

A wide-angle photograph of the Perth city skyline at dusk. The image shows a dense cluster of modern skyscrapers with glass facades reflecting the sky. In the foreground, a large, illuminated bridge with two prominent white arches spans a body of water. The water reflects the lights from the buildings and the bridge. The sky is a mix of blue and orange hues from the setting or rising sun.

COUNSEL CONNECT WA Legal Salary Guide

2025/2026



“We have put this guide together because we think good, honest, locally-grounded information makes a real difference.”

A NOTE FROM OUR MANAGING DIRECTOR

Welcome to the Counsel Connect 2025/26 Western Australia Legal Salary Guide.

When we launched Counsel Connect, we made a deliberate choice: to focus entirely on the Western Australian legal market. No national footprint to maintain, no Eastern States priorities pulling our attention. Just WA, the legal community here and a genuine commitment to understanding this market as well as it can possibly be understood. The insights in this guide come directly from our day-to-day work, our conversations with lawyers thinking about their next move, the briefs we receive from General Counsel and HR leaders trying to stay competitive, the salary negotiations we work through on both sides of the table and the patterns we see playing out across private practice and in-house over time. We do not import data from interstate and apply it to WA. Everything here is local, current and grounded in real market activity.

So, what is actually happening out there?

The short version: it is a dynamic market, and there is a lot to navigate. WA's economy continues to do a lot of the heavy lifting for the legal profession here. Mining, energy transition, construction and infrastructure are keeping demand strong, ensuring WA remains in a genuinely different position to the rest of the country. Salaries have been tracking upward across the board as this market continues to command a real premium nationally.

That said, it is not a rising tide lifting all boats equally. Lawyers with specialist skills, particularly in front-end construction, energy and complex transactional work are seeing the strongest salary growth. The talent shortage at the 3-7 PQE mark continues to be one of the defining features of the WA in-house market. There simply are not enough experienced lawyers at that level to meet demand, which is pushing salaries up and prompting organisations to get more creative with how they structure roles and remuneration packages.

One of the most consistent themes we hear from candidates right now, and this cuts across both private practice and in-house, is that salary alone does not close the deal anymore. Flexibility, culture and genuine work-life balance: these are no longer the 'nice to have' items candidates mention politely at the end of a conversation. They are often the deciding factor. Employers who can speak honestly and specifically to how they support their people with work-life balance are the ones attracting and retaining the best talent. Those who can't are losing candidates they did not expect to lose.

And then there is AI. It is generating a lot of conversation, some of it well-founded, some of it speculative. In WA, the immediate impact is more about efficiency than headcount. Teams are doing more with what they have. However, the longer-term questions around the impact on junior development, legal skills, client expectations and how legal capability pipelines will be managed are the ones the market is only beginning to work through seriously.

We have put this guide together because we think good, honest, locally-grounded information makes a real difference. Whether you are a lawyer thinking about your next career move, a General Counsel benchmarking a new hire, or a firm wanting to stay competitive in a tight market, we hope you find it useful. If anything in here sparks a question or a conversation, please do not hesitate to reach out, that's exactly what we are here for.

Kristy Campbell

MANAGING DIRECTOR

COUNSEL CONNECT



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE STATISTICS



1101 TOTAL
in-house lawyers in WA



603 FEMALE
in-house
lawyers



412 MALE
in-house
lawyers



8435 TOTAL REGISTERED
legal practitioners in WA



Over the twelve months to the
December quarter, the Wage
Price Index rose to

3.4%



Average salary in WA

\$112,154



Average legal salary in WA

\$133,618

Salary Data and Insights – Counsel Connect Secondments

Counsel Connect is WA's most experienced legal secondments team and as a result, we are uniquely positioned to provide genuine insight into the WA secondment market. The data and observations below are drawn directly from our day-to-day work with lawyers, General Counsel and organisations across WA.

Importantly, Counsel Connect operates as an Incorporated Legal Practice, with our secondment lawyers employed by us on fixed-term employment contracts. Our lawyers receive market salaries and employee entitlements including annual leave, personal leave, long service leave and parental leave, whilst also being covered by our Law Mutual insurance. They form an integral part of our legal practice and are embedded

into our clients' businesses to provide high-quality, commercially focused support.

