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## **Media Release**

Wednesday, April 12 2017

### **As technology takes reign, Western Sydney researchers warn: How much trust is too much?**

Machines are watching us, they are listening to us, living with us and soon they will be living inside us.

As the world comes to grips with an ever growing technological society, a question that is often asked is: Can and should we trust machines?

Parramatta Square in the City's CBD will be the stage for a heated Q and A style event that discusses just such topics on Wednesday, April 26 at midday.

Headlined by Western Sydney University researchers, the Food 4 Thought Seminar series brings the most controversial topics of today into a space where they can be broken down, analysed and discussed before a large public audience.

James Wright, a bio-medical engineer with the MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development, believes that a symbiotic relationship between man and machine is necessary if society is continue to progress.

“The most important thing about embracing technology is about understanding it,” he said.

“As a society, we already trust machines. If we didn't, then we wouldn't rely so heavily on our smart devices to correct our spelling, give us directions, manage our finances or tell us the weather.

“Australia is now in the midst of an ageing population crisis that continues to grow. There are approximately 3.5 million people in Australia over 65 and more than half of this group is reported to be living with a disability that restricts the performance of their everyday activities.

“What we are likely to see is greater dependence on technological aids to restore movement and independence in our older residents. We need to be prepared to allow the machines to do their job.”

Mr Wright is currently developing an interface for a prosthetic limb, or “exoskeletal arm” to improve the lives of stroke victims, amputees and those who are paralysed.

“I am trying to work out just how to plug an exoskeleton into a human being using a method that allows direct communication between the prosthetic limb and the nervous system in order to control movement and sensation,” he said.

“In theory, this interface will connect an intelligent, semi-autonomous system into the nerves inside a person's arm. For this to be effective, this system will also need to understand patterns of behaviour and make informed decisions about the welfare of its user.

“In order for us to be successful in giving movement back to those who are paralysed, our technology needs to be smart enough to learn about us, and as humans, we need to have sufficient faith in machines to allow them to do just that.”



**YOU'RE INVITED:**

**Event:** Food 4 Thought Forum, followed by a networking lunch.

**Topic** AI & Autonomous Agents

**Panel:** Professor Steven Freeland (School of Law), Mr James Wright (MARCS Institute), Associate Professor Karen Liu (School of Science and Health), Dr Liam Magee (Institute for Culture and Society)

**Date:** Wednesday, 26 April 2017

**Time:** 12.30pm–2.00pm

**Venue:** Parramatta Square – The Western Sydney University Parramatta City Campus – (Room PC-01.9.10 (Conference Room 1), 9th Floor, 169 Macquarie Street, Parramatta

**RSVP by:** Friday, 21 April 2017. Register your attendance at: [westernsydney.edu.au/food4thought](http://westernsydney.edu.au/food4thought)

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Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver AM,  
Pro Vice-Chancellor Engagement and  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Leadership, invites you to attend the  
*Food 4 Thought* seminar series to  
discuss topics of relevance to the  
Greater Western Sydney community.

*This seminar is proudly hosted by  
The MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development.*  
[westernsydney.edu.au/marcs](http://westernsydney.edu.au/marcs)

**Topic** AI & Autonomous Agents  
**Moderator** Professor Steven Freeland, School of Law  
**Presenters** Mr James Wright,  
The MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development  
A/Prof Karen Liu, School of Science and Health  
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*A light lunch will be served at the seminar.*