THE RECRUITMENT COMPANY

2026 AUSSIE PROJECT SERVICES $ALARY GUIDE

COMPLETE INDUSTRY BENCHMARKS & INSIGHTS

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AGILE
PAYMENTS
PROJECT SERVICES
SCRUM
PROJECT MANAGEMENT
STRATEGY
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WELCOME

The Australian project services market has had a fascinating run over the last 18 months.

After the post-COVID highs of 2022 and early 2023, salaries have largely settled. Project services cover the full delivery discipline – project and program management, PMO, business analysis, product, change management, agile, and testing. Role volumes across all of these have picked up again over the last six to twelve months, but the briefs themselves have shifted. Clients are more specific, more selective, and far more willing to pay above-market for candidates whose experience maps directly to their domain, system stack, and program profile.

The single clearest pattern in the market right now is the premium for specialists. Candidates with deep, recent experience in one industry domain are out-pacing generalists with broader but shallower backgrounds, even where the transferable skills are obvious. Specialist compensation has held firm or risen; generalist compensation has softened on the margins.

At the same time, role consolidation is reshaping the structure of the discipline. In smaller and mid-sized organisations, businesses are asking for hybrid seats: project and product managers who can also run the scrum cadence, BAs who can also own end to end testing, change responsibilities folded into delivery leadership. The work hasn't gone away, it's just being packaged differently, which is why pure agile roles, change, and testing have become secondary markets in the current cycle and why combined-skill candidates clear higher offers.

Agentic AI is the rising skill theme on both desks. Generative AI and co-pilots are now considered table stakes; clients are starting to brief specifically for project and product professionals who can scope and deliver agentic implementations in core systems (ERP, CRM, finance platforms). Hands-on AI delivery experience is shifting from a "nice to have" to a clear tiebreaker on senior briefs.

Permanent roles and contract gigs continue to run in parallel and trade on different terms. Contract pays a meaningful premium with no benefits beyond day rate; permanent pays below contract but builds in stability, progression, and a benefits stack. The choice between them is mostly orientation-driven, and we're seeing strong candidates take that decision deliberately rather than as a fallback.

We've pulled together the salary benchmarks, hiring insights, and future trends that matter for project services in 2026, based on what we're seeing in the market every week. Whether you're a hiring manager rethinking your offer, an HR leader benchmarking compensation, or a project services professional planning your next move, this guide is built to give you the clarity you need.

PERMANENT PROJECT SERVICES
SAM McKAY

CONTRACTING PROJECT SERVICES
JOSHUA GREENHALGH

THE RECRUITMENT COMPANY



INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

The Australian project services sector has entered a more mature phase. After the rapid expansion and aggressive compensation surges in 2021–2022, the market saw a decline through 2023–2024 before stabilising. It is now characterised by stable benchmarks for most roles and clear premium growth for specialised, domain-anchored profiles.

Demand hasn't gone, it's just become more targeted. Briefs are tighter, candidate shortlists are narrower, and the bar for moving a candidate at the senior end of the market has risen. Within that, the appetite for hybrid skill sets and agentic AI experience is the clearest area of upward salary pressure.

$* WHO'S HIRING? *$

We're seeing the strongest, most consistent activity in industries that have to keep evolving to operate:

- **Financial Services & Fintech:** The largest single contributor to perm and contract briefs across our books. Within FS, the sub-segments holding the most activity are superannuation, payments, trading, and tax and regulatory programs – with clients increasingly hyperfocused on domain-specific experience within each. Lending remains a substantial market and continues to generate consistent demand.
- **Tech & SaaS:** Startups and scale-ups continue to hire, but with leaner teams. Salaries are competitive in absolute terms but lower than enterprise FS for equivalent titles, the trade is exposure to new builds and emerging platforms.
- **Professional Services & Legal-Adjacent:** A natural extension of financial services activity, with legal and other professional services firms running consistent programs particularly at the permanent end of the market.
- **Government & Public Sector:** Activity is sensitive to fiscal and policy cycles. The In 2023, New South Wales public-sector contracting pullback materially compressed activity and that softness has largely remained – public sector hiring has not meaningfully returned. With impending government changes, however, we anticipate an uptrend in activity over the coming 12 months.
- **Healthcare:** A growing market driven by regulatory change and technology refresh across patient-facing and clinician-facing systems.

