

Lawyers, accountants join list of workers who could lose their jobs to AI, warns report

PM

By [Zoe Ferguson](#)

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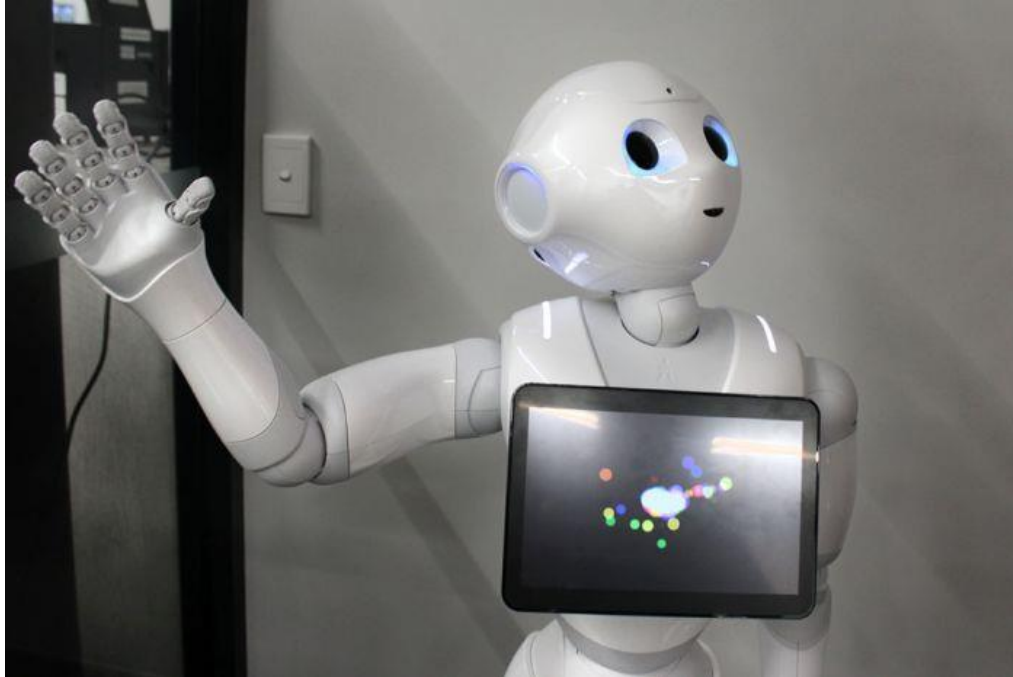


Photo: Pepper is the humanoid robot who has the capacity to understand people's moods and emotions. (ABC Tropical North: Harriet Tatham)

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If you're an accountant, lawyer or data analyst, a robot may soon take over your job.

KEY POINTS:

- New development of AI and robotics affects both blue and white collar sector
- Life could be safer with artificial intelligence around us
- Report recommends a 'human quota' in sectors
- Legislation needed to protect human safety and security

A new report from the International Bar Association suggests machines will most likely [replace humans in high-routine occupations](#).

The authors have suggested that governments introduce human quotas in some sectors in order to protect jobs.

Gerlind Wisskirchen, a lawyer for labour and employment law, coordinated the study, which started one-and-a-half years ago.

"We thought it'd just be an insight into the world of automation and blue collar sector," she said.

"This topic has picked up speed tremendously and you can see it everywhere and read it every day. It's a hot topic now."

WHICH JOBS WILL WE LOSE OUT TO THE ROBOTS?

The report suggests that the jobs at risk are high-routine ones, such as accounting and lawyers.

Financial services are more at risk than legal roles though, as algorithms are easier for a computer to synthesise when compared to maintaining client relationships and drafting new legislature.

Simple [physical and manual work is also in the firing line](#), the authors estimate.

GIF: Transhumanism aims to transform the human condition by using technology to enhance human abilities. The future of work and job security is questionable for some, regardless of whether artificial intelligence will outperform humans.

For business futurist Morris Miselowski, job shortages will be a reality in the future.

"I'm not absolutely convinced we will have enough work for everybody on this planet within 30 years anyway," he said.

"We're heading towards a population of 7 billion to 10 billion.

"I'm not convinced that work as we understand it, this nine-to-five, Monday to Friday, is sustainable for many of us for the next couple of decades."

He forecasted that the biggest changes would be a shift away from the traditional work schedule.

"I think the internet will in many ways disappear... it'll just become as electricity or gas, we'll take it for granted.

"Artificial intelligence... and all sorts of new technologies are just literally on the horizon, all of that's going to change where, how and when we do work."

Ms Wisskirchen was surprised by how far-reaching the effects of automation are.

