EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES ON TOP RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

for the Near- and Long-Term

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Global Business Consulting

Why resilience will power Australia's next wave of growth

Australian organisations enter 2027 with stronger growth ambitions but uneven readiness to deliver them. Regulatory complexity, privacy demands, talent constraints and AI adoption are increasing the premium on enterprise resilience.

Leaders are responding by strengthening the foundations for transformation: modernising infrastructure, establishing effective AI governance, and leveraging partnerships to expand capabilities and open new routes to growth.

Yet confidence in transforming the enterprise, protecting value and responding with agility trails comparable markets. Our research indicates that Australian organisations plan to close this gap by strengthening governance, modernising infrastructure, building workforce capability and using partnerships to accelerate growth.

Where do leaders see the greatest opportunities for their organisation over the next two to three years?

Australian business leaders see a stronger growth horizon ahead, with strategic ecosystems emerging as the standout opportunity. Nearly two-thirds (63%) see significant potential to expand their organisation's alliances and partnerships, nearly double the 34% reported last year.

Views about opportunities for growth – AU

	2027	2026
Revenue potential	42%	34%
Geographic expansion	32%	16%
Ecosystem development	63%	34%

Based on a five-point scale assessing agreement/disagreement.
Percentages reflect sum of "Agree completely" and "Agree somewhat" responses

The magnitude of that shift is significant. It suggests leaders see growth as extending beyond what their organisations can build or achieve independently. In a business environment being reshaped by technology, talent demands and regulatory change, the right external relationships can broaden capabilities, accelerate innovation and provide new routes to market.

Growth expectations are also strengthening more broadly: 42% see significant opportunities to increase revenue, up from 34% in our 2026 survey, while 32% see significant potential for geographic expansion, twice last year's 16%.

These findings point to greater growth ambition and a more collaborative model for achieving it. Competitive advantage will depend on how effectively Australian organisations combine internal strengths with external capabilities. Leaders who choose the right partners and integrate those relationships into the enterprise will be better positioned to convert a more favourable outlook into sustainable value.

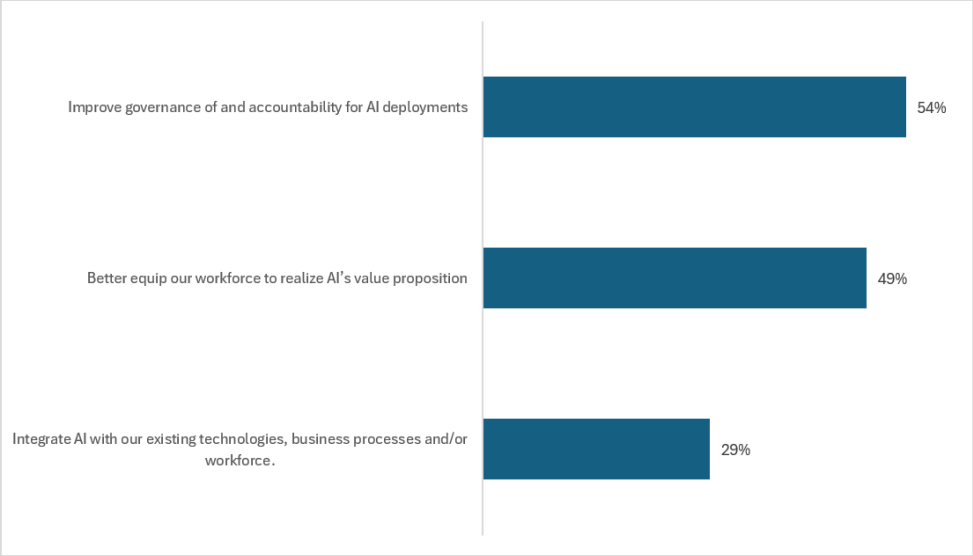
42%

view revenue potential as a near-term growth opportunity.

What priorities do leaders see as most important to maximising the value of AI deployments?

Australian business leaders are focused on building the organisational foundations needed to turn AI investment into business value. More than half (54%) identify improving governance and accountability for AI deployments as a top priority, while 49% point to equipping the workforce to realise AI's value proposition.

