Submission to the Senate Select Committee on the Future of Work and Workers Inquiry on the impact of technological and other change on the future of work and workers in Australia

Australian Psychological Society

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1. Summary of Recommendations

The APS recommends that:

Recommendation 1: Given the mental health benefits of employment largely apply to good quality work, the Government focus on creating and supporting employment opportunities that provide a decent minimum (living) wage, and that entail good OH&S conditions, including employee recognition and respect.

Recommendation 2: Any strategic consideration of the future of work include a recognition that reducing the rate of unemployment is only one indicator of successfully addressing employment opportunity and discrimination. Employee satisfaction and quality of life must also be taken into account when planning for the future of work.

Recommendation 3: Given job insecurity and unemployment are predictors of poor psychological and physical health and also of negative work-related outcomes, any envisioning of the future of work be premised on providing secure and sufficient meaningful work for all, including the use of legislation to underpin it.

Recommendation 4: Governments design policies which prioritise employee conditions and job autonomy, and which encourage organisations to manage atypical work arrangements in ways that promote job security and maximise wellbeing.

Recommendation 5: Any examination of the future of work take into consideration the implications of climate change. These implications encompass both the impacts of climate change itself, as well as the impact on work and workers of an inevitable transition to a low/zero carbon economy.

Recommendation 6: The Government specifically examine the changing generational profile of the workplace and develop policies that support the retention of older workers.

Recommendation 7: Future employment strategies incorporate measures designed to ensure that the inclusion needs of people with significant barriers to work are addressed.

Recommendation 8: Strategies to address the gender polarisation of paid and unpaid work and reduce the pay gap for women in employment are prioritised. In addition to strategies that encourage women to remain connected to the workforce is the need for lowering work hours of fathers

and creating a new social norm around men undertaking more care and household responsibility.

Recommendation 9: The Government develop policies that mitigate the detrimental impacts that technological changes are likely to have on families. Such policy responses may include better pay for work outside the standard day, provision of further financial support for childcare and other services, and increasing choice and control over when parents start and stop work to help them fit their schedules around family events and routines.

Recommendation 10: The Government work with rural, regional and remote communities to best prepare them for the future of work. In particular, investing in good quality, fast internet coverage in all rural communities, assisting communities to transition to renewable energy technologies as well as increasing skills (including in technology) among rural Australians should be a priority.

Recommendation 11: The Government invest in a strong safety net and ensure supports are in place for all people to participate in the future world of work. Welfare policies need to avoid victim-blaming approaches and adapt to the increasing precariousness and job insecurity likely in the future.

Recommendation 12: The Government scope the benefits of a Universal Basic Income and examine the potential benefits and risks of different models of application, particularly as they relate to marginalised groups such as those living with a disability and those with caring responsibilities.

2. Introduction

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Future of Work and Workers Inquiry on the impact of technological and other change on the future of work and workers in Australia.

Australian psychologists and international colleagues have long advocated for meaningful, quality employment as a determinant of psychological health and wellbeing, while drawing attention to the harmful impacts of poor quality, insecure employment and unemployment on mental health and wellbeing. In 2000, the APS completed a discussion paper on *The psychology of work and unemployment in Australia today.* In 2004 the American Psychological Association released *Public Policy, Work and Families: The Report of the APA Presidential Initiative on Work and Families*. More recently, the British Psychological Society (BPS) produced a comprehensive review paper titled: *Psychology at Work: Improving wellbeing and productivity in the workplace*.

In particular, the APS contribution to the current Inquiry draws upon several psychological aspects of future trends in work and unemployment, including the mental health and wellbeing of workers and their families, the precarious nature of work for particular population groups, implications for regional, rural and remote communities, and the impacts of climate change.

The nature and availability of work, and therefore the impact of the work experience and the role work plays in people's lives, are inevitably changing and will continue to do so. At present, the provision and nature of work in Australia are undergoing marked changes which are modifying the impact of work in ways that risk reducing or negating its potentially beneficial effects. There are proportionally fewer full-time and more part-time jobs, and increasing casual and contract labour, often resulting in adverse impacts on the family, on the nature of work experience and on career paths.

This submission focuses in detail on the psychological aspects of these changes and their effects, but the solutions to most of the problems raised will necessarily involve social, economic and political action.