The following section provides an overview of the current secondment market in WA, including salary trends, market observations and insights from our uniquely placed secondments division.



Our average secondment salary is

\$255,556

Industries:



26%

of our secondments are within Oil & Gas



40%

of our secondments are within Mining & Resources



6%

of our secondments are within Renewables



6%

of our secondments are within Private Practice



6%

of our secondments are within Not-for-Profit



16%

of our secondments are within Construction

PQE:

35%

are 20 + PQE

25%

are 10 – 15 PQE

13%

are in non-legal roles

21%

are 15-20 PQE

6%

are under 10 PQE

Specialities:

13%

are Oil & Gas Lawyers

13%

are Commercial Managers

33%

are Commercial Lawyers

20%

are Construction & Projects Lawyers

15%

are Corporate Lawyers

6%

are Litigation Lawyers

Other:

63%

of our secondments are extended.

6.36

months is the average length of our secondments.

36%

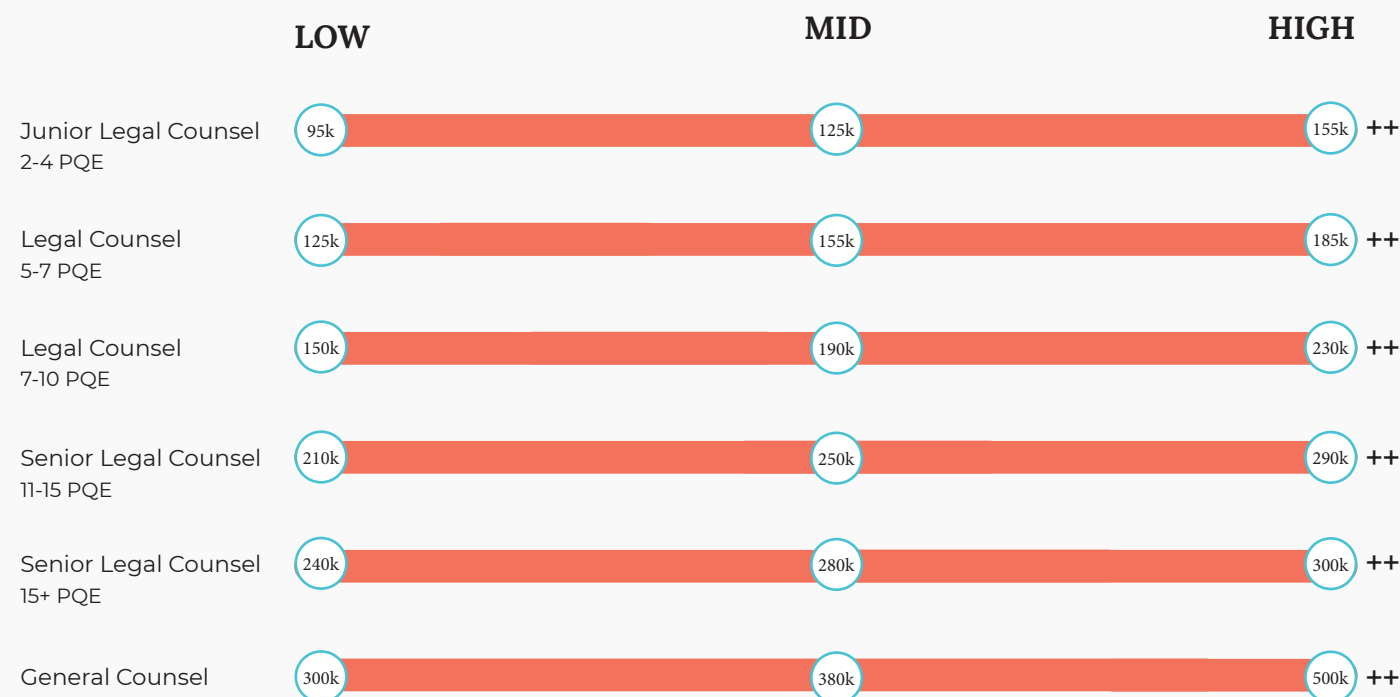
of our secondments are part time.