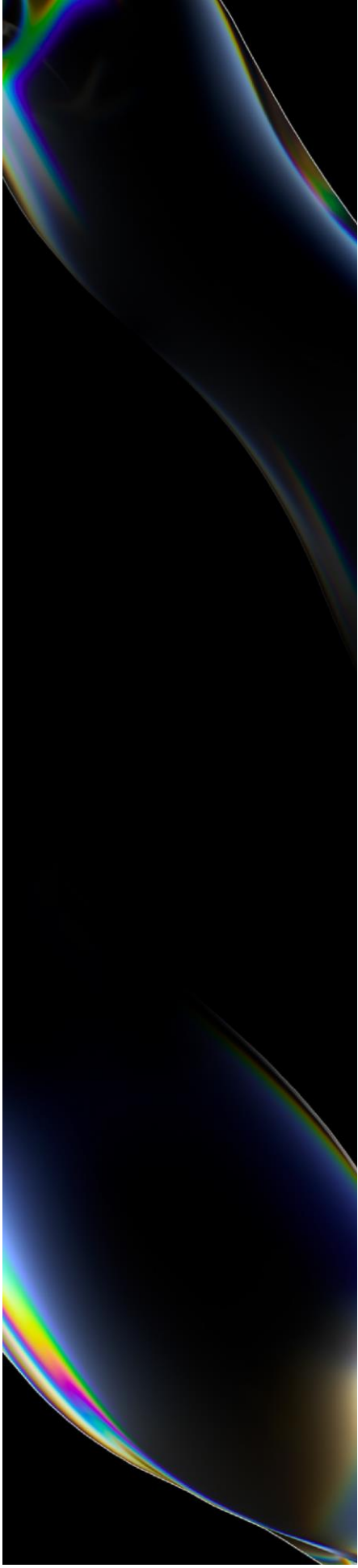
Top AI opportunities – AU



That emphasis is telling. As AI moves deeper into the enterprise, the challenge shifts from proving what the technology can do to ensuring it is deployed with clear accountability and applied effectively by the people expected to use it. Strong governance helps organisations establish the guardrails for responsible deployment, while workforce readiness can determine whether AI translates into meaningful improvements in performance.

Integration with existing technologies, business processes and the workforce is also a priority for 29% of leaders. By contrast, just 20% prioritise deploying AI at a more competitive pace.

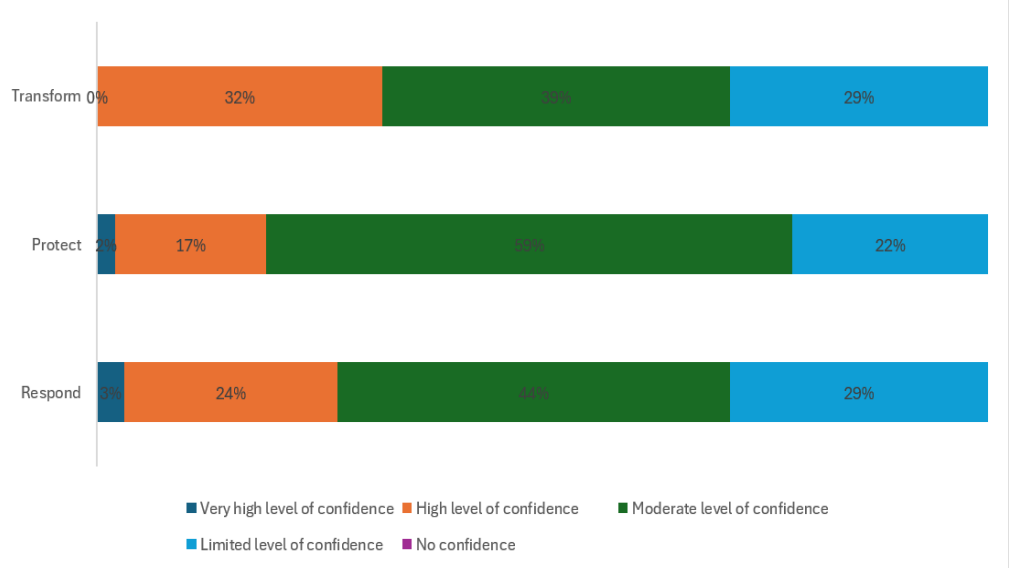
For Australian organisations, the AI imperative is less about moving faster than moving with purpose. Sustainable value will depend on creating the accountability and workforce capability needed to embed AI into the enterprise and translate technological potential into better business outcomes.