Psychological and health benefits of work

Paid work is typically a major part of life for adults in Western society. Reliable and secure access to work potentially offers a number of benefits, including an income (which in turn provides access to essential and desired

activities, goods and services), structured activity, a sense of purposefulness and personal worth, and social contact, including enabling individuals to contribute to the welfare of their social and cultural groups. And in addition to the integral role of work (whether paid or unpaid) in people's lives, paid employment is also associated with better mental health (British Psychological Society [BPS], 2017; Butterworth et al., 2011; World Health Organization [WHO], 2002).

Conversely, unemployment is also associated with and causes individual distress and physical and mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, negative self-esteem, dissatisfaction with life, social dislocation, community dysfunction and population morbidity (Jefferies et al., 2011; Kiely & Butterworth, 2013; Kim et al., 2012).

However, gaining employment alone is not sufficient to achieve mental wellbeing, since the mental health benefits identified apply only to good quality, meaningful work, which is characterised by:

- a decent minimum (living) wage
- having control over work (both tasks and hours/times)
- being respected and rewarded
- being provided with good quality workplace supports and services
- effective Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) policies.

Research shows the transition from unemployment to poor quality jobs is more detrimental to mental health than remaining unemployed (Butterworth et al., 2011) and this is particularly so for young people (APS, 2000; Thomas, 2014). Moreover, it is important to distinguish between association and cause: while poor health may increase the likelihood of long-term unemployment, it is likely that poverty and stigmatising models of delivering unemployment benefits and services, along with the experience of not being employed, contribute to these poor health outcomes.

Job insecurity is also recognised as a predictor of poor psychological and physical health and of negative work-related outcomes (British Psychological Society [BPS], 2017). Longitudinal studies of the relationship between job insecurity and general psychological health and wellbeing found job insecurity predicts a negative effect on mental health, carrying an increased risk of distress; such insecurity may result in employees doing just enough to meet the demands of the job because exceeding expectations is not rewarded. Unpredictability and uncontrollability are key psychological challenges for wellbeing, leaving the individual unsure about how to cope (BPS, 2017).

Psychological research indicates that, for mental wellbeing, it is not sufficient just to get people into jobs. It is likely therefore that the benefit to the national economy of having more employed people is potentially negated by the potential loss of productivity and heavier burden on services resulting from compromised workplace wellbeing. This highlights the importance of considering employee satisfaction in any attempt to boost and maintain workforce participation.

Recommendation 1: The APS recommends that, given the mental health benefits of employment largely apply to good quality work, the Government focus on creating and supporting employment opportunities that provide a decent minimum (living) wage, and that entail good OH&S conditions, including employee recognition and respect.

Recommendation 2: The APS recommends that any strategic consideration of the future of work include a recognition that reducing the rate of unemployment is only one indicator of successfully addressing employment opportunity and discrimination. Employee satisfaction and quality of life must also be taken into account when planning for the future of work.

Recommendation 3: The APS recommends that given job insecurity and unemployment are predictors of poor psychological and physical health and also of negative work-related outcomes, any envisioning of the future of work be premised on providing secure and sufficient meaningful work for all, including the use of legislation to underpin it.

3. Responding to the Terms of Reference

The impact of technological and other change on the future of work and workers in Australia, with particular reference to:

1. **the future earnings, job security, employment status and working patterns of Australians;**

Emerging technologies are widely expected to have significant consequences for workers, workplaces, families and communities, both positive and negative, but also disruptive.

Advances in technology (increased reliance on Information Communication Technology [ICT], automation, robotics, Artificial Intelligence, etc) will continue to replace tasks, and some whole roles/jobs previously done by humans, primarily because they can be done more efficiently. This will

eliminate the need for less workers, but can also create new jobs in different areas (discipline areas as well as geographically). Many jobs will be transformed rather than destroyed or reduced.

Technology will also play a major role in augmenting the remaining proportion of work that will be done by humans, with increasing use and reliance on technology to complete many more complex/time consuming tasks.

Impact of changes to work boundaries and arrangements

Technological developments also dovetail with a broader set of concerns about how labour markets operate and how the boundaries of 'work' are defined (Healey et al, 2017).