Secondment Market Observations

- The lower to mid level PQE cohort seem to prefer permanent roles over secondments. We have seen more junior lawyers purchasing houses and needing financial security than in previous years.
- We are seeing a high number of extensions due to the nature of project and front-end work, as well as a competitive talent market.
- Majority of our current secondments are in front-end/transactional work streams.
- We are seeing shorter secondment lengths as a way for organisations to gain quicker hiring approvals and get talent in the door.
- Placing more senior lawyers on secondments within the oil and gas sector, as well as market wide salary increases has resulted in our average secondment salary being higher than previous years.
- Lawyers in private practice continue to use secondments as a way to move in-house and will consider minimum 6 month secondments to secure an in-house role.

**Salary figures in this guide are inclusive of superannuation and exclude bonus and incentive payments. Figures are drawn from Counsel Connects placement data, WA market knowledge, broader market research and reflects information current to the date of publication.*

Salary Data for In-House



In-House Market Observations

Sector-Specific:

- Mining and resources remain the dominant employer of in-house counsel in WA, but energy transition (hydrogen, renewables, battery metals) is creating new opportunities.
- Government and semi-government (e.g. infrastructure authorities, utilities) offering competitive packages and stability — increasingly attractive to mid-career lawyers.
- Tech, IP and financial services in-house roles remain limited in WA compared to Eastern States.
- Ongoing talent shortage at the 3-7 PQE range, particularly for lawyers with transactional or projects experience.
- General Counsel roles remain tight and in turn Senior Legal Counsel are finding it hard to step up.

Remuneration Trends:

- Growing use of STIs, LTIs and equity-linked incentives (particularly in ASX listed companies) to remain competitive, particularly if the commodity is doing well ie Gold.
- Total remuneration benchmarking is becoming more sophisticated and lawyers are now evaluating the full package, not just base salary.
- Increase in senior lawyers preferring to take lower remuneration if flexibility is offered and guaranteed.

Role Evolution:

- General Counsel and CLOs increasingly taking on broader risk, compliance and governance mandates.
- Growing expectation for in-house lawyers to act as genuine business partners, rather than purely legal advisers.
- Technology and AI literacy becoming a valued (and increasingly expected) competency.

Work Flexibility & Culture:

- Hybrid working is now largely embedded, but some tensions emerging around return-to-office expectations. Clear policies around this topic are increasingly becoming more important.
- More senior roles, particularly those involving leadership and management of teams, are also generally expected to maintain a predominantly office-based presence to support team collaboration, mentoring and broader business engagement.
- At the other end of the spectrum, more junior Legal Counsel roles are also frequently preferred to be office-based, as organisations recognise the value of developing not only technical legal capability, but also internal and external stakeholder management skills through regular in-person interaction and exposure to senior team members.

Factors Influencing In-House Salaries in WA

When considering the above data, please keep in mind these are averages across the WA in-house market. There are several factors that we have identified that can have significant impact on salary brackets, summarised below.

Industry Sector

Industry sector seems to be one of the biggest influences on salary figures. The below industries are currently paying on the higher end of the salary scale in WA:

- Oil & Gas
- Construction & Projects
- Energy

Organisation Structure

The following company structures can impact salary range:

- **ASX Listed:** If a company is ASX listed and within the resources sector, we are typically seeing higher salaries as well as incentives.
- **Not-for-Profits and Government:** Not-for-profits and government sector organisations can have stricter salary bands and approvals for roles, meaning they tend to be on the lower to mid end of the salary spectrum. However, often offer more flexibility.
- **Start-Ups:** Start-ups with a small legal team or a sole practitioner usually offer higher equity or bonus incentives to offset a lower base salary. Although, the impact of the recent Federal Budget on start-up remuneration is one to watch.

Team Structure

The below team structures can influence salary brackets:

- **Legal Team Size:** Smaller teams may not have salary banding for legal roles, meaning remuneration

parity may be a bigger consideration when determining new hire salaries. Larger teams and organisations may have less flexibility when determining new hire salaries if they have to work within strict salary banding and approval processes.

- **Service Length:** Regular annual salary increases for teams with long tenure can result in salary brackets increasing over time, which may not reflect current market data. Alternatively, if there has been no new hires for a long period, it may limit an organisations knowledge of current market expectations and rates.
- **Contract vs Permanent:** If an organisation has a high ratio of contractors, this could result in higher salary brackets given contracting often comes with a premium salary. If contractors within that organisation are also regularly converting to permanent roles and expecting their salary to remain the same, this can also push up salary brackets.

