

Australian HR Institute

4 TRENDS

SHAPING THE HR EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE IN 2026

Learn about the average salary, job seeking intentions and most sought-after skills for HR practitioners across Australia.

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60 per cent of HR professionals saw a one to nine per cent base salary increase

Salaries for the same role continue to vary hugely, according to *Frazer Jones*.

HR Generalists

Role	Average salary range (AUD)	Average bonus
Chief People Officer	300,000 - 475,000	30%
HR Director	200,000 - 320,000	25%
Head of HR / People & Culture	180,000 - 260,000	20%
HR Manager	140,000 - 200,000	20%
Senior HR Business Partner	160,000 - 200,000	15%

Learning and Development (L&D) and Organisational Development (OD)

Role	Average salary range (AUD)	Average bonus
Head of Learning and Organisational Development	180,000 - 300,000	25%
Organisational Development Manager	140,000 - 200,000	20%
Learning and Development Manager	140,000 - 200,000	20%
Instructional Designer	115,000 - 160,000	15%
Diversity and Inclusion Manager	100,000 - 210,000	15%

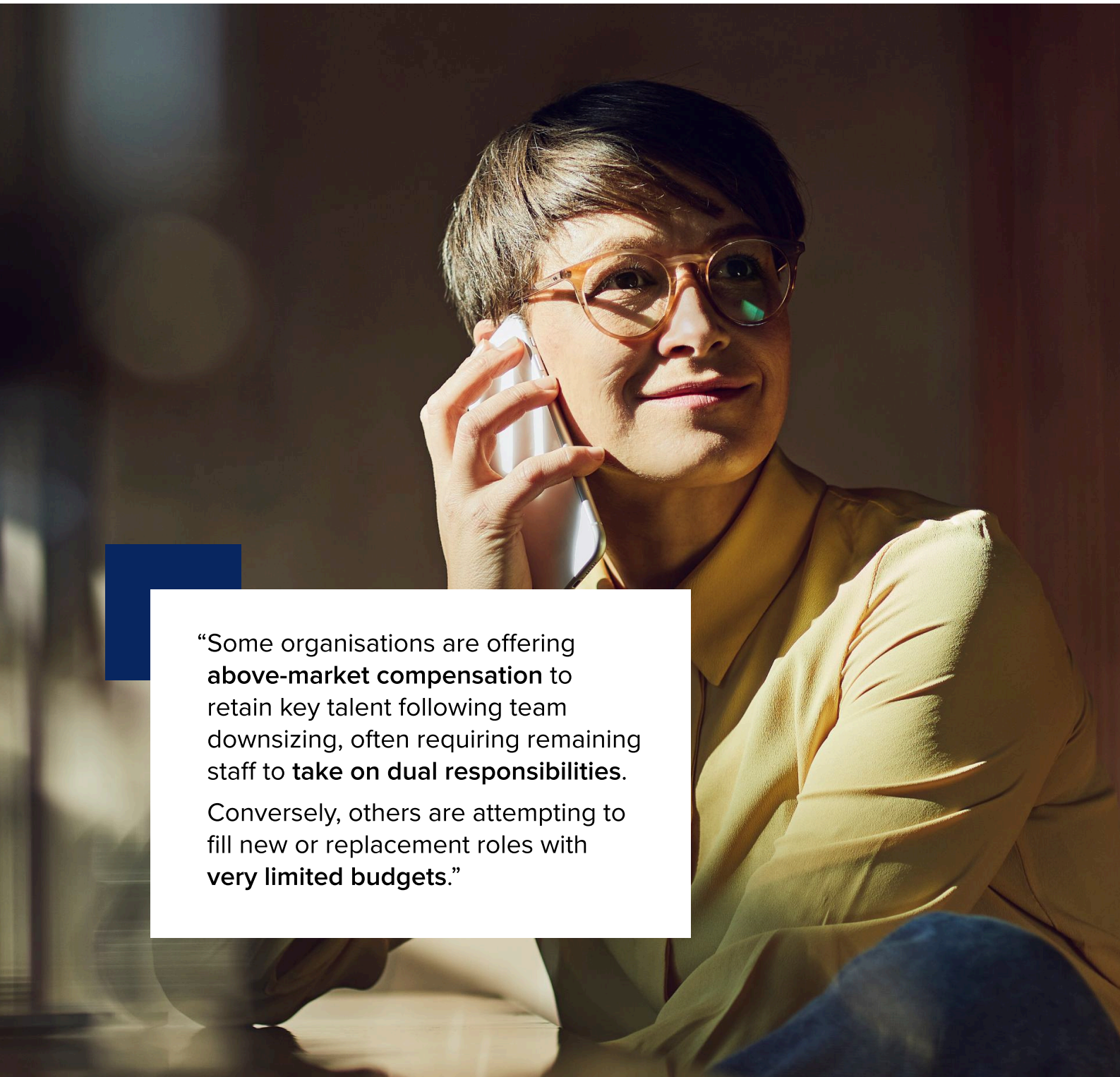
Junior to mid-level HR see strongest wage growth