Increasingly technology will allow more work to be done from anywhere, and often anytime.This can reduce the need for commuting which has both personal, time and environmental benefits, and there can be substantial savings for organisations on office rent and energy costs. This technology can improve work–life balance by allowing people to manage the competing demands of their work and home roles more effectively.

Evidence on the benefits of flexible work is mixed however, as often flexibility translates to doing more in less time or interfering with work/life balance. Indeed, under some conditions, it can intensify stress and increase rather than reduce conflict between work and personal life (see reviews by Joyce, Bambra and others). There is also a risk of shifting the responsibility for work-related infrastructure from the employer to the employee (such as use of Internet, electricity supply, office set-up). It is therefore vital for organisations to be aware of the risks of 'imposing' remote working on their employees: choice and control over flexible working options, and support when jobs are redesigned and reconfigured, are vital.

There is also increasing recognition that technology use can threaten as well as develop employability. Being 'always on' can extend working hours by making the job role more salient – this limits opportunities to recover from work, with serious implications for productivity and personal relationships (BPS, 2017). At present most organisations only provide their remote workers with general health and safety guidance, and they are forced to self-manage their ICT use.

For those left in full time employment, the trend to 'do more with less' means that the intensification of work is playing a part in decreasing levels of

wellbeing and in turn has negative implications for our work-life balance (APS, 2000).

The precariousness of future work

One of the greatest concerns about the impact of technology is the growing precariousness of work. Some groups have always contended with precarious work conditions, such as mothers, new migrants, older workers and those living with a disability. Changes in technology will inevitably mean that more workers face such conditions.

Fewer hours of work and less certainty around when people work are likely to result in less job security, poorer job quality and lower incomes. For example in the UK, Zero Hour Contracts[1], whereby there are no guaranteed hours of employment and employees may choose whether or not to accept work, have gained momentum. While benefits such as individual choice over work hours have been espoused, in practice those on these contracts may feel pressured to accept work to maintain employment, or may not be able to afford that choice (BPS, 2017). Indeed research shows insufficient household income and irregular and/or antisocial working hours – again a feature of emerging work arrangements – are strong predictors of poor psychological health (De Moortel, Vandenheede, & Vanroelen, 2014).

Furthermore, the 'boundaryless career' in which individuals must take responsibility for managing their career (e.g. keeping skills up to date, planning career progression, identifying opportunities) is often described in terms of individuals escaping the restrictions (e.g. on careers) of organisations. However critics have warned that such arrangements present barriers to career success for marginalised workers, such as women, ethnic minorities and those in low-skilled jobs, who have less resources to self-manage their own career. So while the flexible job market is good for organisations, and for those who are able to progress from one opportunity to the next, others will be left with underemployment, and unemployment (BPS, 2017).

[1]Unlike a traditional contract of employment, a zero-hours contract offers no guarantee of work. Many employers use such contracts to cover situations where work fluctuates, and many individuals also find this to be a suitable working arrangement. However, there has been criticism of their widespread use in the UK. Although there is currently no legal definition for a zero-hours contract, employers need to ensure that written contracts contain provisions setting out the status, rights and obligations of their zero-hours staff. https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/emp-law/terms-conditions/zero-hours-factsheet#6035

The 2017 BPS paper highlights the potential impact on mental health and wellbeing of insecure and emerging atypical work arrangements, finding that there are stressors associated with lower paid jobs and jobs of poorer quality (both of which include zero hour contracts), and that these jobs are characterised by high job insecurity, low control, high demands and low job esteem. Furthermore, they report that poorly designed jobs carry as great a risk factor for mental ill health as unemployment and that job insecurity is associated with a doubling of the risk of mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety (BPS, 2017).

This emerging research underlines how important it is for governments to design policies which prioritise employee conditions and job autonomy and for organizations to manage atypical work arrangements carefully. A strong 'psychological contract' (Argyris, 1960) between employer and employee (where there are reciprocal expectations, open communication with employees and efforts to build and maintain trust) may not solve the issue of insecurity, but does have the potential to mitigate a negative impact on the psychological health of employees.

Given that many more people will no longer have access to good quality, permanent full time employment, it is imperative that governments avoid stigmatising those who are unemployed or engaged in casual, precarious work by punishing them further with victim blaming approaches (e.g. welfare policies of mutual obligation and income management). Proposals to expand such approaches and related programs are not evidence-based, and risk undermining the autonomy and decision-making ability of individuals, which, as well as being a fundamental human right, is essential to psychological health and wellbeing (Borland & Tseng, 2011).

