



Keane McDonald
executive legal recruitment

AUSTRALIA LEGAL SALARY GUIDE 2025

PREPARED BY KEANE McDONALD



SALARY GUIDE

PRIVATE PRACTICE

SYDNEY

LEVEL	TOP TIER	BOUTIQUE / MID-TIER
1 Year	\$110,000-120,000	\$85,000-110,000
2 Years	\$125,000-145,000	\$90,000-125,000
3 Years	\$130,000-160,000	\$98,000-140,000
4 Years	\$150,000-170,000	\$113,000-150,000
5 Years +	\$160,000-186,000	\$120,000-160,000
SA 1 - 2	\$180,000-230,000	\$135,000-180,000
SA 3 - 4	\$200,000-280,000	\$160,000-240,000
Special Counsel	\$240,000-350,000	\$215,000-295,000
Salaried Partner	\$370,000-600,000	\$300,000-500,000

MELBOURNE

LEVEL	TOP TIER	BOUTIQUE / MID-TIER
1 Year	\$95,000-115,000	\$70,000-105,000
2 Years	\$110,000-125,000	\$85,000-117,000
3 Years	\$120,000-140,000	\$98,000-130,000
4 Years	\$130,000-160,000	\$102,000-145,000
5 Years +	\$145,000-170,000	\$120,000-160,000
SA 1 - 2	\$165,000-210,000	\$135,000-190,000
SA 3 - 4	\$180,000-260,000	\$160,000-230,000
Special Counsel	\$235,000-305,000	\$220,000-275,000
Salaried Partner	\$350,000-560,000	\$270,000-500,000

BRISBANE

LEVEL	TOP TIER	MID-TIER
1 Year	\$90,000-115,000	\$80,000-90,000
2 Years	\$95,000-125,000	\$90,000-110,000
3 Years	\$110,000-135,000	\$100,000-125,000
4 Years	\$125,000-145,000	\$115,000-140,000
5 Years +	\$145,000-155,000	\$130,000-148,000
SA 1 - 2	\$165,000-185,000	\$140,000-175,000
SA 3 - 4	\$170,000-240,000	\$160,000-220,000
Special Counsel	\$205,000-310,000	\$190,000-270,000
Salaried Partner	\$300,000-510,000	\$240,000-450,000



SALARY GUIDE

PRIVATE PRACTICE

PERTH

LEVEL	TOP TIER	MID-TIER
1 Year	\$95,000-115,000	\$80,000-90,000
2 Years	\$102,000-125,000	\$90,000-108,000
3 Years	\$115,000-140,000	\$100,000-130,000
4 Years	\$125,000-160,000	\$115,000-145,000
5 Years +	\$140,000-170,000	\$125,000-160,000
SA 1 - 2	\$165,000-215,000	\$145,000-185,000
SA 3 - 4	\$190,000-260,000	\$170,000-230,000
Special Counsel	\$200,000-270,000	\$190,000-240,000
Salaried Partner	\$300,000-550,000	\$240,000-460,000

IN-HOUSE

LEVEL	SYDNEY	MELBOURNE
Legal Counsel (1-3 years)	\$90,000 - 155,000	\$80,000 - 150,000
Legal Counsel (3-5 years)	\$120,000 - 195,000	\$110,000 - 190,000
Senior Legal Counsel (6+ years)	\$170,000 - 270,000	\$95,000 - 250,000
General Counsel	\$350,000 - 550,000	\$300,000 - 470,000

LEVEL	BRISBANE	PERTH
Legal Counsel (1-3 years)	\$75,000 - 140,000	\$75,000 - 140,000
Legal Counsel (3-5 years)	\$110,000 - 175,000	\$100,000 - 170,000
Senior Legal Counsel (6+ years)	\$150,000 - 220,000	\$150,000 - 220,000
General Counsel	\$250,000 - 400,000	\$250,000 - 400,000

SUMMARY

While overall demand remains strong in the Australian legal market, it has become more concentrated in certain practice areas and locations, suggesting a potential strategic and mature market focus compared to the broad-based growth seen in previous years. Firms are showing measured optimism as they navigate a complex hiring landscape and shifting economic backdrop.

The first half of 2025, has been marked by sustained demand for legal services, particularly across banking and finance, energy (driven by continued government investment in renewables), workplace relations, real estate and construction - building on the momentum from Q4 2024. Transactional practices such as Corporate/M&A and Projects have also rebounded, due to interest rates decreasing. However, macroeconomic headwinds - including a slowdown in global economic growth and trade tensions - could influence the latter part of the year.

The local legal landscape continues to evolve, with boutique and mid-tier firms gaining traction through specialisation, value-driven services and agile business models providing candidates with more career progression opportunities.

We've also seen a recent rise in individual legal startups led by lawyers seeking greater autonomy, niche specialisations or more flexible working models.

Demand is highest for mid-level (3–5 PQE) and senior lawyers, while salaries for junior lawyers (1–2 PQE) are beginning to stabilise after sharp post-pandemic increases. Sydney-based graduates at top-tier firms now earn over \$100,000, up from pre-COVID levels of \$80,000–\$90,000. Meanwhile, the salary gap between top-tier and mid-tier/boutique firms has continued to narrow, as has the divide between regions.

Promotion rounds in 2025 highlight a commitment to internal talent development, with increased appointments to partner, special counsel, and senior associate roles. We've also seen broader adoption of salaried partner models at mid-tier and global firms, while equity remains the standard at the senior level.

Disclaimer: Figures are based on current market rates for basic salaries in Australia. There can be several reasons for large discrepancies between salaries, ranging from areas of specialism to size of firm and market demand.

Lawyers continue to embrace AI as a tool for efficiency, not a threat to their roles. Career priorities have also evolved: flexibility, upskilling, firm culture, and wellbeing now weigh heavily in decision-making—alongside salary and career progression.

In-house legal teams have also evolved, with increasing expectations to operate as strategic partners to the business. As digital transformation accelerates and legal functions become more integrated into commercial decision-making, there has been a noticeable rise in the adoption of legal technology to improve efficiency and deliver greater value. This has driven demand for lawyers with strong commercial awareness, regulatory expertise, and the ability to navigate shifting business priorities. Many organisations are investing in upskilling, restructuring, and targeted hiring to build teams that can effectively support broader organisational goals—particularly in sectors such as financial services, technology, and energy.

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ABOUT US



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This guide was compiled by the directors of Keane McDonald.

Keane McDonald is an international executive recruitment firm focusing on legal appointments. We specialise in the recruitment of legal talent for private practice clients and in-house legal departments located in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Australia.

We possess a wealth of experience and knowledge of the global legal recruitment sector which enables us to provide our clients and candidates with sound, in-depth and up-to-date advice.

For further guidance on salaries please e-mail Yvonne to arrange a confidential discussion.

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