AI adoption is no longer the challenge, AI governance is

By Peter Marinis, Regional Director of Technology, Hays

Artificial intelligence is rapidly moving from experimentation to implementation across Australian organisations. But while AI adoption is accelerating, many businesses are discovering that technology is only part of the equation.

The latest Hays IT Contractor Rates Guide FY26/27 reveals a growing disconnect between AI ambition and AI readiness. More than 72% of organisations report using AI regularly, yet security and privacy concerns remain the leading barrier to adoption, cited by almost half of employers. At the same time, shortages persist across AI, cybersecurity, data and software engineering roles.

For technology leaders, this presents a critical challenge. Success with AI increasingly depends not only on building technical capability, but on developing the governance, security and risk management frameworks that enable organisations to scale AI safely and responsibly.

This is reflected in hiring demand, with strong demand for contractors across cybersecurity, data and digital transformation as organisations seek specialist expertise to support AI-enabled transformation initiatives. As AI adoption accelerates, governance, security and risk management are becoming increasingly important, particularly as organisations prepare for the implications of agentic AI and the emerging challenges it presents for cybersecurity and data protection. Nearly 60% of employers hiring contractors say they do so to access specialist skills for one-off projects, reinforcing the shift towards targeted expertise rather than broad workforce expansion.
What's particularly noteworthy is how employers are evaluating AI capability. The research shows that practical evidence of delivery is valued more highly than credentials alone. Organisations want professionals who can demonstrate real-world implementation experience, manage risk, and translate emerging technologies into measurable business outcomes.

For the AIIA community, the message is clear: the next phase of AI adoption will be defined less by access to technology and more by access to talent that can govern it effectively. As

organisations move from pilots to enterprise-wide deployment, professionals who combine AI expertise with cybersecurity, governance and risk management capabilities will play an increasingly important role in unlocking value while maintaining trust.