possible intervention is where AI is used for selection, applicants should have the capacity to offer insights on that, but that's also very rarely the case in Australia, although I do understand it's been used in the United States. In short, AI, trick or treat, when it comes to fair recruitment, um mainly it appears trick, but with a few powerful treats thrown in for good measure. Thank you.

**Justice Hatcher:** Michael?

01:03:51,920

**Michael Harmer:** Alright, thank you. Look, I'm going to address uh this topic tonight from the perspective of an employer in a small to medium enterprise in Australia, but also as a partner in a global alliance involving some 1,750 employment lawyers across 31 countries, several thousand employees. And I'm one of six lawyers on a global quality committee, and artificial intelligence has a lot to do with quality in our legal services industry. When ChatGPT3 came out, some of our employees, far more adept than I at artificial, well at any sort of IT, and I should say that's probably every employee in our firm, got together with our IT consultant and imposed a ban on ChatGPT3 because of its lack of ability to ensure quality in

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the provision of services to our clients. And that ban stays in place today with ChatGPT4, but we are using artificial intelligence in a detailed way.

We have currently sizing up a new document management system that carries a number of artificial intelligence benefits, uh including automatic e-filing, fantastic document retrieval, and it looks like it's going to greatly enhance the productivity of finance, administration, and lawyering within our firm. A couple of our team leaders just came back from the global AGM of our global alliance. It was held in Turkey this year, and the view was that yes, there's going to be massive changes in the legal services industry across the world, but more intended 20 years rather than the next two to three years in terms of utilisation of artificial intelligence and its impact on lawyering.

We're employment lawyers. We're currently conducting an investigation for the largest employer in Australia. It has in excess of 400,000 employees. At the same time, we're trying to service an individual employee who has been bullied. For either role, I would not send along anyone without a high level of emotional intelligence, a high level of empathy, and interpersonal perspicacity. Uh indeed, if I sent along the bot, I would lose the work, whether that's the largest employer in the country or one individual who has been bullied. So I don't see a great deal of interference with our level of workers in our firm. Uh we, as part of enterprise bargaining with the United Services Union, have already given a commitment to develop a code on impact on workers. The legal services industry, as part of an enterprise bargaining process that we're currently undergoing, and I think that's important for all employers.

Now, if you expand that out to Australian industry, I think it'd be true to say that Australian employers are cautiously optimistic about the utilisation of artificial intelligence. There's currently in excess of 60% of Australian employers, based upon a 2024 survey, who are actively engaging with artificial intelligence. But across the Australian industry, in excess of 80% of Australian workers are utilising artificial intelligence in their jobs. In other words, if you're an employer, you need to strategically look at artificial intelligence, have a policy, and control its utilization to the benefit of your business and not allow your workers to get ahead of the game and drag down quality issues with hallucinations that might impact your customers.

**01:07:25,799**

Now, in terms of um the adoption of artificial intelligence by Australian employers, obviously the large cyber security scares that have occurred in Australia, uh the Robodebt debacle, have discouraged uptake across Australia. Uh however, you would have read in the *Financial Review* yesterday a survey across the Commonwealth Public Service involving the utilisation of a well-known form of artificial intelligence, and the estimated increase in productivity was one hour per day. And that increase in productivity of 10 to 15% is fairly low-hanging fruit for pretty much all employers with administrative involvement. Um, in terms of that, employers have a right to manage their business as they see fit, and Australian employers should be adopting and tailoring artificial intelligence for the benefit of productivity and so as not to lose competitive advantage. But that right to manage ends when you act unfairly or unsafely towards your employees.

Now moving then to an issue of global safety, I can just observe that artificial intelligence has the potential to end poverty throughout the world, end inequality, cure climate change, and basically have us all on universal basic income while the machines do the work and then we foster our actualisation, if you like. When, how far is that off? Well, that's where the trick comes in. Um, in terms of the technological singularity, when artificial intelligence exceeds a human being's intelligence in every respect. Elon Musk says two years. Uh Bill Gates says about 10 to 20 years. Uh futurists say about five years. That's a very short time span towards the potential technological explosion when artificial intelligence exceeds the intelligence of every human being by every multiple. Uh and it's that, that point that you will find that the designers of this artificial intelligence have no idea how it's going to operate in that context. They have no idea how it's going to be controlled, and they're basically introducing it to the world for a lark without design for safety. And it would not pass muster under Australian safety laws in any respect.

