

Are AI-Driven Redundancies Inevitable?

A presentation from Strategic Design by Argon & Co (formerly Bevington Group)

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Strategic Design
by Argon&Co formerly Bevington Group

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The current context

Persistent cost pressure and weak productivity increase the need to improve performance



Cash Rate

4.35%



- Markets pricing in further tightening by the Reserve Bank

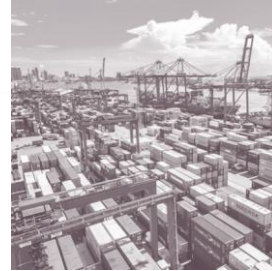


Inflation (CPI)

3.5% Y-o-Y 2026



- Amid persistent inflation pressures, target returns highly uncertain



GDP Forecast

1.4% Dec 2026



- Economy has softened and unlikely to recover soon



AUD / USD

~0.71

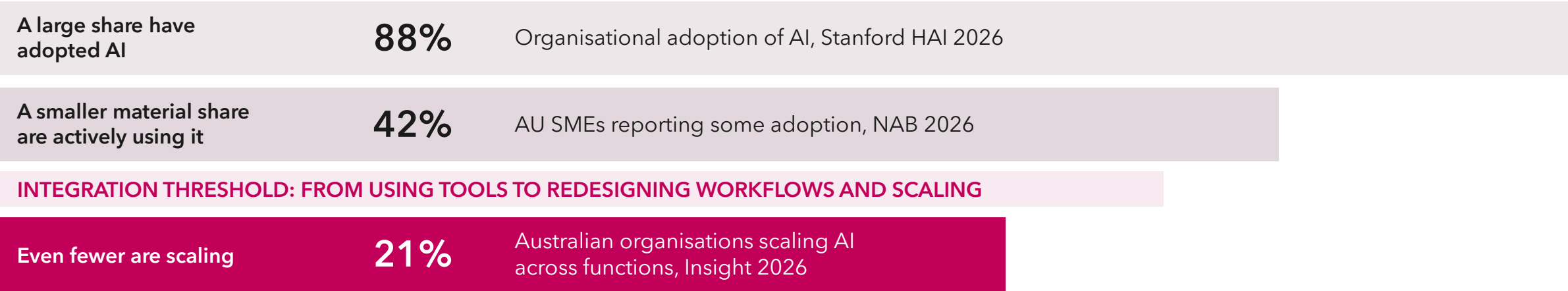


- Firmly broken through a long-standing key resistance level

Australia continues to benefit from high employment, but weak productivity, persistent inflation, and rising labour costs are increasing pressure on organisations to produce more from existing capacity

On one path to productivity, organisations have broadly adopted AI, but scaled workflow integration remains limited

ACROSS SURVEYS, ADOPTION DEPTH FALLS SHARPLY FROM ACCESS TO SCALED DEPLOYMENT



Above metrics are directional, not directly comparable

Australians are sceptical but heavy users, mostly in a chat context, not embedded in core workflows

Sources: NAB; Stanford HAI 2026; CSIRO National AI Centre; Insight;

* DISTINGUISHING WORKFORCE OUTCOMES

AI has caused local disruption – however, it is important to acknowledge that different workforce adjustments are often grouped together with AI

Current evidence does not support claims of widespread AI-driven job losses across the economy

OBSERVABLE WORKFORCE ADJUSTMENTS

TASK AUTOMATION	REDUCED HOURS
HIRING SLOWDOWN	BACKFILL FREEZE
CONTRACTOR REDUCTION	REDEPLOYMENT
REDUNDANCY	LOCAL DISRUPTION

WHAT THE CURRENT EVIDENCE FINDS

Across multiple data sources, aggregate employment effects remain limited or inconclusive, with some key sources leaning towards job creation

- **Australia** Department of Employment and Workplace Relations found no evidence of broad, AI-driven labour-market upheaval or large-scale job losses in AU
- **Denmark** Linked administrative data found no meaningful average change in employment, hours, wage bills
- **US Federal Reserve** Higher AI adoption was not associated with fewer total job postings
- **US Bureau of Labour Statistics** Job creation is running ahead of AI-attributed losses so far. The Economist estimates AI has created around 1 million new jobs in America, against roughly 200,000 lay-offs attributed to AI since mid-2023
- **Executive Surveys** Realised employment impact remains limited despite growing adoption

