

Closing the work readiness gap

Why compliance alone
is not enough



Why verification, visibility and workforce readiness help reduce risk

If you're responsible for getting workers to site safely, on time, and without disruption, the pressure is only rising.

Risk is moving faster across contractor networks, site requirements, labour availability, and compliance obligations. But in many organisations, the systems behind workforce mobilisation still aren't moving at the same pace. Verification takes too long, visibility is incomplete, teams work from different signals, and when the pressure builds, work can start before full assurance is in place.

That's the work readiness gap.

It's the distance between what your organisation needs to know before work begins and what it can verify in the moment. This gap shows up when compliance looks fine on paper, but is harder to prove in practice.

This paper uses research from over 500 professionals across Australian high risk sectors as a lens on a broader regional challenge: how to move from a fragmented compliance activity to a more connected, confident and assured way of getting work done.

The findings are clear. Compliance still matters, but on its own, it doesn't always keep work moving.

“

As organisations face increasing workforce complexity and resource pressures, the ability to manage risk as a system, rather than a collection of standalone initiatives, becomes a critical capability. Health, safety, sustainability, and psychosocial wellbeing are interconnected elements of a single organisational ecosystem. Organisations that thrive will be those that understand, measure, and continuously challenge the relationships between these elements, turning complexity into resilience, performance, and sustainable value.

This is where Avetta's Ready to Work approach helps customers manage complexity through strategic engagement toward performance improvement, rather than compliance management.”



Lynda Richards
Principal, Health and Safety Avetta

Executive summary

The data points to a clear pattern, but the story isn't primarily about policy. It's about execution.

While many organisations believe their workers and contractors meet site standards, the underlying operational signals tell a more fragile story.

Only 14.9% of respondents say their organisation can verify that a worker is 'ready to work' instantly. At the same time, 41.6% say workers often or sometimes start work before all required safety checks or credentials are fully verified, and 59.4% report partial, limited, or no real time visibility of who's on site, what their role is, or an understanding of their risk profile.

That matters because work readiness isn't just about meeting a requirement. It's about being able to act with confidence before work begins.

Across the survey, five themes stand out:

- Confidence often outpaces operational evidence
- Verification is still too slow for the pace of modern and dynamic operations
- Skills shortages are turning readiness into a workforce capacity issue
- Fragmented systems and misaligned teams are creating avoidable friction
- Many organisations are interested in AI, but they still want human oversight in critical workforce decisions

The opportunity for organisations is practical, not theoretical. When readiness improves, work can start faster, mobilisation becomes smoother, and teams spend less time chasing readiness status across disconnected systems.

That's where Avetta comes in. We help businesses and suppliers move from friction to flow, from uncertainty to assurance, and from reactive compliance to more intelligent work readiness.

Methodology

Avetta partnered with PureProfile to surveyed 503 professionals across manufacturing, construction, resources, data centres, facilities management and other high-risk sectors. The survey explored organisations' approaches to worker readiness, safety and compliance — including the challenges of verifying workers credentials, qualifications and readiness in real time.

The work readiness gap

Many organisations have spent years building strong compliance frameworks, supplier controls, and safety programmes. That work matters. Reaching 100% compliance is a significant achievement, built through sustained effort from teams across the business, suppliers, and QHSE professionals.

Compliance sets the standard for safe, responsible work. It gives organisations a strong foundation to build on. But today's operating environment is making the next challenge more urgent: turning that achievement into clear, current, and actionable confidence at the point of work.

When operations depend on multiple contractors, changing site requirements, distributed teams, and tighter timelines, work readiness becomes a live coordination challenge. It's no longer enough to know that a worker completed training last month, a document was uploaded last week, or a requirement exists somewhere in a separate system. You need to know whether the right person is verified, visible, and ready for this role, on this site, at this moment.

That's where the work readiness gap opens.



Compliance asks whether the required standard has been met. Work readiness asks whether work can begin safely, confidently, and without avoidable delay.