So what does that mean for Australian governance of AI? Number one, I think the Australian government should impose an immediate ban on all artificial intelligence beyond ChatGPT4, and I'm talking about large language models because that's the segue to losing control. Number two, Australian legislation should all move to the model of our safety legislation, all reasonably practical steps to ensure safety, not just safety, but fairness. And that should not just be under our workplace relations system, but under all our law because there is no aspect of prescriptive law that can keep up with the



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speed of technological AI change in this country. Uh so in terms of ensuring that we secure the treat rather than the trick, we need to act now. Thank you.

**Justice Hatcher:** Alright, well, um we'll start the debate element of the night. So I thought I'd start with a big picture question, and it sort of takes up some of the themes that um Michael was just talking about. So I was, I was looking at the internet this afternoon about some quotable quotes about AI, and one commentator said that in the future, uh the relationship between us and robots or AI will be like the relationship that currently exists between humans and dogs. Um, so I'm going to direct this question to you, Bill. Um, do you accept that analogy, and more importantly, who will be the dogs?

**01:11:14,120**

**Bill Simpson-Young:** Exactly, exactly. Um, yeah, no, I don't accept that. I mean, it'll be nothing like it. Um, yeah, we're talking about, yeah. And um, I mean, it is, it is up to us. You know, we have to choose the right door, as Liam said. Um, if we can go down a route that is going to lead to humans being in control, then maybe we've got some hope. If we don't, you, I mean, you've got this, that the capabilities are increasing so fast. And don't forget, they're not just, they're not just going to be doing what humans can do. It's not, not like they're going to be artificial humans. They'll have access to, to a world of data, right? A world of information, a world of capability, all internet worked. You know, you know, in some cases it's not just, you can't compare it to your person and a dog. It's just no comparison.

**Justice Hatcher:** Okay. Um, alright. So the other big picture question I suppose is just the effect of AI on the level of employment in modern economies. Um, now if we look back in the past, in, for example, in the '60s, we had the introduction of containerisation of work on the waterfront, which led to a lot of itinerant low-paying jobs being replaced by a small number of high-paying jobs. I remember the '80s where the desktop computer was going to cause mass unemployment, and it didn't. So my question, perhaps starting with Liam and also Helen, um, um, how, um, well-placed are our fears of unemployment being caused by AI? Or is everyone going to find an alternative path in the future?

**01:12:46,280**

**Liam O'Brien:** Well, I fear, I mean, it's, I think the comparisons to technological change that's occurred maybe in my lifetime is a good one. Um, before I left the Australian Workers Union, I organised the aluminium industry. I was there for the unfortunate closing of Australia's first smelter down in Point Henry, Geelong. That smelter was designed in the '60s. It was designed to produce 150 tons of aluminium per pot. And at the time that it was built, it employed close to 2 and a half thousand people. When we closed it, it employed 200 and produced nearly double that in terms of capacity. And I think for many of those workers that were displaced over that period, they never found gainful employment that was like what they'd had. And what we know with AI is that the change will be much more rapid than previous technological change, but also it will really widely affect all workers and all industries.

We talked this before about ChatGPT, but actually the applications beyond just that are significant. And so in some ways it creates much greater risk. We are going to displace workers as we already are, really displacing them more productively, faster than we can productively redeploy them. So I fear that actually the displacement of workers is a really serious issue, and we need to ensure that as AI is being introduced, that not only workers are being given the skills in order to be able to use it, but equally those that are displaced are afforded a just transition in terms of being, how to provide training and instruction and ultimately good quality jobs. And so I am very skeptical and very concerned about the job displacement and creation conundrum because I think, you know, very clearly it is having a rapid effect on jobs. I gave the Commonwealth Bank as an example, but we've seen many other companies in Australia start to displace workers far faster than we've ever seen before.

**Justice Hatcher:** Helen, do you want to have a go with that question in the context of some of the changes you described in retail?

**01:14:40,679**

**Helen Cooney:** Yeah, I think the issue is transition. Um, because I would say at a systemic level, retail's a reasonably resilient industry. Um, but it's the individuals that matter in, in our world. So, um, what I mean by that is, um, buying and selling goods for profit, um is a pretty clear objective. And um, through the transitions that we've had, uh, I used to work in

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David Jones at one point. Sorry, won't name the company. Um, uh, through the process of the GST and um, peeling the uh, price tags of every single CD in the music and video section of David Jones, um, there's still, there's still jobs selling goods. Some of those are in store, some of them are online. Um, and buying and selling of goods for profit will, will continue. And that is something that people will continue to work on.

