

TECH BRIEFING · AUGUST 2026

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Policy moved further this winter than in the previous two years, and businesses are switching AI on faster than they are working out the rules. Written for a business with no IT department.

Two stories are running at once. **The rules started arriving, and everyone quietly switched AI on anyway.** Neither story is reckless on its own. Together they explain why the next twelve months will be spent retrofitting governance onto things that are already in production.

■ What actually changed

What happened	When	What it means for you
AI Standards head into legislation. The government announced plans to legislate Australian Standards for AI and to set up an Office of AI inside the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.	Announced 15 July 2026, legislation expected early 2027	Nothing to comply with yet. Worth knowing that the direction is set, so anything you build now should be documentable later.
A national framework for large AI data centres covering location, energy, grid contribution and water goes to National Cabinet.	August 2026	Indirect, but it is the reason data residency questions are about to get easier to ask and harder to dodge.
The OAIC began its first ever privacy compliance sweep.	Underway	Privacy policies are being read by someone other than you for the first time.

■ The other story: everyone already switched it on

- **About 50% of organisations across Australia and New Zealand have AI agents deployed**, often with little or no formal governance. If you have switched something on you are in the majority. If you have written down what it may decide, you are not.
- **87% have AI assistants past pilot stage**, and **52% describe their own AI security posture as reactive or inconsistent**. Reactive is the honest answer for most businesses, and it stops being acceptable the moment a tool touches customer data.
- **58% say their IT architecture is too rigid to support AI properly**. The blocker is usually integration rather than the model. Nothing is connected to anything.

The date to put in the diary: 10 December 2026

From that date, businesses covered by the Privacy Act that use personal information in **significant automated decisions** must say so in their privacy policy. This is a disclosure obligation rather than a ban. Most phone system uses of AI are capture and triage, which is not a significant decision. But if something in your business prioritises, screens, scores or declines a person using their personal information, that is the one to look at before December. General guidance, not legal advice.

■ The one day checklist

- 1 **List what is already on.** Every AI tool anyone in the business uses, including the ones nobody approved. This list is always longer than expected.
- 2 **For each one, answer three questions.** What data goes into it, where does that data go, and what is it allowed to decide on its own.
- 3 **Separate capture from decision.** Anything that only records, transcribes or routes is low risk. Anything that scores or screens a person needs an owner and a review.
- 4 **Read your privacy policy.** If it does not mention automated decisions and something in your business makes them, that is a December problem you can fix in an afternoon now.
- 5 **Write down who owns AI.** One name. Governance failures are almost always ownership failures wearing a technical costume.

■ Why the gap exists, and it is not recklessness

- The tools arrived through the products businesses already pay for, not through a procurement decision.
- Nobody was asked to approve them, so nobody wrote anything down.
- The rules are genuinely still being written, so waiting felt reasonable.

■ Why this keeps coming back to the phone

- The phone is where AI most often touches a real customer, in real time, unsupervised.
- It is also where the record lives: recordings, transcripts and summaries are all personal information.
- Get the boundary right there and most of the rest of the checklist follows.

This is the summary. The guide has the detail.

The full briefing works through each item, the research behind the figures, and what a business with no IT department should actually do about it. If you would rather talk it through, call **1300 663 222** or visit vocphone.com/about/contact-us.