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that Governments design policies which prioritise employee conditions and job autonomy, and which encourage organisations to manage atypical work arrangements in ways that promote job security and maximise wellbeing.

The effects of climate change on the future of work

Any examination of the future of work must also take into consideration the implications of climate change. These implications encompass both the impacts of climate change itself, as well as the impact on work and workers of an inevitable transition to a low/zero carbon economy.

An increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, unpredictable weather patterns and also indirect and more insidious changes

such as rising sea-levels, prolonged droughts, changing growing seasons, and loss of liveability will have both sudden and gradual effects on human systems and ecosystems, creating increased economic hardship, higher disease prevalence, increased mortality, forced migration, and species' extinctions (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2014).

These impacts have many obvious implications for the future of work. For example, there will be an increased need for emergency services and first responders to disasters, and increased pressures and demands on health workers and others coping with physical and mental health problems resulting from the direct and indirect effects of climate change. There will be more need for workers involved in rebuilding damaged infrastructure, like engineers and others in the construction industries.

The necessary transition to a low/zero carbon economy leads to a significant drop in jobs in the fossil fuel industry. Unplanned closures of fossil fuel industries that employ large numbers of workers can have negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of workers, their families, and the community at large. These closures must be planned, with attention to a just transition for workers (See our 2016 APS submission to the *Senate Inquiry into the experience of closures of electricity generators and other large industrial assets on workers and communities*).

The changes involved in a transition to a low carbon economy also have several benefits for the future of work, like a proliferation of new green-tech industries, including renewable energy projects, with many opportunities for workers in employment and advancement. At an individual level, it has been shown that as people accumulate skills and become more specialised in new renewable industries, their capacity to learn and innovate is enhanced (OECD, 2012).

Climate change is also expected to have large economic consequences. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2014) report warns that Australia's multibillion-dollar mining, farming and tourism industries all face significant threats as worsening global warming causes more dangerous and extreme weather.

A final point about changes to the future of work in response to how societies respond and adapt to climate change comes from research conducted into hours of work. Knight and colleagues (2013) note that countries with higher average annual hours of work have higher carbon emissions after accounting for other factors. In terms of the future of work, it would seem that shorter hours should be a part of emissions-reduction strategies. For workers, this

could mean a better work-life balance, more time to spend with family and friends, less stress and therefore better health.

Recommendation 5: The APS recommends that any government consideration of the future of work must take into consideration the implications of climate change. These implications encompass both the impacts of climate change itself, as well as the impact on work and workers of an inevitable transition to a low/zero carbon economy.

2. the different impact of that change on Australians, particularly on regional Australians, depending on their demographic and geographic characteristics;

As discussed above, the future of work is likely to entail increased job insecurity and casualisation of the workforce, competition for jobs and the increasing demand for qualifications. All these factors can serve to discriminate against those living in rural and regional Australia, older people and people with disability. Inequality is also likely to increase in gender outcomes, as well as on socioeconomic and rural/regional indicators if measures are not put in place to ensure all can participate in the future of work.

Older people

By 2050, 22.7 per cent of the Australian population will be aged 65 years and over, compared to 13.5 per cent in 2010 (Commonwealth of Australia Attorney General's Department, 2010). Ageing is a normal biological, social and emotional process which is often experienced as positive, contrary to prevailing and inaccurate negative stereotypes about older people.

Media stereotypes have contributed to a view of the ageing boom as a burden, with older people (in the same ways as people living with disability) often portrayed as dependent recipients of government benefits, not engaged in the workforce and heavy users of health care services. However, disability (e.g. depression, dementia and ill health) is not inevitable in older age, and older people who are not in the workforce make many important contributions to society, for example as informal carers and volunteers (APS, 2000).