And at a systemic level, when there's been major change, there has been resilience at a sort of broad level. I think about the taking of Franklins and putting that into into other stores. Uh, and, you know, there was, at a systemic level, it was fine. That doesn't go to the dystopian description that was given before about self-actualisation while by just being, while a machine does everything. That world of the individual, the human who makes a difference by contributing through work, if you have individuals who are not consulted, who are not going through a process of human oversight of transition, then you won't get the outcomes for those people. And people matter.

**Justice Hatcher:** And you see AI-driven businesses like your Amazons and, and its imitators, as it were, destroying traditional retail in the longer term?

**01:16:44,280**

**Helen Cooney:** Uh, retail has, um, a fabulous word that I use a little bit, Omni channel. Omni channel retailing. Some, for those of you who, um, buy cosmetics, uh, there are some retail stores that have a lot of staff. But when you talk to those staff, you'll, they'll show you the products. And then, and you'll say to them, "Oh, I might look at it online." They'll go, "No worries," because actually the store is part of the marketing budget rather than, um, a traditional location. So you might have bricks and mortar store. So this idea of online versus bricks and mortar, it's just not a reality in, in these industries. Um, I think the, the challenge will be making sure that the collective, uh, approaches to containment and to, um, the objectives around uh, transition is important. So you asked about large companies like Amazon and others, are they going to destroy it? Well, it's a, it's, it's a certain type of life working for those organisations right now. Um, and we've got to make sure that there's collective action to, to change the behaviours of companies like that.

**Justice Hatcher:** Alright. Well, let's talk a bit about the effect of AI on, uh, the quality of employment. So the upside picture, and I think this was touched upon by the Shadow Minister, was that AI will enhance job satisfaction because it will displace, um, boring and repetitive and dangerous tasks. And everyone will be freed up to be creative and do more, um, human interactive tasks. I thought I might ask some of the panel as to how realistic they see that being in their particular industries, occupations. Perhaps David, you could tell us about how realistic that might be in the context of journalism and media.

**01:18:45,000**

**David Marr:** The capacity of AI to really analyse what's going on in the community is immense and will be incredibly valuable. It still requires, I think it still requires a human being to say, "This is the question I want answered by the AI." And that human being will need to be trained, um, in the ways of, um, addressing public curiosity, which is one of the great things that journalism does. Um, and will have to be trained in, in methods of, you know, making sure that the research is fair and truthful. But there's going to have to be a person there saying, you know, "I want this question answered", for it presents, for so many, professions, a chance to do away with the boring, the boring stuff. And a chance to be able to analyse things at a, at a level that is never really been possible before.

But as I was saying in my five minutes, the boring stuff is so often where you learn your job. And if you are not going to, you know, if you can't be employed and paid, um, uh, to do the boring stuff, there may be no way at all of providing people at the end of the process who are the ones capable of asking the machines the big questions. There, of course, are going to be job losses, of course. Employment is going to be reshaped.

Could I add one thing, to what's already been said, which is that job losses are not just a matter of individual justice. What we're seeing in the United States of America at the moment is a society that failed to give a just transition to its workers when it de-industrialised across the Rust Belt states. They are the people at the moment who may well elect next week a criminal tyrant to run them. Um, because they have become completely exasperated about the solutions to their, the predicament of their worlds. Um, this is about, ultimately, it is about the flavor of the politics of a country and where that country is going to go. And as for the notion, sir, of the possibility of it, all the proceeds being so beautifully and evenly distributed that we will all be able to live on social wages, um, underneath mango trees and enjoying our lives, um, there

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is absolutely, there is absolutely nothing in the record of, um, uh, technological advance in the last century that suggests the benefits will be equally shared.

**Justice Hatcher:** I'm certainly going to come back to that, but can I ask the same question of you, Michael, in terms of the legal profession? You were talking about, uh, the effects that AI has had at your firm and perhaps more broadly, but again, do you see this utopia of removing the boring and repetitive tasks and everyone being freed up to do creative work as being a realistic prospect for the legal profession?

**01:22:02,320**

**Michael Harmer:** There's no question that it's going to impact and re, I guess, remove a large amount of low-level repetitive work. I might just reflect on the whole issue of the transition. I think there's been a number of aspects of technological innovation over the last couple of centuries where everyone's thought the sky was falling in, and actually more jobs have been created. I just note that the World Economic Forum in 2020 estimated that there'd be 80, sorry, 85 million jobs lost across the globe through artificial intelligence, but 95 million created. They conducted a further analysis in 2023 post the large learning models and came up with 83 million jobs lost, 69 million created. So it is turning against, but it's not as extensive as one would expect. And, and certainly in our area, there's no question a lot of things that are currently done by paralegals, et cetera, could be displaced. But in our firm, I won't be, because we, we need that touch of people.