Workforce adaptation remains gradual, but skill requirements are already changing

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH BY AI EXPOSURE

MOST EXPOSED OCCUPATIONS



LEAST EXPOSED OCCUPATIONS



Department of Employment and Workplace Relations -
November 2022 to February 2026 (July 2026)

+25%

software development roles during
same period

BREADTH WITHOUT DEPTH

Australian firms took up assistants quickly. Few have rebuilt the work around them, so role change arrives gradually rather than at once

NEW CAPABILITY, NEW SKILL DEMAND

Owned and open-weight models, safe deployment, and the data-centre build all need people, with new skills. This will likely lift activity in the near term

AI IS RESHAPING EMPLOYMENT

The most exposed occupations still grew, only more slowly than the least exposed. Software development roles grew 25% over the same period

THE DATA-CENTRE LIFT IS SHALLOW

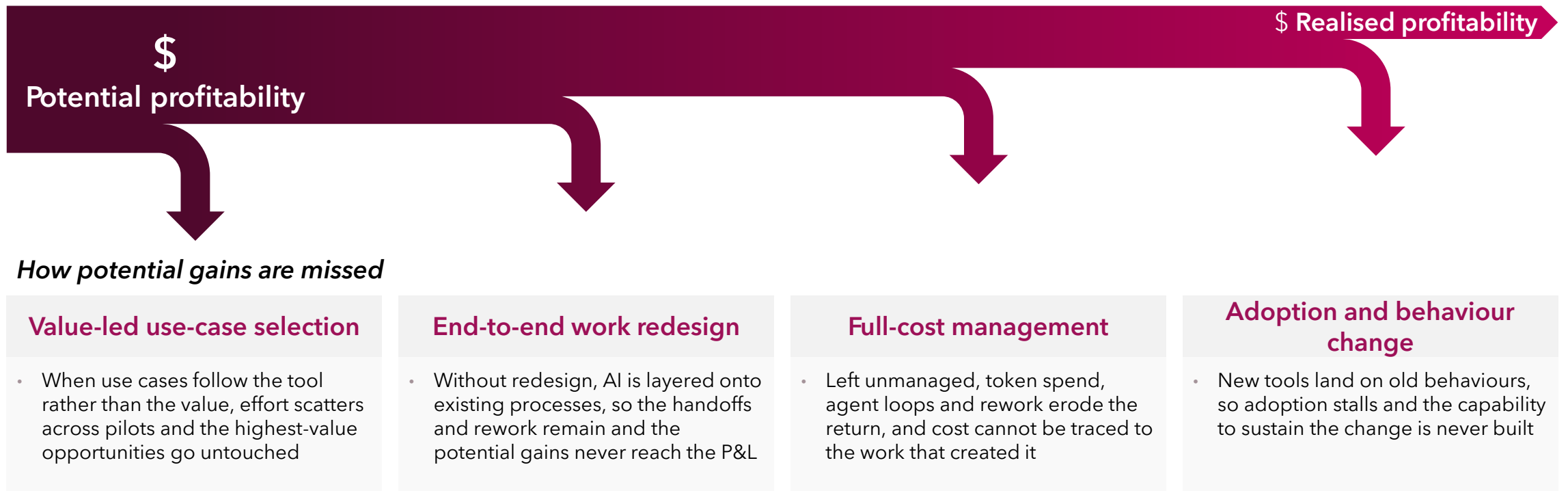
Most of the work sits in construction and much of the skills will need to be imported. Few people staff a finished facility, so the ongoing local benefit is smaller than the build suggests

Roles change before headcount. Near-term management task is to redesign work and build the skills required for the residual role

What organisations need to convert AI into value

From our experience, four key conditions determine whether AI produces enterprise value at scale

It is tempting to assume that productivity gains from AI will naturally show up in the bottom line. However, unless every step along the value chain is aligned to capture the gains AI can create, the efficiencies will be wasted, and additional profits will not be realised.

