
The Essential Eight, in plain English.

The Australian Signals Directorate's Essential Eight is the baseline most NZ & AU insurers, auditors and boards now expect. Use this to self-check where you stand against each of the eight, then target Maturity Level One as a minimum.

01 Application control

- Allowlisting.** Only approved executables, scripts, installers and libraries can run
 - Coverage.** Applied to all workstations and internet-facing servers, not just a sample
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02 Patch applications

- Internet-facing.** Critical vulnerabilities patched within 48 hours
 - Other apps.** Patched within two weeks; unsupported apps removed
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03 Configure Microsoft Office macro settings

- Block by default.** Macros blocked for users with no business need
 - Trusted only.** Only macros from trusted locations or digitally signed are allowed
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04 User application hardening

- Browsers.** Block Flash, ads and Java on the internet; web ads from the internet blocked
 - Office.** Office prevented from creating child processes and injecting into other processes
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05 Restrict administrative privileges

- Least privilege.** Admin access validated when first requested and revalidated annually
 - Separation.** Privileged accounts cannot read email or browse the web
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06 Patch operating systems

- Critical.** OS critical vulnerabilities patched within 48 hours on internet-facing systems
 - Currency.** Operating systems are vendor-supported (no end-of-life OS in production)
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07 Multi-factor authentication

- Everywhere that matters.** MFA on email, VPN, remote access and all internet-facing services
- Phishing-resistant.** Moving toward phishing-resistant MFA for privileged and remote access

08 Regular backups

- Important data.** Backups of data, software and configuration are performed and retained
- Tested & isolated.** Restoration is tested, and backups are stored offline or immutable so ransomware cannot reach them

Maturity matters. Each strategy has Maturity Levels 0-3. Most insurers expect Level One across all eight as a floor. Score yourself, then close the lowest first.

Want this assessed for your environment?

Book a 90-minute discovery & security session.

09 974 2379 · +61 3 4803 4915

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