

SALARY GUIDE - 2026

# Australian Tech Engineering Salary Guide.

---

Senior, principal and tech lead compensation bands across AI, software, data, cyber, cloud and forward-deployed engineering. Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane benchmarks. Permanent and contractor day rates.

Re:Sourced - Specialist Tech Recruitment - Sydney, AU  
Edition: 2026 - Calibrated against active searches Q1 2026  
Author: Matt Gold, Founder  
[www.resourced.com.au](http://www.resourced.com.au)

# Contents

1. Executive summary
2. Sydney - permanent salary bands
3. Melbourne - permanent salary bands
4. Brisbane - permanent salary bands
5. Contractor day rates (Sydney)
6. Total compensation context
7. Methodology
8. What to do with this

---

## 1. Executive summary

AI engineering compensation continued to pull away from the broader engineering market in 2026. Senior AI engineers in Sydney now command base salaries 12-18% above senior software engineers in like-for-like roles, with the gap widening at principal levels. The Sydney-Melbourne gap remains at 8-12% at senior IC and closes to 5-8% at principal and tech-lead levels.

The contractor market tightened as several large transformation programs began in Q1. Day rates for senior cloud, platform, cyber and data engineers rose 5-10% year over year.

### Headline numbers (Sydney, base only)

- Senior software engineer: AUD 160-190k
- Senior AI / ML engineer: AUD 180-220k
- Senior data engineer: AUD 160-190k
- Senior cyber engineer: AUD 170-200k
- Senior cloud / SRE / platform: AUD 170-210k
- Senior forward deployed engineer: AUD 180-240k

---

## 2. Sydney - permanent salary bands

Sydney is Australia's deepest tech engineering market. Bands below cover the senior, principal and tech-lead levels for permanent placements.

Base only. 25th-75th percentile of accepted offers.

DISCIPLINE	SENIOR BASE	PRINCIPAL BASE	TECH LEAD BASE
<b>AI / ML engineer</b>	AUD 180-220k	AUD 220-250k	AUD 200-240k
<b>Software engineer</b>	AUD 160-190k	AUD 190-220k	AUD 190-210k
<b>Data engineer</b>	AUD 160-190k	AUD 190-250k	AUD 200-250k
<b>Cyber engineer</b>	AUD 170-200k	AUD 200-220k	AUD 200-230k
<b>Cloud / SRE / platform</b>	AUD 170-210k	AUD 190-220k	AUD 190-230k
<b>Forward deployed</b>	AUD 180-240k	AUD 240-280k	-

Senior bands run consistent across well-funded scale-ups and listed financial services. Frontier AI scale-ups (foundation model and platform-AI companies) often exceed the senior AI band by 30-50%, particularly on equity. Forward deployed engineers in AI-native scale-ups command top-of-band base plus structured equity.

---

### 3. Melbourne - permanent salary bands

Melbourne bands run roughly 5-8% below Sydney for like-for-like senior IC roles, with the gap closing to 5% at principal and tech-lead levels.

Base only. 25th-75th percentile of accepted offers.

DISCIPLINE	SENIOR BASE	PRINCIPAL BASE	TECH LEAD BASE
<b>AI / ML engineer</b>	AUD 175-210k	AUD 210-240k	AUD 190-230k
<b>Software engineer</b>	AUD 155-180k	AUD 180-210k	AUD 180-200k
<b>Data engineer</b>	AUD 155-180k	AUD 180-240k	AUD 190-240k
<b>Cyber engineer</b>	AUD 165-190k	AUD 190-210k	AUD 190-220k
<b>Cloud / SRE / platform</b>	AUD 165-200k	AUD 180-210k	AUD 180-220k
<b>Forward deployed</b>	AUD 175-230k	AUD 230-270k	-

---

### 4. Brisbane - permanent salary bands

Brisbane bands run 10-15% below Sydney for like-for-like senior IC roles. Defence and government roles are typically pegged to APS classifications or contractor day rates rather than commercial bands.

Base only. 25th-75th percentile of accepted offers.