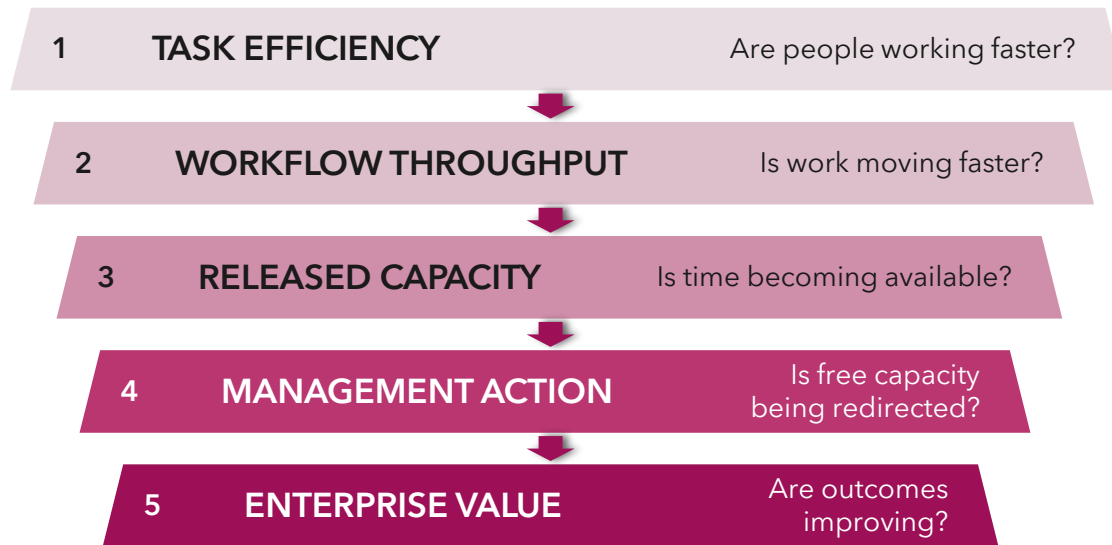


* FROM TASK GAIN TO ENTERPRISE OUTCOME

The overall operating model must also be aligned to realise the potential value gained from AI

Each step in the value chain requires a method or process to capture value. A gain from AI in a task can be lost at any stage or simply move the constraint to another stage

HOW VALUE CAN LEAK AT EACH STEP



EXAMPLE: AI-ASSISTED SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

2.09x merged pull-request throughput per developer by April 2026 vs pre-mandate baseline (He et al., 2026)

Across 196,212 pull requests from 802 developers, Jan 2024-Apr 2026



WHAT HAPPENED DOWNSTREAM

- **Reviewer workload roughly doubled** as review capacity grew more slowly than authoring volume
- AI-labelled pull requests took longer through human review and the end-to-end delivery cycle

Local output rose, however, the workflow constraint moved downstream

How workforces are changing

Productivity gains have several destinations, and redundancy is only one path

01

More output

Where demand can expand, released capacity increases service volume or production. Headcount holds while volume rises

02

Higher quality or resilience

Capacity moves into closer review, harder cases, and work that the team previously deferred

03

Hard-to-hire roles

AI can cover work that leaders cannot staff today. The gain shows up as filled demand, not as fewer people

04

Reduced roles

Where demand is fixed and cost reduction is the stated objective, management may remove roles or leave vacancies unfilled

* EXAMPLE - AI AMBIENT SCRIBING IN NHS ENGLAND

For instance, even where AI creates a benefit, it may appear as service capacity rather than cost reduction

In one example, documentation time was converted into more patient care. The measured outcome was higher service throughput

BEFORE

Clinical time split between patient care and documentation



Two competing demands



Clinical time is released



AFTER

More patients seen through the existing service platform



Higher patient throughput

13.4%

more patients
seen per shift

Capacity release is an operational result that must be harvested to obtain value for the organisation

Furthermore, AI policies within organisations might look like a historic lean policy approach from a well-known Japanese company

The no-redundancy philosophy at Toyota was the design condition that made continuous improvement possible

THE AGREEMENT

Improvement would never cost a person their job

- Toyota built its production system inside a post-war contract of long-term employment, where efficiency gains were never meant to be banked by cutting people
- The system was given two pillars of equal weight: continuous improvement, and respect for the people who carry it out

WHY THE AGREEMENT WAS PRACTICAL

Only secure workers will show you the waste

- Frontline workers hold the process knowledge, so improvement depends on them naming the waste they see every day
- If naming it puts colleagues at risk, they hide inefficiency and resist change instead. Security removed that fear, and released capacity went into cross-training, maintenance, quality work, and new lines