The 2015 Willing to Work Inquiry conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission followed Australia's first national prevalence survey of age discrimination in the workplace. That survey revealed that more than a quarter of Australians surveyed aged 50 years and over had experienced age discrimination in the workplace during the past two years. One third were aware of other people in the same age range experiencing discrimination

because of their age. Of great concern, a third of those who had experienced age discrimination gave up looking for work. These findings were reinforced in 2017 research conducted by the University of South Australia's Centre for Workplace Excellence, which found that almost a third of Australians perceived some form of age-related discrimination while employed or looking for work in the last 12 months - starting as early as 45 years of age.

Retirement can be beneficial or deleterious, depending on several factors, particularly health, financial security, and the individual's perceived control over the decision. Attitudes towards retirement are now contradictory, with governmental encouragement for delayed retirement standing alongside community pressure to leave work to make room for younger workers. Technology can play a role in providing workplace flexibility to enable 'bridge' employment or a staged transition out of full-time work for older people. There may also be a need for further training or retraining to ensure that technological change does not exacerbate workplace exclusion for older or non-'digital native' workers.

Recommendation 6: The APS recommends that the Government specifically examine the changing generational profile of the workplace and develop policies that support the retention of older workers.

People with disability and neurodiversity

The APS is concerned that Australia has one of the lowest rates of job participation for people with a disability in the OECD (OECD, 2012) and this is unlikely to change (but could worsen) with the technological changes predicted to occur within the workforce. In Australia, approximately one in five people report having a disability. Media stereotypes have contributed to a view of disability as a burden, with people with disability often portrayed in similarly distorted ways as older people.

In accordance with the social model of disability, the APS acknowledges that while individuals may have psychological and physical impairments, it is often the environment itself (built and social) that contributes significantly to the experience of disability, in that it is unable to accommodate for people with impairments.

An emerging area of focus in the UK is on neurodiversity, a term that arose from the disability rights movement. The range of conditions that affect cognitive functions such as thinking, attention, memory and impulse control are collectively known as neurodiverse conditions. The intention was to move away from a medical model where such conditions are seen as diagnosis of ill-health, towards a more socially inclusive recognition that differences in

thinking ability reflect normal variation between people – that is, neurodiversity.

Neurodiversity typically encompasses a range of conditions including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia/developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) and Tourette Syndrome (TS). The focus on strengths and what individuals who experience these conditions bring to the workplace is a promising approach to inclusive thinking as it applies to the future of work.

Different types of neurodiversity result in different work-related strengths and difficulties. For some, technology offers opportunities to participate in work that have not been previously afforded (BPS, 2017). While the underlying causes of such conditions are different, the workplace issues are more similar than they first appear. Fear of disclosure, discrimination and learned helplessness mean that personal, human contact is the most effective intervention to ensure inclusion in the workplace. It is important that future work design makes adjustments that play to people's strengths. For people with disabilities, including those with neurodiverse conditions, this means undertaking workplace needs assessments, workplace adjustments, collaboration with support services and addressing stigma, prejudice and discrimination.

Recommendation 7: The APS recommends that future employment strategies incorporate measures designed to ensure that the inclusion needs of people with significant barriers to work are addressed.

Gendered patterns of employment, family time and future work

A happy and fulfilling life is achieved by close personal relationships, a sense of purpose and pursuit of meaningful activities and financial security. It is important that work is structured to enable people to achieve this outside work and maximise their work/life balance. The persistent unequal work participation and pay gap between men and women, particularly mothers, is a current and future concern for how work and family life are organised.

As discussed technology is influencing the way work is structured, both in terms of hours, locations and permanence. In future the gender polarisation in jobs, contract types and work hours (whereby very short hour jobs accompanied by poor job quality and casual contracts are usually worked by mothers, whereas fathers work in longer-hour jobs) is likely to be magnified (Charlesworth, Strazdins, O'Brien & Sims, 2011).

Gaps in the paid workforce are linked to inequality in unpaid work where women are still responsible for caring roles and housework and face additional barriers to workplace equality and flexibility, particularly when a woman returns from maternity leave.

Any future employment strategies must explicitly address this gender polarisation by increasing access to good quality jobs for mothers and enabling fathers to engage more fully in parenting by promoting flexible employment (including shorter hours). The gender pay gap needs to be explicitly addressed with concrete measures, including consideration of legislative measures to end it. Such measures should also include greater access to affordable childcare and extended parental leave for both parents.

