

media release



Unions seizing the opportunities of AI and protecting the fair go

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Australian Unions are continuing to pursue regulatory guard rails to steer the future roll-out of Artificial Intelligence in workplaces.

The ACTU today hosted a symposium on Artificial Intelligence in Canberra's Parliament House, with Melbourne University's Centre for Employment and Labour Relations and the Centre for Future Work.

Workers across finance, transport, health, education, creative industries and the tech sector shared how AI is affecting the way they work, how their employers are treating them, and how it is changing their industries.

Ride share drivers, actors and performers, retail workers, nurses, bank employees and software developers were at the symposium calling for a pro-job pro-worker agenda to give workers a stake in the gains from AI while being transparent and fair.

Assistant Minister for Science Technology and the Digital Economy, Dr Andrew Charlton and Industry and Innovation Minister, Tim Ayres addressed the symposium. The Assistant Minister for Productivity, Competition and Treasury, Dr Andrew Leigh spoke on a panel on making the most of AI as part of a productivity agenda.

Australian Unions are calling for fair safeguards that would require employers to consult with their staff before new AI technologies can be introduced into workplaces.

AI agreements would include guarantees around job security, skills development and retraining, transparency over the use of AI technology, as well as genuine privacy and data collection protections. Workers are also calling for the protection of their creative output from content theft and for regulation of AI through a National Artificial Intelligence Authority.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary, Joseph Mitchell:

“We want Australia’s digital future to be one where working people have a voice in the uptake of AI and get the skills and training needed to seize the opportunities AI can bring.

“What we don’t want is Australia following a United States style ‘let it rip’ approach, where the benefits of the new technology and productivity flow through to multinational tech companies, leaving workers without a say or a meaningful stake in the potential gains.

“Workers showed that AI can bring benefits, if brought in with workers who have a fair say in how AI is used and are trained to work with it.

“As we heard from a broad range of industries today, it won’t happen effectively without the knowledge, experience, creativity and skills of workers to drive the process.

“Working people need to know their key concerns, such as job security are not going to be left unprotected.

“We heard from workers that there are good employers grasp this and are consulting their workforce, but we need protections for all workers. A national regulatory framework will mean that all employers follow their lead and engage in the uptake of AI responsibly and one which protects Australian industries.”

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