

# TRANSPARENT AI: THE QUANDARY OF GENERATIVE AI ADOPTION IN PUBLIC SERVICES

RESEARCH INNOVATION COUNCIL ANZ BRIEF | VOL.11 | GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public Sector Network hosted a roundtable with Griffith University focusing on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in government, with a particular emphasis on building trust. The event brought together government officials, academics, and industry leaders to discuss challenges, opportunities, and actionable strategies for integrating AI into public sector operations. Key themes included fostering collaboration across academia, industry, and government, addressing public and institutional trust in AI, and defining actionable use cases.

Participants highlighted the importance of education and transparent governance to bridge the gap between AI capabilities and public trust. Challenges such as workforce transformation, ethical AI governance, and maintaining transparency were explored. Actionable recommendations included using AI as decision support rather than decision-makers, leveraging community of practice events for knowledge sharing, and addressing workforce reskilling to adapt to AI-driven environments.

This discussion sets the stage for ongoing dialogue and practical action to ensure AI adoption enhances public services while maintaining trust and equity.

## FUTURE RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

**Trustworthy AI and government-led adoption:** The discussion highlighted the importance of transparency, explainability, and accountability in AI systems to build trust with government executives and the public.

**Upskilling the government workforce for the AI era:** The conversation touched on the challenges of reskilling and redeploying government employees as AI automates certain tasks.

**Practical AI use cases and problem-solving:** The group emphasised the value of identifying real-world, practical applications of AI that can deliver tangible benefits to government services and the community.

**AI governance and policy frameworks:** With the discussion on evolving government AI policies, the council could provide a platform to share learnings and develop consistent, responsible approaches to AI governance across different agencies and jurisdictions.

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# KEY THEMES AND INSIGHTS

## BUILDING TRUST IN AI SYSTEMS

- **Challenge of Perception:** Participants emphasised that public and institutional trust in AI remains low, particularly due to past controversies like "Robo-debt." AI decisions are often perceived as opaque, with limited accountability compared to human decision-making.
- **Proposed Solutions:**
  - AI systems should function as decision-support tools rather than autonomous decision-makers to build incremental trust.
  - Transparent AI: Ensuring AI systems provide traceable, explainable outputs can enhance trust.
- **Examples:** Queensland Government's AI chatbot exemplifies transparent traceability by logging prompts and outputs, fostering trust.

## PRACTICAL AI USE CASES IN GOVERNMENT

- **Low-Stakes Automation:** Participants identified areas like recruitment pre-screening, compliance checks, and customer inquiry management as suitable for AI pilots.
- **Critical Insights:** Deploying AI in low-risk environments allows agencies to measure effectiveness without jeopardising trust.
- **Examples:**
  - AI-driven compliance monitoring systems are being piloted to streamline document reviews.
  - Insurance companies using AI to prioritise applications highlight scalable efficiencies.

## WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION

- **Upskilling and Role Redesign:** AI adoption risks displacing low-level administrative roles, prompting the need for strategic workforce evolution.
- **Key Strategies:**
  - Focus on upskilling affected employees to perform higher-value tasks.
  - Long-term strategic workforce planning to address the changing nature of work.
- **Examples:** A compliance branch is piloting AI tools to manage repetitive inquiries, enabling staff to focus on analytics and strategic planning.

## CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

### DATA GOVERNANCE AND PRIVACY

- AI systems often rely on sensitive data, raising concerns about data privacy and security.
- Adherence to the Australian Information Commissioner's guidelines for commercial AI products was a key recommendation alongside regular audits to help ensure data use aligns with privacy regulations.

### INSTITUTIONAL RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

- Many public servants are hesitant to adopt AI due to fear of job displacement or inadequate understanding of AI's capabilities.
- Solutions included targeted change management programs emphasising the role of AI as a supportive tool and bespoke approaches to upskilling based on individual and departmental needs.

# INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND CASE STUDIES

## 1. AI IN PUBLIC HEALTH COMMUNICATION

- **Application:** AI tools are being developed to enhance health literacy by translating complex medical terminology into accessible language, improving mental health service delivery.
- **Example:** Collaboration between a design consultancy and Melbourne University to develop AI models assisting patients in articulating symptoms.

## 2. AGRICULTURAL AI INNOVATION

- **Focus:** Griffith University's AI-driven smart farm initiative automates agricultural processes, including climate control and harvesting, highlighting AI's potential to improve productivity in diverse sectors.

