

Rowan,

My good friend Stephen Lacaze made me aware of your inquiry into the future of work just now and mentioned that although the closing date for submissions has passed you would still accept things.

Here are a few points I think you need to consider.

Is the Gig economy something marvelous and new or just a euphemistically rebranded version of a wild west industrial landscape.

Rather than ignore the elephant in the room the Gig economy needs to have it's claims properly investigated. Actual hourly rates of remuneration need to be researched. A few short years ago Uber was claiming it's drivers were making upwards of 90 grand a year. Do they still claim that? How about we find out exactly what the truth is.

Another question that needs to be asked is what exactly is "work"? It's an important question because whole areas of industrial law swing on that.

Pizza companies used to claim that kids delivering in their mother's car were independent contractors and they used that to pay peanuts. That was rightly fixed and now they have to be paid properly.

Why is someone driver a passenger from A to B still allowed to be called an independent business person? The nature of the work is very similar. Why is delivering a pizza given employment protection, yet someone delivering a passenger given no protections?

The spread of this Gig philosophy is also another major concern. It's not hard to see it spreading to other parts of the economy.

The central philosophical question is do we value people and invest in them as human beings and then all prosper as that investment yields benefits, or do we take the third world way of tearing the vulnerable down so that them having less means I have more.

I'm now living in Bogota Colombia and can see the end result of the tear down mentality. I'm surrounded by it daily. The guy who sells fresh orange juice outside my apartment is an exploited Venezuelan refugee. His boss pays him 300 Oz dollars a month because the minimum wage for a Colombian is 500 a month. If you're wondering what his money buys him it's like living on 20 Oz dollars a day in Australia. It sickens me to see how things are here. The seeds of Revolution are sown daily. He isn't an isolated case. This is how the entire country operates. The Gig philosophy is so entrenched that even Uber has trouble competing here.

This all evolves or flows from the leadership of the country. People are not valued. They are seen as expendable. And the social costs are horrendous. People get murdered for their mobile phone or push bike. My own brother in law was murdered two years ago. Every single person in my wife's family has been robbed in some way since I arrived here 3 years ago. I myself was walking in the middle of the day along a major thoroughfare and a young guy threatened to kill my 8 yr old son if I didn't hand over my wedding ring. Last month the electrical switches were stolen out of my heavily locked fuse box on the front of my house. My wife's nephew was on his motorbike and was stabbed through the thigh so hard the knife pierced the steel petrol tank. These examples are the norm for this place. And it all came about because those in power many years ago decided that the best way to get wealthy was to take from those who don't have much.

It really is that simple. The part that is difficult is that the people who advocate for a wild west system in Australia don't ever have to live in it's consequences. If they did they might better appreciate that investing in people and paying them proper wages is what makes a country truly prosperous.

Best wishes,

Bruce Erwin

Oz Expat.