
Trust first, tech second: A people-centric approach to AI

Why Moorabool Shire Council is
treating AI as a people challenge rather
than a technology rollout.

Moorabool's Greta Holt, Lisa Grey, and Josh Warner accepting an award for 'Innovator of the Year – Best Use of AI' at the National HR Innovation Awards



LGPro's recently released baseline report on AI adoption across Victorian councils identifies a critical sector tension: staff are routinely picking up AI faster than their organisations can respond.

Power users are being held back by restrictive IT settings and policy ambiguity, while savvy "explorers" are limited by a lack of organisational clarity where they don't know what's okay or what to do when something goes wrong.

Early in the year when Moorabool Shire Council went out to consult on a potential municipal charge, they wanted the community to understand really clearly how it could affect their rates.

Using free AI tools, their team built a calculator that plugged right into the Have Your Say portal. The decision didn't get up, but the tool was a hit with residents.

Moorabool's since been awarded for a raft of AI initiatives that are freeing up staff to be creative and efficient, from in-house built digital assistants and governance supports to bots, agents, and customer-facing tools.

Moorabool Shire Council has been managing this rapid transition into AI-enabled operations through a people-centric approach. Executive Manager People and Culture, Josh Warner, explains that AI adoption isn't a technology issue, but a people challenge.



"AI is positioned as a tool that supports our people to do their jobs better, not a mechanism that does their jobs for them," he says.

Instead of driving the technology in isolation, it is integrated into a smarter way of working initiative.

Their strategy relies on an environment of trust and voluntary engagement. Moorabool provides its staff enabling resources like its *Section AI Academy*, a self-paced learning portal that encourages curiosity and experimentation without the pressure of mandatory adoption.

"Innovation cannot be mandated," says Josh.

"Our people have been given the opportunity to engage with new technologies at a pace that suits their own comfort and capability.

"We believe successful adoption is achieved when people trust the technology, understand its purpose, and have the choice to engage with it."

“Successful AI adoption is fundamentally a people [and trust] challenge, not a technology challenge.”

Like the baseline report indicates, the key has been supporting staff-led innovation by establishing clear policy structures and tools that provide both permission and guidance. With this problem-solving mindset and capability instilled, AI becomes just one tool among many.

"AI is not an isolated solution and is simply one of many alternatives that enable smarter ways of working," Josh adds.

"Rather than pursuing technology for technology's sake, our AI initiatives are purpose-driven, focused on solving genuine operational challenges and creating meaningful value for both our people and the community."



Moorabool receiving a High Commendation in the Customer Experience Award program

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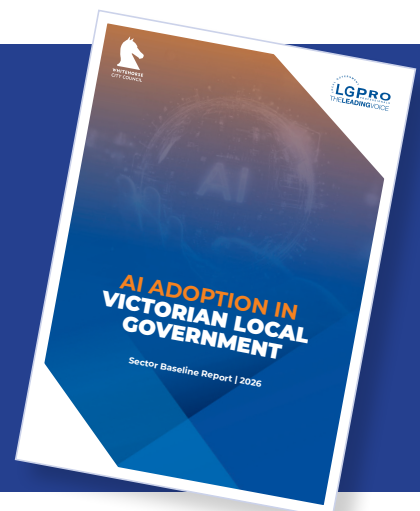
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