"Even though automation begun 30 years ago in the blue-collar sector, the new development of artificial intelligence and robotics affects not just blue collar, but the white-collar sector," Ms Wisskirchen.

"You can see that when you see jobs that will be replaced by algorithms or robots depending on the sector."

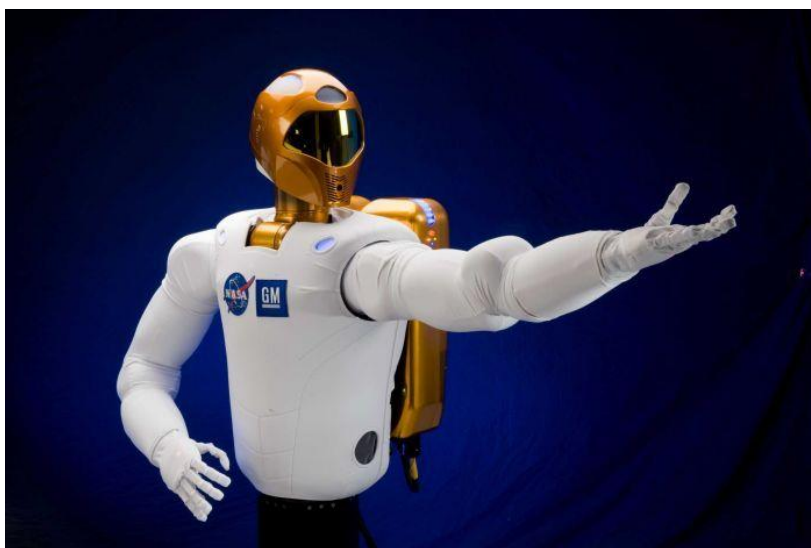


Photo: Robonaut is being tested to see if it could be used in harsh and dangerous places in WA mines. (Supplied: NASA)

NEED TO LEARN TO WORK WITH ROBOTS, NOT AGAINST THEM

If technology continues to advance at the pace it has been, Ms Wisskirchen points out the legislation needs to keep up with it to protect human safety and security.

Because currently, it's difficult to answer the question of who is responsible if someone is hit by a driverless car — is it the manufacturer, the owner, or the person who got hit?

"There is an increasing gap between legislation in field of employment and labour law and reality," she said.

"The business world is leaping ahead in huge leaps and disruptive business models, while legislators are inching forward incrementally.

"This huge gap makes it difficult for the business world and practitioners to deal with."

The report has recommended some methods to mitigate human job losses, including a type of 'human quota' in any sector, introducing 'made by humans' label or a tax for the use of machines.

But for Professor Miselowski, setting up human and computer ratios in the workplace would be impractical.

"We want to maintain human employment for as long as possible, but I don't see it as practical or pragmatic in the long-term," he said.

"Some jobs are better done by people and some are better done by machines.

"I prefer what I call a trans-humanist world, where what we do is we learn to work alongside machines the same way we have with computers and calculators.

"Because these machines, artificial intelligence, are really no more than a calculator or some other piece of equipment, so we really need to learn to work with them not against them.

"To me that makes more sense than putting quotas in place."

The ability to negate fear and be optimistic about the future is important, according to Ms Wisskirchen.

"It's just something that is going to happen, or has already started to happen," she said.

"And we need to make the best out of it, but we need to think ahead and be very thoughtful in how we shape society in the future — and that's I think a challenge for everybody.

"Nobody should shut down his or her ears of what's coming, but think ahead and try to find solutions. "

WILL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE MAKE LIFE SAFER?

Toby Walsh, professor of Artificial Intelligence at UNSW, said there was a silver lining when it came to technology and the future of jobs.

"It's always good to remember that although technology will take jobs away as they raise in this report, there will also be new jobs created by technology," he said.

"In fact if we look at the history of technology since the Industrial Revolution, more jobs have been created than destroyed," he said.

"We don't know if that's going to be the case this time, there's no fundamental law of economics that requires that to be.

"And there are worrying trends out there that suggest this might be a bit different, because many of our skills will be taken away, our cognitive skills — perhaps the last skill left to us."

But Professor Walsh pointed out that life could be safer with artificial intelligence around us.

"If we look at for example autonomous cars: 1,000 people will die on the roads of Australia in the next year in road traffic accidents," he said.

"More than 95 per cent of those are caused by driver error.

"So as soon as we can get humans out of the loop, the much safer our roads are going to be and that carnage will stop."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-03/martin-ford-warns-the-rise-robots-could-lead-to-a-jobless-future/6747776>

Submitted by: Ruth Edge – Cardinia Shire Council