

tomorrow calling



The next phone won't be a phone at all, it will be a jack that you plug right into your brain

ROBERT TERCEK, HYBRID WORLD ADL CURATOR

SCIENCE FICTION SCENARIOS: Hybrid World ADL explores how the real and digital worlds are intertwined, and, below, "bio-hacker" Andrew Hessel will be a discussion leader at the event.

lieve it or not, you click and print," Tercek says.

A new DNA strand is then synthesised in a lab and inserted into a single-cell organism, such as a bacteria or an algae, and the new life form is tested to see if it behaves the way the maker intended. If not, it is destroyed to make sure nothing unpredictable escapes from the lab.

"That is always the scary scenario," says Tercek. "Although it's a bit overblown because that's not what this is about. It's not about building some kind of new superbug, scary science-fiction scenario."

Tercek says that Hessel, one of five keynote speakers announced so far, was the first person he called, because his work sits so far out on the cusp of what is possible.



Leading discussion about artificial intelligence will be Dr Phillip Alvelda, who worked with the US military innovator, DARPA (Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency) where he developed national programs to create next-generation interfaces that connect electronics to

neurons. Tercek says to understand this is to answer the question, "What comes after the smartphone?"

"When people ask me that I tell them the next phone won't be a phone at all, it will be a jack that you plug right into your brain," he says. "That's what Phillip worked on at

DARPA. It might sound a little bit audacious and little bit out there and over the horizon, and it is."

The work at DARPA, driven by the horrific injuries US soldiers were coming home with, includes commanding a fake limb by using the mind. (Doubters should watch a YouTube video of quadriplegic woman Jan Scheuermann feeding herself chocolate with a prosthetic arm under her mind control).

DARPA does not keep the technologies it invents, including the smartphone, and Alvelda has left and now works on commercialising their ideas.

"Talking to him, my mind is blown," says Tercek.

"You are telling me I can be sitting here talking to someone somewhere else in the world and say 'hey, Penny, check this out' and you will actually see something that I am seeing now, through your own eyes?"

"He said 'yes, of course that is going to happen, in probably four to 10 years'."

Other less futuristic but equally transformative technologies will be featured, including blockchain software that Sydney-based AgriDigital chief executive Emma Weston successfully pioneered last December to complete the first ever blockchain settlement between a farmer and a buyer.

The technology, which is a by-product of the creation of the digital currency Bitcoin, is effectively a decentralised ledger that secures transactions so one system can enable the delivery of a product, and its payment. Its applications are immediate, and the agriculture industry is the first to embrace it.

"For me it's interesting, because if you're not in the agricultural business you tend to think of it as old-school when it's not," Tercek says.

"The reality is, farmers are the first to adopt technology if it's going to be useful and practical."

HYBRID WORLD ADL, OCTOBER 4-8. DETAILS: HYBRIDWORLD.AE.LAIDE.ORG

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