FREE RESOURCE

AI Search Readiness Checklist

for Australian small businesses

Eight practical sections, a 20-point self-assessment and a prioritised plan. Confirm Google can find, read and quote your website, without a technical background.

- **20-point check**
- **Priority fixes**
- **Plain English**
- **45 minutes**



PRACTICAL GUIDANCE
AUSTRALIAN EXAMPLES
PRIORITISED ACTION PLAN

01

What AI-assisted search means for your business

Google now answers some searches with an AI-written summary above the usual results. Two versions exist: AI Overviews, which summarise a topic and link to supporting pages, and AI Mode, for longer questions that used to take several searches to answer.

The part that matters for a small business is what Google says about who gets included. Google states that AI Overviews and AI Mode do not require additional technical requirements or special AI-specific optimisation beyond the Google Search requirements. A page must be indexed and eligible to show a snippet. Eligibility is where inclusion starts, not a guarantee that a page will be used in any answer.



Google requirement. The same foundations as ordinary search: crawling allowed, a working page, and readable content. Google's guide to AI features lists no additional technical requirement.

What is genuinely different. One question can draw on several pages at once, because the system breaks it into related searches and gathers supporting pages. A site that answers a question in one clear paragraph on its own page is easier to use than one that spreads the answer across a photo, a price image and a form.

What is not different. A page nobody can crawl, or that hides its words inside images, will not be quoted by anything.

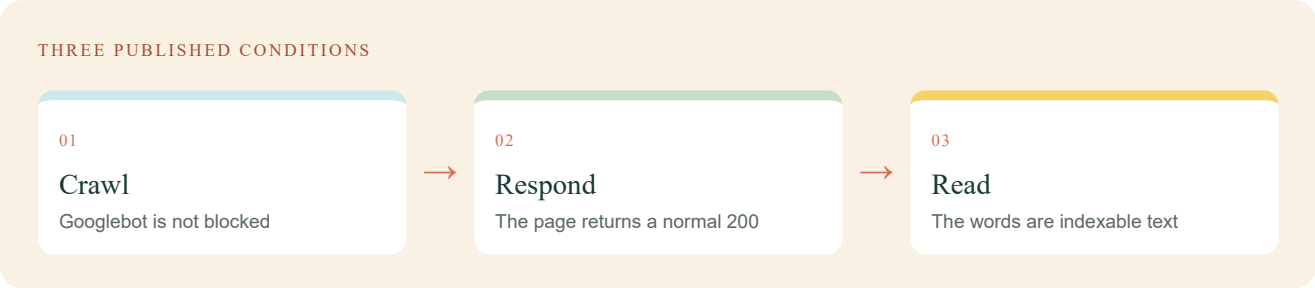
Claim you may have heard	What is actually published
You need special AI schema or an llms.txt file	Google states there are no additional technical requirements beyond an indexed, snippet-eligible page.
AI answers mean people stop visiting websites	The features are designed to surface links to supporting pages.
Blocking Google in robots.txt removes you	It prevents crawling. The page and its URL can still appear. Use `noindex` to remove a page.

02

Can Google reach and read the site?

Google publishes three technical requirements for a page to be eligible for indexing at all: Googlebot is not blocked, the page returns a normal success response, and the page has indexable content. Meeting them makes a page eligible. It does not make indexing certain.

Most problems found in small business sites are not exotic. They are a launch setting left switched on, an expired security certificate, or a service page that exists only as a menu item.



The ten checks. Work down the list on a desktop browser first, then repeat the mobile checks on your phone.

- ☐ The site opens with a padlock and no certificate warning.
- ☐ The home page and each service page load as normal pages, not an error, a blank screen or a "coming soon" placeholder.
- ☐ The "discourage search engines from indexing this site" setting is switched off. On WordPress this sits under Settings, Reading. It is commonly left on after a site moves from a development address.
- ☐ `robots.txt` does not block the whole site. Open yourdomain.com.au/robots.txt and look for a line reading `Disallow: /` under a `User-agent: *` heading.
- ☐ A sitemap has been submitted in Google Search Console, and reports pages as discovered.
- ☐ The important words are real text on the page, not text inside a photo, logo or PDF-only menu.
- ☐ The phone version is readable without pinching, and the main heading is visible without scrolling sideways.
- ☐ Every menu link works. Menus built entirely in JavaScript can hide pages from a crawler that does not run scripts.
- ☐ No service page sits behind a login, a password or a members-only area.
- ☐ Search Console is verified, so you can see what Google actually knows about the site.

