RETHINKING WORKING TIME



PRODUCTIVITY,FAIRNESS AND WELLBEING

Thursday, 12 November 2026

University of Melbourne
The Potter Museum of Art
Primrose Potter Studio,
Corner Swanston Street and Masson Road
Parkville, Victoria 3010

ACADEMY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN AUSTRALIA

Conference Program

Rethinking Working Time: Productivity, Fairness and Wellbeing

9am — **Registration, tea and coffee**

9.30am — **Welcome and acknolwedgements**

9.35am — **Introduction: Working Time from Past to Present**
Explore how the working week has evolved through social, political and economic change, and what history can teach us about the possibilities for rethinking working time today.
Speaker: Professor Sean Scalmer (UniMelb)

9.50am — **SESSION One: Productivity, New Technologies, Working Time**
Examine the relationship between productivity growth, technological innovation and working hours, and whether the benefits of a more productive economy can be shared through shorter working time.

Speakers: Dr Angela Jackson (Productivity Commission), Dr Greg Jericho (The Australian Institute and Centre for Future Work), Professor Paula MacDonald (QUT)
Panel: Dr Margaret McKenzie (Per Capita), Alan Oster (Independent economist, formerly NAB chief economist), Professor Roy Green (academic and policy adviser)
Chair: Professor Ross Garnaut AC (economist, author and public policy advisor)

11am — **Morning tea**

11:30am — **SESSION TWO: The Digital Economy, Artificial Intelligence and Working Time**
Explore how artificial intelligence and digital technologies are transforming the nature, pace and organisation of work, and the implications for workers, employers and regulation.

Speakers: Professor John Howe (UniMelb), Associate Professor Jake Goldenfein (UniMelb), Dr Debora Lanzeni (Monash)
Panel: Dr Andrew Charlton (Assistant Minister for Science, Technology and the Digital Economy), Nicole McPherson (National Assistant Secretary, Finance Sector Union); Millie Muroi (Ch 9 newspapers)
Chair: Professor Shelley Marshall (RMIT)

12:40pm — **Lunch**

1:30pm — **SESSION THREE: Work, Flexibility, Care and Time**
Examine how working time arrangements shape the distribution of paid work and unpaid care, and what better forms of flexible approaches could mean for gender equality, workforce participation and wellbeing.

Speakers: Associate Professor Myra Hamilton (USYD), Associate Professor Natasha Cortis (UNSW), Professor Rae Cooper AO (USYD)
Panel: Georgie Dent (The Parenthood), Padma Raman (Executive Director of the Office for Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet), Annie Butler (Federal Secretary, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation)
Chair: Professor Marian Baird (USYD)

2:40pm — **Afternoon break**

3:00pm — **SESSION FOUR: Beyond the Forty-Hour Week?**
Drawing on international research and Australian workplace experiences, explore the evidence for shorter working weeks, their potential benefits for productivity and wellbeing, and the practical challenges of making them work.

Keynote: Professor Brendan Burchell (Cambridge)
Panel: Emma Dawson (Chifley Research Centre), Michelle Urquhart (Medibank), Cassie Farley (Australian Services Union)
Chair: Associate Professor Tess Hardy (UniMelb)

4pm — **Closing remarks**