$* WHAT'S TRENDING? *$

The rise of the hybrid project services professional; someone who can flex across delivery, agile, BA, or product responsibilities in a single seat, is reshaping how clients hire, particularly in smaller and mid-sized organisations.

We're also seeing growing demand for specialised profiles driven by ongoing tech shifts:

- **Project & Product Managers owning AI/ agentic AI delivery**
- **Transformation and Change Leadership at program scale**
- **Technical BAs across multiple flavours, process, stakeholder, and platform-led**
- **Domain-specialist PMs in regulatory and compliance-driven programs**
- **Platform-specific PMs (SAP S/4HANA, Microsoft D365 implementations)**

In short: the market is maturing. Clients are more discerning, programs are more deliberately scoped, and project services professionals are expected to do more than coordinate, they're expected to translate, advise, and deliver. This isn't a slowdown. It's a sharpening, and the candidates who lean into specialisation early will be the ones ahead of the curve.

$* SALARY TRENDS IN PROJECT SERVICES *$

If the past few years were about rapid growth and aggressive bidding wars for talent, before the project services market drastically slowed. In the last 12–18 months have been a return to balance. Project services salaries have generally stabilised, but are not necessarily at the peaks of 2021-2023.

Benchmarks are holding steady for most roles, with premium growth reserved for candidates with in-demand domain experience, hybrid skill sets, or transformation leadership credentials. Here's how it looks across experience levels.

Salary Benchmarks by Experience Level:

Junior/Project Coordinator (0–3 years)

Project services rarely start at zero – most candidates enter via a coordinator role or transition from an adjacent function (operations, consulting, business support). This is also a level where organisations tend to hire directly rather than through recruitment agencies. Clients are cautious about hiring volume at the junior end, partly because productivity gains from AI tools have lifted the expectations on individual contributors, and partly because the appetite is for ready-to-go, domain-anchored profiles further up the experience curve.

Mid-Level (3-5 years)

Mid-level project services professionals remain in strong demand, particularly those who can flex across delivery disciplines and bring more than one skill set to a brief. Salaries in this bracket have remained steady, with incremental upward pressure in financial services, healthcare, and on transformation programs.

Senior-Level (6+ years)

Senior project services candidates with domain depth, system experience, and AI exposure are commanding the strongest premium in the market. Employers are willing to pay above-market for senior PMs, BAs, and product managers who can also bring stakeholder navigation, mentorship, and influence across business and tech. These are the candidates who clear cross-functional roles bridging delivery and business, which lifts their value further.

Leadership (Program Director/Head of PMO/ Transformation Lead)

Leadership compensation remains strong, particularly for candidates with experience leading multi-program portfolios, distributed delivery teams, or large transformation initiatives – nd increasingly, with deep domain expertise in the sector they are being hired into. Leadership roles increasingly require a blend of deep delivery experience and senior stakeholder management, and the market reflects that with high six-figure base salaries supplemented by bonuses and (in tech-side perm) equity.

$* SALARY BREAKDOWN BY ROLE *$

Below is a breakdown of current permanent salary and contract day-rate benchmarks across all major project services roles in Australia, based on what we're seeing day-to-day.
Figures vary by industry, organisation size, program complexity, and how layered the requirement is.

Permanent Salary Guide (AUD)

Role	Junior/ Analyst	Mid/ Standard	Senior/ Lead	Manager	Director/ Head of
Program Manager	–	$180k–$220k	$220k–$270k	–	$270k+
Project Manager	$120k–$140k	$140k–$170k	$170k–$230k	–	$230k+
PMO Manager	$120k–$150k	$150k–$170k	$170k–$220k	–	$220k+
Change Manager	$80k–$130k	$100k–$160k	$160k–$230k	–	$230k+
Product Manager/ Product Owner	$100k–$140k	$140k–$180k	$180k–$250k	–	$250k+
Business Analyst	$80k–$120k	$120k–$150k	$150k–$200k	$180k–$250k	$250k+
Scrum Master/ Agile Coach	$120k–$140k	$140k–$175k	$175k–$220k	–	$220k+
Tester/Test Analyst	$70k–$110k	$110k–$130k	$130k–$150k	$150k–$200k	$200k+

Note: Permanent figures are base salaries plus superannuation and may be supplemented with bonuses, and benefits such as flexible work arrangements, equity, and learning budgets. Day rates are market rates for standard contracts and do not include oncosts. Actual figures vary by industry, organisation size, and program complexity.