Some employers have expedited pay **increases for junior HR professionals** more rapidly than for senior peers.

Source: Frazer Jones

What is influencing earning potential and pay?

***Frazer Jones* observes a mixed approach:**



"Some organisations are offering **above-market compensation** to retain key talent following team downsizing, often requiring remaining staff to **take on dual responsibilities**.

Conversely, others are attempting to fill new or replacement roles with **very limited budgets**."

Role	Average salary range (AUD)	Average bonus
HR Manager	140,000 - 200,000	• Organisational size • Leadership scope • Responsibility for policy, compliance, and people outcomes
Senior HR Business Partner	160,000 - 200,000	• Strategic influence • Senior stakeholder engagement • Exposure to complex organisational challenges
HR Advisor	90,000 - 110,000	**Experience with:** • Handling employee relations matters • Compliance issues • Complex casework
HR Coordinator	75,000 - 90,000	Experience and progression into advisory or specialist HR roles
Recruitment Consultant	75,000 - 90,000	• Placement volume • Commission structures • Specialisation in high-demand markets • Performance incentives also play a major role

"Employers are **willing to pay a premium for in-demand skills** because they see them as critical to growth, efficiency and maintaining a competitive edge, especially where regulatory compliance and specialist knowledge matter."

Emma Sestic, Director at *Robert Half*

Source: Frazer Jones and Seek

2

45 per cent of HR professionals are looking for a new role

The reality of a highly mobile talent market, according to *Frazer Jones*.

2.9 years

Median tenure when HR professionals are most likely to change job.

35%

of HR professionals would consider changing jobs to increase their earnings.

55%

of HR professionals did not receive a bonus this year.

26%

would move for career growth opportunities.

What is driving the shift?

After steering businesses through relentless disruption and driving company-wide retention strategies, HR professionals are now turning the lens on their own careers:

Total remuneration



As experts in market value, HR professionals are frustrated by a significant remuneration gap, with over half missing out on bonuses entirely this year. When compensation fails to reflect their strategic impact and market knowledge, this talent will quickly look elsewhere.

Professional growth



Ambitious HR practitioners seek roles that challenge them professionally. Organisations that underutilise HR risk losing top talent to workplaces that actively invest in their continued professional development.

Work/life balance and flexible working



HR professionals expect to benefit from the very same work-life initiatives they secure for the broader business. A genuine commitment to work-life balance is a non-negotiable requirement for retention.

Culture and team



Highly trained in building high-performing workplace cultures, HR professionals are acutely sensitive to environments that fall short of these standards. They actively seek cohesive teams and supportive leadership that truly values the 'People & Culture' mandate, rather than just paying it lip service.