If you have no IT support. Three free tools do most of the work. Search Console tells you whether pages are indexed, and its URL Inspection tool shows what Google received. The Page Indexing report lists pages excluded and the reason. Your web host can confirm that nothing at the server or firewall level is blocking Googlebot. On Squarespace, Wix, Shopify and similar platforms the defaults are usually correct, but each has a "hide from search" style toggle worth checking once.

03

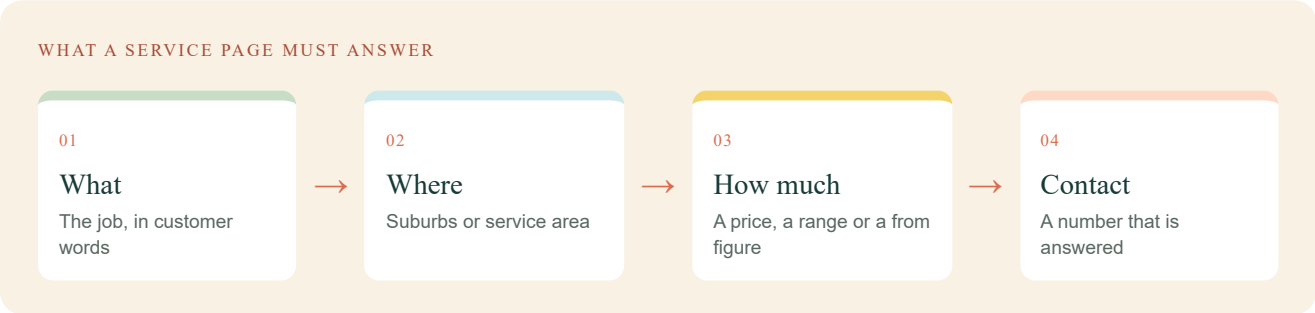
Say plainly what you do

A visitor and a search system are asking the same thing: what does this business do, where, and how do I contact it. A site that answers in plain sentences, on separate pages, is easier for both.

The four pages that carry the weight.

1. **Home.** One sentence naming the service, the customer and the area. Example: "Licensed electricians for homes and small businesses across the Illawarra, with same-day callouts for power faults."
2. **One page per service.** Not one "Services" page listing eight trades in a paragraph. A page per service, titled with the words customers use.
3. **About.** Real names and faces, years in business, licence or registration numbers, and the suburbs you cover.
4. **Contact.** Phone, email, street address or service area, hours and ABN. A form alone is not enough, and a form that silently fails is worse than none.

Use customer words in page titles. "Emergency electrician Wollongong" beats "Voltage Solutions".



Weak, then better. The same business, described two ways.

> **Weak.** "We pride ourselves on quality workmanship and customer satisfaction. Our team delivers solutions tailored to your needs."
>
> **Better.** "Brightwater Electrical is a licensed electrician in Wollongong. We fix power faults, install switchboards, safety switches and outdoor lighting, and test smoke alarms. Same-day callouts before 3pm on weekdays. Licenced NSW electrical contractor 123456C."

The second version is not more clever. It contains the facts a customer would ask for on the phone.

Our recommendation. Keep the essentials in the page body rather than only inside tabs or accordions: the service, the area, the price and how to make contact. Google's guidance on deep links asks that content be immediately visible, but it is not a general prohibition on tabs. If a visitor must open three panels to find your price, it is not easy to find.

On price. Put a price, a range or a "from" figure on each service page. It filters out enquiries you do not want, and it is the fact most often missing from small business sites.

