

QG Breakfast Series

6 August 2019 event - transcript

Interviews with presenters

Peter Fitzsimon, Consultant, Strategic Transformation, Queensland Government Chief Information Office

ANTHONY: Welcome to you Peter.

PETER: Thank you.

ANTHONY: What does the future look like when it comes to jobs in Queensland?

PETER: I think it looks pretty bright. I mean we're going to have a lot of jobs happening. There's a lot of good things happening. Technology brings a lot of new jobs. It does have an impact on older jobs as well, but we think largely that impact's going to be positive in the sense that it will make those jobs a little bit easier.

ANTHONY: Where do you see the disruption?

PETER: It'll be across the board. There'll be lots of things will change. But it won't change as quickly as people probably expect. The discussion around the types of things that we will allow automation to do and it concentrates on four words people use. The dull and boring stuff, the repetitive stuff, the dirty, the dangerous, and sometimes called the dear which is also the expensive stuff.

ANTHONY: And in terms of preparing ourselves, those in the workforce now and into the future what would be your advice to those people?

PETER: A lot of discussion around lifetime learning. And we will always constantly learn. I think one of the issues with change in the past if you look at things like the Industrial Revolution it took you know hundreds of years to make a difference. And many of the people whose jobs changed they more like aged out of the workforce rather than had to change within the workforce. Today people will be changing roles within years. Probably in a 30 or 40 year work life you'll have multiple roles. And so you'll be constantly learning new stuff in that space. It's not hard to do. I mean people, I think most people enjoy learning new stuff. But you've just got to be prepared to do that.



ANTHONY: We know that change is inevitable, especially in the workforce. I don't think that comes as a surprise to many people. But are there jobs that you know or that the sector is aware of that won't be around in the next few years and jobs that we're likely to see come into the workforce over the next 10 or 15?

PETER: Automation is going to make some jobs obsolete or redundant in the future. Around those jobs that we lose will be a lot of activity supporting that automation. So if you look at robotics in general I mean someone's still got to build the robots and train them how to do their things and test and make sure they're doing the right thing. There'll always need to be human interaction around are we getting the right results out of the automation that we apply. A human's job in the future might be more around vetting being done right rather than actually doing the doing. There's industries growing now that didn't exist 10 or 15 years ago. I'm talking about the drone industry as a good example. I mean drones have been around for a long time. They've been used in military applications for a long time. But they have been generally available. But now we teach drone technology in schools. And kids will come out of schools with the ability to play with these things and use them productively in business. I guess the one I like the best though is if all this automation means that we can have a lot more leisure time then the whole leisure industry could be a growth industry as well.

ANTHONY: Is that possible? Do you think we may work three days a week? It'd be nice wouldn't it?

PETER: Well maybe some of us work three days a week just spread it over five.

ANTHONY: What are some of the ways perhaps people working within government, what changes do you think we're going to see there? Will it be significantly different say to the private sector?

PETER: Yes, it will to some extent. Government will change a lot slower than the private sector. And there's a couple of reasons for that. And I guess the major one, and I will mention this in the talk, is that the drivers for use of technology in business and government are different. Largely commercial entities are focused around commercial results and financial results. So they're focused on doing things quicker, faster, to try and save money, and potentially you know save, reduce the workforce as well in terms of savings costs. Government has a whole set of different drivers. And the biggest strong ones are the fact around that they've got issues around public safety and public management and things like that. So commercial employers don't care about terrorism or biosecurity or things like that, but governments have to care about that. So the jobs in government will, I guess they'll stay a lot longer, and they'll be augmented more than replaced in that space.

ANTHONY: Are there other challenges that you see about the workforce of the future due to technology?

PETER: Beyond just normal change, no, I don't really think so, I think it's just a case of adjusting to the change that's going to happen and the fact that change is now happening a lot quicker than previous generations in that space. But I think it's pretty exciting to in the sense that people like the technology that we've got. I mean people like to use technology and to get a benefit. And some areas that are really going to benefit are going to be based around the caring industry. So aged care. I think the ability to do home automation and make sure that you can stay in your homes longer if you want to and control the things around your house. The disabled industry as well. Automation, people being able to use robotics to do a lot more tasks they previously couldn't do. That's a pretty exciting sort of scenario.

ANTHONY: Does it help us in Australia that we embraced technology early? It seems that we're almost the leaders when it comes to other countries?

PETER: That's an interesting comment. Australians do in general embrace technology. And certainly if you looked at some comparisons with Asian countries we are much greater adopters of technology. But by the same token we're very limited investors in technology as well. Around the world countries are investing in technology far greater than what Australia is. And I think that that's going to have an impact on some scenarios. And an obvious impact at the moment is a lot of Australian talent goes overseas, because that's where the money and the investment is. Whether that will change or whether the Australian government will do anything to arrest that? Beyond my control.

ANTHONY: Are there some countries that you're looking at at the moment that are doing things particularly well or are far more advanced that we might be able to pick up on?

PETER: The country that we compare ourselves probably the most in the AI type technology is Canada. Canada are similar size to us, similar focus to us in terms of things there, but their investment is 10 or 15 times the size of what we're doing in terms of the technology. So they're attracting a lot of talent of Australians actually going to Canada, because that's where the investment is. I'd like to see that change. But I mean maybe some of that talent will come back over time as well.

ANTHONY: What excites you about the future when it comes to your field of work?

PETER: I wake up most days pretty excited about work things to do. I just like the fact that technology is there and you can play with it and you can do things with it. I like learning new things. Not a day goes by where you don't learn something new. And if it does it's a disappointing day in some cases. But yeah, no, I just like learning things new.

ANTHONY: Technology has made your job easier?

PETER: Technology gives me a job. No, I don't know if it's actually easier or harder, it's just the fact that if it wasn't there I probably wouldn't have one.

ANTHONY: Thanks so much for joining us.

PETER: Thanks Anthony.