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Demand for HR talent is high

Top locations for in-house professionals

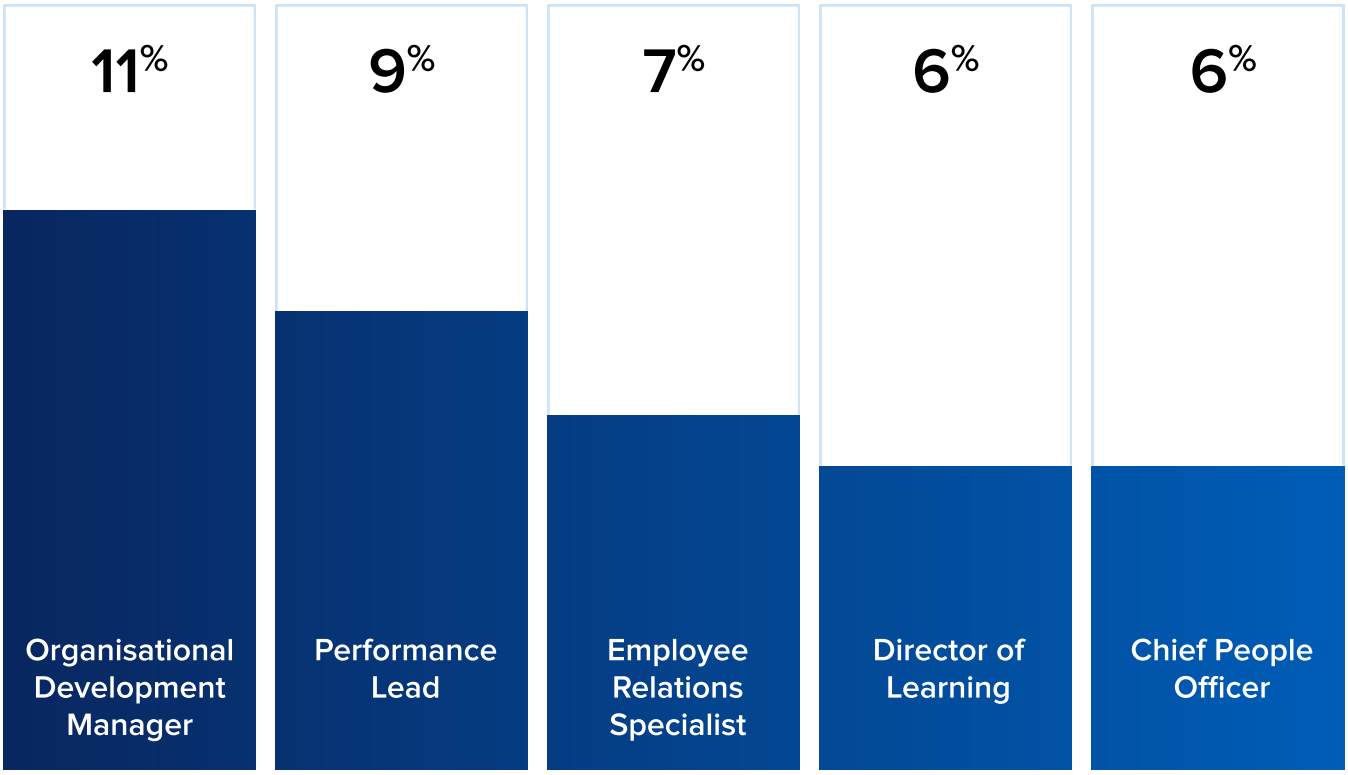


Source: Frazer Jones

Top industries hiring HR talent

1. Consumer Services
2. Banking
3. Real Estate
4. Insurance
5. Financial Services

Fastest growing job titles



Source: Frazer Jones

What is driving demand?

In today's landscape of rapid digital disruption, evolving workplace legislation and shifting employee expectations, the HR profession is more vital than ever.