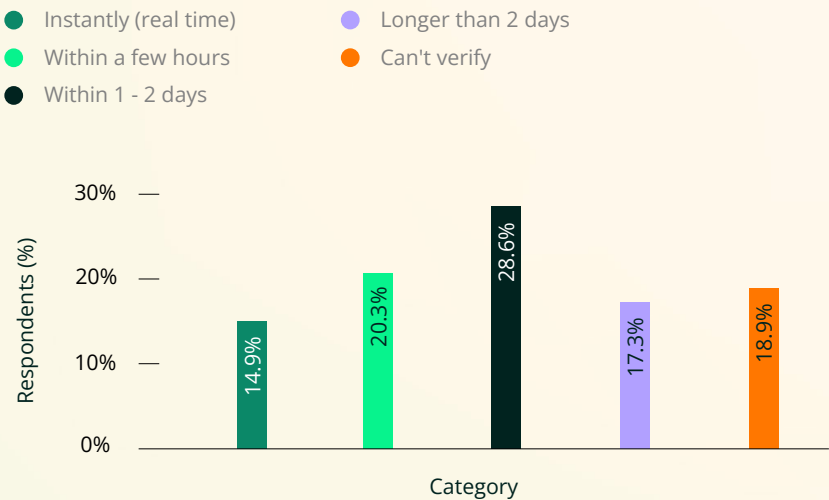
The two aren't competing goals. Compliance is the foundation. Readiness is the ability to apply that foundation with speed and confidence when conditions change.

A worker may have uploaded the right documents, completed the necessary courses, and be shown as compliant in the system. But if it still takes hours or days to verify status, if teams can't see the same information, or if changes aren't surfaced before mobilisation, it becomes harder to turn compliance into real-time assurance.

That's the opportunity: not to replace compliance, but to make it more visible, connected, and useful when decisions need to be made.

The data points to this gap. Only 14.9% of respondents say they can verify readiness instantly. Nearly half need at least one to two days or longer, and 18.9% say they can't verify work readiness at all.

APAC work readiness verification is rarely real time



Source: ANZ Avetta Research - Workforce Readiness Survey A-89695_Tables_20May2026.xlsx, Summary sheet, question: How quickly can your organisation verify that a worker is ready to work before they start on site?

Here's what that means for you: the goal isn't simply to achieve compliance. It's to connect the standards and controls you've worked hard to put in place with the live visibility and coordination needed to support safe, timely mobilisation.

Turn compliance into confidence

Compliance doesn't create a false sense of security when it's supported by current information, clear ownership, and reliable workflows. It creates confidence.

The risk comes when compliance evidence is treated as the whole picture, rather than one part of a live readiness view. A completed check can confirm that a requirement was met. It may not show whether the requirement is still current, whether it applies to the work being undertaken, or whether the right information has reached the people making the next decision.

That's why compliance and work readiness need to work together. Compliance sets the baseline. Readiness helps you see whether that baseline is being met in the right context, by the right person, before work begins.

Why the gap feels especially urgent now

The story here is distinctive because the readiness challenge shows up where work actually happens: on site, delivery time pressures, across contractor heavy environments.

That makes this more than a compliance conversation. It's an operational one.

01 Verification is too slow

When organisations can't verify readiness in real time - site access, contractor deployment, and workforce planning all become slower and riskier. Only 14.9% of respondents say their organisation can verify that a worker is ready to work instantly. The issue isn't just missing paperwork. It's the inability to turn compliance status into immediate operational confidence.

For HSE leaders, that creates exposure. For procurement teams, it creates friction in supplier mobilisation. For operations leaders, it creates operational delays, workarounds, and inconsistent execution.



14.9%

of respondents say their organisation can verify that a worker is ready to work instantly

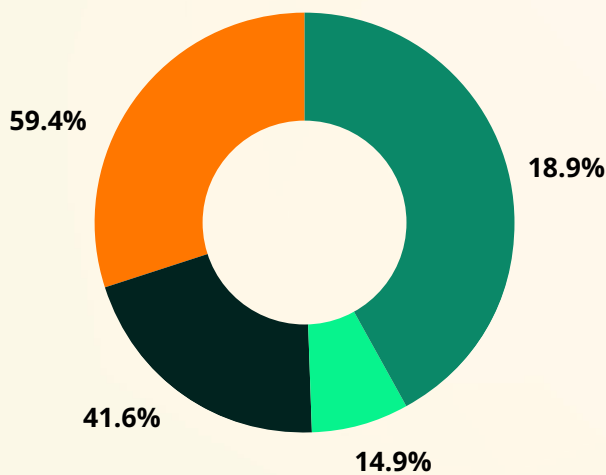
02 Confidence is higher than the evidence supports

One of the clearest signals in the data is the gap between confidence and proof.

84.3% of respondents say they're very or somewhat confident in their organisation's ability to verify that contractors meet site specific safety standards before starting work. But only 14.9% say they can verify that readiness instantly. Meanwhile, 59.4 % report limited, partial or no real time visibility of who's on site, their role, and their risk profile and 41.6% say work often or sometimes starts before all checks are fully cleared.

