

BEACON LEGAL

Specialist legal recruitment.

ADELAIDE SALARY AND MARKET REPORT

OCTOBER 2020



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“HAVING ACCESS TO ACCURATE AND RELIABLE SALARY AND BONUS INFORMATION IS ESSENTIAL FOR BOTH JOB SEEKERS AND HIRING MANAGERS, ESPECIALLY IN THE CURRENT CLIMATE.”

BRACKEN REEVES, SENIOR CONSULTANT

Overview

Welcome to the Beacon Legal FY20/21 Adelaide Market Report and Salary Guide. Here, we'll provide a succinct overview of the impact of COVID19 on the Adelaide legal market. We hope this report will help you make informed decisions when switching roles, negotiating salary increases and planning your career.

The salary figures outlined in this Report are based on data collated by the Beacon Legal team over the last financial year. They represent an amalgamation of our placements, role briefings, remuneration figures entered into our Salary Comparison Calculator and our general market intelligence. They are accurate and reliable numbers, but also need to be viewed in context. An 'appropriate' salary for a lawyer will always vary depending on a range of factors. We can provide more tailored salary information, relevant to one's personal circumstances, on request.

We hope you find this information useful. If you have any questions about the information contained in the Report, please feel free to get in touch. We're always happy to help!

Bracken Reeves
Senior Consultant
Beacon Legal



LIVE VACANCIES

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Despite the turmoil of the COVID 19 pandemic, the Adelaide legal market remains strong compared to other markets around Australia and the rest of the world. The relatively low impact of COVID 19 in Adelaide compared to the rest of Australia has meant the legal market has recovered quicker than the other state capitals.

Despite the relative strength of the market, it goes without saying that the pandemic has had a significant impact on recruitment trends across the major city firms. The three major trends resultant of COVID 19 were:

- i) hiring freezes
- ii) focus on senior recruitment and,
- iii) increased pressure on litigation departments.

HIRING FREEZES

The most significant impact was felt immediately. Between April and June 2020 most firms adopted a complete hiring freeze. During this time over 90% of our live vacancies in Adelaide were removed or put on hold.

We continued speaking with lawyers during this time. Most lawyers we were speaking with said that despite the lack of external recruitment at their firm, their work remained steady. Whilst work was more sporadic in nature, most lawyers did not notice a significant drop in their billings over this time. Speaking to our clients, many reported that capacity across the firm sat between 80 – 95% during this time, a definite drop but far from a fatal one.

As workers returned to the city in late May / early June firms looked to consolidate rather than grow their teams.

New influxes of work were usually managed by utilising lawyers from other practice groups that were not as busy, or for the larger firms, by drawing on the help of lawyers based interstate.

As COVID cases continued to fall and we entered a new financial year, firms began to turn their mind to external recruitment.

FOCUS ON SENIOR RECRUITMENT

As roles began to return, we noticed that firms were increasingly focused on senior level hires. Traditionally the Associate level, 3 – 5 PQE, is the most active segment of the market. Associates tend to work more billable hours per month than those in the Partner ranks who focus on business development and delegation to the team as well as billing. Accordingly, firms are usually in need of talented Associates.

This trend began to reverse in the months of July and August.

In the face of unprecedented uncertainty, the demand from clients for advisory services increased. This higher volume of complex work could not always be completed by Associates. As such, Partners and other senior team members were forced to take on a greater workload.

This increased pressure on senior team members led many firms to look for senior level roles when external recruitment returned. Further, staff were now working remotely (either entirely or at least part time) so any external hire would need to be very autonomous. This often necessitates a more senior hire. Coupled together, these factors led an increased focus on senior recruitment.

Traditionally we are briefed on three Associate roles for every Senior Associate job vacancy. During the months of July – September this ratio was one to one.

INCREASED PRESSURE ON LITIGATION TEAMS

According to the Thomson Reuters 2020 State of the Legal Market Report, dispute resolution comprised 21% of all billable hours worked across Australia in the last quarter of the 2019/20 financial year and is the largest practice by volume of billable hours.