"These industries are hiring HR talent to help manage workforce pressure and retention, support performance and pay conversations, and **navigate change in tightly managed, fast-evolving environments**.

These employers are prioritising engagement, loyalty, communication and competitive rewards, all of which **increase demand for HR professionals** who can partner with leaders and support employees through organisational change."

Emma Sestic, Director at *Robert Half*

What is driving demand?

Consumer Services

HR must manage continuous recruitment to offset high turnover and rely on industrial relations specialists to navigate complex Australian Modern Awards. Additionally, HR focuses heavily on employee engagement, as frontline staff directly dictate the customer experience and overall business profitability.

Banking & Financial Services

Strategic HR is needed to guide digital transformation, upskill teams for AI integration, and transition traditional corporate models into flexible workspaces. Proactive talent acquisition is also crucial to find rare candidates who blend deep financial acumen with advanced technological capabilities.

Real Estate

Agencies depend on HR to recruit elite agents and design complex commission structures in a highly competitive, relationship-driven market. HR is also vital for sustaining resilient, high-performance teams that can withstand the natural fluctuations of the property cycle.

Insurance

Because of heavy industry regulation, HR's role in strict workforce governance, risk management and policy implementation is critical. Furthermore, HR must use competitive remuneration and sophisticated succession planning to retain highly specialised talent.

4

Top HR talent have strong compliance expertise and ability to work with the C-suite

In-demand technical skills

- Human Resources Information System (HRIS) (Employment Hero, Workday, ELMO)
- IT payroll (Dayforce)
- Legislation and award interpretation
- Enterprise bargaining
- IR and ER expertise (workplace investigation and case management)

In-demand human skills

- Business partnering skills
- Performance management skills
- Confidentiality
- Engagement
- Stakeholder management skills
- Coaching
- Solutions-focused mindset

In-demand certifications, degrees and memberships

- Bachelor of Human Resource Management
- Bachelor of Business (Human Resource Management)
- Australian HR Institute membership

Source: Robert Half



What does the ‘ideal’ HR candidate look like in 2026?

As the Australian business landscape becomes increasingly complex, the profile of the ‘ideal’ HR candidate has evolved.

According to recent data from *Robert Half,* today’s most sought-after HR talent must master a dual mandate: they must possess the rigorous technical expertise to mitigate legal risks while harnessing their commercial acumen to influence the C-suite.

IR and ER skills are highly sought after

In Australia's highly regulated landscape, HR professionals must possess strong Industrial and Employee Relations skills to navigate complex Fair Work compliance and conduct sensitive workplace investigations. Additionally, proficiency in HRIS and payroll platforms is essential for translating people data into actionable, commercial insights for the C-suite.

“The demand for [technical] skills is being driven by a mix of compliance pressure, workforce complexity and the need for operational efficiency. Employers are placing higher value on specialists who can navigate regulated, high-accuracy environments and help the business adapt quickly to changing conditions.”

Emma Sestic, Director at *Robert Half*





The growing importance of the ‘human’ element

HR leaders must act as strategic business partners, using exceptional stakeholder management to align People & Culture initiatives with commercial objectives and coach leadership through organisational change. They must also balance high emotional intelligence and discretion to effectively drive company-wide engagement and manage performance.

“Soft skills are in demand because HR teams are being asked to do far more than manage processes. They are expected to support leaders through workforce change, lift employee engagement, manage sensitive issues appropriately and help retain talent in a market where burnout, workload pressure and career concerns remain prominent.”

Emma Sestic, Director at *Robert Half*

Staying ahead

As the stakes in HR management rise, employers increasingly look for tangible proof of rigorous training and professional commitment.

Active membership with the Australian HR Institute (AHRI) has become the industry benchmark, signalling a candidate's dedication to continuous learning, ethical practice and staying current with workforce trends.

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Ready to level up your HR leadership potential?

Register for AHRI's Leadership and Management Essentials short course today!

Find out more