Confidence outpaces operational proof

- Confident contractors meet site standards
- Can verify instantly
- Work starts before all checks clear
- No full real time visibility of who is on site



Source: ANZ Avetta Research - Workforce Readiness Survey A-89695_ Tables_20May2026.xlsx, Summary sheet, combined proof points used in the whitepaper narrative.

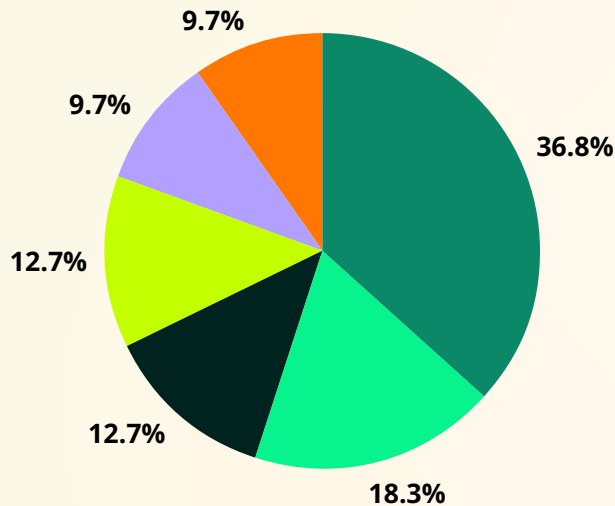
This isn't about catching anyone out. It's about recognising how easily confidence can be eroded by delayed, incomplete, or disconnected information.

03 Skills shortages are turning readiness into a capacity issue

The leading workforce readiness risk cited by respondents for the next 12 months is skills shortages, named by 36.8% of the sample.

Skills shortages are the leading readiness risk in APAC

- Skills shortages
- Increased reliance on contractors
- Lack of integration between systems
- AI adoption risks
- Poor data visibility
- Regulatory complexity



Source: ANZ Avetta Research - Workforce Readiness Survey A-89695_Tables_20-May2026.xlsx, Summary sheet, question: What is the biggest risk to workforce readiness in your workplace

That shifts the conversation. Readiness isn't only about proving compliance. It's also about making sure qualified workers can be identified, verified, and mobilised quickly enough to keep work moving.

When labour is tight, every avoidable delay becomes more costly. Every duplicated check slows progress, and every manual workaround adds friction that your teams and suppliers can't afford.

04 Limited alignment is slowing response

Only 27.4% of respondents say safety, procurement, and operations are highly or fully aligned in managing supply chain risk, while 36.2% say those teams are not aligned or only slightly aligned.

That matters because work readiness is shared by design: safety and environment oversee the standards, procurement manage the contracted relationship, and operations own the site and operational reality. If they're not working from the same view, your organisation will always respond more slowly than the risk in front of it.

05 Site reality still doesn't always match system reality

The survey also points to a practical say/do gap.

37.8% say safety or compliance decisions are made under time pressure often or very often. One in four say management often or very often believes a health and safety risk is under control when it isn't fully resolved on site. And only 58.6% believe workplace safety systems fully or mostly reflect what actually happens on site.

That's the real warning sign. Readiness can't live only in policy, paperwork, or dashboards. It has to hold up in the field, including ongoing verification applied.



1/4

say management often or very often believes a health and safety risk is under control when it isn't fully resolved on site.



What better work readiness looks like in practice

When work readiness is strong, it's easier to trust the decision to mobilise.

That doesn't mean chasing perfection. It means building a more connected operating model, so you can see what matters sooner, resolve issues earlier, and move forward with fewer surprises.

In practice, that comes down to five capabilities:

01 Faster verification

Readiness improves when worker status can be verified before mobilisation becomes urgent. That means reducing manual checks, shortening approval cycles, and making it easier to confirm whether someone is trained, compliant, and ready to work.

02 Shared visibility

Teams need a real time view of who's on site, what role they're performing, what requirements apply, and where the risk sits right now. Without that visibility, even strong programmes become reactive.

03 Better alignment across functions

Safety, procurement, environment, compliance, and operations all shape work readiness. When they're working from different systems, timelines, and priorities, friction builds at the exact moment speed matters most.



