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2025-2026

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SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

SALARY GUIDE

COMPLETE INDUSTRY BENCHMARKS & INSIGHTS

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WELCOME

The software development market in Australia has had an interesting run over the last couple of years.

After the hiring frenzy and salary surges of the COVID era, we've seen things level out across the board. But that doesn't mean it's gone quiet. In fact, the market is maturing, salaries have plateaued in many areas, but specialised roles (think AI, cloud, security) are still commanding top dollar, and we're seeing a shift in what employers value.

Companies aren't just throwing money around anymore. They're getting smarter. Instead of aggressive hiring sprees, they're investing in the people they already have. That means better benefits, more flexibility, learning budgets, and a stronger focus on retention and upskilling. At the same time, they're becoming more selective with new hires, chasing people with deep expertise and the right soft skills to match.

Permanent roles and contract gigs are still running in parallel, but we're noticing more people making strategic moves between the two depending on lifestyle goals, risk appetite, and financial targets. Contractors are pulling in higher short-term earnings (sometimes 15–20% more), while permanent roles continue to offer long-term security and pathways to leadership.

We're also seeing some fascinating trends when it comes to skills. Python remains king in the world of AI and machine learning. Go is still booming for backend and infrastructure. And surprisingly, Appian (yes, low-code!) is fetching some pretty hefty pay packets thanks to its rapid app development capabilities. Certifications, especially in cloud and AI, are delivering strong ROI, with developers seeing salary bumps of 10–20% or more.

Looking ahead, we expect demand (and salaries) to grow in areas like AI, cloud-native development, DevOps, and cybersecurity. Junior roles, on the other hand, may remain flat as businesses favour productivity tools and experienced talent over high-volume entry-level hires.

Whether you're a hiring manager trying to stay competitive, an HR leader rethinking your comp strategy, or a developer mapping out your next career move, we hope this guide gives you the clarity you need.

We've pulled together all the key salary benchmarks, hiring insights, and future trends from the trenches of the software development world, based on what we're seeing every day in the market.

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INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

The software development sector in Australia continues to be one of the most resilient and dynamic parts of the tech industry, but not without its shifts.

After years of rapid growth and eye-watering salary jumps (especially during COVID), the market has entered a new phase. Salaries have largely plateaued across the board, but the demand for specialised, highly skilled talent hasn't gone anywhere. In fact, it's becoming even more targeted.

While roles in AI and machine learning remain niche, job ad volumes in these areas have actually increased, reflecting growing demand and the premium salaries still being offered for specialised talent.

\$ WHO'S HIRING? *\$*

We're seeing strong and steady growth in several key industries:

- **Finance and Fintech:** With security and innovation at the forefront, finance remains a hotbed for software development talent, especially full-stack engineers, DevOps professionals, and cybersecurity specialists.
- **Digital Health:** The sector is booming post-COVID, with ongoing investment in patient-facing platforms, data infrastructure, and system integration.
- **Government & Public Sector:** Particularly in cybersecurity and infrastructure, the public sector offers stability, longer contracts, and in many cases, higher rates for contractors.
- **Renewable Energy & Green Tech:** As the shift to sustainability accelerates, developers with experience in ethical tech, compliance, and data-driven innovation are in demand.
- **Tech & SaaS Companies:** Startups and scaleups are still hiring, but with leaner teams and a focus on engineers who can wear multiple hats.

\$ WHAT'S TRENDING? *\$*

The rise of the *T-shaped developer*, someone with deep expertise in one area but broad knowledge across others, is reshaping hiring strategies. Employers want devs who can flex between frontend and backend, build across multiple frameworks, and integrate with modern tooling like GraphQL, CI/CD pipelines, and containerisation.