I think we'll be greatly enhanced by artificial intelligence, and we'll work collaboratively with it. I think we're going to find a lot of jobs created around the need for artificial intelligence advisors. Um, certainly I could do with one at the moment, and I spent a lot of time with my IT consultant on just that. Um, so I think as with the advent of many changes, I think there is the possibility, short term, prior to the singularity, um, of there being much job creation, almost equivalent job loss, just change, as we've seen. And if it's well change managed, I think we can look after a lot of people. It's post singularity where I think we need a HAL and some careful sculpting to deliver the treat rather than the trick I want to go back into that.

**Justice Hatcher:** Alright. And Michael, do you see that, um, higher level work like submissions to courts and tribunals might be prepared with AI? I think we're already seeing that at some levels, but at some stage it'll get so good that we can't pick it anymore.

**01:24:01,560**

**Michael Harmer:** Yeah. Look, there's been cases around the world already where people have come up with, um, a list of authorities that have turned out to be something less than accurate and, um, got in a bit of strife, including disciplinary processes in our profession. But look, what I do see it doing is, um, reducing some of the tremendous costs and bottlenecks of access to justice in Australia. Um, if you look at the whole issue of alternative dispute resolution and, I guess, uh, pre-dispute assessment by an expert, I think it's going to be very helpful going into conciliation or mediation to have an assessment by artificial intelligence. I think counsel assisting should be appointed to every court assisted by artificial intelligence. And yes, we never lose the benefit of a judge, but I'd like to see a lot of the cost, expense, and, I guess, obfuscation of justice that occurs through, of access, um, removed through artificial intelligence. And I think that can happen. I think that'd be a great contribution to our country.

**Justice Hatcher:** Alright. So let's, um, talk about, um, some of the new jobs that might be created through AI. So Bill, you started talking about, um, the skills that one might need in the AI workplace. Can you, can you expand upon that? I heard recently that there's a whole new profession of people who know what the right question is to ask AI to do.

**01:25:25,280**

**Bill Simpson-Young:** Yeah, as I was saying before, the, um, you don't, don't think about AIs, even when they're performing human-like tasks, they don't work the same way as humans. They will make, do some things better, they'll be, do something worse, they'll make mistakes, right? And there's a lot of mistakes they'll make. And for someone who, in the workforce, who's got access to AIs, it's critical that they understand the basics of how they work, the basics of how they go wrong, their risk profile. And, and that isn't going to go away because they're not going to be, for a while. I mean, at least for the next, you know, three or four years, um, it'll be essential to have humans. I mean, there's lots of examples now

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where you've got people using AIs and not knowing how. Here's a good example. This is a recent paper. They, uh, in the US, they interviewed, um, the researchers interviewed 50, uh, physicians. And those 50 physicians, they got some who were using AI to do diagnosis and, you know, general, general diagnosis. Um, some who were, so, some who were using AI, some who, uh, were not using AI. And some who, um, where the AI just did it by themselves, right? And so who won, right?

So the best results on average from the AI systems doing the diagnosis, that was the best result on average. But when you took at the individuals, there was this massive variability between the individuals. There were some who were always worse, you know, some humans with using AI always worse, and some humans using AI were always better. And so the ones who actually understood when to override the AI decision did really well this. And you know, but, but having an appropriate calibrated trust in the machine and knowing when it was right and when it was wrong was a key skill that some people had and some people didn't. And so that you, I mean, that, that's sort of traditional AI with, you know, um, but it's, that's still continuing with generative AI. So you'll have some people who are really good at overseeing AI, some know questioning it when they should be questioning it, not questioning it when they need to. And some who we, and that, that's going to be a key differentiator between schools.

**Justice Hatcher:** Sounds to me like a high skill level job that is, doesn't sound to me like you're displaced blue-collar worker is going to get a job in correctly monitoring AI. Is that right?

01:27:37,520

**Bill Simpson-Young:** I think there'll be a lot of jobs in monitoring AI. Some will, I think most where it's, where it's necessary to have a human overseeing it, often they'll be high skilled. They'll need to have skills, they need to have that understanding, they'll need to know when to override. So yeah.

**Justice Hatcher:** Alright. Um, so, um, Anna, you were talking before about, um, the way AI might affect issues of discrimination and equality. So let's talk about income equality. How do you see AI potentially affecting that? Do you see it as, um, equalising incomes, or do you see it as exacerbating and, uh, income inequality?

