

Dear Select Committee on Adopting Artificial Intelligence,

My name is Benjamin Anderson and I am a fourth-year politics and economics student at the Australian National University. Over the past three years, I've been living in Canberra, throwing myself in the political scene and various advocacy organisations. I personally massively recognise the urgent need for major discussion and action regarding the risks posed by artificial intelligence (AI). As a technology, AI is advancing rapidly, I see it every day as a student at uni and especially in the last year with the advent of ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude as language learning models. AI will undoubtedly play a significant role in the future, but it is crucial that this technology is beneficial and does not pose an existential threat to our society.

One of the first steps we need to take is the creation of an Australian AI Safety Institute. This body should immediately start to work towards safe AI development, without needing to wait for new legislation. Taking a leaf out of the UK AI Safety Institute's book, we should primarily focus on three core areas: evaluating advanced AI systems, driving foundational AI safety research, and coordinating internationally on AI Safety. This three pronged approach would not only prepare us for any future regulatory regime but also provide us with more information and options when implementing regulations. AI safety institutes are an essential part of national AI governance regimes, helping to manage the rapid, unpredictable, and potentially dangerous progress of AI, an AI Safety institute is simply absolutely necessary.

Secondly we really need to just actually establish good AI governance laws. By doing so, Australia could set a precedent and encourage other nations to follow suit. While our Government has expressed interest in regulating AI, the current term of Government seems unlikely to achieve this. Given the speed of AI development, we must act promptly to address safety concerns.

Another point of concern is our current approach to liability for AI companies. There are critical gaps that put the public at risk, and I believe this Senate Committee should review our liability laws. A recent study found that 39% of Australians believe that the government's priority AI policy should be ensuring AI companies are liable for any harm they cause. Our existing negligence laws are outdated and put the burden on the harmed individual to prove negligence, which is near impossible given the complex nature of AI systems.

A strict liability regime for AI harms might incentivise greater caution, while a fault-based liability system could define the duties of care for AI developers and deployers. Examples of potential issues include a teenager using an AI model for a damaging cyber attack, a chatbot tarnishing a company's reputation, or a tragic case like the one in Belgium where a chatbot designed for entertainment persuaded a user to commit suicide. As AI's impact on our society grows, so does the potential for harm. Modernising Australia's AI liability laws must become an urgent priority.

Lastly, I want to emphasise the biosecurity risks posed by advanced AI. There have been warnings about the possibility of AI empowering terrorists to create bioweapons. In 2022, a paper published by Collaborations Pharmaceuticals showed how an AI designed to find new drugs instead created 40,000 lethal molecules in under six hours. Additionally, studies have shown how Large Language Models could assist in making bioweapons.

The US has already taken action, with President Biden issuing an Executive Order on Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy AI, focusing on preventing AI from enabling the production of advanced bioweapons. Australia needs to follow suit and quickly implement similar risk mitigations. I urge the Senate Inquiry to seek evidence

from various departments to understand their awareness of biosecurity risks from AI and any actions being taken to address these risks.

In conclusion, the risks posed by AI are pressing and important. AI is going to be apart of our future and for the next six decades of my life whether I like it or not. I would prefer to live in a world where that AI is beneficial to me and my loved ones and does not pose a constant existential threat.

Kinder regards,

Ben Anderson