04 Earlier action on exceptions

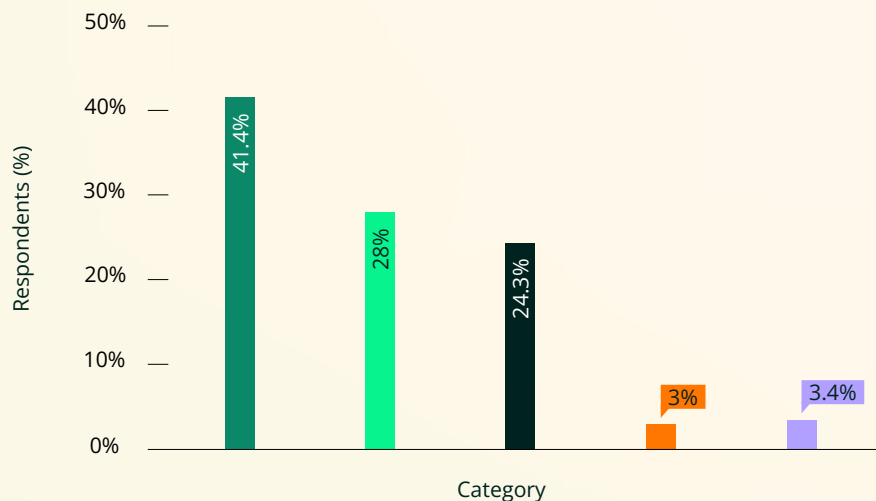
The goal isn't simply to record missing requirements. It's to surface them early enough to close that gap before they turn into delay, disruption, rushed decisions, and increased costs.

05 Responsible use of automation

The data suggests that organisations are interested in AI, but not yet ready to hand over critical workforce decisions without strong guardrails.

41.4% of respondents say they don't trust AI for critical workforce decisions at all. Only 6.4% trust AI for high risk or fully autonomous decisions, and 73% describe their organisation as either not ready or only in early exploration when it comes to scaling AI across the extended workforce.

APAC respondents want human oversight in workforce AI



Source: ANZ Avetta Research - Workforce Readiness Survey A-89695_Tables_20May2026.xlsx, Summary sheet, question: To what extent do you trust AI to make critical workforce decisions?

AI isn't a replacement for human judgement in work readiness. It's about surfacing better data, reducing manual burden, and helping teams make faster, more confident decisions with appropriate oversight.

In other words, the path to intelligent work readiness starts with operational clarity, not automation hype.

The value for contractors in being continuously work ready

For suppliers and contractors, the work readiness gap is more than an internal process issue. It affects how quickly workers can get approved, how easily teams can move between clients and sites, and how much time is lost to repetitive admin.

When readiness is fragmented, suppliers feel it first. They spend time chasing requirements across different systems, varying client requirements, responding to the same requests more than once, and trying to prove status without a clear shared view.

When readiness is connected, that picture changes.

Workers can get to site faster, status is easier to prove, admin becomes lighter, and suppliers are better placed to build trust with clients because they're easier to mobilise, easier to verify, and easier to work with.

That's why readiness can become a growth advantage, not just a compliance outcome. In contractor heavy industries, the organisations that reduce friction often strengthen relationships at the same time.



A practical framework for closing the work readiness gap

If you want to move from compliance pressure to operational confidence, focus on the following actions:

01 Start with the moments where operational readiness breaks down

Look at where work slows, exceptions become the norm, or teams are forced to make rushed decisions. The work readiness gap usually appears at the handoff points: Supplier and worker onboarding, document verification, training status, role assignment, and site access.

02 Replace fragmented views with one shared picture

Bring together a holistic view of supplier and worker data, compliance status, and site specific requirements to provide confidence in end-to-end compliance. The goal isn't simply centralisation for its own sake. It's about getting clarity. When everyone sees the same truth, teams can act faster and with less friction.

03 Move verification upstream

Don't wait until a worker is due on site to find out whether something is missing. Use earlier governance checkpoints, automated reminders, review exemption based workflows so issues are surfaced before they become delays and workarounds are not normalised.

04 Treat visibility as a control, not a convenience

Real time awareness of who's on site, what hazards are attached to that work, and awareness of site variations or changes are a core part of work readiness. Without that visibility, even well designed programmes become reactive.

05 Measure work readiness, not just compliance

A mature programme tracks more than completion rates. It looks at time taken to verify, number of unresolved exceptions, communication and alignment across teams, confidence in site readiness, and how often work begins before full assurance is in place.

Readiness confidence also comes from ongoing governance and monitoring programmes to ensure site and worker compliance is being met, and potential gaps are addressed much earlier.

How Avetta Workforce Management helps close the work readiness gap

We help your organisation make work readiness easier to prove and easier to act on.