WHAT HAPPENED WITHOUT IT

Lean as a cost programme stopped working

- Western adopters imported the tools in the late twentieth century but used Lean mainly to reduce headcount
- Improvement ideas dried up, workforces and unions pushed back, and many programmes stalled, which is the clearest evidence that the commitment was structural rather than sentimental

Employment security was the precondition for improvement, not its reward. The same logic holds for AI: people will not automate their own work if automation is what removes them

The labour market is beginning to distinguish augmentation from automation

Recent Australian job-advertisement data (Seek) suggests that occupations where AI complements workers are performing differently from occupations where AI can automate a larger share of the work

AUGMENTATION

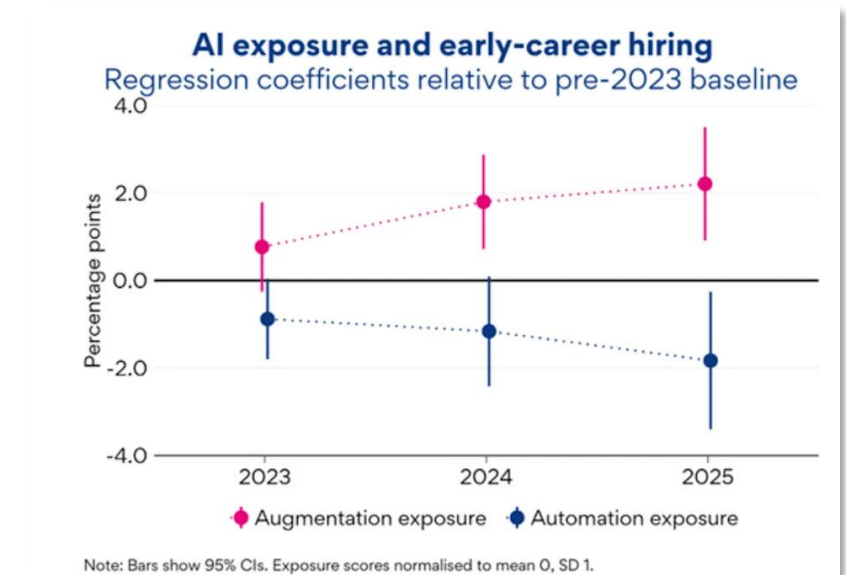
Roles where AI assists workers continue to show demand

- AI increases productivity while retaining the need for human judgement
- Employers increasingly seek AI-enabled workers rather than fewer workers
- Demand remains strongest where AI expands capability rather than replaces it

AUTOMATION

Demand is weaker where a larger share of work can be automated

- Roles with high automation exposure have seen softer hiring demand
- Employers can delay hiring, reduce entry-level recruitment, and leave vacancies unfilled
- The first labour-market signal appears in hiring before it reflects in redundancies



Augmented knowledge jobs are growing, according to the SEEK report. SEEK

* HOW WORKFORCES ARE CHANGING – TASKS BEFORE ROLES

As AI automates tasks before roles, shifting the remaining work towards judgement and exceptions

AI reaches routine work first

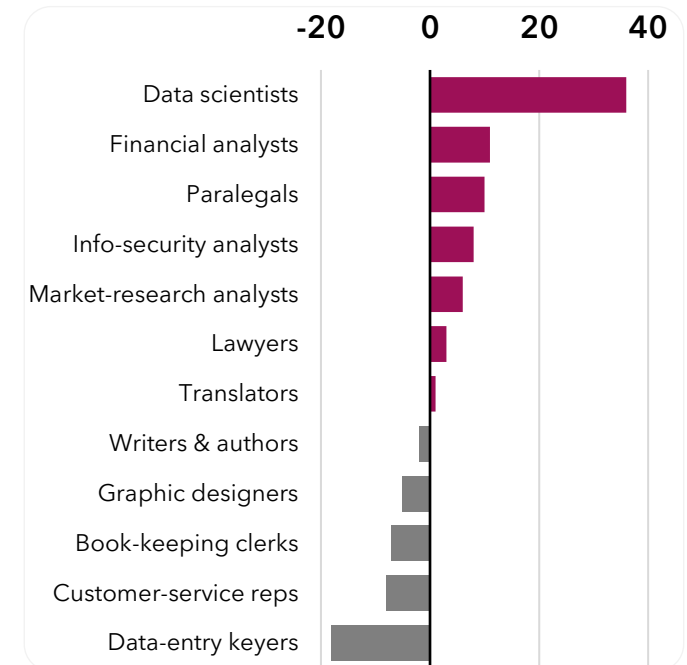
- About 55 per cent of US workers report using AI for at least one of eleven workplace tasks now. E.g., searching (37%), drafting (32%)
- Example A: in the US, employment has fallen by about 10% among customer-service workers and roughly 15% among secretaries and administrative assistants since January 2023, all roles heavy on routine tasks. The **US Bureau of Labor Statistics expects office and administrative-support occupations to shed 752,000 jobs by 2035**
- Example B: US job data shows a 14-15% relative decline in junior versus senior developer vacancies after ChatGPT was released. Employers drove most of it by raising the experience bar within the same job titles (IZA Discussion Paper, June 2026)



