

Response the Productivity Commission Report from the Work Futures Otago Group.

A/P Sara Walton, Drs Paula O’Kane and Diane Ruwhiu

We thank the Productivity Commission for this report and see it is a very valuable piece of work. While we agree with much that has been said in it, we also wanted to add a few points, based upon the research we have completed into the Future of Work in the following three reports:

Ruwhiu, D., Walton, S. & O’Kane, P. (2019). High Value Manufacturing in New Zealand to 2040: A Work Futures Otago Report. Published by the Department of Management at the University of Otago, Dunedin. ISBN 978-0-473-47427-0. (<https://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz/handle/10523/9013>)

Walton, S., O’Kane, P. & Ruwhiu, D. (2018). Information and Communication Technology in Dunedin to 2040: A Work Futures Otago report. Published by the Department of Management at the University of Otago, Dunedin. ISBN 978-0-473-30605. (<https://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz/handle/10523/8161>)

Walton, S., Ruwhiu, D., O’Kane, P. & Cathro, V. (2014). Future of Work: Dunedin. Published by the Department of Management at the University of Otago, Dunedin. ISBN 978-0-473-30605. (<https://blogs.otago.ac.nz/futureofwork/files/2015/01/Future-of-Work-Dunedin-Report.pdf>)

1. *Change on our terms:* While large-scale change is not imminent, we do think that it will happen and that we should prepare for it. In addition to the changing nature of work, technology and employment systems, climate change and other social and environmental issues will simultaneously affect us. We may be a small island in the Pacific, but we need to be careful not to succumb to the whims of the global economy and develop our own destiny. It is important to ensure that New Zealand’s response reflects our bi-cultural political economy, and multi-cultural society. Of note, we have a particular context (i.e. Mātuaranga Māori), and we need to set an agenda for the future that builds productivity for Aotearoa New Zealand on our terms, for our people.
2. *Changing Skills:* In our research (above) participants felt that, in NZ, we would need to adapt to different skill sets and capabilities, emphasising the need for greater partnership between education, industry and government to ensure future oriented skills were available.
3. *Wealth Gap:* Our participants echoed the worry about the gap between the rich and the poor increasing and we believe that this is a key area NZ needs to address, whether this be through living wages or some form of universal basic income.
4. *Ageing Population:* the very complex reality of the ageing population is not mentioned in detail in the report. We see the ageing population having a knock-on effect on skill sets and wealth gaps.
5. *Employee Monitoring:* Employee monitoring is posited as a good thing, but the reality of “man [sic] and machine” raises considerable ethical dimensions to this that need to be carefully worked through otherwise monitoring can be open for abuse by organisations and resulting in negative individual level effects.
6. *Employment Law:* At present, employment law offers little support or guidance for businesses or communities trying to be responsive to changes in technology and work. This is an area where NZ needs to be forward thinking and allow for flexibility in work scenarios while still protecting employees.