Contract Daily Rate Guide (AUD)

Role	Junior/ Analyst	Mid/ Standard	Senior/ Lead	Manager	Director/ Head of
Program Manager	–	$1,100–$1,300	$1,300–$1,700	–	$1,700+
Project Manager	$700–$900	$900–$1,100	$1,100–$1,500	–	$1,500+
PMO Manager	$650–$850	$850–$1,100	$1,100–$1,500	–	$1,500+
Change Manager	$600–$800	$700–$1,100	$1,100–$1,500	–	$1,500+
Product Manager/ Product Owner	$600–$800	$800–$1,200	$1,200–$1,600	–	$1,600+
Business Analyst	$600–$800	$800–$1,000	$1,000–$1,300	$1,200–$1,500	$1,500+
Scrum Master/ Agile Coach	$700–$850	$850–$1,100	$1,100–$1,400	–	$1,400+
Tester/Test Analyst	$500–$700	$700–$900	$900–$1,100	$1,300+	–

On the contract side, rates tend to lift on urgent or audit-driven programs and soften on longer engagements where the contractor is effectively buying security alongside the work.

EMERGING SKILLS & CERTIFICATIONS IMPACTING SALARY

In a market where hiring is more selective and specialised than ever, your skill set matters more than your title. Here's what's commanding attention and higher pay in project services right now.

HIGH-DEMAND TECHNICAL SKILLS

An important note up-front: in project services, technical depth is a "nice to have" rather than a price-setter. The role is fundamentally about translation, stakeholder navigation, and delivery judgement, not coding. That said, certain platforms and tool fluencies do move salary on the right kind of program.

- **AI/Agentic AI Exposure:** The single most consistent emerging skill across both desks. Candidates who can credibly demonstrate hands-on AI product ownership, agentic AI implementation, or AI-augmented delivery practices are commanding clear premiums, even where AI isn't an explicit requirement on the brief. This is rapidly becoming a tiebreaker on senior roles.
- **Atlassian Suite (Jira, Confluence):** Not a salary driver on its own, but absence is friction on most briefs. Treat it as table stakes.
- **Platform-Specific Delivery (SAP S/4HANA, Microsoft D365):** PMs and program managers with prior delivery on large platform implementations command a premium on those programs. The technical heavy lifting is done by SMEs and consultancy partners, but the program manager has to speak the platform credibly.
- **Low-Code/No-Code Platform Exposure (Pega, Appian):** Premium where the role owns that platform; modest where it's incidental. Most visible on perm hires into product or BA roles aligned to those stacks.

CERTIFICATIONS – THE HONEST VIEW

Certifications do not meaningfully push salary in project services on their own. We're saying that plainly because the candidate market needs to hear it: a PRINCE2, PMP, or SAFe / agile certificate is treated as evidence of exposure, not evidence of capability. What actually moves an offer is the ability to articulate in interview – how that methodology has been applied in real situations, ideally across multiple organisations. Methodology fluency is worth having on paper because some hiring managers screen for it. AI training courses (the short-form courses run by AI platform vendors) are increasingly nice to have. But the pay rise comes from demonstrated applied experience, not the certificate at the bottom of your CV.

THE SOFT SKILLS THAT MATTER

If technical skills are nice-to-have in project services, soft skills are the dominant compensation driver. This is the part of the discipline that pays.

- **Translation Between Business and Technology:** The single most consistent comp signal across every project services hire we work on. The professionals who clear the strongest offers are those who can take what the technology team is saying and put it in language the business can act on, and do the reverse, too. It's less about being technical, more about being able to speak technology.
- **Stakeholder Engagement at All Levels:** From hands-on developers through to senior business leaders. The premium sits with candidates who can flex registers credibly across the full stakeholder range, not just within their natural comfort zone.
- **Mentorship & Influence:** Particularly for senior and lead roles. Employers are looking for project services professionals who can guide junior delivery staff, shape program direction, and influence decisions outside their direct reporting line.

THE TAKEAWAY: If you're a project services professional looking to grow your earning potential in 2026 and beyond, think beyond methodology certifications. Anchor on a domain, deepen your system fluency, get hands-on with AI delivery, and invest hard in the soft skills that make you a credible translator between business and technology. That combination is what's driving premium offers in the current market.