Specialist Skills

We have noticed organisations are increasingly seeking lawyers with specific industry and contracting experience, rather than broader generalist skill sets.

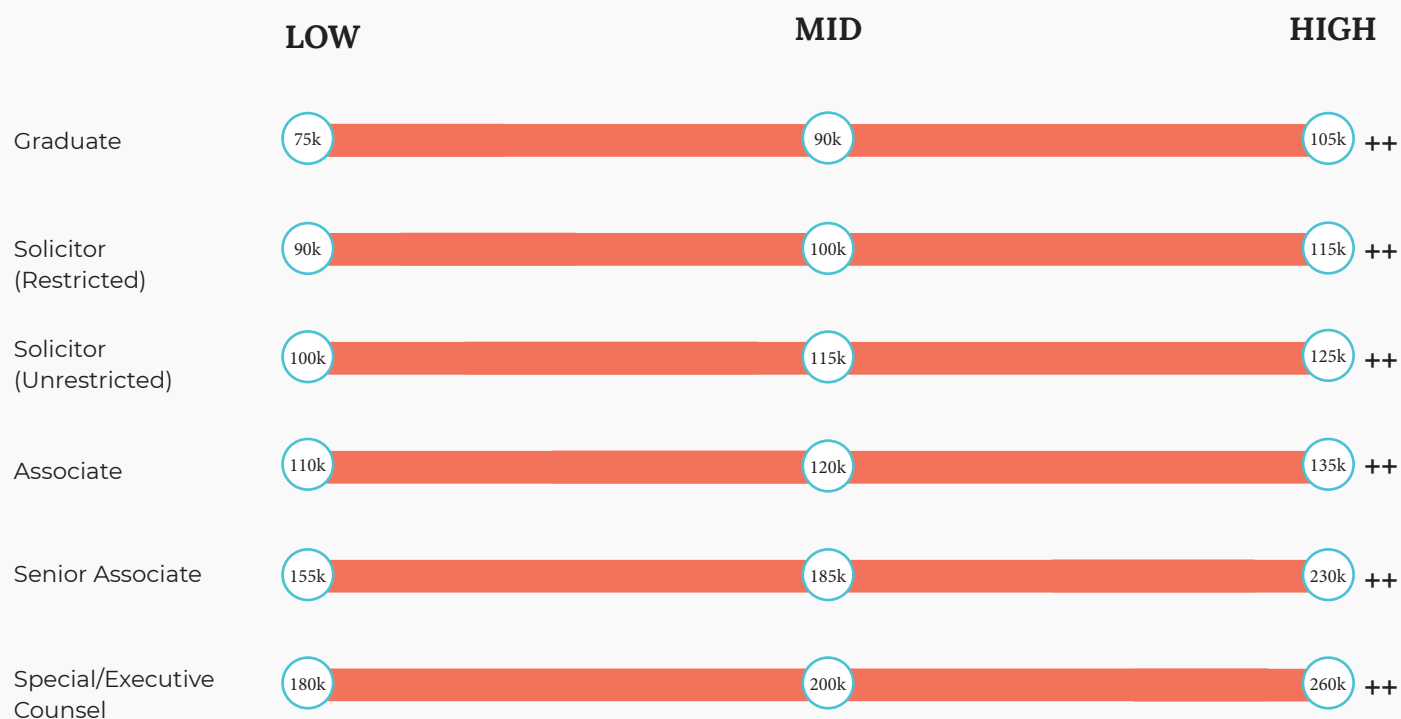
Lawyers with the below skills and experience can expect a higher salary in this market:

- **High Demand Industries:** Oil and gas, construction and infrastructure, projects and energy.
- **Specific experience:** Lawyers experienced in oil and gas sale agreements, joint ventures and drafting complex construction or new development contracts.