Where most parents manage two major life roles simultaneously (raising children and participating in paid work), time pressure, feeling rushed and work–family conflict pose significant challenges to the health, wellbeing and financial security of families. High work–family conflict has been shown to have significant social and economic costs to employers, individuals, and their families (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005).

Technological changes can be expected to shape when both men and women work. In developed economies, about half of businesses now operate around the clock or on weekends, so work times outside the regular nine-to-five weekday are common. Among dual-earner families, as many as three quarters have at least one parent working evenings, nights, or on weekends - times many would prefer to reserve for family (La Valle, Arthur, Millward, Scott, & Clayden, 2002).

Nonstandard schedules have been viewed as part of job flexibility that is potentially family-friendly, in that families have a choice of work times that may help them manage caring for children and going to work. But nonstandard work times have evolved to meet economic imperatives, not parents' needs, and, in lower status jobs, such hours are unlikely to be combined with good pay or with much choice in start and stop times (Strazdins, Clements, Korda, Broom & D'Souza, 2006).

Such changes in work times may have profound consequences for families, especially where both parents are employed. For example, emerging research indicates that parents working nonstandard schedules reported worse family functioning, more depressive symptoms, and less effective parenting. Their children were also more likely to have social and emotional difficulties, and these associations were partially mediated through family relationships and parent well-being. For some families, work in the 24-hour

economy may strain the well-being of parents and children (Strazdins, et al, 2006). This not only has implications for parental experience of employment and their wellbeing, but for children's health and wellbeing and them as future workers, not to mention the well-being and employment options available to large numbers of grandparent-carers.

Recommendation 8: The APS recommends that strategies to address the gender polarisation of paid and unpaid work and reduce the pay gap for women in employment are prioritised. In addition to strategies that encourage women to remain connected to the workforce is the need for lowering work hours of fathers and creating a new social norm around men undertaking more care and household responsibility.

Recommendation 9: The APS recommends that the Government develop policies that mitigate the detrimental impacts that technological changes are likely to have on families. Such policy responses may include better pay for work outside the standard day, provision of further financial support for childcare and other services, and increasing choice and control over when parents start and stop work to help them fit their schedules around family events and routines.

Rural and remote communities

Rural and remote communities in Australia are expected to undergo a number of changes in the future due to existing trends and ongoing pressures like the direct and indirect effects of climate change. National trends have consistently highlighted the shift of people and services from rural to metropolitan areas, which in some communities has resulted in fewer job opportunities or further travel to access employment.

Technology is often described as the solution to the tyranny of distance experienced by people living in rural, regional and remote (RRR) Australia. While it is likely that technology will improve access for some RRR people to some services (e.g., health services, legal services, education, shopping etc), significant inequities will continue to persist, such as:

- still poor/unreliable internet coverage in many RRR locations
- the high number of people in RRR who have low SES/low literacy will mean large numbers of people in these areas will experience barriers to the benefits of technology (e.g. high cost of data usage, no access to computer/internet(and will be unable to afford access to face-to-face services or jobs.

Employees in rural and remote Australia frequently work in great geographical and professional isolation yet deal with complex issues. It is difficult to attract and retain many professions, to the detriment of rural and remote communities.

There is a decline in traditional industries like forestry, agriculture and mining in rural and remote areas. This has led to increases in unemployment for workers in rural areas, especially if the closure of some of these industries was done rapidly without proper planning (see earlier point). Rural regions are an important potential location for manufacturing, and most rural workers are now employed in service sectors, including tourism, health care, education, finance and public administration.

Future work in rural areas that are transitioning to renewable energy technologies may also bring positive changes to the community. Rural communities hosting renewable energy initiatives often enjoy multiple psychosocial and economic benefits like the creation of local ongoing jobs, and the development of a positive image for their region as innovative, modern, and technologically progressive (Busch & McCormick, 2014). The current approach to rural development in OECD countries can be best described as "modernising" and "adapting". At an individual level, it has been shown that as people accumulate skills and become more specialised in new renewable industries, their capacity to learn and innovate is enhanced (OECD, 2012).

Recommendation 10: The APS recommends that the Government work with rural, regional and remote communities to best prepare them for the future of work. In particular, investing in good quality, fast internet coverage in all rural communities, assisting communities to transition to renewable energy technologies as well as increasing skills (including in technology) among rural Australians should be a priority.

