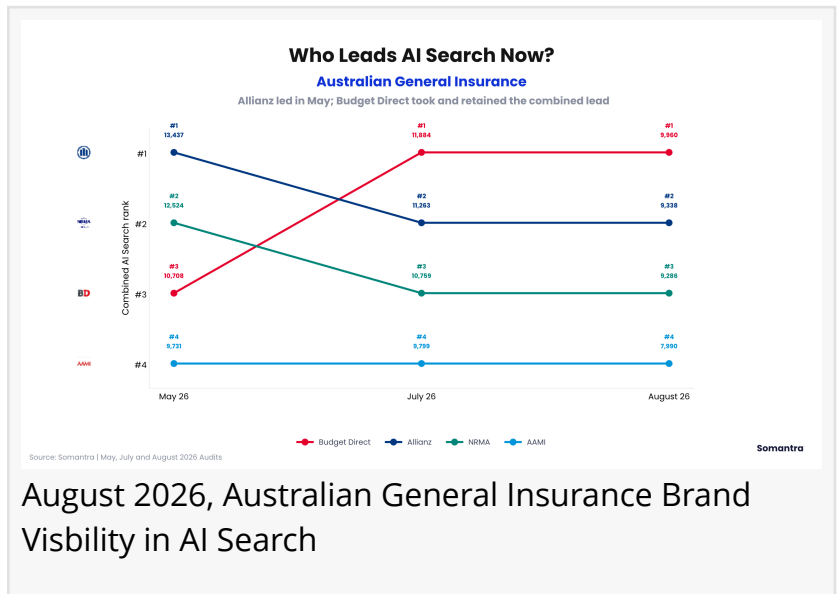


Budget Direct Holds AI Search Lead as Somantra Data Shows Visibility and Brand Consideration Are Diverging in AI Search

Somantra's latest research tracking 20 Australian insurance brands finds NRMA has overtaken Allianz on ChatGPT, while Budget Direct Holds AI Search Lead.

SYDNEY, NSW, AUSTRALIA, August 31, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Somantra](https://www.somantra.com/), the AI search brand mindshare tracking platform, today released its third audit in the AI Search Visibility series, tracking how 20 Australian general insurance brands appear across ChatGPT and Google AI Overviews from May through August 2026. The report is built on over 34,000 consumer conversations and confirms a pattern Somantra has argued since its first report; being named by an AI engine and being chosen by it are two different outcomes, and brands that lead on one frequently lag on the other.



“

In AI search a brand might be mentioned less than competition, but highly recommended by AI when mentioned, to drive higher conversions. Brands should measure if they are chosen, not just mentioned.”

*Arun Prasad, Founder,
Somantra*

Budget Direct remains the combined AI Search leader in August with 9,960 observed mentions, holding the #1 position it took from Allianz in July. But the engine-level picture is split. Budget Direct still leads Google AI Overviews (5,771 mentions), while NRMA has overtaken Allianz to lead ChatGPT for the second straight audit (5,649 mentions, 83 ahead of Allianz). Short-term movement was mixed on the matched July-to-August query cohort: Budget Direct fell 4.4%, Allianz fell 5.4%, AAMI fell 6.0%, while ING gained 4.2%.

The more consequential finding sits below the leaderboard. Somantra's [Brand Consideration](#) metric,

which measures whether an AI answer frames a brand as the most-likely recommendation

rather than simply naming it, shows visibility rank and consideration rank pulling apart. Shannons ranks #10 in raw visibility but #1 in most-likely framing, a nine-place premium in the elite, premium and vintage motor vehicles segment. ING shows a similar pattern, ranking #11 in visibility but #3 in consideration. At the other end, AAMI and NRMA are both high-visibility brands that underperform on consideration, ranking five and four places lower on framing than on raw mentions, respectively.

"Most AI visibility tools stop at the mention count and call that the win," said Arun Prasad, Founder of Somantra. "Our data says the mention count is the least interesting number. Shannons is being actively recommended to prospective customers in the segments where the brand competes while NRMA is being named constantly on ChatGPT without a matching lift in how likely AI is to actually recommend it. That gap between being cited and being chosen is exactly what brands need to see and act on."

The report also introduces three new diagnostic layers not present in prior audits. A Modifier Test found that a single word change in a prompt materially shifts an AI answer: "most trusted" produced the largest positive sentiment shift (+0.498) across tested brands, while "cheapest" produced the largest semantic distance from baseline (0.626), meaning it changes the substance of the answer, not just its tone.

A First Seen Audit found that Google AI Overviews places a tracked brand before the scroll line 85.6% of the time, compared with 34.0% for ChatGPT, whose longer-form answers push the first brand mention to a median of word 186.

Citation-layer analysis of 7,945 domains cited across the two engines found the leading citation layer is stable. Canstar remains the top-cited domain across all three audits and every one of July's top 100 cited domains remained present in August even as thousands of long-tail domains entered and exited the data.

The audit also reinforces a finding from Somantra's May baseline that most AI-generated insurance advice still doesn't name a brand at all. In detailed ChatGPT conversational queries, 78.9% of category-level answers named no tracked insurer, up only slightly from the roughly 82% brandless rate recorded in May and July. Life insurance is the least-branded category, with 96.9% of ChatGPT conversation answers naming no tracked brand leaving open significant whitespace for insurers willing to build content and answers around unbranded, in-depth advice queries.

Availability

The [full AI Search Visibility Report](https://somantra.ai/post/ai-search-visibility-august-2026), May–August 2026: Australian Insurance Brands, including the Somantra Visibility Model appendix and category-level breakdowns, is available now at <https://somantra.ai/post/ai-search-visibility-august-2026>.

About Somantra

Somantra is a Sydney-based AI search brand mindshare monitoring platform specialising in Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO) and Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO). Somantra helps brands understand not just whether AI search engines know their name, but whether AI is actively driving purchase decisions. The platform tracks brand presence across AI engines including ChatGPT, Google AI Overviews, Claude and Perplexity, measuring how brands appear across multi-turn consumer conversations.

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