

AI, Workplace Change & Mental Health

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Agenda

- 01 Setting the Scene
- 02 AI and Neuroscience
- 03 The Impact on Critical Thinking
- 04 The Impact on Mental Health
- 05 Practical Strategies

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VUCA



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Enter AI

- Rapid adoption of AI has been seen in the past 12 months
- Larger organisations lead AI adoption
- More businesses are reaping the benefits of AI with the top 3 reasons for use being:
 - faster access to accurate data to inform decision making (23%)
 - enhanced engagement and response to marketing activities (20%)
 - enhanced resource optimisation and productivity (18%)

AI Adoption by business size

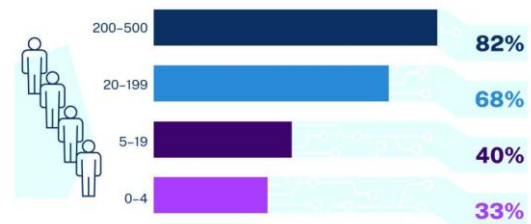


Figure source: <https://www.industry.gov.au/news/ai-adoption-australian-businesses-2025-q1>

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AI and Neuroscience



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AI & Neuroscience

- Loss of the 4 Cs = the FAST track
- We are wired for pattern completion (fluency is evidence of understanding) = we over trust AI
- Our emotional brain looks for emotion = we attribute empathy, understanding or malice (anthropomorphize)
- We are wired for meaning not accuracy = easily fooled by plausible nonsense (AI hallucinations)
- The role of dopamine



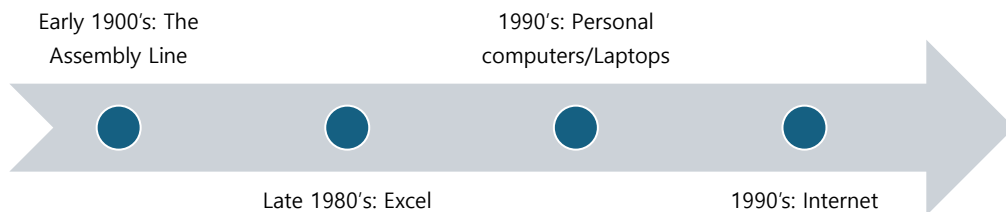
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The Implications



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Evolution of Technology



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The (Possible) Antidotes

- Self-awareness and presence of mind
- Create deliberate friction – allow room for the "hard way"
- Treat AI as a tool and not a friend
- Be an AI 'skeptic'
- Look after your wellbeing and fill up your oxygen tank
- Protect your connection to meaning – don't out-source that

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AI and Critical Thinking



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Critical Thinking Considerations

- Enhance vs hinder critical thinking
- Cognitive fatigue
- Assumes existing knowledge and expertise



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AI as Mental Health Support



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AI as Mental Health Support

Survey led by Orygen provided insight into how AI is being used in Mental Health Care in Australia:

1/3 of community members use Chat GPT for:

- Quick emotional support
- As a personal "therapist"

Community members more likely to use it when emotionally distressed

Community members and Mental Health Professionals see potential for its use as support due to:

- Accessibility
- Personalisation
- Efficiency
- Cost effectiveness

BUT

All had concerns surrounding:

- Reduction in human connection
- Ethics
- Privacy & regulation
- Errors
- Data security
- Potential for misuse

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Practical Strategies – AI as Support

- Know that chatbots aren't regulated
 - If needed, choose evidence-based bots designed with input from mental health professionals like Woebot and Wysa (a note on dopamine)
- Useful for accessibility and early support planning
- Use it as a cognitive partner not as emotional support
- Use as a routine builder
 - Establish self-care routines without the effort that would normally stop us from doing it
- Maintain emotional hygiene and set digital boundaries/limits

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Practical Strategies – AI as Support

- Effective for psychoeducation/information but NOT for behaviour change or treatment
- Useful as a mechanism to structure thoughts and gain insights but know its limitations and how it works (hijacks your neurobiology)
 - Generative AI generates responses based on statistical associations between words, therefore can exacerbate biases and will tell users what they want to hear, not always what they need to hear
- AI isn't a replacement for a trained mental health professional
 - Preventative tool for information gathering
 - Planning tool when utilised for prevention

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Practical Strategies for Coping with Change



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Adaptability Quotient



Emotional regulation

Understand your emotions and remain calm in challenging situations



Growth mindset

View mistakes as learning opportunities and being resilience after setbacks



Learning Agility

Let go of old ways that are no longer effective. Seek new information and learn new skills.



Social adaptability/EQ

Able to adjust behaviour and communication style when interacting with different people

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Questions



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Thank You!