01:28:26,320

**Anna Boucher:** I think you could see an exacerbation. So you could have, well, you'll definitely have some jobs that are displaced. So those people will probably end up on lower income because they'll end up on income support if they can't find new jobs. There is an increase in low-skilled labor. So there's an interesting question. Some of that can't be automatised. So perhaps there will be actually a slight increase in the wages of what we might categorise as low-skill workers. And then at the top of the, um, the wage curve, I think you'll probably see an increase, especially with these people who have this fusion of skills, legal skills and AI skills, or they'll become a specialist class who will be able to, um, negotiate very high skills in the labor market. That's how I'd probably see it. And if you look at where the skill gaps are in Australia, um, there's a lot in the tech sector, but there's also in low skill. We know that that's where the pressure is on the migration system. And some of those jobs, they seem like all the stuff around seasonal work, they can't be automatised very well. So they, those people will still be able to negotiate, um, wages, I think, irrespective of AI.

**Justice Hatcher:** And what about issues of gender and racial equality?

01:29:28,800

**Anna Boucher:** Well, I've talked about ADM, um, how it's, how it's, um, leading to highly problematic racialised and gendered outcomes. Um, there's a movement for some of these assessments to be audited. In New York City, there's legislation where audits, um, the, the methods need to be published on the employer's website, and they can be audited once a year. But I, from what I understand, there's limits to the audits that can get these questions of, um, inequality. Uh, because sometimes the data is like a black box, and, um, it can be hard to get into the assumptions, or sometimes the data is private and it's not accessible. So I'm, maybe I'm too cynical. I feel like I'm the cynic on this panel. Um, but my sense, just from the literature I read on discrimination, is it can be very hard to identify, and these trends are quite obvious and, and pretty consistent across the academic studies that have been done. So I'm, I'm pretty concerned personally about what that means, unless of course people are not relying on LinkedIn, or if they're using more their personal

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networks. But there, we know social networks bring other forms of disadvantage in terms of job, job applications. So I think people are kind of disadvantaged whether they go through the traditional methods or the AI-generated methods.

**Justice Hatcher:** Well, this leads me to my special question for you, Michael Harmer, on from Anna's comment. So your firm obviously has done a lot of general protections cases over the years. And as you know, one of the key issues in those cases is identifying who the decision maker was and working out the reasons. How does that work if the decision maker is an algorithm that, there's no human involved?

**01:31:13,960**

**Michael Harmer:** I think we'll be having regard to the corporation still, that is in charge of the undertaking. Um, but there's certainly scope, I think, as I indicated before, for adjustment of our laws so that persons conducting businesses or undertakings have to act safely and fairly, uh, universally. And as I said before, I think that has to apply everywhere. But corporations with AI won't escape, um, culpability, I wouldn't have thought, even under the current regime.

**Justice Hatcher:** Seemed to me that a plaintiff law firm in that situation might need a degree of AI expertise to even understand and bring a case about that that'll win the case.

**Michael Harmer:** Yeah, they so say. Um, thanks. Thank goodness for the statutory presumption and, uh, over to the employer with the reverse onus to prove that the AI did not take into account anything discriminatory. And I will call an expert in Anna, and we'll do them like a dinner. But there you go.

**Justice Hatcher:** Alright. So let's go back to you, David. This, this touched upon something you raised before. So can we find a way to share the productivity benefits of AI across our society? Or do you think we're just doomed to a situation where all the benefits are captured by a small number of tech companies and other giant corporations?

**01:32:29,719 --> 01:32:34,560**

**David Marr:** Well, unfortunately, the sharing of the bounty of AI is not going to be something done by AI. That's going to be done by people. Um, because that's where the bounty goes. And I can't see any reason at all why the usual principles don't apply, which is that, um, far from trickling down, money whooshes upwards. Um, it's natural state is to rise. And, and the only way in which that could be, um, dealt with is by difficult legislation, by government action. Um, if this is going to, if there is the, you know, potential for paradise out there, there's the potential for paradise already, but we're no, we're bloody near it. Um, and there's no signs we're getting any closer. And that's, that's politics. That's, you know, the reality of politics. Um, I think it would be bizarrely utopian to suspect that anything else is facing us.