3. the wider effects of that change on inequality, the economy, government and society;

The impact on inequality

The consequences of inequality are detrimental for everyone in society, with recent research highlighting that the chronic stress of struggling with material disadvantage is significantly intensified by doing so in more unequal societies, of which Australia is one (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2012).

The Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2014) reports that there is a 'direct link between income and education level and health

whereby those on higher incomes are more able to afford better food and housing, better health care, and healthy activities and pursuits and are more likely to be better informed about healthy choices and behaviours' (p.25).

Future work has the potential to either widen or reduce inequality, depending on the measures and policies put in place by governments and societies. Access to secure, quality and flexible employment is disproportionately spread, with low income earners experiencing job insecurity, precarious employment arrangements, more part time or casual work and fewer conditions that provide essential protections (such as sick leave) (Douglas et al., 2014). This trend will only continue and the inequality gap widen as those who have the resources to participate in the fewer secure jobs or to manage their own careers will survive or even thrive, while those with caring responsibilities, living with a disability or older, become more reliant on casual employment or that which accommodates their situation.

One impact of inequality, and the ongoing exclusion of certain groups from employment, is that it decreases the diversity of the workforce, which is associated with reduced productivity. There are many benefits for individuals, communities and the economy of a workforce that is reflective of the community make-up, in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, ability and religious background (Fassinger, 2008; Mannix & Neale, 2005).

Further initiatives are needed to boost diversity in the workforce and to ensure that future trends in work and the workforce do not increase inequality. The economic benefits of a diverse and inclusive workforce have been well documented (Fassinger, 2008). However there are likely to be many social and psychological benefits as well, such as more tolerance of difference in and beyond the workplace.

Finally, any consideration of the future of work must also address the conditions of the unemployed. There is now overwhelming evidence that Australia's social security net is a poverty trap, not a safety net. Pertinent to this inquiry is the recognition that income received on Newstart is now so low it prevents people from finding work. No consideration of the future of work can be complete without serious engagement with these issues and recommendations to repair our social security system. This may mean flexible forms of delivery of income and family support that enable workers to participate in casual work and combine caring responsibilities without being punished.

Recommendation 11: The APS recommends that the Government invest in a strong safety net and ensure supports are in place for all people to participate in the future world of work. Welfare policies need to avoid victim-

blaming approaches and adapt to the increasing precariousness and job insecurity likely in the future.

The potential of a Universal Basic Income (UBI)

The Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a regular, non-means tested, guaranteed income, delivered to every citizen. It has the potential to provide a safety net to ensure that all people are in a position to have access to an income to attain a basic living standard.

In the context of work insecurity, precariousness and possible increased inequality, a UBI offers the possibility of individual economic freedom, increased agency, connections with others; sense of meaning and purpose in life; and social trust and cohesion. For those who are not in a position to undertake paid employment, due to intellectual or physical disabilities/barriers or caring responsibilities, a UBI offers a safety net and values their non-paid contributions to the community (such as caring, volunteering, creative pursuits etc). Given that job insecurity is highly related to poor mental health, having the safety net of a universal income could help to alleviate the stress that can accompany insecurity. At a broader level, it has the potential to influence work conditions in a positive way by providing individuals with sufficient income to ensure they are not pressured into jobs with poor conditions, which in turn would place pressure on employers to provide good quality working conditions (Psychologists for Social Change, 2017).

Without the pressure to pursue paid work for covering living costs, the UBI may provide an opportunity for individuals to seek out activities that are meaningful to them, but not in the formal workforce, such as artistic or creative endeavours or to spend more time with their families or volunteering in their communities. This could offer an important sense of identity and meaning for individuals and provide significant social cohesion and connection benefits more broadly (Psychologists for Social Change, 2017).

In the context of future scenarios where traditional work opportunities, particularly unskilled jobs and labour intensive manufacturing, are likely to be more scarce and conditions more precarious, we may need to plan for a post-industrial society where work is less central to people's identity and economic survival. Provision of a UBI has potential to address both of these considerations.

Recommendation 12: The APS recommends that the government scope the benefits of a Universal Basic Income and examine the potential benefits and risks of different models of application, particularly as they relate to marginalised groups such as those living with a disability and those with caring responsibilities.

