USE CASES // WHOLESALE AND DISTRIBUTION

AI in Wholesale and Distribution: what's already working, and what's next

Five practical uses of AI and automation for wholesalers and distributors, sorted by how proven they are.

> **The short version:** the biggest win is cutting re-keying: supplier invoices in, customer orders in. Forecasting and enquiry handling are emerging, and Australian evidence for them is thin.

Where the sector sits

Government tracking (DISR, 2025 Q1) puts AI adoption in **distribution at 31%** (not an exact match for wholesale). Across all industries, data entry and document processing is the most common AI application, used by **27%** of adopters.

What's typically painful

Orders arrive as emailed PDFs, spreadsheets and calls and get re-keyed into the system. Supplier invoices are keyed again. Stock is managed in spreadsheets, so stockouts and overstock tie up cash. The ATO puts the cost of a paper or PDF invoice at $27 to $30.

Established: businesses like yours are already doing this

Use case	The everyday problem	What the AI does	What the evidence says
Supplier invoice capture	Invoices arrive by email and are typed in, then matched to purchase orders by hand.	Reads supplier, lines, GST and totals and drafts the bill in Xero or MYOB for approval.	Company claim (one Australian parts distributor): about 40% less time on invoice entry, 2-3 days a month. Vendor page, one firm.
E-invoicing (Peppol)	PDF invoices mean keying, lost invoices and "bank details changed" fraud risk.	Invoices go system to system as structured data, so no retyping. This is automation, not AI.	Government estimate (ATO): PDF invoices cost $27-$30 to process; e-invoicing can bring that under $10.

Emerging: early adopters are starting, worth planning for

Use case	The everyday problem	What the AI does	What the evidence says
Sales orders from emailed POs	Customer POs arrive as PDFs and are retyped into the system.	Reads the order, matches customer and product codes and drafts a sales order. Exceptions go to a person.	No verified figure. Packaged Australian products exist; DIY builds are newer. Vendor claims not quoted.
Demand forecasting and reorders	Reordering by gut feel leaves stockouts on fast lines and cash tied up in slow ones.	Forecasts demand per product and suggests purchase orders. A person approves.	Survey (inFlow, 400 pros, not Australia-specific): 81% want AI for inventory, only 11% use it.
Customer enquiry and order-status replies	Staff field “where is my order” and “is it in stock” all day.	Looks up order and stock status and drafts a reply for staff to approve.	Only overseas consultancy estimates found (Deloitte US). No Australian case study.

Before you start

Protect personal information. The Privacy Commissioner’s guidance (OAIC) advises against entering personal information into public AI tools, and asks you to check whether a vendor can see or train on what you enter. Check whether the Privacy Act applies to your business, and tell customers when they are dealing with an AI. Wholesale is mostly business to business, but customer contacts and sole-trader credit applications hold personal information. **Keep a person on money.** Payments and price changes need approval, and tax invoice records must stay intact.

Sources: DISR AI adoption in Australian businesses, 2025 Q1; Xtracta (Scandinavian Vehicle Distributors); Dext customer stories; ATO e-invoicing benefits page; Commerce Vision; Cin7; inFlow survey via AAP, Jul 2026; Deloitte US, Gen AI in wholesale distribution; OAIC guidance on commercially available AI products. Outcome figures marked vendor claim or company claim are the supplier’s own and have not been independently verified. Survey figures reflect the businesses surveyed and may not match every firm.

Want to talk this through for your business?

Book a free 15-minute call. We’ll look at your situation and give you a straight answer, with no jargon and no sales pitch.

Let’s Chat

Opens the request form on our website. Free, no obligation.