**Justice Hatcher:** Alright. Do you want to add anything to that, Anna?

**01:33:35,159**

**Anna Boucher:** Okay. Alright. Well, let's talk about the relationship between AI and our Australian industrial relations systems. And I might direct this at Helen and Liam in the first instance. Um, is it possible that artificial intelligence will render our workplace relations system irrelevant by bypassing traditional working relationships and empowering workforces in terms of their bargaining power? You want to have a go at that Helen?

**Helen Cooney:** Uh, we have, I mentioned, um, rostering systems that are algorithm-led. Um, alongside those is usually a WhatsApp group or a, uh, something else, a conversation, discussion with your manager. Um, I find it hard to see that, um, AI would render workplace law, um, useless. Like, how is that possible when AI is not actually replacing the relationships? But if it does in time, it, it does require, um, human oversight to make sure that it's done well. We had a, um, mom who is returning to work after having her, uh, baby. And she was orally told by her manager that for her to work from Monday to Friday would be unfair to other workers. But with a letter that talked about the role of, um, uh, section 65, she was able to get, um, appropriate, um, rostering. That's navigating the law, the legal system in an AI, uh, algorithm-led rostering arrangements. So I think some of the, I mean, we've got a lot of, um, over 55s, um, needing fatigue and night shift changes and things like that. So I just can't see how, how it's going to render it useless. I think if anything, it makes it more important to get it right and to get the, um, accountabilities clear.



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**Justice Hatcher:** Alright. Do you want to add anything, Liam? In particular, do you see a role of further IR reform in dealing with this particular issue?

**01:35:36,520**

**Liam O'Brien:** Always. Um, I think, I mean, firstly, I think we should be looking at our work health and safety and our industrial relations frameworks to ensure that they're fit for purpose when we think about AI. I'm going to maybe keep to the work health and safety framework generally, because I get in less trouble when I freelance on that than when I do on the Fair Work Act. But I also want to pick up on, I suppose, Michael's kind of invitation to suggest that actually we've got a bit of a framework that can work here. And I actually, as someone who, you know, practices in work health and safety, I really am quite fond of the principle of duties and how they can be adapted to different areas. I would say, obviously, that, you know, there are duties on people who manufacture plant and equipment. People who make AI systems have duties to how they're used, and they need to think about the end user and the consequences.

There, I suppose my one caveat, I've never seen a work health and safety regulator prosecute people who manufacture plant that actually kills workers yet. I'd love to see greater insight in terms of how we can get them active there. But I do think that principle of duties and due diligence of those that make these systems is something that should be looked at. And I think there are opportunities around thinking about that framework and how it can be applied in the context of AI, to those that are creating AI systems, making them think about the end use. I think we see that in some aspects of gig, making sure the gig platform, uh, conscious of how these systems get used and the hazards that they create. So I think there is a lot of merit to looking at our system, both in terms of work health and safety, but indeed industrial relations, and ensuring that is fit for purpose when it comes to the development of AI systems. I think really starting with the principles around duties is a really good start.

**Justice Hatcher:** Alright. Um, uh, there's obviously ethical issues that, uh, can arise from the use of AI in the workplace. So I'll ask this to you, Bill, in the first instance. How might we go about developing an appropriate legal and ethical framework for the use of AI? Uh, and is that viable in the face of international competitive pressures, competing against countries which will no doubt allow AI to be used in a totally unregulated fashion?

**01:37:49,360**

**Bill Simpson-Young:** Yeah, so in Australia, in 2019, the federal government, through the Department of Industry, Science, and Resources, released AI ethics principles. So, nine principles, that things like transparency, accountability, and so on. But with details of those that should apply for all AI systems. More recently, just last month, um, the government released their mandatory, their, their draft mandatory guardrails, including some options for possible regulatory approaches to implement those mandatory guardrails after, after those develop further.

In parallel to that, the government just released a document on the, on a voluntary safety standard for industry that is, has almost identical mandatory guardrails for voluntary use for industry to start adopting those. Now we're involved in writing those, and I'm involved with both. But, um, with the development of those, both at guardrails and the, um, mandatory safety standard, there was a lot of consideration for global consistency. And this, this was coming from industry. Industry was saying, "Please make sure," you know, a lot of industry in Australia works globally. Um, that they use software that comes from overseas. They send, they export software overseas. So there was a real attempt to, to take a global approach. Um, there is a lot of work happening globally in, to ensure AI is being used safely, ethically, and responsibly. Um, in the, both coming from the standards, the AI, the AI standards from ISO, you know, from the International Standards Organization, working on, they've already got about 30 different AI-related standards now. Um, and then so the Australian government is trying to bring those into the draft regulations they're working on.

