The future of Australian jobs revealed

Bernard Salt

Booking, paying, and rating electricians with an Uber-like app, teaching virtual yoga classes over Skype, and getting a medical diagnosis from a computer.

These are just some of the ways technology is predicted to impact Australian jobs in the future, according to the author of a new study.

Demographer Bernard Salt has unveiled his report 'Super connected jobs', commissioned by nbn, which looks at how jobs will change as we move further into the digital age.

Mr Salt said the first, most glaring point, is that we will simply need more jobs, everywhere.

"There's going to be another five million Australians by 2030, so we need another three million workers," he told AAP.

But it's where those jobs can be found that is interesting.

Jobs are already being shed in agriculture and manufacturing, but expanding in health and education.

Mr Salt says regardless of how technology changes, we are always going to need doctors, accountants, dentists, urban planners and teachers.

It's just the way they conduct their work that might change.

"The sort of work they do and how they do it will be augmented by new technology." he said.

For example, Mr Salt says the IBM supercomputer Watson, which won US game show Jeopardy in 2011, has since gone to medical school and is already being trialled as diagnostician.
Care givers are another important area in the future, whether that be aged carers, child care, or care in personal services like beauty therapists and fitness instructors, with group workouts conducted via HD video-conferencing.

While the engineers and entrepreneurs is an unsurprising area of growth, one that's perhaps a bit of a shock is photographers.

"Everyone now has a camera on their phone, but the demand for photography skills is actually expanding and this is because we're curating our personas and our profiles on websites and social media," he said.

It also might just be part of being human to gravitate toward something creative.

"If we free up humanity from the drudgery of assembly line work, do we create people that are unoccupied? Or does the human condition actually find a creative outlet?

"Photographers, pilates and yoga instructors, performing arts or even sports people are all associated with a greater expression of creativity expected to be unleashed as a consequence of these shifts in the workforce."

So what's the biggest thing Mr Salt learnt from the study?

That it's not just about technical skills. It's about attitude - being adaptable and open to change.

"Lean into tech. Embrace it, learn it, master it, command it, surf it," he said.

"Create an opportunity, create a business, or find an opportunity to apply your skill."