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Australian Tech News, August 2026: What Matters

AI standards go to National Cabinet this month. Half of Australian and New Zealand organisations are already running AI agents, most without governance. And a privacy obligation that nobody is talking about starts on 10 December.

Policy caught up with practice this winter, and both are now moving. On **15 July 2026** the Prime Minister announced plans to legislate Australian Standards for AI and established an **Office of AI** inside the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; a national framework for large AI data centres, covering location, energy, grid contribution and water, goes to **National Cabinet this month**, with legislation expected in early 2027.

■ The short version

Finding	Figure	What it tells you
AI agent deployment across Australia and New Zealand (Salesforce research)	~50% of organisations	Agents are mainstream, not experimental
Of those, how many have formal governance	Frequently little or none	The gap between doing and governing is the exposure
Australian organisations with AI assistants deployed beyond pilot (Proofpoint 2026)	87%	This is not a future technology conversation
Of those, describing their AI security posture as catching up, inconsistent or reactive	52%	More than half know they are behind their own deployment

Also worth knowing

Question	Answer
Does this apply to me?	If you are an APP entity. The \$3 million turnover small business exemption still exists as at writing, but many small businesses are covered regardless of turnover, including health.
What counts as an automated decision?	A decision made by a system rather than a person, using personal information, where the outcome could significantly affect someone.
Does an AI receptionist count?	Generally not, if it is answering, taking details and routing. It starts to if it decides who gets served, who is turned away, or who receives a different price.
What do I actually have to do?	Disclose it in your privacy policy: the kinds of information used and the kinds of decisions made. It is a transparency obligation, not a prohibition.

What this does and does not mean for a small business

It does **not** mean an AI compliance burden is landing on a ten-person business next quarter. Legislation is expected to be introduced in early 2027, and the framework is aimed principally at high-risk uses and large infrastructure. What it does mean is that the direction is settled: **using AI on customer data will be a regulated activity in Australia, not an unregulated one**. Decisions you make now about where your AI runs, whose data it touches and what records it keeps are decisions you will be asked about later.

Questions the full guide answers

- ☐ Is Australia going to regulate AI?
- ☐ What are the proposed Australian rules for AI data centres?
- ☐ How many Australian businesses are actually using AI agents?
- ☐ What is the 10 December 2026 privacy deadline?
- ☐ Why do most Australian businesses struggle to get value from AI?
- ☐ What is the OAIC privacy compliance sweep?
- ☐ What should a business do about data breach risk in 2026?

This is the summary. The guide has the detail.

Every point above is worked through in full on our site, with the Australian context, the numbers and the exceptions. If you would rather talk it through, call **1300 881 662** or visit **unidenvoice.com/get-started**.