

Australia's 20 best and 20 worst performing salaries

Shaped by local and global forces, some roles have rocketed in value while others tumbled. As we approach 2020, SEEK's Senior Employment Trends Analyst, Leigh Broderick looks back at the [20 best](#) and [20 worst](#) performing salaries and shares his insights into where Australian salaries may head in the next decade.

Three trends driving the top performers

Super smashes its way to number one

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The gold medal goes to roles in the Superannuation industry, which had the highest recorded salary rise of 46%. The industry has undergone rapid expansion – according to the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia, superannuation assets in Australia had grown to \$2.8 trillion by the end of the March 2019 quarter. Interestingly, however, there hasn't been corresponding growth in the number of available roles, suggesting the increase in salaries we're seeing in the SEEK data has been driven by the demand for specialised roles in the industry.

Rise of a caring nation

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No less than eight of the 20 fastest risers were in health and education. These included teachers and carers in every age group from preschool to secondary school and people working in aged care, disability support, child welfare and youth and family services. This suggests recognition for those traditionally at the lower end of the scale. As the

population grows and ages and initiatives like the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are introduced, demand for skilled professionals in Healthcare and Education has seen consistent year-on-year growth in Australia. According to the Federal Government, spending on health grew by about 50% in real terms to \$16 billion over the decade to 2015-16 and, today, Healthcare and Education combined are Australia's largest employers by far.

STEM burns bright

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It's little wonder that careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, take up three of the top 20 places. Technology is playing an increasingly important role in both the economy and everyday life. Yet, despite heavy government promotion, between 2008 and 2018 the proportion of people studying these subjects fell. The consequent skills shortage can't be resolved overnight, and is more likely to intensify, so it seems the value of qualified professionals in STEM will only continue to increase.

Australia's top 20 salary gains

1

Insurance & Superannuation

Superannuation

\$98,796

46%

2

Science & Technology

Mathematics, Statistics & Information Sciences

\$118,937

44%

3

Education & Training

Teaching Aides & Special Needs

\$66,907

43%

4

Design & Architecture

Web & Interaction Design

\$103,321

38%

5

Education & Training

Teaching - Primary

\$84,521

36%

6

Science & Technology

Biotechnology & Genetics

\$92,466

35%

7

Community Services & Development

Aged & Disability Support

\$71,545

32%

8

Farming, Animals & Conservation

Horticulture

\$68,522

30%

9

Trades & Services

Carpentry & Cabinet Making

\$68,076

29%

10

Education & Training

Teaching - Secondary

\$87,934

29%

11

Community Services & Development

Volunteer Coordination & Support

\$71,644

29%

12

Hospitality & Tourism

Gaming

\$65,485

29%

13

Design & Architecture

Landscape Architecture

\$90,172

28%

14

Community Services & Development

Child Welfare, Youth & Family Services

\$77,702

28%

15

Trades & Services

Hair & Beauty Services

\$52,102

28%

16

Manufacturing, Transport & Logistics

Public Transport & Taxi Services

\$74,253

26%

17

Real Estate & Property

Valuation

\$98,662

26%

18

Healthcare & Medical

Nursing - High Acuity

\$82,754

26%

19

Information & Communication Technology

Engineering - Software

\$116,547

26%

20

Education & Training

Childcare & Outside School Hours Care

\$61,273

26%

RANK

INDUSTRY

ROLE TYPE

2018-2019

%

Source: SEEK Salary Review, annual full-time salary averages by role type, 2011/12-2018/19, SEEK.

Three forces shaping downward moves

Mighty mining digging itself out of a hole

At the peak of the mining construction boom, eager workers were lured to far-flung corners of Australia to earn salaries beyond their wildest dreams – examples abounded of truck drivers on mining sites earning over \$150,000 a year. As the projects concluded, however, salaries fell. The result? Mining, Resources & Energy claimed a dispiriting nine of the 20 lowest places on our list of salary movement. That said, given the inflated starting point, this is better interpreted as a correction rather than a fall. Rebounding commodity prices and the consequent return of salary growth in the industry suggest the future could be brighter, though the cyclical nature of mining means this is definitely an industry to keep your eye on.

Construction cops collateral damage

Construction growth was largely tied to the mining industry at the beginning of the 2010s. Then, as the boom ended, the industry picked up again, this time due to residential construction. This growth is now starting to slow – construction appeared three times in our list of the biggest falls – so the hope is that investment in public infrastructure will help to pick up the slack for the 1.1 million Australians employed directly by the industry.

Legal eagles have their wings clipped

Of the 350+ role types on SEEK, Legal Professionals who were Generalists in a Law Firm took the biggest salary plunge. [Paul Rawlinson](#), Global Chair of law firm Baker McKenzie, has said that, while 30 years ago clients might pay millions to have thousands of documents manually reviewed, today much of that labour has been handed over to machines. That doesn't necessarily mean lawyers are surplus to

requirements – it's more likely that spending less time on tedious manual tasks frees them up to be more productive, creative and efficient. It could also explain how Generalist Lawyers show the biggest fall in salary, of 21%. Rather than being less valuable, they could well be doing more specialised work.

Australia's 20 biggest salary falls

1	Legal	Generalists- Law Firm	\$82,044	-21%
2	Construction	Planning & Scheduling	\$100,052	-18%
3	Engineering	Materials Handling Engineering	\$103,453	-17%
4	Engineering	Mechanical Engineering	\$97,633	-16%
5	Mining, Resources & Energy	Oil & Gas - Drilling	\$107,045	-16%
6	Engineering	Process Engineering	\$109,532	-14%
7	Mining, Resources & Energy	Mining - Exploration & Geoscience	\$120,461	-13%
8	Accounting	Insolvency & Corporate recovery	\$78,093	-13%

9

Mining, Resources & Energy

Oil & Gas - Exploration & Geoscience

\$120,961

-12%

10

Construction

Quality Assurance & Control

\$102,594

-11%

11

Real Estate & Property

Residential Sales

\$69,658

-9%

12

Consulting & Strategy

Environmental & Sustainability

\$96,251

-9%

13

Mining, Resources & Energy

Mining - Operations

\$123,688

-9%

14

Mining, Resources & Energy

Oil & Gas – Production & Refinement

\$115,677

-9%

15

Mining, Resources & Energy

Mining – Engineering & Maintenance

\$129,094

-8%

16

Science & Technology

Environmental, Earth & Geosciences

\$97,142

-8%

17

Mining, Resources & Energy

Mining - Processing

\$119,888

-8%

18

Mining, Resources & Energy

Surveying

\$122,229

-7%

19
Mining, Resources & Energy
Oil & Gas – Operations
\$113,314
-7%
20
Construction
Health, Safety & Environment
\$113,308
-7%

RANK

INDUSTRY

ROLE TYPE

2018-2019

%

Source: SEEK Salary Review, annual full-time salary averages by role type, 2011/12-2018/19, SEEK.

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