Rather than adding another layer of process, we bring worker status, requirements, verification, and visibility into one connected flow. The goal is simple: help businesses and suppliers spend less time navigating fragmented compliance activity and more time moving work forward with confidence.

That means helping you:

- Verify worker and contractor readiness faster
- Improve visibility across sites, roles, and risk profiles
- Automate repetitive workflows and surface issues earlier
- Reduce duplication across systems and client requirements
- Align safety, procurement, and operations around one clearer view of readiness

From fragmented compliance to connected readiness

What gets in the way today	What the research shows	What a more connected approach makes possible
Verification is too slow	Only 14.9% can verify a worker is ready to work instantly	Faster confirmation of worker status before mobilisation
Work starts before checks are fully complete	41.6% say this happens often or sometimes	Stronger readiness gates and fewer last minute surprises
Visibility is incomplete	59.4% report partial, limited, or no full real time visibility	A clearer live view of who's on site, their role, and their risk profile
Teams aren't working from the same signals	Only 27.4% report highly or fully aligned teams	Better coordination across safety, procurement, and operations
Manual effort keeps building	Fragmented systems and reactive tracking are core pain points	Less administrative friction, earlier action, and smoother mobilisation

Technology doesn't solve everything, but having the right connected system makes it easier for people, processes, and priorities to work in sync.

Work readiness and AI:

Why human oversight still matters

The conversation about AI is maturing. Boards, regulators, workers, and customers are asking harder questions about how AI is used, where decisions are being made, and what evidence sits underneath them.

The regional data shows why that scrutiny matters. In the US, 54.2% of respondents say they trust AI for high risk or fully autonomous decisions. In the UK, that falls to 46.0%. In Australia, only 6.4% say they trust AI at those levels.

Region	Trust AI for high risk or fully autonomous decisions
United States	54.2%
United Kingdom	46.0%
Australia	6.4%

The US and UK figures are included as context rather than a direct benchmark. The regional surveys used different audiences and instruments, although the decision trust question was worded consistently enough to show a useful directional contrast.

For Australian organisations, the next phase of AI adoption will be shaped as much by governance and risk as by productivity. Organisations are under more pressure to show that digital systems don't create unmanaged risks around monitoring, workload, autonomy, or unfair outcomes. In contractor heavy and supply chain intensive sectors, leaders need to move faster without losing control, while workplace health and safety and psychosocial safety expectations increasingly shape how digital work systems are designed and managed.

With the right foundations in place, AI becomes more useful and more credible. It can help teams speed up reviews, reduce manual effort, and surface risk earlier — without losing sight of key controls, transparency, and human oversight that safety critical environments demand.

For HSE and procurement leaders, AI isn't an abstract user case. It affects real workers, contractors, suppliers, and operational exposure. They're interested in AI where it removes friction and improves visibility, but they also expect it to be transparent, controlled, and appropriate for regulated environments. Faster workflows only help when they're backed by trusted information and a risk-based decision model that's clear and defensible.

Speed matters. Confidence matters more.

From compliance burden to competitive advantage

The most compelling outcome of better work readiness isn't just lower risk. It's stronger momentum.

When organisations can verify readiness faster, improve visibility, reduce manual effort, and align teams around one shared source of truth, they do more than protect against disruption. They create better operating conditions for everyone involved.

For hiring clients, that means smoother mobilisation, stronger control, and more confidence that work can begin safely and on time.

For suppliers, it means less friction, clearer expectations, centralised evidence based document and learning platforms, and a faster path to becoming a trusted partner.

For both, it means moving from uncertainty to assurance without slowing the business down.

That's why operational readiness is worth treating as an operating discipline rather than a back office process. In high risk, contractor reliant environments, the organisations that move ahead will be the ones that can see more clearly, align more quickly, and act with confidence before pressure turns into disruption.



Conclusion

The work readiness gap isn't a future problem. It's already shaping how work gets done now.

Across this focused research, the message is consistent: verification is often too slow, visibility is often incomplete, and confidence doesn't always rest on real time proof. When that happens, even well intentioned organisations can find themselves relying on processes that weren't built for the pace of modern operations.

Compliance still matters. It always will. But when work depends on distributed teams, multiple contractors, changing site requirements, and tighter timelines, compliance alone won't always keep work moving.

True work readiness will.





See how Avetta helps businesses and suppliers reduce mobilisation friction, improve visibility, and verify readiness with more speed and confidence. When your people, systems, and decisions are better connected, work can move forward without unnecessary delay.

avetta.com