## 3. AI FOR WORKFORCE OPTIMISATION

- **Example:** Queensland Health's AI system for processing doctor prescriptions demonstrates successful AI deployment for high-volume tasks.
- **Outcomes:** Increased efficiency and scalability, with lessons applicable across other government domains.

# STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- **Pilot Low-Risk AI Applications:** Deploy AI in manageable areas like compliance monitoring or customer inquiries to build internal confidence.
- **Engage in Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships between academia, industry, and government to share expertise and resources.

## MEDIUM-TERM GOALS

- **Develop Ethical AI Frameworks:** Establish clear guidelines for responsible AI use internally, incorporating feedback from stakeholders.
- **Expand Knowledge Sharing:** Increase the frequency and accessibility of community of practice events to disseminate successful case studies.

## LONG-TERM VISION

- **Workforce Evolution Programs:** Implement robust upskilling initiatives to prepare public sector employees for AI-integrated workflows.
- **AI Integration Across Sectors:** Expand AI applications into high-value areas, such as disaster resilience and predictive analytics for public health.

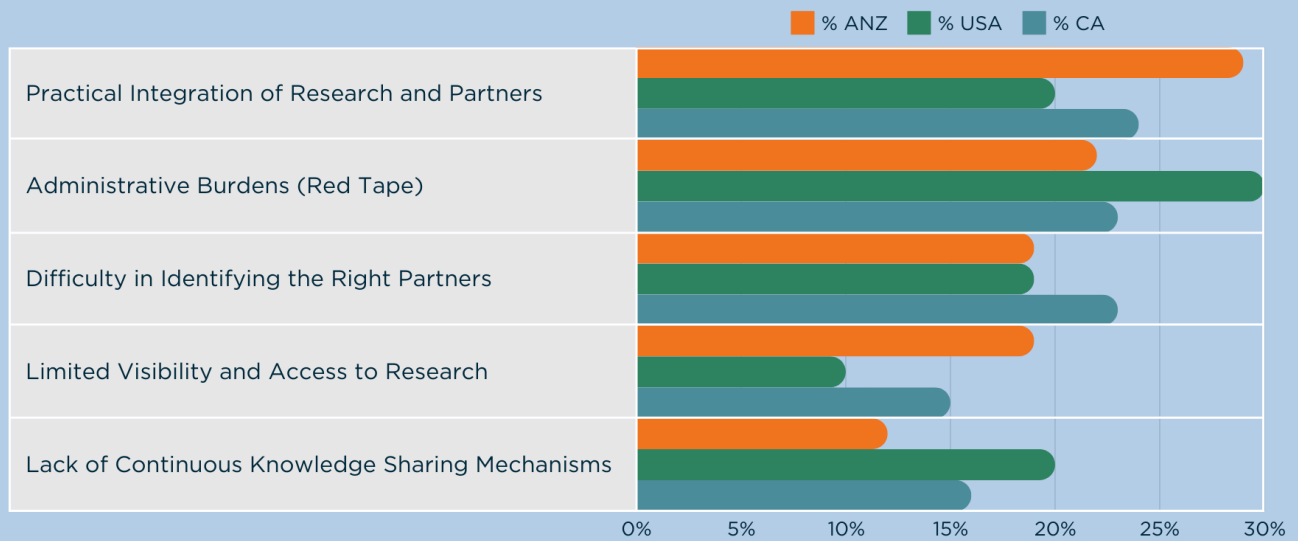
# ABOUT THE RESEARCH INNOVATION COUNCIL

**Connecting government, industry and academia:** we've been able to engineer a new program antithetical to the classical red tape, administration, and risk-aversion that impedes innovation.

Our program offers senior executives a unique opportunity to gather monthly for PSN-facilitated roundtable sessions with colleagues, academics, and technologists. We run the program at no cost to government executives or academics, and provide attendees a private online group on our global insights exchange platform, access to research briefs, and expert engagement with PSN analysts and facilitators.



## Greatest challenge partnering with Academia or Industry



Source: PSN Research Innovation Council Survey 2024. Total Sample Size: 188 ANZ/ 83 USA/ 80 CA Gov Executives

## ABOUT PUBLIC SECTOR NETWORK

Public Sector Network is a research company that represents public sector professionals across Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the USA. It develops roundtables, seminars, and conferences to suit current areas of interest to government agencies and their suppliers.

PSN's growing community spans across federal, state, and local government departments, healthcare, and education, allowing members to share information, access the latest in government innovation, and engage with other like-minded individuals on a secure and closed-door network.

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