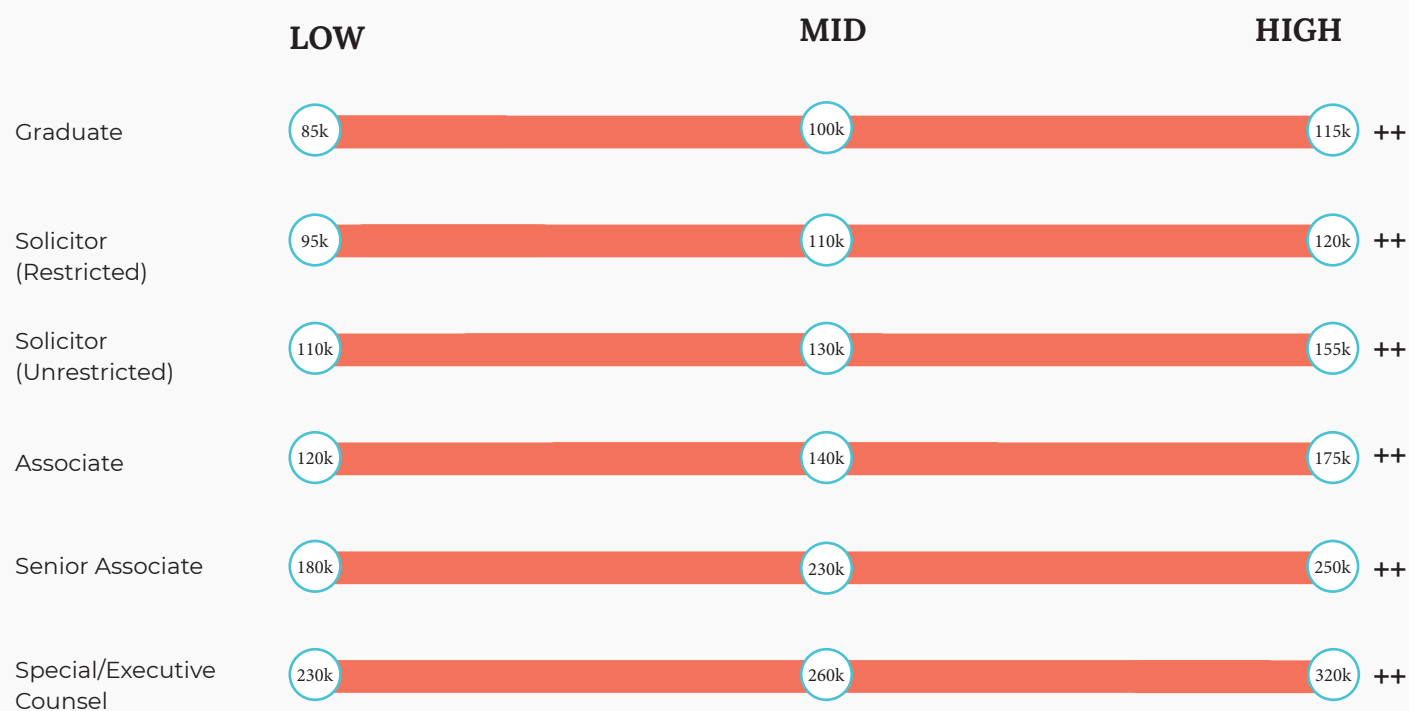


“Our approach is relationship-led, practical and highly personalised.”

Salary Data for Private Practice - Boutique Firms



Salary Data for Private Practice - Mid to Top Tier Firms



Private Practice Market Observations

The WA legal market continues to benefit from the State's resource-driven economy. Strong activity in mining, energy and infrastructure is underpinning demand across corporate, commercial and projects practices

WA remains something of an outlier nationally, with relatively robust economic conditions compared to the Eastern States. The trends we have noticed within private practice:

- Boutique firms tend to offer higher bonus structures for all levels, compared to larger firms.
- Larger firms seemingly limit or have no bonus structure for Solicitors.
- It is common for larger firms to lock step junior lawyers remuneration, until they settle into a practice group.
- In the past several years, we have noticed a strong increase in market activity and turnover amongst the 2-5 PQE cohort. Whether this is to move in-

house or change firms, this cohort are open to opportunity.

- In comparison to their junior cohort, Senior Associates seem to have lower turnover and movement between firms. Majority only changing firms for a Special Counsel or Partnership promotion.
- Perth firms are increasingly setting stricter and higher billable targets for admitted junior lawyers. This could be influenced by industry wide salary increases, US mergers and firms ensuring promotion pathway to Senior Associate level is clear.