We're also seeing a rise in specialised roles created by ongoing technological shifts, including:

- AI/ML and Generative AI Engineers
- Cloud-native Developers and Architects
- Automation & DevOps Specialists
- Secure Software Engineers (with cybersecurity credentials)
- Ethical Tech & Compliance Developers

In short, the market is maturing. Employers are more discerning, technologies are evolving fast, and developers are expected to do more than just write clean code, they're expected to innovate, communicate, and adapt. From where we're standing, this isn't a "slowdown." It's a shift, and those who adapt early will be ahead of the curve.

\$ SALARY TRENDS IN SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT *\$*

If the past few years were all about rapid growth and aggressive bidding wars for talent, the last 12–18 months have been a return to balance. Salaries in software development have stabilised, but that doesn't mean they've stagnated.

We're seeing a maturing market, where salary benchmarks are holding steady for most roles, with premium growth reserved for those with in-demand skill sets, niche expertise, or leadership capabilities.

Let's break it down by experience level and what's happening across industries.

Salary Benchmarks by Experience Level:

Entry-Level (0-2 years)

For junior developers entering the market, salary growth has been modest. Many companies are cautious about hiring large volumes of junior staff, partly due to productivity comparisons with AI tools and partly due to a focus on hiring ready-to-go, specialised talent. As a result, junior salaries remain competitive but relatively flat.

Mid-Level (3-5 years)

Mid-level developers remain in strong demand, particularly those who show versatility and adaptability, the so-called "T-shaped" engineers. These professionals are increasingly expected to bring full-stack capabilities or experience across multiple frameworks. Salaries in this bracket have remained steady, with incremental growth in sectors like finance and health.

Senior-Level (6+ years)

Senior developers with cloud, DevOps, or AI/ML expertise are still commanding premium salaries. Employers are willing to pay top dollar for experienced developers who also bring strong communication, mentoring, or leadership skills to the table. These developers are often tapped for cross-functional roles that bridge tech and business, boosting their value.

Leadership

Engineering Managers, Team Leads, and Technical Architects continue to see strong salary packages, particularly those with experience managing distributed teams or overseeing cloud transformations. Leadership roles increasingly require a mix of deep technical expertise and people management, and the market reflects that with high six-figure salaries and equity offerings (especially in tech firms).

\$ SALARY TRENDS BY INDUSTRY *\$*

Tech & SaaS Companies:

Still offering the most dynamic packages, including equity, performance bonuses, and personalised benefits. These organisations value innovation, speed, and flexibility, so full-stack developers, DevOps engineers, and AI specialists are particularly well-compensated.

Finance & Fintech:

Salaries remain high, particularly for backend developers and cloud specialists. The push toward digital transformation, data security, and automation is keeping this sector highly competitive.

Government & Public Sector:

While base salaries may be lower, contract rates are often higher, especially for roles in cybersecurity, infrastructure, and DevOps. Longer-term contracts and lower risk appeal to many contractors, though competition can be fierce.

Healthcare & Digital Health:

Post-pandemic investment continues to drive hiring in this space, with stable salaries for developers working on platforms, integrations, and secure data management.

Green Tech & Energy:

A growing niche, but one to watch. Developers working in sustainability-focused tech are seeing increasing demand, and while salaries here aren't yet outpacing traditional sectors, the potential for long-term growth and mission-driven work is high.

In summary, salaries in software development aren't skyrocketing like they were in 2021–2022, but they're holding strong, with clear growth in specialised areas. Developers who invest in the right skills, certifications, and soft skills are still well-positioned to earn top-tier packages, even in a more selective market.

\$ SALARY BREAKDOWN BY ROLE *\$*

Let's get into the numbers. Below is a breakdown of current salary and contract benchmarks for some of the most in-demand software development roles across Australia, based on what we're seeing day-to-day in the market. These figures reflect typical ranges for mid, senior, and leadership-level professionals, but as always, the exact numbers depend on factors like industry, company size, project complexity, location, and of course, your negotiation game.