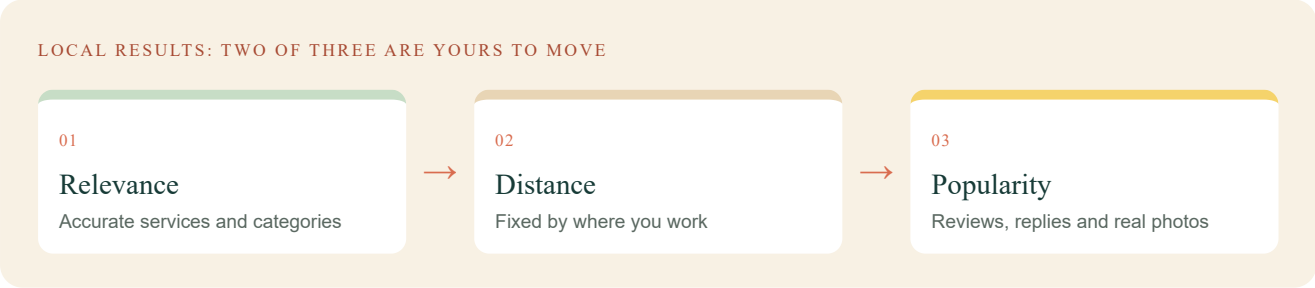
04

Your Google Business Profile

For a local business, the profile often appears before the website does. It is also the part most often filled in once and never revisited.

Google requirements for the profile.

Element	What Google requires
Name	The real world name, as it appears on your signage, invoices and stationery. No taglines, service lists, suburbs, phone numbers or opening hours in the name. Keyword stuffing here risks suspension.
Category	The fewest categories that describe the core business. One primary category, secondary ones only where genuinely accurate.
Address or service area	A precise address customers can visit, or a defined service area. No post office boxes or remote mailboxes.
Hours	Accurate opening hours, including special hours for public holidays.
Description	Useful information about services and the business. No links of any type, and no prices, specials or promotion language.
Photos	Images and video must accurately represent the business and must not mislead.
Reviews	Genuine reviews only. No incentives, no discounts in exchange for a review, and no selectively asking only happy customers.
Duplicates	One profile per business location. Duplicate listings split reviews and confuse customers.



What shapes local results. Google describes local ranking as mainly relevance, distance and popularity. Distance is fixed. Relevance and popularity are the two you can influence, and both depend on accurate information rather than volume of words.

The consistency check. Read your website, your profile and your two most important directories side by side. The business name, phone number, address, opening hours and list of services should match exactly, including the way the phone number is written.

05

Content, reviews and trust signals

Useful content. Google's phrase is helpful, people-first content. In practice, for a small business, that means writing down what you already tell customers on the phone: what the job costs, how long it takes, what can go wrong, what you need from them, and which suburbs you will and will not travel to. One genuinely useful page a month beats five rewritten generic articles.

Reviews. Ask every customer, at the same point in every job, by the same method. Do not offer anything in exchange, and do not ask only the customers you expect to be happy. Reply to all reviews, including the bad ones, in public, briefly, without arguing. Google treats paid, incentivised and selectively solicited reviews as prohibited content and removes them.

Trust signals that cost nothing.

- ABN and, where relevant, a licence or registration number, in the footer.
- A real street address or a clearly stated service area.
- Names and photos of the people who do the work.
- Insurance, warranty and guarantee terms, written plainly.
- A privacy policy and terms page that describe what you actually do.
- Two or three short case studies, with the customer's permission, describing the problem and the outcome.
- A response time you can keep, and then keep it.

Our recommendation. Publish reviews on your own site as dated text with the customer's first name and suburb. Do not build your page around earning star ratings in search results for reviews you collected yourself. Treat the stars as a bonus, not a plan.

06

Self-assessment

Answer each honestly. **Yes** is true today and you could show someone. **Needs attention** is partly true or out of date. **No** is not true.