In addition, there's the, uh, in terms of AI safety specifically, uh, there was a really good move started by the UK under Rishi Sunak last year to have a global AI safety summit, which had 35 countries coming in, including China, including us, including UK, including Australia. Um, and large agreement on the requirements for these big large language models to be able to be operated safely, safely. And then in November this year, there's actually, you, 11 of those countries, 10 countries in the EU, are getting together to talk about how to actually do this for real. Um, the, so there is a, both in terms of sort of general responsibilities of AI and companies and keeping the, the big models safe, there is a lot of global cooperation happening now. I just got today a draft of a new report from the UK AI Safety Institute saying, "Can you review this? Because we're going to release it a couple of weeks." And doing the same thing with the US as well. So

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we're, we're sort of very much tied into this global network. So there is a lot of discussion going. Um, it's still going to be an issue because you still, there still will be some countries that go rogue. But, um, there's an attempt in that safety community to keep China involved and keep, keep other countries involved. But there will be some rogue countries.

**Justice Hatcher:** Do you want to add anything to that, Anna? That is, how realistic do you think it is to, to put in place an enforceable and effective legal framework for the use of AI, both nationally and internationally?

01:40:43,920

**Anna Boucher:** There's been some stuff in Europe, the General Data Protection Regulation, Article 22, that gives platform workers the right for human intervention on the conditions of their work. Um, and so that's been held up as a gold standard in this regard. There's a sort of social dialogue around algorithmic management, which gets some of the issues you raised about who's the decision maker. Um, so if there is an algorithmic decision maker, there still needs to be some human intervention. Um, but apparently, um, case law on that directive shows that in some instances, ADM is still permissible. So I think at least in Europe, in the European Union, they have a discussion around this which we haven't really got in Australia. Um, but even there, with this apparently gold standard regulation, it can be difficult. So I mean, I'm a bit, I'm a bit skeptical because I think we're talking mainly, especially with platform workers, largely vulnerable workers. Um, and then we've heard from the union representatives how, um, these, that their work of power can be fractured through, um, AI. And so their capacity to then build voice and also have the ability to understand the complexity of these systems, I'm quite cynical about that. Maybe that's just me.

**Justice Hatcher:** Alright. Um, we've heard some, some of the speakers talked about the need to, um, upskill and retrain workers. Helen, do you want to talk about what sort of framework from the governmental level needs to be in place to make that effective and to ensure that there is a just transition?

01:42:21,239

**Helen Cooney:** There is, there is a governmental need to invest in skills and jobs. Um, and we know that the current government, one of their first acts was to have a Jobs and Skills Summit, which then the first bill was the Jobs and Skills Australia bill in parliament. So there's certainly a, a very clear-minded thought from government about, um, the demand for skills as we go through a transition process. I think we do need to assure ourselves with the process of transition that redundancy is thought about in a way that acknowledges the need to avoid the community impacts that David was speaking about earlier. In particular, I, I have a personal view that the distinction drawn between higher education and vocational education and training is, um, has been increasing over the last 20 years, and it's been extremely unhelpful, and we know that a lot of the, the skills that are needed for the future are vocationally orientated and we, we need to, we need to change the way we think about that, particularly for, um, young people entering, entering their first jobs. I'm not sure if that answers where you were getting, going at with it. Certainly the, the qualifications review process is, is about ensuring that the vocational education and training system is fit for the future. Um, where that, where that lands, yet to be seen. But I, I, I certainly, um, know the data from all of the data systems that the government's got, uh, shows that we have a great need for highly skilled workers, and we need to invest in education in order to get there. And it's, it's my view that TAFE should be at the centre of that and at the moment it's not, and it needs to be, and I know that the government is working on that topic.

**Justice Hatcher:** Alright. Might ask one last question, and anybody who wants to take this question can do so. Uh, we've heard a lot about the potential productivity bonanza that might arise from AI. Um, as probably most of you know, and this is reported in the newspapers, Australia's productivity performance, at least as recorded, um, in the last few years has been very poor. That is, effectively, we've had no productivity growth overall about the last at least seven years. Um, when do we start seeing the benefits of this productivity performance? Or is there some problem with the way we're measuring it?