DISCIPLINE	SENIOR BASE	PRINCIPAL BASE	TECH LEAD BASE
<b>AI / ML engineer</b>	AUD 160-200k	AUD 200-225k	AUD 180-215k
<b>Software engineer</b>	AUD 145-170k	AUD 170-200k	AUD 170-190k
<b>Data engineer</b>	AUD 145-170k	AUD 170-225k	AUD 180-225k
<b>Cyber engineer</b>	AUD 155-180k	AUD 180-200k	AUD 180-205k
<b>Cloud / SRE / platform</b>	AUD 155-190k	AUD 170-200k	AUD 170-205k
<b>Forward deployed</b>	AUD 160-215k	AUD 215-250k	-

---

## 5. Contractor day rates - Sydney 2026

Day rates below are for Sydney permanent contractors. Melbourne tracks Sydney within 5%; Brisbane runs 10-15% lower. Day rates exclude GST.

Base only. 25th-75th percentile of accepted offers.

DISCIPLINE	SENIOR	PRINCIPAL	TECH LEAD
<b>AI / ML engineer</b>	AUD 900-1,200	AUD 1,100-1,300	AUD 1,100-1,250
<b>Software engineer</b>	AUD 900-1,100	AUD 1,000-1,300	AUD 1,000-1,250
<b>Data engineer</b>	AUD 950-1,150	AUD 1,100-1,300	AUD 1,100-1,350
<b>Cyber engineer</b>	AUD 950-1,200	AUD 1,100-1,300	AUD 1,100-1,250
<b>Cloud / SRE / platform</b>	AUD 950-1,150	AUD 1,000-1,300	AUD 1,000-1,250

Cleared (NV1, NV2, TS) day rates run 15-25% above the bands above for cyber and cloud roles in defence-adjacent contexts. Strict-onsite mandates compress the candidate pool and command a premium.

---

## 6. Total compensation context

Bands above are base only. Total compensation typically runs:

- Listed companies (CBA, Macquarie, Atlassian): base + 10-25% bonus + equity (RSU). Total comp 20-40% above base for principal and tech-lead levels.
- Series C-D scale-ups: base + small bonus + equity (options). Total comp commonly 20-50% above base; equity outcome highly company-dependent.
- Frontier AI / AI-native scale-ups: base + meaningful equity. Total comp commonly 50-100% above base; some equity packages exceed total comp by more.
- Public service / government: APS classifications, no equity, base + super (typically 15.4% PSSAP).

Superannuation is currently 11.5% of base, rising to 12% on 1 July 2026 per the SG step-up schedule. Most permanent offers state base "plus super" rather than including it.

---

## 7. Methodology

This guide is calibrated against Re:Sourced active and recent search briefs in the 12 months ending Q1 2026, supplemented with public salary data points from Glassdoor AU, Levels.fyi (Australia filter), Robert Half AU 2026 Salary Guide, Hays 2026 Salary Guide, and Talent International "More Than Money" 2026.

Bands represent the 25th to 75th percentile of accepted offers for like-for-like roles. Outliers (top 10% AI engineering at frontier labs, bottom 10% at low-stage early-startup) are excluded from the band but discussed in the total compensation section.

---

## 8. What to do with this

- If you are pricing a 2026 brief, anchor on the 50th-75th percentile of the relevant band. The 25th-50th percentile drives offer-acceptance issues at final stage.
- If you are renewing a 2025 retention package, expect senior IC base to be 3-7% above last cycle for software roles, 5-9% above for AI/ML, 7-12% above for cyber and senior cloud.
- If you are competing with frontier AI scale-ups for ML talent, plan equity structure into the offer at signing rather than as a retention lever 12 months later.
- If you are positioning a remote-first role, do not regional-discount AU candidates against your Sydney band. The 2026 candidate market closed that arbitrage.

For a full brief read with named-employer comp data, contact Re:Sourced. Submit a brief at [www.resourced.com.au/contact](http://www.resourced.com.au/contact) or read the live online version at [www.resourced.com.au/tools/salary-guide-2026](http://www.resourced.com.au/tools/salary-guide-2026).

---

**Re:Sourced** is a specialist tech recruitment firm headquartered in Sydney, Australia. We recruit senior engineers across AI, software, data, cyber, cloud and forward-deployed disciplines for ANZ, US and EMEA teams.

**Median time to close:** 21 days, brief to signed. **Replacement guarantee:** 90 days. **90% of roles filled in ≤3 CVs.**

[www.resourced.com.au](http://www.resourced.com.au) · LinkedIn: [/company/resourcedworldwide/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/resourcedworldwide/)