

SHADOW AI · STEP ONE OF THREE

The amnestied AI use survey

Ten anonymous questions that tell you how AI is really being used in your organisation. Run it before you write a single policy line, because the answers usually change what the policy needs to say.

WHY THIS SURVEY EXISTS

Australian businesses that report using AI

12%



Australian workers who use an AI tool at work

84%



The space between those two answers is where shadow AI lives.
This survey measures it.

WHO RUNS IT

A leader, not IT

TIME TO COMPLETE

4 minutes

OPEN FOR

One week

REPEAT AT

Day 90

METHOD

01

How to run **this survey**

The survey itself is the easy part. What determines the quality of your data is how you introduce it, who sends it, and what you do with the answers.

- 1 Make it genuinely anonymous**
No names, no team field small enough to identify one person, no logging. If people suspect otherwise you will get the answers they think you want, which are worth nothing.
- 2 Have a leader send it, not IT**
The amnesty only means something if it comes from someone with the authority to grant it. Sent from IT, this reads as an audit no matter how it is worded.
- 3 Keep it open for one week, and say so**
Short, clearly bounded windows get better response rates than open ended ones. Send one reminder on day four.
- 4 Publish the results back to staff**
Including the uncomfortable ones. This is what buys you honest answers the second time you ask, and there will be a second time.
- 5 Re-run it ninety days later**
Movement in Q1 and Q5 is your actual measure of success. Not tool licences issued, not policies published. Movement in those two numbers.

COPY THIS WORDING INTO THE TOP OF YOUR SURVEY

This survey is anonymous and there are no consequences for any answer you give. Nobody is in trouble. We are asking because we want to make the approved tools genuinely useful, and we cannot do that without knowing what people actually use today. Please answer honestly.

THE ONE THING THAT WILL RUIN YOUR DATA

Do not pair this survey with any announcement about restricting or blocking AI tools. If staff think the survey is building a case against them, response rates collapse and the answers you do get will be the safe ones.

TEN QUESTIONS

The survey

02

Q1 In a typical work week, how often do you use each of the following?

Tick one box per row.

TOOL TYPE	NEVER	SOMETIMES	MOST DAYS
A free public chatbot on a personal account	☐	☐	☐
An AI tool our organisation pays for	☐	☐	☐
An AI feature built into software we already use	☐	☐	☐
A browser extension or plug-in with AI features	☐	☐	☐
An AI agent or automation someone here built	☐	☐	☐

Q2 What do you use AI for at work?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Drafting or rewriting text
- ☐ Summarising documents or meetings
- ☐ Research and finding information
- ☐ Data, spreadsheets or analysis
- ☐ Code, formulas or scripts
- ☐ Translating or simplifying language
- ☐ Images, slides or visual material
- ☐ Something else

Q3 If you use a tool our organisation has not approved, what made you reach for it?

Tick all that apply. There is no wrong answer here.

- ☐ I did not know we had an approved tool for this
- ☐ I have access to the approved tool but was never shown how to use it
- ☐ I tried the approved tool and it was not good enough
- ☐ The approval process was slower than the work
- ☐ The tool I use is simply better for this task
- ☐ I did not realise I was supposed to use something specific
- ☐ Not applicable, I only use approved tools

Q4 Have you ever entered any of the following into an AI tool our organisation does not manage?

Honest answers here are the most useful in the whole survey. Nobody is in trouble.

- ☐ Customer, client or patient information
- ☐ Colleague or staff information
- ☐ Financial information that is not public
- ☐ Contracts or tender documents
- ☐ Internal documents marked confidential
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ I am not sure

Q5 How confident are you using the AI tools our organisation has approved?

- ☐ Very confident
- ☐ Reasonably confident
- ☐ Not very confident
- ☐ Not confident at all
- ☐ I do not know which tools are approved

Q6 What training have you had on AI at work?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ An instructor led course
- ☐ A recorded video or webinar
- ☐ Written guidance or a policy document
- ☐ Someone on my team showed me
- ☐ I taught myself
- ☐ None

Q7 Do you know what our AI rules are?

- ☐ Yes, and I could explain them to someone else
- ☐ Roughly, but I would have to look them up
- ☐ No
- ☐ I did not know we had any

Q8 Have you built, or does your team rely on, an AI agent, automation or custom assistant?

This includes anything that runs steps on its own: a Copilot agent, an automated workflow, or a custom assistant someone set up.

- ☐ Yes, and my team depends on it
- ☐ Yes, but only I use it
- ☐ No, but I would like to build one
- ☐ No

Q9 What is the one thing that would most help you use AI well in your job?

Q10 Is there anything else we should know?

INTERPRETATION

03

How to read the results

Four numbers matter more than the rest. Read these first.

Q1

Your shadow AI baseline

The share using a free public chatbot on a personal account is your baseline. It should fall because the approved tools became usable, not because you banned anything. A fall caused by a ban just means the use moved to phones, where you cannot see it at all.

Q3

Training gap or discipline problem

If the top answers are "did not know" or "never shown how", you have a training gap rather than a discipline problem. That is good news. It is fixable in weeks.

Q4

Privacy exposure you did not know about

Any tick other than "none of the above" is exposure that was previously invisible to you. The OAIC advises against entering personal information into publicly available AI tools, and expects organisations using AI to have robust training and auditing measures in place.

Q6

The three forms threshold

Count how many ticked three or more forms of training. In the Digital Transformation Agency's whole of government Copilot trial, those who received three or more forms were confident at a rate 28 percentage points higher than those who received one.

BEFORE YOU WRITE THE POLICY

Wait for the Q3 answers. Most AI policies fail because they were written against imagined behaviour rather than observed behaviour, and they end up banning things nobody was doing while missing the thing everybody was.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Sanction, train, monitor. In that order.

Training is the step that gets skipped and the step the evidence says carries the most weight. Nexacu runs one day, instructor led AI courses across Australia, face to face or live online.

AI Governance Training

AI for Business Leaders and Managers

AI Prompting Fundamentals

Copilot for M365

Microsoft Copilot Agent Builder

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