HIRING TRENDS & EMPLOYER INSIGHTS

Hiring in project services has slowed from its post-COVID highs, but demand remains real – particularly for specialists. What's changed is how clients are hiring, who they're targeting, and what they're putting on the table to stand out.

THE SHIFT IN HIRING BEHAVIOUR

Across both permanent and contract markets, clients have become materially more strategic with headcount. Rather than hiring at speed, they're focused on getting the most value from each hire. That means:

- **More selective hiring processes –** shortlists are tighter and the bar to convert at offer stage has risen
- **Smaller, more skilled teams –** fewer headcount, higher individual expectations
- **Hybrid skill expectations –** combined-role hires are the new normal in SMB and scale-up clients
- **Higher specificity in requirements –** domain, system, and program-profile fit all weighted heavily

There's a real emphasis on fit, not just delivery capability – alignment with the program's stakeholder landscape, the organisation's risk appetite, and the team's existing chemistry are all explicitly weighted in the hiring decision.

PERMANENT VS CONTRACT: WHAT'S THE DEAL

The perennial question: perm or contract? Here's how it stacks up in project services right now.

PERMANENT ROLES

- ✓ Base salaries sit below equivalent contract rates
- ✓ Bonus, super, paid leave, and job stability included
- ✓ Structured career progression and internal mobility paths
- ✓ Exposure to multi-year strategic initiatives
- ✓ Best fit for candidates focused on long-term security, growth, and benefits stack

CONTRACT ROLES

- ✓ Meaningful day-rate premium over equivalent perm work
- ✓ No benefits beyond day rate - no leave, no super, no learning budget
- ✓ Contractor manages own tax, super, and professional development
- ✓ Best fit for candidates focused on short-term earnings and exposure to varied programs
- ✓ Strong specialist contractors choose engagements partly by what builds the next CV

THE TAKEAWAY: it's less about which is "better" and more about which fits your career goals, risk tolerance, and lifestyle. In a stable market, most project services professionals sit firmly in one camp – those in secure permanent roles rarely jump to contract, and established contractors rarely trade their day rate for a permanent salary. Where the lines blur is in the current market, where redundancies are occurring more frequently and defunded programs are pushing more candidates into active job search – appetite for contracting has grown meaningfully as a result. Candidates out of work or actively looking tend to be far more open to either path. There is also a segment – smaller but real – who are genuinely opportunity-driven and will consider both regardless of market conditions. Either way, the two markets trade on very different terms.

BENEFITS & PERKS:
WHAT PROJECT SERVICES PROS ACTUALLY WANT

Cash matters, but it's no longer the only lever. Today's project services candidates evaluate the full package. Here's what's consistently moving strong candidates on the perm side right now:

- ✓ **Clear, Achievable Bonus Structures**
- ✓ **Exposure to High-Value Work** (AI programs, regulatory change, major transformations)
- ✓ **Hybrid Flexibility**
- ✓ **Learning & Certification Budgets** (typically $2-5k per year)
- ✓ **Parental Leave & Wellbeing Support**
- ✓ **Equity/Share Plans** (tech-side perm)

On the contract side, the rate is the package. The closest thing to a benefit is the program itself – strong contractors weigh the CV value of an engagement almost as heavily as the rate when choosing between offers.

THE BOTTOM LINE: hiring has evolved. It's no longer just about who offers the most money; it's about who offers the most value. The real differentiator in 2026 is clarity, flexibility, and the quality of the work itself.

FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR PROJECT SERVICES $ALARIES

WHAT'S NEXT
FOR PROJECT SERVICES SALARIES IN AUSTRALIA?

If the past two years were about stabilisation, the next 12-24 months will be about specialisation. Three trends to watch:

- **AI Exposure shifts from nice-to-have to preferred:** Not yet a hard requirement, but increasingly the tiebreaker on senior briefs. Hands-on AI delivery experience commands a growing premium.
- **The specialist gap widens:** Clients are doubling down on domain anchor + system depth + AI overlay. The salary gap between specialist and generalist profiles will widen, not narrow.
- **Activity tracks the investment cycle:** Benchmarks can move quickly when project investment confidence shifts. Roles tied to mandatory work - regulatory change, compliance, cyber - remain better protected than discretionary transformation.