The residual role moves up the value chain

- What remains is heavier on judgement, exceptions, and accountability
- The International Labour Organisation finds one in four jobs worldwide is exposed to Gen AI. Transformation will be more likely as most occupations will still need people
- Example A: some occupations once thought vulnerable grew instead: paralegals up about 11% and market-research analysts up 6%, against a national average near 2%
- Example B: the role did not vanish, rather the task content moved, and remaining junior postings shifted towards problem-solving, communication, and attention to detail, rather than AI-specific skills

US, employment, % change May 2023-25, selected sectors



Leaders can prepare for workforce changes by planning at the task and process level, rather than by role title

Never-the-less, two potential employer paths set the workforce outcome

1 NATURAL ATTRITION

- Some employers guarantee no forced redundancy and let natural attrition carry the reduction. This is the Lean approach
- The brake is speed. Attrition only releases roles as fast as people leave

Where turnover is slow, redundancy becomes the more likely lever

TURNOVER IS CURRENTLY LOW

7.2%

Job mobility rate, year to February 2026, down from 7.7 per cent a year earlier (ABS, 2026)

2 MOVE FAST WHERE WORK IS STABLE

- Other employers judge that reduction now is cheaper than reduction later, and they act on it
- Software is the visible case. Coding agents are safest on mostly new code, so a firm building new product can cut engineers and still ship
- Atlassian example: reason as funding AI and enterprise sales, and a changed mix of skills

EXAMPLE

1,600 roles

Atlassian, 11 March 2026, about 10 per cent of its workforce, with more than 900 in software research and development

Hiring and turnover are the earliest indicators of organisational shift, whereas redundancies represent the final signal rather than the first

ESCALATING JOB MARKET SIGNALS

(signals are independent)

01 HIRING SLOWS

Employers open fewer roles

Watch job ad volume and fill rates

02 TURNOVER FALLS

Fewer people change jobs, so fewer roles open up

Watch job mobility and the quit rate

03 ENTRY POINT NARROWS

Employers reduce graduate and junior intake first

Watch graduate intake and the junior to senior mix

04 BACKFILL FREEZES

Employers do not replace people who leave

Watch the backfill rate and quiet attrition

05 TARGETED REDUNDANCIES

Reductions are occasional and specific to a role

Watch redundancies by function

06 RESTRUCTURING REDUNDANCIES

Volume can rise as AI capability matures. This stage is not automatic

Watch redundancy volume and sector concentration

WHERE AUSTRALIA SITS NOW

- Job mobility is at 7.2%, near a structural low
- The entry-level signal is clear in the US, where employment for workers aged 22 to 25 in exposed jobs sits 19% below less-exposed peers (Stanford Digital Economy Lab 2026)
- Australian job postings results are mixed - office roles that have been highly augmented by AI are growing, but jobs with a high degree of total automation are declining (and have been since 2023) and showing no clear sign of stabilising (Seek 2026)

New jobs are being created, and old jobs are in demand, but not necessarily for the people leaving, so disruption pain is likely to stay in the system

The demand is real, and it sits elsewhere

- Australia still needs the work done. Housing construction, aged care, and nursing shortages are all unmet today, and those roles are growing while youth employment has held up
- As jobs come out of one sector, they grow in another. The problem is that the two are not the same jobs

The most exposed cohort is specific

- Ageing workers who are replaceable and potentially cannot transition to other jobs carry the highest risk, particularly where the growing roles involve manual work such as aged care. Retraining is not a clean answer
- Not everyone can retrain into the care economy or the housing industry, and older workers are less likely to be given the opportunity