Key Practice Area Trends within Private Practice

Resources & Energy

Remains the engine room of WA private practice. Lithium, critical minerals and energy transition are generating significant M&A, joint venture, native title and project finance work. Green hydrogen and offshore wind projects are emerging as new instruction streams.

Construction & Infrastructure

State Government infrastructure spend (Metronet, hospital builds, road projects) is sustaining a strong pipeline of construction, procurement and disputes work.

Native Title, Environment and Planning

WA continues to generate a disproportionately high volume of native title work nationally. Land access agreements and cultural heritage compliance remain active areas.

Property & Real Estate

Residential and commercial property markets have remained relatively buoyant in Perth, sustaining transactional work, though some cooling is anticipated.

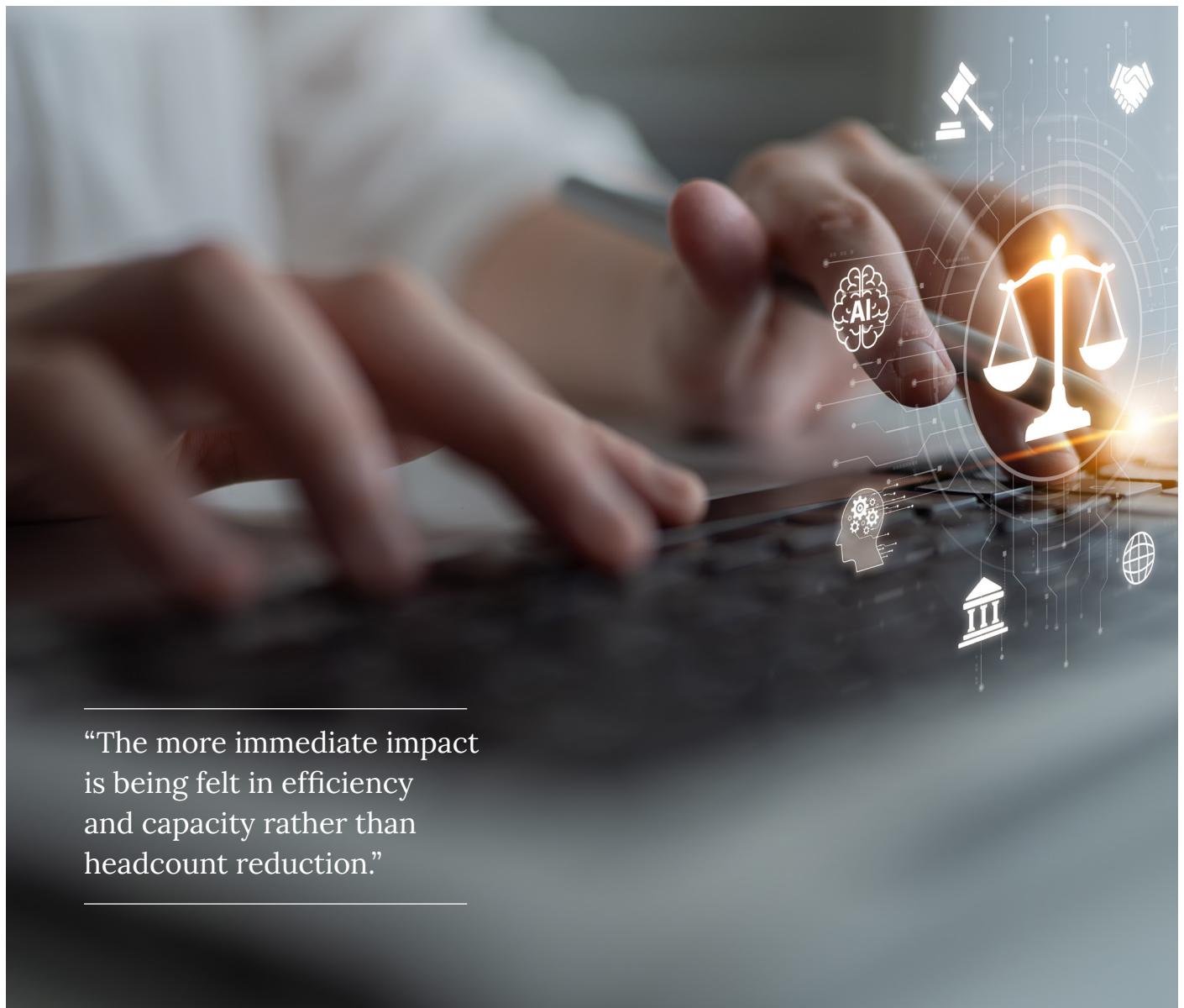
Disputes & Litigation

Insolvency and restructuring instructions are rising as interest rate pressures and cost inflation bite into SME and mid-market businesses. Construction disputes remain elevated.

Employment & IR

Continued demand driven by workplace relations reforms, psychosocial hazard obligations and fixed-term contract changes under the Federal IR Legislative agenda.

Artificial Intelligence and the Legal Market



“The more immediate impact is being felt in efficiency and capacity rather than headcount reduction.”

In-House

Artificial intelligence continues to generate significant discussion across the legal profession, and WA's in-house market is no exception. Whilst larger corporates and ASX-listed companies are leading the way with adoption of platforms, there is still a clear directional shift toward embedding AI tools into everyday legal workflows in most in-house teams.

The more immediate impact is being felt in efficiency and capacity rather than headcount reduction, with in-house teams using technology to do more with existing resources. However, as these tools mature and confidence in their outputs grows, the longer-term implications for team sizing, skill mix, and remuneration at the junior level will warrant close attention from both employers and candidates alike.

Private Practice

The rise of AI in private practice carries meaningful implications for talent pipelines and career development in the WA legal market. Junior lawyers and graduates have traditionally built foundational skills through high-volume, process-driven work, the very tasks most susceptible to automation.

As firms adopt AI platforms and tools, there is a growing need to re-imagine how junior lawyers are trained and supervised. Firms that invest thoughtfully in this transition, ensuring technology augments rather than simply displaces will be better positioned to attract and retain top graduate and junior talent in an already competitive market.

