

Wednesday, 6 August 2025

## PC Report proposes to sell out Australian workers and their industries

The Productivity Commission's report on 'Harnessing data and digital technology' is hopelessly behind the times and its proposals will deliver nothing for working Australians and the good employers who are looking to do the right thing and make the most of the AI opportunity.

The Productivity Commission has swallowed the arguments of large multinational tech companies hook, line and sinker in its rejection of the need for appropriate economy-wide regulation to manage the risk of social harm posed by the misuse of AI.

The Commission's report offers nothing for working people and contains no plan to make sure that workers are at the centre of the widespread AI uptake and get the skills and training needed to get the most out of this technology, which is the productivity-maximising approach. It has no plan to make sure the productivity gains of AI are fairly shared.

The report offers no solutions to address the chronic lack of managerial capability that is holding the economy back or drivers to get big business to invest in research, development and innovation.

Australians want to gain the benefits of AI but are right to insist on Government action to ensure their data and privacy rights are protected, along with their job security.

The Productivity Commission has completely ignored these legitimate concerns of Australians and the need for big business to build a social licence to maximise AI-related productivity benefits.

The report's extensive canvassing of the possibility of a text and data mining exemption opens the door to legitimising the rampant theft of the creative output of Australia's creative workers and of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property.

The Productivity Commission seems completely ignorant of the world-leading academic research and best-practice examples that demonstrate the most effective AI introduction is done through consultation, co-design, and collaboration with workers.

### Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary, Joseph Mitchell:

"The Productivity Commission's only ambition for Australia's digital future seems to be that we turn ourselves into a mini version of the United States where tech bros get all the benefits of the new technology and productivity benefits are not fairly shared.

"Rather than engage reasonably with the Australian public's desire for appropriate regulatory responses to manage the risk of AI so that we can undertake this tech transition in a way that benefits all Australians, the Productivity Commission has taken a knee-jerk stance by asserting that any appropriate economy-wide regulatory response will hinder productivity.

"This report offers absolutely nothing to working people who want to get the benefits of AI in their work while being protected from its misuse by bad-faith actors. It offers nothing to those good employers who want to do the right thing and introduce AI in a safe and responsible way and appears to reject a pro-worker, pro-job, and pro-growth future.

"The Commission misses a vital fact on harnessing the productivity gains of AI: AI itself will not deliver productivity growth; it is the skilled use of AI by working people who are appropriately trained and supported and fairly paid that will do so. Workers must share fairly in any productivity improvements that this delivers.

“The union movement absolutely opposes any move towards the reckless and irresponsible diminishing of protections for the output of Australian creative workers, journalists, academics and other similar workers. We are deeply concerned about the Productivity Commission’s extensive canvassing of the possibility of a text and data mining exemption, which could only be for the benefit of large multinational tech companies.

“Let’s be clear about what relaxing copyright for data mining really means in practice – it means legitimising the theft of the work of Australian creative workers, journalists and academics. It means undermining some of our most treasured industries, ones that define our sense of who we are as a nation. Further it means denigrating and stealing Indigenous cultural and intellectual property all to benefit overseas tech billionaires making new products.”

**ENDS**

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