Impacts on psychology and psychology services

Technological and other changes are also likely to impact significantly on the work of professions, including psychology. It is important that adequate consideration is given to how these changes will be managed for the benefit of professionals, employees and communities.

Community demand for psychology services is likely to continue to grow – psychological issues are one of the highest presentations in GP settings, and psychological injury incurs the highest work cover insurance costs. There is also likely to be a growing demand for psychological services to assist people to manage chronic illness – a rapidly growing health burden. However, there are a number of factors likely to impact on the psychology workforce of the future:

- Face to face service delivery will remain important, but to meet demand and improve access it will be complemented by new forms of service delivery (e.g., telehealth, apps, online). Training programs will need to incorporate the skills needed to deliver such services.
- The growing use of technology is also changing the nature of presentations to psychologists (online bullying, decreased social interactions etc). Such presentations will demand psychological research that explores impacts of technology on individuals and communities, and skill building for practitioners to identify and better manage these new issues.
- Similar to other health professions, the distribution of psychologists in RRR is less than ideal, and unlikely to change in the short term because rural workforce solutions are directed primarily to medical and nursing professions. There are interventions that could ameliorate this problem, such as HECS exemptions for psychology graduates to work in RRR, support packages for psychologists in both private and public sector to move to RRR, and supported internships and registrarships in RRR.
- Psychology training programs are not well aligned to meet the future needs of the workplace and will need to be central to growing the future workforce.

Conclusion

A happy and fulfilling life is achieved through close personal relationships, a sense of purpose and the pursuit of meaningful activities (which may be within or outside of work, particularly voluntary work or community involvement) and financial security, among other factors. It is important that future work is structured to enable people to achieve these domains outside work and to maximise their work/life balance.

From a psychological perspective a range of work-related factors facilitate people's mental health and wellbeing:

- a decent minimum (living) wage
- having control over work (both tasks and hours/times)
- being respected and rewarded
- being provided with good quality workplace supports and services
- effective Occupational Health and Safety policies.

Conversely, research shows that people's mental health is negatively affected by:

- unemployment or underemployment
- stigmatisation of unemployment and punitive welfare systems
- inaccessible employment, e.g. barriers faced by older people, a lack of acceptance of disability and neurodiversity
- job insecurity and precarious employment
- work that isn't meaningful
- lack of autonomy and control over one's workload

Technology is likely to impact the future of work and workers in a range of ways that can be both positive and negative as well as disruptive. In particular, changes that will impact on workers' mental health and wellbeing, both inside and outside the workplace, include changes in:

- working patterns, earnings, job security
- work boundaries and arrangements
- precariousness of work
- ageing workforce
- the way psychological services are delivered
- the profile and functioning of rural and remote communities.

Changes in technology will also dovetail with several other social and economic changes that will influence the future of work. These include widening inequality, climate change, discrimination in the workplace, gender

inequality including the gendered polarization of paid and unpaid work, and the widening pay gap.

It is important that governments are cognisant of how these changes will impact on the future of work and on people's lives, particularly on groups who are already marginalized. The mental health and wellbeing of workers should be foregrounded, alongside prioritising good quality, meaningful work opportunities. A strong safety net is required to ensure supports are in place for all people to participate in the future world of work. The Universal Basic Income is one approach worth considering to improve both working life and wellbeing for all Australians.

About the Australian Psychological Society

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the national professional organisation for psychologists with more than 23,000 members across Australia. Psychologists are experts in human behaviour and bring experience in understanding crucial components necessary to support people to optimise their function in the community.

A key goal of the APS is to actively contribute psychological knowledge for the promotion and enhancement of community wellbeing. Psychology in the Public Interest is the section of the APS dedicated to the communication and application of psychological knowledge to enhance community wellbeing and promote equitable and just treatment of all segments of society.

Organisational psychology is a specific area of research and practice within psychology focusing on organisational processes such as human-technology system design, learning and development, leadership, coaching, mentoring and career development, change management, occupational health and safety, and wellbeing, stress and work-life balance.

Relevant APS Member Groups and

- College of Organisational Psychologists
- Rural and Remote Psychology Interest Group
- Psychology and Ageing Interest Group
- Psychology of Intellectual Disability and Autism Interest Group
- Occupational Health Psychology Interest Group

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