Permanent Salaries (AUD)

Role	Mid-Level	Senior-Level	Lead/Manager
Fullstack Developer	\$120K – \$155K	\$155K – \$190K+	\$190k+
Frontend Developer	\$110K – \$145K	\$145K – \$175K+	\$180K+
.NET Developer	\$115K – \$145K	\$150K – \$180K+	\$180K+
Java Developer	\$115K – \$145K	\$150K – \$180K+	\$180K+
Python Developer	\$115K – \$145K	\$150K – \$180K+	\$180K+
Node Developer	\$120K – \$150K	\$150K – \$190K+	\$190K+
Golang Developer	\$120K – \$150K	\$150K – \$190K+	\$190K+
Appian Developer	\$120K – \$145K	\$150K – \$185K+	\$190K+
AI Developer	\$125K – \$160K	\$160K – \$190K+	\$190K+
Engineering Manager	–	–	\$200K – \$225K+

Note: These are base salaries and may be supplemented with bonuses, superannuation, and benefits such as flexible work arrangements, equity, or training budgets.

Contract Rates (Daily) (AUD)

Role	Mid-Level	Senior-Level	Lead/Manager
Fullstack Developer	\$800 – \$950	\$950 – \$1,100	\$1,100+
Frontend Developer	\$700 – \$925	\$925 – \$1,050	\$1,050+
.NET Developer	\$750 – \$850	\$900 – \$1,100	\$1,100+
Java Developer	\$700 – \$900	\$900 – \$1,100	\$1,100+
Python Developer	\$750 - \$900	\$900 - \$1100	\$1,100+
NodeJS Developer	\$700 - \$850	\$900 - \$1050	\$1050+
Golang Developer	\$850 - \$1000	\$1000 - \$1200	\$1200+
Appian Developer	\$800 - \$900	\$900 - \$1000	\$1000+
AI Developer	\$850 - \$975	\$975 - \$1100	\$1100+

Contract roles continue to attract candidates looking for higher short-term earnings, flexibility, and exposure to fast-paced projects, but they also come with fewer benefits, no job security, and the responsibility of managing your own tax, super, and professional development.

\$* WHAT'S THE MOST IN-DEMAND ROLE RIGHT NOW? *\$

Across both perm and contract markets, Fullstack Developers are leading the charge. Companies are increasingly after developers who can work across the stack and adapt quickly to changing tech environments, especially those who bring DevOps, cloud, or security skills to the table.

EMERGING SKILLS & CERTIFICATIONS IMPACTING SALARY

In a market where hiring is more selective and specialised than ever, your skill set has never mattered more, especially when it comes to salary.

Whether you're negotiating your next role or figuring out where to upskill, here's what's commanding attention (and higher pay) right now.

HIGH-DEMAND TECHNICAL SKILLS

Some tech stacks never go out of fashion, but others are rapidly climbing the value ladder.

- **Python:** No surprises here. Python continues to dominate the AI, machine learning, and data science scenes. Developers with experience in frameworks like TensorFlow, PyTorch, and working with large language models (LLMs) are earning a significant premium, especially in AI-heavy industries like finance, healthcare, and tech.
- **Go (Golang):** With the rise of cloud-native architecture and scalable infrastructure, Go has become the go-to language for high-performance backend systems. Companies building microservices in AWS or Kubernetes environments love Go, and they're willing to pay for it.
- **Appian:** A bit of a dark horse, but Appian is turning heads in the low-code market. Businesses leveraging rapid process automation and enterprise app development are paying top dollar for talent that knows how to build and deliver quickly using Appian.

CERTIFICATIONS THAT BOOST EARNING POTENTIAL

Certifications continue to offer solid ROI, especially when they align with in-demand tech.

- **Cloud Certifications:** (AWS Certified Solutions Architect, Azure Solutions Architect Expert, GCP Cloud Engineer) Expect a 10–20% salary uplift with these credentials, particularly if paired with strong backend or DevOps skills.
- **AI & Machine Learning:** (Google Cloud ML, Microsoft AI Engineer Associate, AWS Machine Learning Specialty) With generative AI adoption on the rise, certified professionals in this space are seeing premium salary offers, up to 30% above market rates in some cases.
- **DevOps & Automation:** (Docker, Kubernetes, Terraform, CI/CD pipelines) While not always formal certifications, proof of hands-on DevOps expertise, especially in cloud environments, is increasingly valued in both perm and contract markets.