The gap is a skills mismatch, not a shortage of work

- There are plenty of jobs in the economy, but not in the same skill sets as the people who will be displaced. A knowledge worker who loses their role often cannot move easily into construction or care
- The result is a slower transition than it could have been, and disruption pain that does not clear

Robotics is a later relief, not a near-term one

- Robotics could ease the shortage roles, but not for another five to ten years. The middle transition period is where the teething issues sit
- Companion robots are already in Australian aged care, with 22 units across *mecwacare* homes, while physical-care and construction humanoids remain at pilot stage

How society may manage the transition

* HOW SOCIETY MAY MANAGE THE TRANSITION

Cost pressure pushes firms to act, while four brakes set the pace. Together they point to a slow ramp-up rather than a shock

FORCES DRIVING CHANGE

Productivity

Market sector multifactor productivity fell 0.5% in 2024-25. Firms cannot grow output the way they did before

Labour costs

The Wage Price Index rose about 11% from June 2022 to June 2025, so labour costs keep climbing while the workforce ages

Job mobility

Job mobility fell to 7.2% in February 2026. Little natural attrition remains, so redundancy becomes the more likely lever

FORCES AGAINST FAST CHANGE

Shallow adoption

Example: Treasury advice reports take-up that is widespread but thin. Fewer than one in ten businesses report significant adoption, so measured value has not yet landed

Government coordination

Example: The Office of AI started on 15 July 2026 in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. It coordinates agencies and designs a national AI standard

Union bargaining

Example: The Australian Council of Trade Unions sought enforceable consultation on AI. Microsoft Australia and the ACTU signed a framework agreement on 14 January 2026 that gives workers a voice in deployment

Reputational and legal risk

Example: In September 2025 SafeWork NSW halted a 150-role university restructure on psychosocial grounds. The notice was lifted eight days later, after the process was reviewed

* HOW SOCIETY MAY MANAGE THE TRANSITION

Governments are setting the terms of AI, and one interpretation is a goal to slow disruption so society can keep pace

In Australia...

The framework is moving from voluntary to legislated

- The Office of AI was established within Prime Minister and Cabinet on 15 July 2026 to coordinate agencies and design a national AI standard
- On 26 August 2026, National Cabinet committed all nine governments to nationally consistent mandatory standards for large data centres, with legislation targeted for early 2027

Worker protection is written into the plan (and may get stronger)

- The 20 July 2026 work plan set five whole-of-government AI safety priorities, including workplace AI safety, a digital duty of care, and a framework curbing automated decision-making in federal agencies
- Union pressure is shaping the terms. The ACTU is pushing enforceable AI Implementation Agreements that would require consultation, retraining, and job-security guarantees before AI is introduced, with no agreement meaning no government contracts

The trade-off

- Slowing the transition buys society time to adjust but risks the productivity dividend if handled poorly. AI is the main pathway out of a six-year productivity stall, so the policy balance carries a real cost either way

* HOW SOCIETY MAY MANAGE THE TRANSITION

Data centres draw huge investment and enormous power, but employ very few people once built

HUGE INVESTMENTS

- Australia is the world's second-largest data-centre destination
- Microsoft committing A\$25 billion and AWS A\$20 billion
- AEMO forecasting demand to rise almost sevenfold, from 5 TWh to about 34 TWh, by 2035–36

MINIMAL IMPACT ON LONG-TERM JOBS

- A 100 MW hyperscale campus peaks near 800–1,200 construction workers for 18–36 months
- Then runs on roughly 100–200 permanent staff
- Some of the most automated operate on as few as 20–30 staff per 100 MW

DATA-CENTRE EMPLOYMENT

JOB MEASURE	WHAT IT COUNTS	EVIDENCE SIGNAL
Construction jobs	Temporary build phase	Usually the largest headcount, but one-off and not durable employment
Direct operations	Permanent on-site roles	Materially lower, with US evidence suggesting about 100–200 roles per facility
“Jobs supported”	Indirect and induced, modelled	Australia’s ~23,040 ongoing jobs supported - not on-site jobs

Much of the Australian AI spend leaves the country, with the building dominated by imported plant, servers, and GPUs

The likely path will be composed of disruption and adaptation, rather than a tsunami

Hiring slows first

- The first signal is reduced hiring and fewer entry-level roles
- Firms hold positions open instead of cutting staff