We asked leaders three specific questions about their views on the organisation's ability to (1) transform the enterprise, (2) protect enterprise value, and (3) respond with agility to market opportunities and risks. What did they tell us?

Australian business leaders show greater confidence in their capacity to transform than in their ability to protect enterprise value or respond with agility. Nearly one-third (32%) report high confidence in their ability to transform the enterprise to sustain competitiveness and create value, with another 39% expressing moderate confidence.

Views about the ability to transform, protect and respond – AU



The picture is more restrained when leaders consider protection. Only 19% express high or very high confidence in their ability to protect enterprise value from emerging threats and business model disruption. Most, 59%, place themselves in the middle, suggesting that protection capabilities may not yet be as mature as transformation ambitions.

Agility presents a similar challenge. Twenty-seven percent report high or very high confidence in their ability to respond to emerging opportunities and risks, while 29% have limited confidence. That finding is especially consequential because resilience and agility rank as Australia's top near-term risk concern.

32%

report high confidence in their ability to transform the enterprise to sustain competitiveness and create value.

Ultimately, the strategic challenge is to close the gap between transformation and resilience. Change creates value only when the organisation can protect what it builds and respond quickly enough to prevent disruption from eroding those gains.

What are the most significant near-term concerns and risks on the minds of leaders?

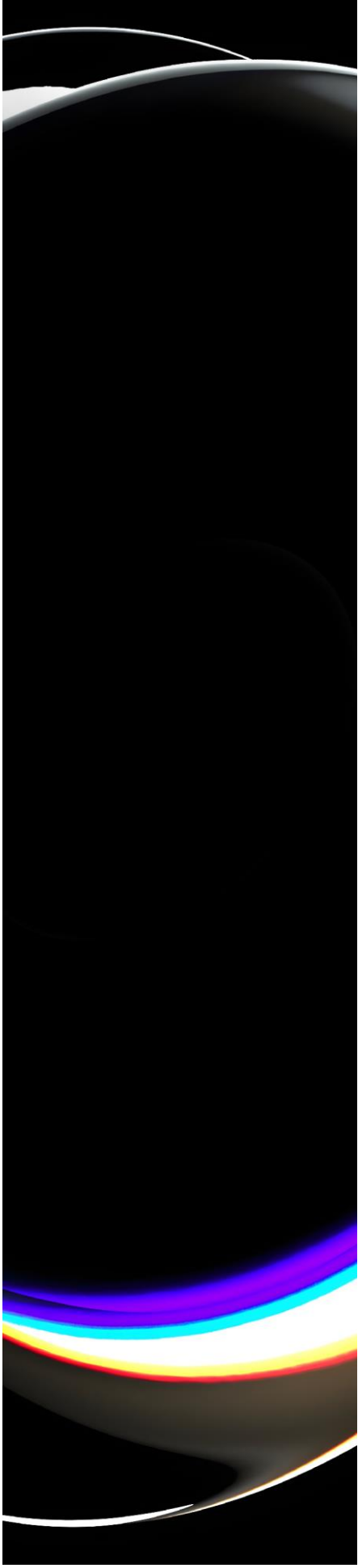
Australian business leaders see a near-term environment that puts enterprise readiness and adaptability under pressure. Resilience and agility in managing unexpected crises and uncertainty is their top concern, along with heightened regulatory change, uncertainty and fragmentation.

The rest of the top five reinforces that message. Privacy and compliance with evolving identity protection requirements ranks third, while skills and talent acquisition, retention, leadership development and succession challenges rank fourth. Limited access to the skills needed to adopt emerging technologies rounds out the top five.

