

Welcome to the

Market Insights & Salary Guide 2026

Clear decisions start with clear insight.

This guide brings together market data, hiring trends and on-the-ground observations from across the People and Culture landscape. Designed to support informed workforce planning and confident career decisions, it reflects how the market has stabilised, where capability is being prioritised, and what matters most as organisations and professionals look ahead. We invite you to explore the insights that follow and use them as a practical reference for the year to come.

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Overview

Across 2022 and 2023, the People and Culture market was shaped by recalibration, restructuring and sustained skill shortages. HR teams were pulled into transformation, organisational redesign and strategic workforce conversations at a pace not seen for years.

By late 2024 and into early 2025, the landscape shifted. A tougher economic setting, high interest rates, ongoing cost of living pressures and geopolitical volatility created an environment where organisations focused even more sharply on cost. Many adopted a ‘do more with less’ mindset. Restructures and operating model reviews dominated planning cycles, and teams were expected to strengthen performance while managing leaner structures.


In 2025, these pressures remained but began to rebalance, with organisations entering the year with caution. Volatility in HR job ads and pockets of restructuring shaped the earlier months, although early rate cuts and a relatively stable unemployment rate helped maintain overall subdued confidence in the market.

Across the year, a consistent trend emerged. Demand stayed active in workplace relations, ER, WHS, HR technology uplift and workforce capability. Employers became more selective, prioritising capability that delivered clear commercial, compliance or cultural value. Applications per job ad hit record highs, intensifying competition and highlighting a gap between market activity and genuine mobility for candidates.

To manage this environment, organisations relied heavily on internal mobility and short to mid-term contracting to secure capability without overcommitting to permanent headcount. At the same time, HR job ads increased modestly throughout the year, signalling early signs of recovery and a growing willingness to invest carefully in people functions.

Candidate behaviour also evolved. Flexibility remained essential, but attention shifted toward sustainable workloads, psychological safety, stability and progression. Many people chose to stay in place through restructures and economic noise, while others quietly prepared for movement once the external environment felt more settled.

Overall, 2025 was a year of considered rebuilding. It was not a period of rapid acceleration, it was one where foundations were strengthened. Organisations reassessed workforce design, refined operating rhythms and invested selectively in the HR capability that would support strategic planning and organisational health.



Salary Data - Generalist Positions + Talent Acquisition

In consideration of the below chart, we encourage you to reflect on further variables such as the size of company (headcount and turnover), industry sector, direct report responsibility and team size. The below figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand (\$'000).

	Generalist									Talent Acquisition				
	Chief	Director or Head Of	Manager	Senior Business Partner	Business Partner	Senior Advisor	Advisor	Coordinator	Officer	Head of	Manager	Business Partner	Advisor	Coordinator
NSW - Sydney	300 - 650	220 - 320	160 - 265	160 - 280	130 - 175	110-150	95 - 130	75 - 105	70 - 80	165 - 280	140 - 180	100 - 145	90 - 125	70 - 95
VIC - Melbourne	300 - 650	220 - 310	150 - 240	160 - 265	125 - 175	110 - 145	95 - 125	75 - 100	65 - 80	175 - 260	125 - 175	100 - 140	90 - 125	65 - 90
QLD - Brisbane	280 - 600	210 - 290	140 - 230	155 - 260	120 - 170	110 - 140	90 - 125	70-95	60 - 75	165 - 260	125 - 170	100 - 135	85 - 120	70 - 85

This data has been collated and determined via a variety of diverse sources including relevant job boards, industry reports, client consultation, our job seeker database and government reporting. The ranges quoted are salary packages inclusive of super but exclusive of bonus payments, share schemes and other monetary benefits.

Salary Data - CoE's

In consideration of the below chart, we encourage you to reflect on further variables such as the size of company (headcount and turnover), industry sector, direct report responsibility and team size. The below figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand (\$'000).

