Dear Select Committee on Adopting Artificial Intelligence,

I am a Researcher at MIT FutureTech with a background in information technology, behavioral science, academia, consulting, research, and communications. My current research examines the risks posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI), their relative importance, and whether key organizations are addressing or overlooking those risks.

My perception of AI has changed significantly over the years. I am generally very optimistic about technology. When I heard about AI Safety in 2015, I didn't think it was compelling. I remember thinking, why would anyone develop or design AI that could cause significant harm? After several years of engaging with experts' arguments and forecasts, I became much more concerned. I realized that it seemed likely that we would have advanced AI within the next century, and that it would create completely unique risks and opportunities when it eventuated. I still didn't perceive AI as an urgent issue. However, recent events completely changed my view. Watching ChatGPT become the fastest-growing consumer application in history made it hard to deny that some form of advanced AI has arrived. Reading about scaling laws for AI and the level of investment in new hardware made it hard to believe that current progress will slow down.

All of this was concerning enough for me to change careers to focus on AI Safety. Research by my colleagues at Ready Research and The University of Queensland indicates that my concerns are shared by many Australians. The Centre for AI Safety's Statement on AI Risk, endorsed by many world-leading researchers, shows that they are also shared by experts.

I believe there is an urgent need for government intervention to combat biosecurity risks from AI - I know several people working at Kevin Esvelt's lab in MIT who are trying to prevent this. The prompt action taken by President Biden on Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy AI, particularly in addressing the potential misuse of frontier AI models in creating advanced bioweapons, should serve as a benchmark for Australia. The absence of a similar initiative in Australia, even six months after President Biden's Executive Order, is quite concerning. I urge the Senate Inquiry to seek evidence from relevant groups to ascertain their awareness of biosecurity risks from AI and the measures they have taken to prevent them.

I am concerned about Australia's negligence laws, which were written before the advent of technology, because these typically require the harmed individual to prove that a developer or deployer of a system acted negligently. Given the complex nature of AI systems, this will be nearly impossible for individuals. I would therefore encourage the Senate inquiry to prioritize modernizing Australia's AI liability laws before it is too late.

I believe that an AI Safety Institute tasked with managing our AI governance is probably the best way to keep up with AI and protect our national interest. I therefore strongly advocate for the establishment of a National AI Safety Institute in Australia, similar to the ones in the US, UK, Canada, and Japan. This institute could focus on three core priorities; evaluating advanced AI systems, driving foundational AI safety research, and partnering nationally and internationally on AI Safety.

Regards,

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Dr. Peter Slattery