

# Legal Salaries & Market Updates for Employers | 2026

Salary data is based on our own  
placement data during 2025/26 FY

# Legal Hiring Trends in 2026



The **Australian legal recruitment market** in 2026 **remains resilient** despite broader economic uncertainty. While unemployment has gradually increased over the past three years, it remains historically low and below the Reserve Bank's benchmark for full employment, reflecting an **ongoing skilled labour shortage** across Australia. At the same time, inflationary pressures, rising interest rates and global economic instability have contributed to more cautious candidate behaviour, with professionals increasingly **prioritising job security** over career mobility. This has led to the emergence of the **"Job Hugging"** trend, where employees remain in roles for stability rather than fulfilment, creating retention challenges for firms despite lower movement across the market.



Within the legal sector, **talent shortages remain most acute at the 3–5 year PQE level**, where attrition, burnout, in-house transitions and career changes continue to reduce supply at the same time demand from firms remains strongest. While the overall lawyer population has grown significantly in recent years, talent availability remains unevenly distributed across experience levels, creating a structural bottleneck in the mid-level market. Legal support roles also continue to experience strong demand, particularly across Family Law, Property/Conveyancing and Plaintiff Personal Injury, with flexibility and part-time arrangements now firmly embedded across support functions.

# Legal Hiring Trends in 2026 (cont.)



**Candidate expectations** have also **evolved** considerably since the post-pandemic “Great Resignation” period. While salary remains important, firms can no longer rely on remuneration alone to attract or retain talent. Work-life balance, hybrid working arrangements, flexibility, career development opportunities and workplace culture are now equally influential factors in candidate decision-making. Mid-level candidates, in particular, are becoming increasingly selective, carefully assessing a **firm’s employee value proposition** before considering a move.



As a result, **firms** that are **succeeding in today’s market** are focusing heavily on retention, succession planning, strong employer branding and efficient recruitment processes. Organisations are increasingly investing in employee engagement, clearly articulated career pathways, competitive benefits and authentic workplace culture to strengthen both attraction and retention outcomes. In a market where talent remains constrained and candidate confidence is cautious, firms are competing not only on salary, but on the **overall employee experience** they can offer.

# Salary Bands - Lawyers

| No   | Year Level   | Annual Salary Pkg (incl. super) |
|--|--|---------------------------------|
| 2025/2026                                  | 1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> year                            | \$80,000 - \$90,000             |
| 2024/2025                                  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> /3 <sup>rd</sup> year                            | \$90,000 - \$100,000            |
| 2023/2024                                  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup> year                            | \$95,000 - \$135,000            |
| 2022/2023                                  | 4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> year                            | \$125,000 - \$145,000           |
| 2021/2022                                  | 5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> year                            | \$135,000 - \$155,000           |
| Associate                                  | Typically 3-5 years PAE<br>(Note: not all firms have this title) | \$125,000 - \$155,000           |
| Senior Associate                           | Typically 5 years + PAE  | \$155,000 - \$190,000           |
| Special Counsel/Consultant<br>(non-equity) | (Without client following)                                       | \$185,000 - \$250,000           |

**Note:** Salary bands are based on our own placement data during the preceding 12 months.

# Salary Bands – Support Staff

| NB. Salary pkg. (incl. super)                                   | Large Law Firms (300+) | Medium Law Firms (100 – 300) | Small Law Firms (Under 100) |
|---|------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Executive Assistant (Snr Partner, Practice Group Head/In-house) | \$110,000 - \$130,000  | \$100,000 - \$120,000        | \$95,000 - \$110,000        |
| Senior Sec (5 + Yrs)<br>- Partner level                         | \$95,000 - \$110,000   | \$95,000 - \$110,000         | \$95,000 - \$110,000        |
| Intermediate Sec (3-4 Yrs)                                      | \$85,000 - \$95,000    | \$85,000 - \$95,000          | \$80,000 - \$95,000         |
| Junior Sec (1-2 Yrs)  | \$75,000 - \$80,000    | \$75,000 - \$80,000          | \$70,000 - \$80,000         |
| Entry Level Sec   | \$70,000 - \$75,000    | \$70,000 - \$75,000          | \$65,000 - \$70,000         |
| Law Clerk   | \$110,000 - \$130,000  | \$110,000 - \$130,000        | \$100,000 - \$120,000       |
| Receptionist  | \$85,000 - \$95,000    | \$85,000 - \$95,000          | \$80,000 - \$85,000         |
| Office Services Clerk   | \$70,000 - \$85,000    | \$70,000 - \$85,000          | \$70,000 - \$75,000         |
| Accounts Clerk  | \$85,000 - \$95,000    | \$85,000 - \$95,000          | \$80,000 - \$95,000         |
| Business Development/<br>Marketing                              | To be discussed        |                              |                             |
| Human Resources   | To be discussed        |                              |                             |

**Note:** Salary bands are based on our own placement data during the preceding 12 months.

# Areas of Law/Practice in Demand

## **Increasing – Lawyers**

- Family
- Employment/Workplace Relations
- Litigation (Commercial/Insolvency)

## **Increasing – Legal Support**

- Family
- Property/Conveyancing
- Plaintiff Personal Injury



# Areas of Law/Practice in Demand

## **Stabilising – Lawyers**

- Commercial
- Tax
- Property Law
- Insurance Law (Defendant)
- Personal Injury Law (Plaintiff)

## **Stabilising – Legal Support**

- Marketing/BD
- Litigation
- Commercial

## **Decreasing – Lawyers**

- Construction (front & back end)
- In-house Counsel
- Wills & Estates

## **Decreasing – Legal Support**

- HR roles
- Document Production Specialists/WPO
- Float
- Reception
- Accounts

# Top 10 Recruitment Trends 2026

1

- Legal job market remains resilient

2

- Candidate hugging resulting in a candidate 'drought' market in many areas

3

- Salary bands have stabilised for Lawyers & Support Staff

4

- Understanding candidate motivation is paramount

5

- Be prepared & expect the counter offer

6

- Notice periods are getting longer

7

- Firms are valuing employee tenure/career stability

8

- Hybrid working arrangements still a priority for candidates

9

- Candidates are more informed than ever before

10

- Integration of AI technology including new HRIS systems

# For further queries, please contact us:



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