	Specialist Functions											
	Learning & Development			Organisational Design			Diversity, Equity & Inclusion			Employee Relations/ Industrial Relations		
	Head Of	Manager	Advisor	Head Of	Manager	Advisor	Head Of	Manager	Advisor	Head Of	Manager	Advisor
NSW - Sydney	170 - 310	140 - 205	90 - 130	180 - 290	155 - 215	95 - 140	175 - 270	155 - 200	80 - 120	220 - 340	150 - 260	110 - 145
VIC - Melbourne	180 - 285	130 - 190	85 - 125	175 - 285	150 - 210	95 - 130	155 - 245	135 - 185	75 - 115	210 - 320	150 - 250	100 - 140
QLD - Brisbane	175 - 260	125 - 180	85 - 125	175 - 275	145 - 200	90 - 120	160 - 240	130 - 180	80 - 110	195 - 320	140 - 250	100 - 135

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Salary Data - CoE's

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	Specialist Functions								
	Health & Safety			Remuneration & Benefits			Payroll		
	Head Of	Manager	Advisor	Head Of	Manager	Advisor	Head Of	Manager	Officer
NSW - Sydney	190 - 300	150 - 220	100 - 150	220 - 360	160 - 260	110 - 180	175 - 260	130 - 180	85 - 130
VIC - Melbourne	200 - 290	140 - 215	90 - 140	195 - 320	150 - 220	100 - 170	165 - 240	125 - 175	80 - 125
QLD - Brisbane	190 - 270	125 - 220	95 - 135	170 - 290	145 - 200	95 - 165	165 - 230	125 - 170	70 - 125

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What to look out for

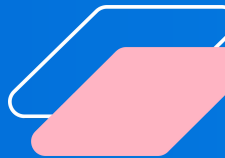


As we enter 2026, conditions appear more settled. While interest rate cuts through 2025 offered some relief, recent economic data indicates rates are likely to remain steady, with a potential hike predicted in the first half. This creates a touch of uncertainty; however, most businesses are now operating with far more clarity than they had at the start of 2025.

In this environment, the People and Culture market is positioned for a steadier year. Many HR professionals who held firm through restructures and shifting conditions are ready to move to their next step. This renewed appetite for movement is likely to open up opportunities, particularly at the mid to senior level, as organisations look to strengthen capability in a measured, strategic way. Growth will not be explosive, but it will be meaningful. P&C, WHS and TA teams are expected to see a gradual uplift as businesses shift from reactive hiring to more intentional workforce planning.

Infrastructure investment will create pockets of strong demand and competition for HR, Talent and WHS specialists who can operate in complex and rapidly scaling environments. These projects will draw capability from established employers, prompting a stronger focus on retention and career pathways more broadly. AI will continue to change the shape of the workplace. The next phase is less about efficiency and more about creating roles linked to governance, analytics, capability uplift and technology enablement. Professionals who pair ER depth with digital fluency will continue to find themselves particularly well placed.

Overall, 2026 is shaping up as a year of balanced progress. Employers who offer clarity, sustainable workloads and genuine development will secure talent in a more active market. For HR professionals, it will be a year to make intentional moves, step into a broader scope and build careers around the evolving needs of the function.



Closing Sentiment

Thank you for taking the time to engage with our 2026 Market Insights & Salary Guide.

We are grateful to the organisations and professionals who continue to share their perspectives with us. These conversations shape our understanding of the market and allow us to provide insights that are relevant, grounded and commercially useful.

If you are planning your next hire, reviewing workforce capability, or considering your own career move, we would welcome the opportunity to support you. A conversation with Levyl is about clarity. Understanding what the market is telling us, what options are available, and what a well-considered next step could look like.

To continue the conversation, contact us at hello@levyl.com.au We look forward to partnering with you on what comes next.

11/50 Margaret Street
Sydney NSW 2000
0499 027 469
hello@levyl.com.au
www.levyl.com.au