THE SOFT SKILLS THAT MATTER

Technical know-how might get you shortlisted, but it's often the soft skills that seal the deal, and yes, they can impact compensation.

- **Communication & Collaboration:** Especially in hybrid or remote teams, devs who can work cross-functionally and clearly articulate their ideas are more likely to be hired into senior or lead roles (and paid accordingly).
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Developers who can bridge the gap between business needs and technical execution are seen as high-value assets, particularly in agile delivery teams.
- **Leadership & Mentorship:** For those eyeing team lead or engineering manager roles, soft skills become just as critical as your code. Employers are actively looking for professionals who can lead from the front, guide junior devs, and influence tech decisions at scale.

THE TAKEAWAY ...

If you're a developer looking to grow your salary in 2025 and beyond, think beyond just learning a new language. Upskill in the areas where tech is heading (AI, cloud, automation), validate your expertise with certifications, and invest in your communication and leadership game, especially if you're aiming for those higher-paying senior or contract roles.

HIRING TRENDS & EMPLOYER INSIGHTS

Hiring in software development may have slowed from its pandemic-era highs, but make no mistake, demand is still strong. What's changed is *how* employers are hiring, *who* they're targeting, and *what* they're offering to stand out in a competitive market.

THE SHIFT IN HIRING BEHAVIOUR

Across both permanent and contract markets, companies have become more strategic with their headcount.

Rather than hiring at speed, they're focused on retention, internal mobility, and getting the most value from each hire. That means:

- More selective hiring processes
- Smaller, more skilled teams
- High expectations around versatility (hello, fullstack devs!)

There's a real emphasis on *fit*, not just technical ability, but alignment with culture, product roadmap, and future potential

REMOTE WORK & SALARY EXPECTATIONS

Remote work is no longer a shiny perk, it's the baseline. But it's also changed how companies approach compensation.

Many organisations have started adjusting salaries based on employee location, but interestingly, that gap between metro and regional rates is starting to narrow. Developers in lower-cost locations are catching up, especially as employers compete for talent on flexibility and lifestyle as much as pay. To attract top-tier remote developers, companies are now tailoring total compensation with add-ons like:

- Gym and wellness memberships
- Mental health support
- Nutrition coaching
- Generous learning budgets

In short? Remote workers are expecting more, and smart employers are delivering.

PERMANENT VS CONTRACT: WHAT'S THE DEAL?

The age-old question: perm or contract? Here's how it stacks up right now:

Permanent Roles:

- Offer lower base salaries than contract gigs
- Come with super, paid leave, and job stability
- Often include career progression and internal development
- Still appealing to developers focused on long-term security and team culture

Contract Roles:

- Can offer 15–20% more in day rates
- Come with less stability and fewer benefits
- Require devs to manage their own tax, super, and upskilling
- Often appeal to senior engineers who value flexibility, high-impact projects, or higher short-term earning potential

VS

The takeaway here is that it's less about which is *better*, and more about what fits your career goals, risk tolerance, and lifestyle.

BENEFITS & PERKS: WHAT DEVELOPERS ACTUALLY WANT

Cash still matters, but it's no longer the only game in town. Today's software developers are evaluating the full package. Here's what's trending across the companies winning talent right now:

- Equity & Stock Options (especially at tech startups and scale-ups)
- Flexible & Hybrid Work Policies
- Learning Budgets & Vendor Certifications
- Wellbeing Programs & Family Support
- Clear Internal Mobility Paths
- Mission-Driven Work (especially in ethical tech, sustainability, and AI for good)

And it's not just about attracting talent, it's about keeping them. In a market where developers are still spoiled for choice, these perks are fast becoming standard expectations.