EMERGING ROLES COMMANDING PREMIUM PAY

- **AI Product Managers & Agentic AI Delivery Leads –** strongest premium signal across both markets right now
- **Domain-Specialist PMs in Financial Services –** payments, super, trading, lending, insurance, regulatory and tax programs
- **Transformation & Change Leadership at Scale –** premium where a standalone role exists; in smaller orgs it's increasingly folded into delivery leadership
- **Data & Cyber Program PMs –** resilient through the 2023/24 contraction and still commanding strong rates across FS, government, and healthcare



Advice from Sam & Josh ...

HOW TO MAXIMISE YOUR EARNING POTENTIAL

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Whether you're chasing a pay rise, planning your next move, or weighing perm against contract, here's the playbook for project services in 2026.

#1

Specialise With Intent. Pick a domain anchor – financial services, healthcare, transformation, AI delivery – and go deep. Specialists clear premium offers; generalists do not. The candidates winning the best roles in 2026 are the ones who stacked a domain, a system, and an AI overlay rather than spreading across many.

#2

Get Amongst the Hottest Work. If you're in a role now, position into the highest-value programs available to you – major regulatory change, AI /agentic implementations, transformation at scale. These programs build the CV that supports your next salary jump and protect you against softening in less-active areas. Internal moves into AI-touching work can be as valuable as a market move.

#3

Soft Skills as a Force Multiplier. In project services, communication, stakeholder navigation, and the ability to translate between business and technology are not nice-to-haves – they're the headline compensation drivers. Invest in them as deliberately as you invest in technical or methodology skills.

#4

Apply Selectively, Not in Bulk. If you're in the market for a new role, five well-targeted, well-tailored applications a day will outperform fifty broad ones. Before applying, ask: against the role's stated requirements, am I likely a top 10 candidate? Do I have the domain experience? Do I tick at least 8 of 10 of the stated requirements? Am I at the right level? If yes, tailor your profile precisely. If no, save the energy for the next brief that actually fits.

#5

For Contractors, Engage Directly. Contracting is generally exact-fit, though the speed and temporary nature of engagements can create more flexibility than perm in some cases – particularly for candidates who are close to the brief. The best contractors engage their recruiter or hiring manager directly, walk through the role and their profile honestly, and tailor their CV to the specific gig rather than relying on volume.

CONCLUSION & KEY TAKEAWAYS

The Australian project services market isn't slowing down - it's evolving. The days of across-the-board salary surges may be behind us, but demand for highly specialised, adaptable project services professionals remains real.

We've moved into a more mature phase, where salary growth is driven by specialisation, hybrid skill sets, and applied AI experience rather than tenure alone. Whether it's anchoring on a domain in financial services, mastering an enterprise platform like SAP S/4HANA or D365, or developing the soft skills that elevate a senior PM into a transformation lead, the opportunities are there for those willing to stay ahead of the curve.

For employers: competitive salary alone is no longer enough. Tailored benefits, clear bonus structures, hybrid flexibility, and exposure to meaningful work are weighted just as heavily by strong candidates. Clarity is the single most cost-effective lever you have.

For project services professionals: sharpen your edge. Pick a niche, stack the platform and the AI overlay, invest in the translation skills that make you valuable across business and technology, and apply with intent. The future of the discipline belongs to those who specialise - and who can communicate that specialisation clearly.

NEED HELP NAVIGATING THE MARKET?

Whether you're growing your project services team or planning your next career move, we're here to help.

HIRING CONTRACT PROJECT SERVICES TALENT OR EXPLORING SHORT-TERM RESOURCING?

Chat with Josh – our go-to expert in contract project services recruitment.



JOSHUA GREENHALGH
Email: joshuag@therecruitmentcompany.com
Call: 02 8346 6702
Joshua Greenhalgh

LOOKING FOR A PERMANENT ROLE, OR BUILDING A PROJECT SERVICES TEAM LONG-TERM?

Speak to Sam M – our specialist in permanent project services recruitment.



SAM McKAY
Email: samm@therecruitmentcompany.com
Call: 02 8346 6780
Sam McKay

THE RECRUITMENT COMPANY

THERECRUITMENTCOMPANY.COM
LEVEL 6, 285 GEORGE STREET, SYDNEY NSW 2000