Check	Yes	No	Needs attention
Getting found and read			
01 The site opens with a padlock and no certificate warning.			
02 Home and service pages load normally, with no error or blank page.			
03 The “discourage search engines” setting is switched off.			
04 robots.txt does not block the site, and a sitemap is submitted.			
05 Search Console is verified, and I checked it in the last month.			
Saying what you do			
06 The home page states the service, customer and area.			
07 Each service has its own page, titled in customer words.			
08 Each service page states the area covered and a price or range.			
09 Phone, email, address, hours and ABN appear on every page.			
10 A test enquiry through the contact form reaches someone.			
Your Google Business Profile			
11 The profile name is the real name, with nothing added.			
12 The primary category is the closest match to the core business.			
13 Address, service area and hours are accurate, holidays included.			
14 There is one profile, with no duplicate listing.			
15 The profile has real photos of premises, team and finished work.			
Content, reviews and trust			
16 The site contains facts only this business could provide.			
17 The important words are text, not pictures of text.			
18 Reviews are requested from every customer, with no incentive.			
19 Every review receives a reply, including negative ones.			
20 Licence, insurance, warranty and ABN details are published.			

07

Prioritised improvement checklist

Do not fix everything. Fix the items that block everything else first, then the ones that change what a customer sees.

Priority	Action	Typical effort
1	Turn off the "discourage search engines" setting if it is on, fix any certificate or error page, and confirm `robots.txt` does not block the site.	15 minutes
1	Verify Google Search Console and submit the sitemap. Ask your host to confirm Googlebot is not blocked at server level.	30 minutes, plus waiting
1	Correct the Business Profile name, primary category, address or service area, and opening hours. Remove duplicate profiles.	30 minutes
2	Create a separate page for each service you actually sell, titled in customer language, each with a plain description, area covered, and a price or range.	2 to 4 hours
2	Put the phone number, email, address or service area, hours and ABN in the footer of every page, and make the contact form send a test enquiry you actually receive.	1 hour
2	Add real photos to the profile and the site. Replace stock images on the home page and each service page.	1 to 2 hours
3	Remove content hidden behind tabs or accordions where it matters, and move it into the page body.	1 hour
3	Set a review request routine: same point in each job, same wording, no incentive, and a reply to every review within a week.	30 minutes to set up
3	Write two case studies with permission, and add licence, insurance and warranty details to the About page.	2 hours

One worked example. A fictional Illawarra electrician scored 8 of 20 on the self-assessment. The blocking failures were a live "discourage search engines" setting and a certificate that had expired three weeks earlier. Next came one combined Services page covering six trades, a profile name reading "Brightwater Electrical Wollongong 24/7", and a contact form sending to an address nobody monitored. Fixing the first two cost nothing and took under an hour. The service pages, profile correction and form test took a working day. Reviews, case studies and photos were left for the following month. That order is deliberate: nothing in the third group matters while the first two are broken.

08

If you would like help

This checklist is designed to be completed without buying anything. If you would rather have the technical side checked properly, TechMedia runs a fixed-scope CleanRank audit: a read-only review of crawlability, indexing, page titles and descriptions, headings, images, internal links, structured data and mobile rendering, delivered as a prioritised report with each fix marked as automated, manual or a client decision.

Google requirement, restated. No audit, plugin or agency can guarantee rankings, AI citations, traffic or enquiries. What a technical review can do is find the faults that stop a site being eligible in the first place.

Next step. Visit techmediamobile.com.au/cleanrank to see what the audit covers, or techmediamobile.com.au/contact to ask a question about your own site.

Where this guidance comes from

Google's published documentation was used for every requirement in this checklist. Recommendations and observations are TechMedia's own and are labelled as such.

- AI features and your website, Google Search Central: developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/ai-features
- Google Search technical requirements: developers.google.com/search/docs/essentials/technical
- Introduction to robots.txt: developers.google.com/search/docs/crawling-indexing/robots/intro
- Control your snippets in search results: developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/snippet
- Page experience: developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/page-experience
- Guidelines for representing your business on Google: support.google.com/business/answer/3038177
- Tips to improve your local ranking: support.google.com/business/answer/7091
- Prohibited and restricted content, Business Profile: support.google.com/business/answer/7400114

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