The bottom line is that hiring has evolved. It's not just about who's offering the most money, it's about who's offering the most value. For developers and employers alike, the real differentiator in 2025 will be flexibility, purpose, and long-term investment in people.

FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT SALARIES >>

WHAT'S NEXT FOR SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT SALARIES IN AUSTRALIA?

If the past two years were about stabilisation, the next 12–24 months will be about specialisation. The market is shifting, and the developers who lean into emerging technologies and future-focused skill sets are the ones set to win, both in terms of opportunity and earning potential.

EMERGING ROLES COMMANDING PREMIUM PAY

As tech continues to evolve, so too does the demand for new types of developers, and some are already pulling well ahead when it comes to salary expectations.

As specialist software development recruiters, here's what we are seeing on the rise:

- **AI & Machine Learning Engineers:** Professionals with the ability to build, deploy, and maintain AI/ML models, especially using deep learning and NLP – are in hot demand. Generative AI and large language models (LLMs) are reshaping industries, and candidates with hands-on experience are seeing offers up to 30% above standard market rates.
- **Cybersecurity Software Developers:** With the increasing focus on secure code, network protection, and cloud security, devs with a security mindset and relevant experience are commanding top salaries, particularly in finance, public sector, and health.
- **Cloud-Native Architects & DevOps/SREs:** Developers who can build scalable, high-performance systems in AWS, Azure, or GCP, and automate the hell out of everything, are quickly becoming indispensable. Expect continued salary growth here, especially in enterprise environments and high-growth scale-ups.

ADVICE FROM SAM & LIAM

HOW TO MAXIMISE YOUR EARNING POTENTIAL

Whether you're chasing a pay rise or planning your next career leap, here's the playbook:

- 1. Specialise With Intent:** Pick your lane, be it AI, cloud, or cybersecurity, and go deep. Specialists will always command a premium, especially in emerging technologies.
- 2. Get Certified:** Certifications don't just boost skills, they boost visibility. Hiring managers are actively scanning for cloud and AI credentials. As a contractor, certs are especially important for standing out.
- 3. Level Up Your Soft Skills:** Communication, leadership, and resilience are increasingly key, especially for senior and contract roles. If you want to negotiate like a pro, you've got to lead like one.
- 4. Go Where the Money Is:** Look for roles in high-paying sectors like fintech, health tech, and enterprise SaaS. These industries are investing in cutting-edge tech, and the people who can build it.
- 5. Keep Networking:** Follow industry leaders. Attend tech meetups. Stay plugged into what's trending. The more connected you are to the ecosystem, the more doors open, and the more confident you'll be when chasing those higher-paying roles.

CONCLUSION & KEY TAKEAWAYS

The software development market in Australia isn't slowing down, it's evolving. The days of across-the-board salary surges may be behind us, but demand for highly skilled, adaptable developers remains strong.

We've moved into a more mature phase, where salary growth is driven by specialisation, not just experience. Whether it's mastering Python for AI, securing cloud certs, or developing the soft skills that elevate a senior dev into a team leader, the opportunities are there for those willing to stay ahead of the curve.

For employers, the message is clear...to attract and retain top talent, competitive salaries alone aren't enough. Tailored benefits, flexible work, learning opportunities, and meaningful work are just as important.

For developers, it's all about sharpening your edge...level up your skills. Pick your niche. Stay connected to what's next. The future belongs to those who don't just keep up, they lead the charge.

NEED HELP NAVIGATING THE MARKET? WHETHER YOU'RE GROWING YOUR TEAM OR PLANNING YOUR NEXT CAREER MOVE, WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

Hiring contract developers or exploring short-term talent solutions?

Chat with Sam Williamson – our go-to expert in the contract software development space.



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Looking for a permanent role or building a high-performing dev team long-term?

Speak to Liam Cox – our specialist in permanent software development recruitment.



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