Top five near-term risks – AU

Risk description	2027	2026
Resiliency and/or agility to manage an unexpected crisis and other uncertainties	**3.36**	**2.38**
Heightened regulatory change, uncertainty and fragmentation	**3.36**	**2.38**
Ensuring privacy and compliance with growing identity protection regulations and expectations	**3.27**	**2.51**
Skills and talent acquisition and retention, leadership development and succession challenges	**3.25**	**2.63**
Limited access to workforce skills needed to adopt new and emerging technologies	**3.22**	**2.82**

What stands out is the combination of external complexity and internal capability demands. Organisations must respond to regulatory and privacy requirements that continue to evolve, while ensuring their workforces have the capabilities to support technology-driven change. Resilience sitting at the top of the risk agenda, coupled with its significant year-over-year rise in risk score, suggests leaders recognise that no single initiative can prepare the enterprise for every disruption.



The strategic priority is therefore to build adaptability into the organisation itself. For Australian leaders, resilience means more than preparing for individual threats. It requires an enterprise capable of responding quickly when conditions change, while maintaining the talent and capabilities needed to keep transformation moving forward.

Given these near-term risk issues, where do organisations plan to invest most?

Australian organisations are putting enterprise modernisation at the centre of their investment agenda. Infrastructure modernisation remains the standout priority, selected by 49% of respondents, well ahead of other investment areas. Regulatory compliance infrastructure follows at 32%, aligning closely with regulatory change and fragmentation ranking among leaders' most significant near-term concerns.

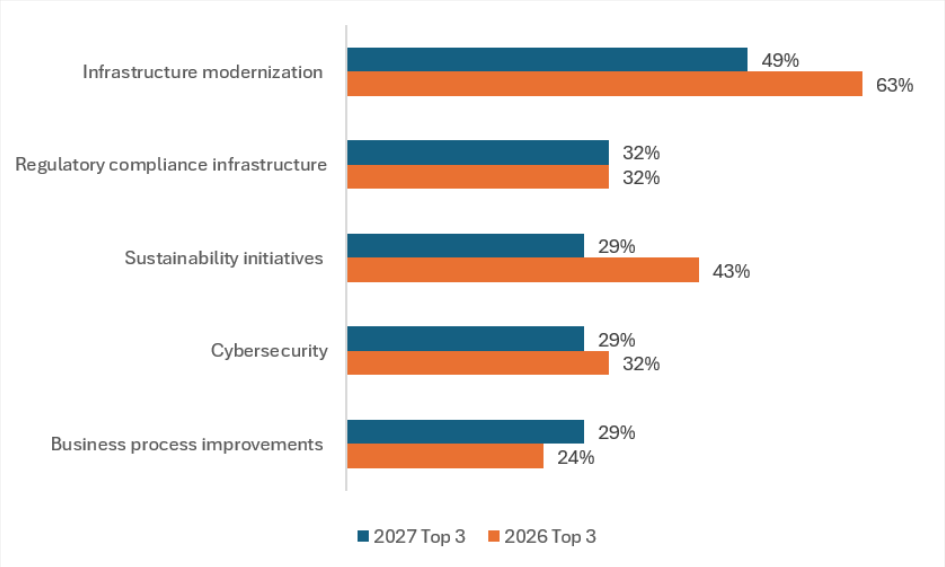
Beyond these foundational investments, priorities are spread across sustainability initiatives, cybersecurity and business process improvements, each cited by 29% of respondents.

The year-over-year shifts add another dimension to the story. Workforce investment rises from 17% to 27%, while advanced data analytics doubles from 10% to 20%. Those increases suggest organisations are directing more attention toward the human and data capabilities needed to make modernisation productive, particularly as emerging technologies reshape how businesses operate.

49%

view infrastructure modernization as an investment priority.

