

WESTERN AUSTRALIA RETAIL GROWTH MOMENT

What the 2026 Development Surge Means for Retail Leadership and Talent



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Prepared by Retailworld | Australasian Specialist Retail Recruitment

Executive Summary

Western Australia's retail sector is in the middle of its most significant growth cycle in over a decade. After years of delayed construction, suppressed investment, and cautious planning approvals, the market has turned. Seven major retail developments are scheduled for delivery before the end of 2026; a further 22 have received approval, and institutional capital is moving into WA neighbourhoods, in particular retail.

For retail leaders, employees, and recruiters, this is not background noise. It is a direct signal that the demand for retail talent in WA is accelerating ahead of the broader market, and that the window to secure the right people before sites open is narrowing fast.

This report sets out what is happening, where growth is concentrated, and what it means practically for retail leadership hiring across the state.

01. The Supply Wave: What Is Being Built and Where

Perth's retail pipeline has opened. Following a prolonged period where completions sat well below the 10-year average, the city is now preparing for a meaningful injection of new stock.

KEY SUPPLY FIGURES

7 major retail projects delivering approximately 53,800 sqm by Q4 2026, with a further 22 approved developments totalling 222,700 sqm in the pipeline.

Sub-5% vacancy rates across Perth's retail market have been reducing available space for operators, making the new pipeline not just welcome but necessary. The approved pipeline signals that the supply squeeze will not ease immediately, keeping competition for quality tenancies and experienced operators high through 2026 and into 2027.

Growth is concentrated in three distinct corridors:

- Northern growth suburbs, including Alkimos and Ellenbrook, where Metronet transport expansion has accelerated population density and retail demand ahead of supply.
- Inner-city mixed-use precincts such as Mount Hawthorn and Highgate, where planning in early 2026 shows strong appetite for boutique formats combining food and beverage, medical, and specialty retail.
- Regional WA hubs, led by the South West corridor, where the \$53 million Treendale Home and Lifestyle transaction confirmed that metropolitan-calibre retail sophistication has arrived outside Perth.

02. Investment Trends: Retail Growth

Q1 2026 saw a concentrated burst of transactional activity that underlined the depth of interest in WA retail. Key sales handled by major agency groups confirmed that unsatisfied capital is actively chasing WA assets, particularly in the essential and neighbourhood retail categories.

Asset	Location	Sale Price	Anchor Tenant
Treendale Home + Lifestyle	Australind (Regional)	\$53 Million	Large Format Retail
Trinity Village	Alkimos (Growth Corridor)	\$33.07 Million	Coles
Carramar Village	Carramar (Northern Metro)	\$32.15 Million	Woolworths

The trend indicates: investors are concentrating on non-discretionary retail anchored by groceries, medical services, and daily needs. These formats are operationally complex to run well and require experienced management, operations leadership, and category-specialist talent that is in short supply.

03. What Growth at This Scale Requires

New retail stock means every development on this pipeline requires a leadership layer before it opens and a management structure that can sustain performance once trading begins.

Across the current WA pipeline, the roles under active pressure include:

- Centre Managers and General Managers capable of managing mixed-use, food-led, and essential retail formats.
- Retail Store Managers who can manage systems from scratch in new or redeveloped environments rather than inheriting established teams.
- Food and Beverage Directors as F&B anchors become the primary foot traffic driver in new format developments.
- Visual Merchandise and Brand Experience leads as presentation standards in new-format retail rise sharply.
- Regional Managers and Area Managers capable of overseeing dispersed portfolios as growth spreads across the Northern Corridor and South West.

KEY SUPPLY FIGURES

The most common hiring mistake we see in pre-opening retail is treating leadership recruitment as part of the fit-out schedule. By the time the hoarding comes down, it is already six weeks too late.



The inner-city mixed-use developments present a separate challenge. Leaders suited to a Supermarket anchored neighbourhood centre and leaders suited to a Mount Hawthorn boutique mixed-use precinct are not the same profile. Hirers who brief out of market expectations can lose time and candidates to competitors.

04. The Talent Pressure Points

Three specific tensions are emerging in the WA retail talent market as a result of this development activity:

Competition for proven leaders is intensifying before sites open

Experienced retail leaders in WA are already employed. The visible candidate pool in the \$75,000 to \$250,000 salary band is shallow, and candidates at this level are not applying to job boards. Pre-opening hiring campaigns that rely on advertised roles will miss the majority of the right talent.

Regional WA needs metropolitan-calibre leadership willing to relocate

The Treendale transaction and broader South West retail activity confirm that regional WA is no longer a secondary market. But the leadership talent capable of running these operations is concentrated in Perth and the eastern states. Relocation conversations require lead time, incentive structuring, and a recruiter who can make the case compellingly to a passive candidate.

Cross-category experience is in short supply

The shift toward food-led and mixed-use formats means that purely apparel or purely hard goods backgrounds are increasingly insufficient for senior roles. Leaders who can manage across categories, or who have made the transition from traditional to mixed-format retail, are being competed for across multiple briefs simultaneously.

05. What Hirers Need to Do

Given these pressures, here is what hirers operating in the WA market need to do differently.

Brief precisely, not broadly

The WA market is too small for a vague brief to work. Candidates who receive a generic opportunity description in a buoyant market will move to a more specific offer. Know the culture, the format, the growth trajectory, and the leadership style of your ideal candidate before you approach the market.

Treat passive candidates as your primary pool

The leaders capable of running your WA operation are not looking. They are managing a team now, probably in a role they are performing well in. Reaching them requires a specialist with existing relationships in the WA and eastern states retail leadership community, more than a job advertisement.

Price your roles for the market you are hiring in, not the one you hired in last time

WA's retail salary bands have moved. Compensation benchmarks from 2023 or early 2024 will cost you candidates before the shortlist stage. Retailworld can provide current market data to ensure your offer is competitive before the search begins.

06. What Senior Candidates Should Know

For retail leaders considering their next move, WA in 2026 represents a genuine career opportunity that deserves serious consideration.

- The leadership pool in WA is less saturated than Sydney or Melbourne. Senior candidates who move are entering a market where name recognition travels further and advancement opportunities are less congested.
- The diversity of format in the current development pipeline is real. If you have wanted to lead a food-led mixed-use operation, a large-format regional centre, or a boutique neighbourhood precinct, all three are appearing in WA simultaneously.
- Salary bands are moving upward, and employers are prepared to structure packages competitively for candidates who require relocation support or who are leaving stable tenure in another state.
- WA's retail growth is underpinned by genuine population and economic fundamentals, not a short-term spike. Leaders who move for this cycle are not taking a speculative risk; they are aligning with structural demand.

CONSIDERING A MOVE TO WA?

Retailworld works with senior retail candidates on a confidential basis. If you are curious about what is available without triggering a visible job search, we can have that conversation.

07. The Retailworld Perspective

The Retailworld Perspective:

The WA retail market is not waiting. Neither should you.

Retailworld has spent over two decades placing retail leaders across Australasia. We work in one sector, at depth, and we know the difference between a market moving and a market surging. WA right now is the latter.

The recruitment assignments we are running today reflect what this report describes: shallow candidate pools, passive talent that needs to be approached with precision, and hirers who are learning that salary benchmarks from two years ago are costing them shortlists.

Whether you are a business with a WA leadership requirement or a senior retail professional considering your next move, we can give you a clear picture of what the market looks like right now.

Contact Elissa Crosswell, Retailworld WA, for a confidential conversation

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This report was prepared by Retailworld in April 2026 by local market specialist Elissa Crosswell. Market data referenced from commercial real estate sources and local marketing knowledge at the current time of publication.