Redundancies build

- Redundancies rise over two to four years as the technology matures and firms restructure work

Displacement rises, partly absorbed

- Demand across the economy can absorb many displaced workers
- If net migration slows, released labour is needed for shortage roles

Government mitigates the pace

- Slowing the transition protects society
- Handled poorly, it locks in low productivity
- AI is the main pathway out of the productivity issue

Net +36,000 to +44,000 full-time jobs by 2036 in AU

\$95-116 billion added to AU economy by 2036

- Independent modelling points the same way. Construction records the largest jobs increase, while agriculture and mining need fewer workers. The lift comes through investment and a 2.0 to 2.4 per cent gain in multifactor productivity, not through headcount
- Official monitoring agrees so far. The federal report on AI and employment finds no broad labour market disruption, with unemployment at 4.4 per cent in May 2026
- The US shows the same shape. In August 2026 the economy added 162,000 jobs and unemployment held at 4.1%, lower than in almost 90% of months over the past half-century, even as AI-attributed cuts continued at about 16,000 a month (The Economist, 4 Sep 2026). Adjustment is running through hiring and mix, not a headline rise in unemployment

In summary

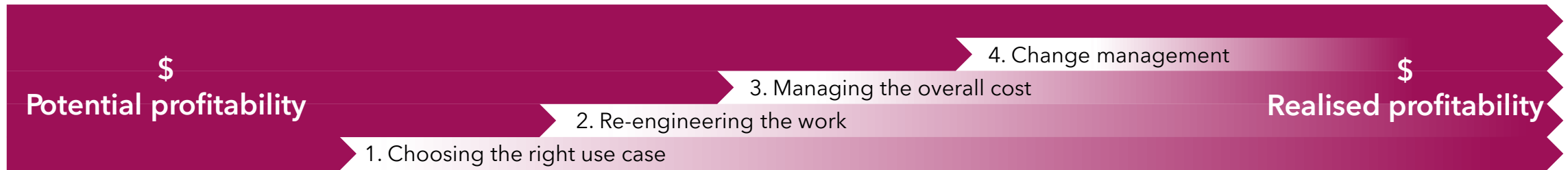
* SUMMARY

In summary, AI-driven redundancies are not inevitable, but work redesign and workforce adjustment have already begun

- **Adoption is broad, value is not**
Australian firms took up AI quickly, but fewer than one in ten have embedded it in core processes. The evidence is strongest at task level and thins toward enterprise value, so the productivity case is real but not yet banked
- **Productivity does not mechanically cut jobs**
So far AI has released capacity, not dictated the workforce outcome. That capacity can absorb growth, lift quality, fill hard-to-hire roles, or reduce headcount
- **There is a difference in jobs that are highly subject to augmentation rather than automation**
There may actually be some growth in jobs that are augmentable, with a slowing in growths for jobs that are largely automatable
- **The skills transition gap may keep disruption in the system for the short term**
The jobs in demand – care, construction, and health – are not the jobs being displaced, and many workers cannot transfer
- **The economy points to a slow ramp-up, not a tsunami**
Cost pressure pushes firms to act; shallow adoption, government coordination, union bargaining, and reputational risk slow the pace
- **New jobs are appearing unevenly**
AI is creating new role classes and lifting demand in parts of the professional core and the data-centre build-out, while routine clerical work contracts

Closing the AI value gap requires action across the four areas

The technology is now broadly available at similar cost to every organisation. What differs is the operating model built around it. Four decisions determine whether a task-level gain reaches the bottom line, and whether it does so through growth or through headcount



Choosing the right use case

- Select use cases against a defined service, cost, risk, or growth outcome
- Tool-led pilots spread effort without resolving the highest-value constraint

Re-engineering the work

- Redesign the complete workflow, including hand-offs, review, exception handling, and downstream constraints
- Automating one task can leave total cycle time unchanged

Managing the overall cost

- Measure model, token, integration, review, rework, control, and operating costs against the outcome produced
- Usage is not value

Change management

- Define how people use the new workflow, who owns the decision, and what happens to released capacity
- Without aligned management routines, old work persists around the new tool

And, of course, we are here to help if you need it...

If you have any additional questions or require further information, please contact

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This presentation and related articles will be available for viewing at www.bevingtongroup.com

We look forward to seeing you at our next webinar

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