Top strategic investment priorities – AU

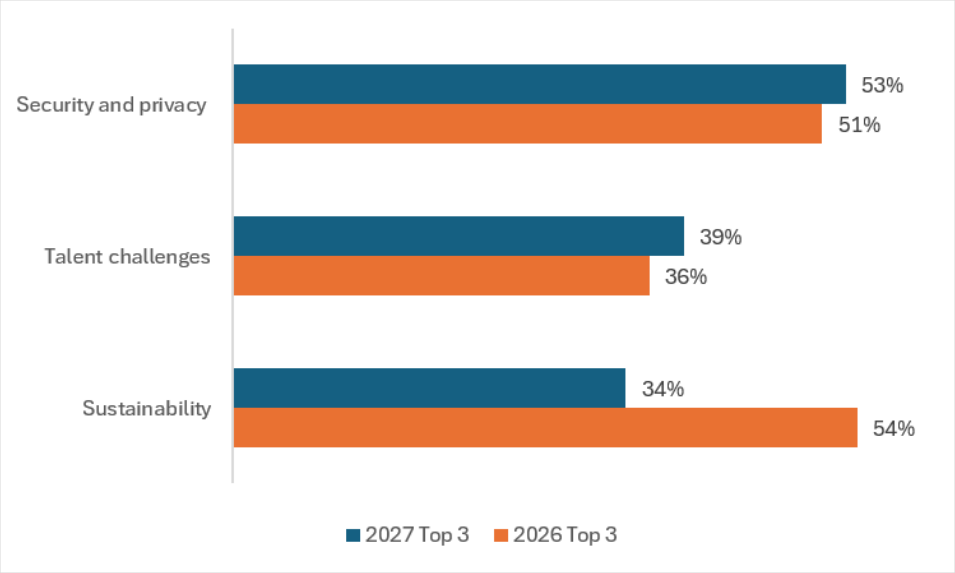


The investment agenda points to modernisation as an enterprise capability, not simply a technology programme. For Australian leaders, the opportunity is to connect infrastructure, talent and data investments so they strengthen resilience today while creating a stronger platform for transformation and future growth.

How do leaders view the 10-year risk outlook for their organisation?

Australian leaders see the next decade being shaped by a convergence of technology risk, talent pressures and external volatility. Security and privacy tops the 10-year outlook, cited by 53% of respondents, with talent challenges second at 39%. Sustainability follows at 34%, while AI deployments rise to 32%, up from 24% last year.

Top long-term risks – AU



The prominence of security and privacy alongside AI points to the expanding role technology will play in both creating and protecting enterprise value. As organisations pursue AI and other emerging technologies, leaders will need to capture their benefits without allowing greater digital dependence to create vulnerabilities that undermine those gains.

The long-term outlook is also shifting in notable ways. Sustainability falls from 54% to 34%, while concerns about markets and economies decline from 43% to 25%. Geopolitical challenges move sharply in the opposite direction, rising from just 7% to 25%.



Ultimately, the long-term challenge is not simply to manage cybersecurity, AI, geopolitical instability and macroeconomic pressure as separate risks, but to prepare for how they are converging. Australian organisations that strengthen their ability to adapt while investing in technology, talent and resilience will be better positioned to protect value as the risk landscape evolves.

Calls to action for leaders in Australia

- **Build** enterprise resilience into strategy, operating models and investment decisions.
- **Modernise** infrastructure to create a secure, adaptable foundation for transformation and growth.
- **Strengthen** AI governance and accountability before scaling deployments across the enterprise.
- **Equip** the workforce with the skills and confidence to turn AI investment into business value.
- **Expand** strategic partnerships to access complementary capabilities, accelerate innovation and open new routes to market.
- **Integrate** regulatory, privacy and security requirements into transformation programmes from the outset.

About the survey

Our 15th annual **Executive Perspectives on Top Risks and Opportunities Survey** contains insights from 1,330 board members and C-suite executives around the world regarding their views on:

- Ability to transform and protect the enterprise and respond to market opportunities and risks;
- Opportunities for growth considering the current environment;
- Priorities perceived as most critical to maximizing the value of AI deployments;
- The top risks on the horizon for the near-term (two to three years ahead) related to 30 specific risks across three dimensions (transform, protect and respond);
- A discussion of their organizations' near-term strategic investment priorities, given the opportunities and the risks they face; and
- The long-term horizon based on 11 risk themes that encompass the 30 near-term risk issues.

Our survey participants shared their views through an online survey conducted in June and July 2026.

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