

What's possible with AI in operations and admin

Evidence current to mid-2026.

A clear breakdown of where AI does and does not fit across the core tasks of an operations and admin team. A practical starting point, not the last word.

Where AI is mature: strong fit today

Proven and available today. AI does the bulk of the work and the operations manager or admin officer reviews it.

Function	The job today	With AI
SOP drafting and maintenance	Write, format and update standard operating procedures from process walkthroughs, templates and existing documents	AI drafts and restructures from the walkthrough or source material; the operations manager or business manager checks accuracy and approves
Meeting notes and action-item capture	Take notes in meetings, write them up, extract decisions and actions, and circulate	AI transcribes and drafts structured notes with decisions and actions; the team lead or admin officer checks accuracy, adds context, and owns what is circulated
Email drafting and routine correspondence	Write supplier emails, internal messages, acknowledgements and follow-ups from a brief	AI drafts from the brief; the admin officer or operations manager checks the facts and sends
Scheduling and calendar management	Find meeting slots, manage calendar conflicts, coordinate availability across multiple parties	AI finds slots and manages the logistics; the admin officer or executive assistant confirms and handles exceptions
Staff announcements and internal communications	Draft internal messages, updates and announcements for all-hands, newsletters or team briefings	AI drafts from the brief; the business manager or admin officer checks accuracy, tone and any employment-law implications before it goes out

Where AI is emerging: consider piloting with a human gate

Promising but not yet proven at this scale. AI assists and the operations team stays in the loop, so trial it on a contained scope first.

Function	The job today	With AI
Document classification and filing	Sort and file documents by type, apply retention labels, keep records accessible and findable	AI classifies and tags documents; the operations manager defines the retention rules, audits the output and owns the destruction decisions
Incident report drafting (WHS)	Record what happened, who was involved, immediate actions taken and whether the incident may be notifiable	AI structures the written record from notes; the competent person verifies the facts, determines notifiability under the WHS Act 2011, and authorises the report
Board minutes drafting	Take notes through the meeting, write up a formal record of discussions and resolutions, and prepare for the chair to sign	AI drafts from notes or a transcript; the company secretary or governance professional reviews and refines, and the chair signs within the statutory period
Supplier and contract administration	Draft and send supplier emails, track contract milestones, summarise contract terms for internal review	AI drafts correspondence and extracts key dates and obligations from contracts; the operations manager or business manager negotiates, checks the terms, and executes
Internal reporting and board papers	Pull data from across the business, build the report structure, write commentary	AI assembles and drafts the report; the business manager or operations manager verifies every data point and owns the conclusions

Where AI is not ready or suitable today: keep with people

These stay with people, either because the tooling is not reliable enough or because controls and compliance rule it out.

- **Notifiable incident determination (WHS Act 2011).** Whether an incident meets the legislative threshold must be determined by the business (the Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking, or PCBU) and their competent persons. AI cannot make this call. Failure to notify the regulator on time is a breach of the Act.
- **WHS risk assessment ratings and controls sign-off.** Risk ratings and the approval of control measures must be completed by the competent person, defined under the WHS Regulation as someone with the training, qualification or experience to carry out the task. AI formats and tracks; it does not assess.
- **SWMS sign-off before high-risk construction work.** AI can start a safe work method statement template. The competent person must review it on-site, customise it for the specific task and hazards, and authorise it before work starts. An unchecked SWMS is a compliance failure regardless of how it was drafted.
- **Record retention policy (the rules themselves).** Which records to keep and for how long must be set by the operations manager or business manager who understands the Tax Administration Act (5 years from when the record was prepared, obtained, or the transaction completed, whichever is later), Fair Work Act (7 years for pay and time records), Corporations Act (7 years for financial records) and Privacy Act obligations. AI applies rules; people set them.
- **Contract execution and ASIC (Australian Securities and Investments Commission) lodgements.** AI does not sign contracts or lodge documents with ASIC. The authorised officer signs and lodges.
- **Disciplinary records and staff decisions.** Who gets managed out, what the record says and whether the process meets procedural fairness standards stays with the business owner or HR manager. Legal accountability follows the employer.

The pitch that AI will fully automate your back office is ahead of the practice. Automated workflows still break on layout changes, form updates and supplier variations. Robotic process automation (RPA) and similar tools require ongoing maintenance as systems and forms change; the setup and upkeep load shifts rather than disappears. The strongest return in operations is on the Band 1 drafting work: the task is contained, the output is easy to check, and the review step is quick.

Worth weighing: for any of these, the upfront setup (loading your procedures, defining the retention rules, agreeing the review steps) is a one-off. The ongoing work on the strong-fit items shifts from drafting to reviewing and approving. The time the operations team reclaims from that administrative grind goes to vendor relationships, process improvement, and the exception-handling and judgement calls that only they can make.