01:45:18,679

**Michael Harmer:** Well, just to fill, fill the void, I think, um, look, I, I think, um, it's going to happen quite rapidly. Um, as I say, look, I'm no expert in artificial intelligence, but I haven't read anyone who has said that the technological singularity will not occur. Um, the question is two, five, 10, or 20 years. That's the point where artificial intelligence is superior to any human being. Now the technological explosion, which is predicted again by most futurists, is when it's more intelligent

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than all human beings combined, manifold. And again, I haven't seen predictions that that is very far off. You're talking 10 to 20 years, probably, that, that being the case. There, there will be a tremendous explosion of productivity and there will be, post the singularity, um, massive job displacement. There will be a need to sculpt a new order. There will be a need for universal basic income and, and very careful change management. And that's why I was suggesting the government call for a moratorium. Because if people like Elon Musk or Bill Gates are predicting that we're either two or 10 years off that, I think we need to be acting now. So I think, yes, massive productivity, according to that, is going to flow, unless most of the experts in the world are incorrect.

**Justice Hatcher:** Give us a date, Michael.

**Michael Harmer:** I'm more a 10 to 20 year person, but, uh, yeah.

**Justice Hatcher:** Alright. Well, thanks everybody. So now I'll ask Ron McCallum to give his perspective on the debate.

**01:47:03,960**

**Ron McCallum:** Thank you very much, President. What a fascinating hour and a half, and I have learned a great deal. We began with Bill with his five-minute presentation and then in further interventions, showing us how complex is our notion of artificial intelligence. And particularly the key word is generative artificial intelligence and the different forms. And that gave me a better understanding of the whole process. And Michael also added to that with his explanations. David, in his inimitable way, um, was able to show that often the large language models steal the work of, particularly of white-collar authors, uh, teachers, et cetera. This strikes home to me because our second son is a film composer in Los Angeles. And if you remember the film that we saw at the beginning, that music was done by artificial intelligence. But how do you get the mood music right? You put into the large language model all the music that other composers have composed. And that's, that's one of the difficult issues. And, and we university teachers don't want to be displaced, but that may happen to some extent.

We also saw from Liam and Helen, the need for workers to have voices, particularly with these enormous changes. Worker power in this country is far less than it was 40 years ago. Trade union membership in the private sector is about 9%. Workers have less power to demand a fair shake of the tail, and we're going to need to make sure that workers' voices are heard when all these changes occur. Professor Anna Boucher spoke importantly about consideration, discrimination, and artificial decision making. And that's something we're going to have to keep an eye on. Already there are clear evidence of bias, um, in artificial intelligence situations and in even, even in the Robodebt scheme.

It seems clear to me that artificial intelligence, and particularly generative artificial intelligence, will displace jobs. And while it may have been in the past that more jobs were created than those were displaced during the Industrial Revolution, that's not going to be the case in the future. We're going to have many workers displaced, and not simply the poor and uneducated, although there'll be many, but junior lawyers, junior accounts people in junior white-collar jobs, um, who are filling in the forms, uh, checking the consistency of documents, this will all go by the wayside. You may find these unhappy campers delivering food and driving Ubers in a very unhappy manner. And we're going to have to manage this displacement of significant numbers of employees at a time when we are facing the challenge of climate change, which is also affecting employment. And when the rules-based order under which we have been living since World War II seems to be disintegrating, we will need governments to hold their nerve. And I think the only way out is by strong international cooperation.

I believe in technology. I love technology. You know, I began, um, I first saw a wire recorder, pre-data tape recorders, where things could be read to blind people on them, and you can play them back. No one reads to me anymore. I do it by machines. I didn't read the, I didn't have the Fair Work Act read to me. No one would have the patience. I used electronic machines. And for many of my sisters and brothers with disabilities, this is a way ahead for us, even though it causes great problems in society. I know that my photography still has a bit of work to do, but you can see that it's coming along. I'm looking forward to saying to Mary, "Look, um, you stay home. You don't need to drive me. I've got my self-driving car out, and I'm just going to be in it." That is not fancy. That will happen. And we will see truck drivers and others displaced. We have to live with it. It's part of us. We can't turn away from it. We need thought, skill, international cooperation, and strong ethics to ensure that all of us can survive these waves of technology, climate change, and international disruption. Thank you for a wonderful debate.

# Ron McCallum Debate

**James Fleming:** Thank you, Ron, and thank you to all of our magnificent speakers tonight. Thank you to Justice Hatcher for moderating such an interesting discussion. There's so much to contemplate. My brain's exploding. I'm sure yours is as well. If you're in the room tonight, please help yourself to a complimentary copy of our latest book as you leave. We'll have to leave it there. Please, yeah, join our newsletter. You can have a look at the Industrial Relations National Calendar on our website to keep abreast of, of events around the country. And we look forward to seeing you all next year. Good night.

**01:53:04,639**

**End**



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