The AI Platforms Dominating the Legal Industry

Two names seem to be dominating the Legal AI conversation this year – Harvey and Legora. They have emerged as the two leading AI platforms for legal professionals.

They are both powerful AI platforms and whilst they share the common goal of augmenting legal work through AI, they take different approaches. Harvey prioritising autonomy and high performance and Legora focussing on collaborative workflows and deep system integration.

The Platforms

Harvey: Harvey was created in the US in 2022 and is a domain-specific AI platform built for law firms, professional services firms, and Fortune 500 companies. The platform has significant presence in the US legal industry but has recently expanded global reach. It is trained in legal as well as tax and regulatory data, which enables it to handle complex document and contract review as well as legal research.

Legora: Founded in 2023, Legora, the Swedish-born challenger, is designed for enterprise-wide adoption across law firms. It directly integrates with existing systems such as Microsoft Word and offers tabular document review, workflow automation and conversational AI assistance.

Where Harvey excels at processing complex legal tasks autonomously, Legoras' strength is the ability it has to manage large-scale contract reviews and for teams to work within a shared AI platform.

Competition

- The legal tech market is fast growing and rapidly changing. Anthropic recently announcing their legal plug in for Claude caused a major market disruption with significant stock drops in publicly listed legal software companies.
- The plug and play AI model is the latest disruptor to enterprise software and one to watch.
- Freshfields have just announced they are not backing Legora or Harvey and instead partnered with Anthropic, rolling out Claude to 33 offices.
- After poaching the legal tech team from an AI company, Microsoft have also moved into the contract review space.

Our Thoughts

- As of June 2025, data indicates graduate hires nationally increased by 6%. Perth firms appear aligned with this national trend and still seem to be hiring consistent graduate numbers.
- We have not yet seen local graduate numbers impacted by AI. However, due to the number of Australian firms recently adopting AI platforms, it is likely we will see a reduction this intake and next. MinterEllison have publicly commented they also think graduates will be the first group impacted by AI use.
- We suspect in the long run, AI platforms will change the core role of graduates and junior lawyers, rather than intake numbers. Instead of starting with the traditional “legal grunt work” graduates potentially could be given higher level tasks or more client facing work. Whilst this cohort will be experienced in the use and management of AI platforms, it could lead to basic legal skills being underdeveloped.



