Australia's future cannot be left to luck, warns Kearney

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09 July 2026 (Sydney, Australia) - Productivity collapse, weak innovation and growing geopolitical instability threaten Australia's future prosperity.

Australia risks squandering its economic advantages unless business leaders, policymakers and boards confront the growing productivity crisis and rapidly changing global environment, according to a new book by **Kearney ANZ Chairman Adam Dixon** and the firm's Australian partner team.

In *Australia: A Lighthouse in the Global Storm – The CEO Imperative*, Dixon argues that while Australia remains a "privileged nation", the foundations of future growth are weakening. Slowing productivity growth, declining innovation investment, increasing geopolitical fragmentation and the disruptive impact of artificial intelligence are creating structural challenges that cannot be ignored.

The book contends that Australia's prosperity can no longer rely on natural advantages alone.

"Australia is one of the world's most prosperous and stable nations – rich in resources, strong in institutions, and globally respected," Dixon said.

"But advantage must be persistently earned in a world of accelerating technological change, rising geopolitical tension, and intensifying competition."

Drawing on Kearney's global experience advising governments and leading corporations, the book identifies five transformational forces that will shape Australia's economic future:

Leadership in a time of moral confusion

The urgent need to improve national productivity

The impact of artificial intelligence on organisations and society

Building more resilient supply chains in an increasingly fragmented world

Rolling back Agile across corporate Australia

The book argues that business leaders must take a more active role in strengthening Australia's longterm competitiveness.

"Every CEO, board and sector has a role to play," Dixon said. "We are entering a more volatile era: geopolitically, technologically, economically and socially. The instinct is to hunker down, play it safe or wait for clearer skies. But history tells us: storms do not reward timidity. They reward preparedness, principle and courage. The leaders who steer into challenge who move towards the hard things – are those who emerge stronger on the other side. This book is written for those leaders."

Below are just some of the book's key findings:

- **Australia is one of the wealthiest, healthiest, smartest and safest nations on the planet**
- **However, Australia's hard-earned position is slipping**
- **Labour productivity has slid to its lowest levels in the 21st century**
- **CEOs are five times more likely to lose their jobs for non-financial reasons than they were a decade ago**
- **Talent and investment are increasingly looking to other markets where they can generate better returns**
- **Bigger AI budgets don't deliver better returns – cultures that embrace AI in the business are the big winners**

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- **Supply chains are now a top CEO and Board priority**

Global management consultancy Kearney is this year celebrating "100 years of impact," and its latest publication reflects that legacy of forward-looking business thinking. While the book highlights significant risks, it ultimately presents an optimistic vision for Australia's future – described as "a practical manifesto for CEOs, Chairs and business leaders in a defining era."

The book also deep dives into seven of Australia’s most important sectors. Sectors that play an essential role in our society - telecommunications, financial services, natural resources, consumer goods, retail, logistics and defence.

Timely, provocative and solutions-focused, *Australia A Lighthouse in the Global Storm - The CEO Imperative* challenges business leaders to confront uncomfortable truths about Australia's future competitiveness while providing a practical framework for action.

Advance Praise

“This is essential reading for every CEO in Australia. It is bold, practical, and grounded in the many realities we face — from lagging productivity to the transformative impact of artificial intelligence. If we want Australia to remain competitive in a rapidly changing world, as business leaders, we must be willing to lead — not just manage. This book provides a thoughtful and timely starting point and reminder.”

David Thodey AO – Australian Business Leader

“This book is a must read for anyone who wants to understand key aspects of the Australian story - where we have been, where we are today and what we face going forward. It brings a clarion focus on challenges and opportunities, together with critical choices we must make to today to shape our share future.”

The Honourable Kelly O'Dwyer, Former Assistant Treasurer of Australia.

“As Australia faces a veritable ‘sea of troubles’, it would be easy for CEOs to focus narrowly on the future of their own businesses. This book is a clarion call for CEOs to step up and lead, not just their own businesses but the business community more broadly. It is an engaging and stimulating take on Australia’s prospects and how CEOs might play their part in leading the nation through stormy waters.

Emeritus Professor Ian Harper AO, Member of the Reserve Bank of Australia’s Monetary Policy Board and Member of Kearney’s ANZ Advisory Group.

“A thought provoking, insightful and challenging assessment of the issues facing Australian businesses and a call to action for every Board and CEO in the country.”

Robert Nason, Former Senior Executive Tabcorp, Telstra, Former Chairman Foxtel, Former Board Member and CEO of Maxis Communications (Malaysia).

About the author

The lead author Adam Dixon is a Senior Partner at Kearney and Chairman of its Australia and New

Zealand business. With more than two decades at the firm, Adam has built a reputation as one of Australia's most trusted advisors to C-suite leaders navigating transformation, strategy, and growth. He is based in Sydney.

About Kearney

For 100 years, Kearney has been a leading management consulting firm and trusted partner to threequarters of the Fortune Global 500 and governments around the world. With a presence across more than 40 countries, our people make us who we are. We work impact first, tackling your toughest challenges with original thinking and a commitment to making change happen together. By your side, we deliver - value, results, impact.

To learn more about Kearney, please visit www.kearney.com.

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