The pandemic has served to put further pressure on litigators, as the biggest practice group continues to service market demand.

The phrase ‘unprecedented’ became common place during the middle months of 2020. Generally commercial contracts and insurance coverage rely on relative levels of certainty to function as intended. The uncertain conditions of COVID changed the world in which these contracts operate leading many to fail or trigger litigious action.

Litigation, particularly within insolvency, is seen as a harbinger of economic downturn. As the global economy stuttered during COVID the already busy litigators saw a further increase in workload as contractual and financial obligations were unable to be met by struggling companies.

These global trends have been reflected in Adelaide, with litigation being the main focal point of recruitment across our major clients. Not only has the pandemic increased the work volume of litigators now, but as the crisis passes, it looks set to continue this trend.

As the crisis subsides there will be (and already is) allegations of non-compliance and abuse of power across industries and levels of government. Federal and state authorities will be forced to investigate these claims likely leading to wide sweeping litigation and further commissions to add to Australia’s already burgeoning tally of Royal Commissions.



TRANSACTIONAL PRACTICE GROUPS

The transactional practice groups will take longer to bounce back than the contentious. However, we are already seeing green shoots in the market. April/May saw an intense period of capital raising and with this 'extra cash' companies who came through COVID are poised to take advantage of investment and M&A opportunities.

We are currently working on a number of transactional vacancies in the Adelaide market at circa 50% vacancy volume compared to pre-COVID levels. Opportunities do still exist and we expect this to continue to improve with time and positive market sentiment.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT IN THE FUTURE?

The market still faces a great deal of uncertainty but continues to improve week by week. Over recent months, the job vacancy volume growth has been significant.

Litigation recruitment, particularly at the experienced Associate / junior Senior Associate level is nearing pre-COVID levels. Many studies are predicting a post-COVID litigation boom for companies, so expect this upward trend to continue.

COVID has halted mobility like we have never seen. As state and international borders start to open many of our clients have communicated to us they expect an exodus of staff. As lawyers from the leading firms depart for international markets and people move interstate this will further increase the need for firms to recruit externally.

The cumulative effect of this is that we expect 2021 to be a busy year for legal recruitment. For the individual lawyer this is a good thing. Increased demand for legal services and in turn increased demand for lawyers by firms, means lawyers moving jobs can expect to achieve a salary rise, potentially offsetting any 2020 freeze.

We hope you find this Report useful. As always, if you have any questions about its content, would like advice on your employment situation, or are interested in the Adelaide, interstate or international market please do not hesitate to reach out for a confidential conversation.

If you would like tailored salary advice, please contact us and we will be happy to help.

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Please turn the page for the Salary Tables. Or click below for our live vacancies in Adelaide.

[LIVE VACANCIES](#)

SALARY TABLES

Adelaide - Leading City Firms

Seniority Level	Range	Mode
1 PQE	\$55- 68k	\$60k
2 PQE	\$60 - 80k	\$70k
3 PQE	\$70 - 90k	\$80k
4 PQE	\$75 - 110k	\$95k
5 PQE	\$80 - 130k	\$110k
Senior Associate	\$100 - 140k	\$125k
SA 2	\$110 - 160k	\$135k
SA 3	\$125 - 170k	\$145k
SA 4+	\$150K +	\$150K +

Adelaide - In-House

Seniority Level	Range
1 PQE	\$50 - 75k
2 PQE	\$55 - 85k
3 PQE	\$70 - 95k
4 PQE	\$80 - 115k
5 PQE	\$85 - 135k
6-8 PQE	\$100 - 160k
8-10 PQE	\$120 - 180k
Deputy General Counsel	\$160 - 200k
General Counsel	\$180 +

GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions about the content of this report, we'd love to hear from you. We're always happy to provide more tailored salary advice based on your unique circumstances. Get in touch with a member of the Beacon Legal team via the details below.



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