Counsel Connect Overview of Services

At Counsel Connect, we specialise in delivering trusted secondment, recruitment and advisory solutions across Legal, Executive and HR functions. As a proudly Western Australian business, we are deeply connected to the local market and bring decades of experience supporting corporates, ASX-listed companies, government organisations, professional services firms and privately owned businesses across WA.

We take the time to understand our clients' businesses, culture and strategic objectives to ensure we deliver the right people and solutions at the right time.

LegalConnect

LegalConnect provides legal secondments, permanent recruitment and advisory services to corporates and private practice firms across WA.

We are recognised as one of WA's leading legal secondment providers, supporting clients with flexible legal resourcing solutions ranging from parental leave cover and workload peaks through to major projects, transactions and specialist legal skill gaps.

Our permanent recruitment practice supports placements from junior lawyers through to General Counsel, Partners and senior leadership roles within both in-house and private practice teams.

Our expertise includes:

- Legal secondments
- Permanent legal recruitment
- General Counsel and legal team advisory
- Remuneration benchmarking
- Legal team structure and workforce planning

ExecutiveConnect

ExecutiveConnect partners with organisations to identify and secure high-calibre executive and senior leadership talent across WA.

We work closely with businesses across the energy, resources, infrastructure, utilities and corporate sectors to deliver both interim executive secondments and permanent executive search solutions.

Our network spans the full C-suite and senior leadership market, including CEOs, CFOs, COOs, General Counsel, Commercial Directors, Company Secretaries and senior operational leaders.

Our expertise includes:

- Executive search and permanent recruitment
- Interim executive secondments
- Board and leadership advisory
- Succession planning support
- Senior leadership market mapping

WorkplaceConnect

WorkplaceConnect delivers independent workplace investigations, HR consulting and strategic people advisory services.

Our experienced HR and workplace relations consultants support organisations with sensitive workplace matters, employee relations issues and broader people and culture initiatives. We understand the importance of discretion, commerciality and practical outcomes when navigating workplace challenges.

Our expertise includes:

- Workplace investigations
- HR advisory and consulting
- Culture and performance reviews
- Policy and compliance support
- HR secondments and recruitment
- Leadership coaching and people strategy

Our Leadership Team



Kristy Campbell

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Kristy Campbell is the Managing Director and co-founder of Counsel Connect and is recognised as one of Western Australia's most experienced legal recruitment and secondments specialists. With more than 20 years' experience working closely with the WA legal and corporate market, Kristy has built an extensive network across in-house legal teams, private practice firms and executive leadership circles.

Kristy specialises in legal secondments, executive search and permanent legal recruitment, with particular expertise across the energy, resources, infrastructure and corporate sectors. She is known for her commercial approach, deep market knowledge and genuine long-term relationships with both clients and candidates.

kristy@counselconnect.com.au



Ken Jagger

CHAIR

Ken Jagger is Chair and co-founder of Counsel Connect and brings more than two decades of experience across the Western Australian legal market. Having practiced as a lawyer and previously held Partner-level roles, Ken combines strong legal and commercial expertise with a deep understanding of the challenges facing both legal teams and businesses across WA.

Throughout his career, Ken has built longstanding relationships with law firms, General Counsel and senior corporate leaders and is highly regarded for his strategic thinking, commerciality and trusted approach. His experience across legal practice, leadership and the broader corporate market continues to play a key role in shaping Counsel Connect's relationship-led and solutions-focused approach.

ken@counselconnect.com.au



Chloe Walsh

SENIOR HR ADVISOR

Chloe Walsh is a Senior HR Advisor within WorkplaceConnect and supports clients across a broad range of human resources and workplace matters, including Workplace Investigations. Chloe works closely with organisations to deliver practical, commercially focused HR support, including employee relations, policy development, performance management and workplace advisory services.

Known for her approachable style and strong stakeholder relationships, Chloe is passionate about helping businesses create positive workplace cultures and effective people processes.

chloe@counselconnect.com.au



counselconnect.com.au

(08) 9458 9169
info@counselconnect.com.au
1/328 Stirling Highway, Claremont, WA, 6010
