



# Legal Eagles Salary Survey 2009



This guide has been prepared using data collated from our previous years' placements, in conjunction with market knowledge gained from our national, specialist legal support recruiters.

We hope you find this tool both useful and practical during the forthcoming salary review process and with lateral hiring.



## NEW SOUTH WALES MARKET

It is no secret that the current market is extremely tight and the shaky economic climate has affected almost every industry and state in Australia, with law firms in NSW being no exception.

With regard to salary expectations and with reviews approaching fast, we have been gathering information over this first quarter. We have found candidate expectations have not changed much since 2008.

Many candidates are happy to remain employed in the current market following the number of recent redundancies made throughout Sydney and nationwide. This expectation is not just limited to candidates at the top tier firms, but is widely held across the legal market. Stemming from this, we have also found that candidates are currently holding limited expectations in relation to any potential salary increases. With a good grasp and awareness of the current economic climate, candidates appear to be content just to be holding down employment.

The main areas of client demand in NSW have been in commercial litigation and debt recovery, with candidates across all levels of experience being sought. We have also seen some movement in other areas of law, namely in intellectual property, employment and insurance litigation.

The sectors in which we have experienced a decline in recruitment have been the transactional based areas such as corporate/commercial and property, together with banking and finance/mortgage work.

We have also found that flexible working conditions are being considered by both clients and candidates alike. Given the current market, contract roles, together with part-time/reduced hours, are being thought of as an option more frequently than we have previously experienced.

### Top-Tier

| Year Level/Role                                      | Range (inc Super)    | Average (inc Super) |
|--|----------------------|---------------------|
| Mail Room/Office Services                            | \$30,000 - \$45,000  | \$40,000            |
| Junior/Trainee Secretary                             | \$26,000 - \$35,000  | \$32,000            |
| Reception/Front of House                             | \$45,000 - \$60,000  | \$55,000            |
| WP Operator  | \$60,000 - \$68,000  | \$68,000            |
| Floater  | \$55,000 - \$68,000  | \$68,000            |
| Accounts Clerk                                       | \$42,000 - \$55,000  | \$50,000            |
| Project Coordinator                                  | \$65,000 - \$100,000 | \$80,000            |
| Paralegal  | \$50,000 - \$70,000  | \$65,000            |
| Legal Secretary 3-4 years (Solicitors & SA level)    | \$45,000 - \$65,000  | \$65,000            |
| Legal Secretary 5+ years (Solicitors & SA level)     | \$60,000 - \$70,000  | \$68,000            |
| Legal Secretary/PA (Practice Group Head/Snr Partner) | \$65,000 - \$75,000  | \$72,000            |
| Property Clerk                                       | \$62,000 - \$72,000  | \$68,000            |



## Mid-Tier

| Year Level/Role                                      | Range (inc Super)   | Average (inc Super) |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Mail Room  | \$30,000 - \$35,000 | \$32,500            |
| Reception/Front of House                             | \$42,000 - \$55,000 | \$50,000            |
| WP Operator  | \$55,000 - \$65,000 | \$62,000            |
| Floater  | \$55,000 - \$68,000 | \$65,000            |
| Legal Secretary/AA 1-2 years experience              | \$40,000 - \$55,000 | \$52,000            |
| Legal Secretary 3-4 years experience                 | \$50,000 - \$65,000 | \$62,000            |
| Legal Secretary 5+ years experience                  | \$60,000 - \$70,000 | \$68,000            |
| Legal Secretary/PA (Practice Group Head/Snr Partner) | \$65,000 - \$75,000 | \$70,000            |
| Mortgage Clerk                                       | \$55,000 - \$68,000 | \$65,000            |
| Property Clerk                                       | \$55,000 - \$68,000 | \$65,000            |

## Boutique

| Year Level/Role                                 | Range (inc Super)   | Average (inc Super) |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Reception                                       | \$35,000 - \$45,000 | \$42,000            |
| Legal Secretary up to 2 years experience        | \$35,000 - \$47,000 | \$42,000            |
| Legal Secretary 3-4 years experience            | \$45,000 - \$63,000 | \$60,000            |
| Legal Secretary 5+ years (to Partner/Principal) | \$55,000 - \$68,000 | \$65,000            |
| Conveyancing Clerk                              | \$50,000 - \$68,000 | \$65,000            |



## VICTORIA MARKET

We have seen a significant easing in the skills shortage within the legal support sector, with the downturn in economic conditions driving down the demand and thus increasing the supply of available, quality candidates.

In similar conditions to NSW, legal secretaries with experience in litigation, debt recovery, insurance, employment law and intellectual property are still in high demand and short supply. Current permanent employees in roles that are paid well and somewhat fulfilling are adopting a conservative view with regards to recruitment and are deferring their job search until the economic outlook becomes clearer.

Private practice law firms are utilising this time to restructure current roles and review the capacity of staff, but they are also concentrating on managing their top talent as these will be invaluable when the market does improve. Also, a more flexible approach to workforce planning is being used with more part-time and contract roles on offer.

Most of the mid and top tier law firms have seen some form of redundancy, whether specific roles or group wide. Although not openly discussed, some of the redundancies targeted non-performers or staff that did not fit into the future vision of the firm.

The impact these factors have on salaries is quite significant as we have seen a massive percentage increase across the board for the past 5 years. Legal secretary salaries will not increase for 2009, with a push to reduce the top end salaries for new starters at a firm. Our current feedback from firms this quarter regarding salary reviews is that there are likely to be no increases or a slight percentage increase only if the secretary has provided an outstanding performance for the past 12 months.

It is likely that the only increases in salaries will be found in the corporate services functions e.g. reception, accounts, HR and marketing.

### Top-Tier

| Year Level/Role                                      | Range (inc Super)   | Average (inc Super) |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Mail Room/Office Services                            | \$30,000 - \$35,000 | \$32,500            |
| Junior/Trainee Secretary                             | \$32,000 - \$35,000 | \$33,500            |
| Reception/Front of House                             | \$45,000 - \$58,000 | \$51,500            |
| WP Operator  | \$52,000 - \$60,000 | \$56,000            |
| Floater  | \$58,000 - \$64,000 | \$61,000            |
| Accounts Clerk                                       | \$42,000 - \$55,000 | \$48,500            |
| Project Coordinator                                  | \$60,000 - \$80,000 | \$70,000            |
| Paralegal  | \$45,000 - \$55,000 | \$50,000            |
| Legal Secretary 3-4 years (Solicitors & SA level)    | \$45,000 - \$55,000 | \$50,000            |
| Legal Secretary 5+ years (Solicitors & SA level)     | \$58,000 - \$64,000 | \$61,000            |
| Legal Secretary/PA (Practice Group Head/Snr Partner) | \$60,000 - \$68,000 | \$64,000            |
| Property Clerk                                       | \$62,000 - \$68,000 | \$65,000            |



## Mid-Tier

| <b>Year Level/Role</b>                               | <b>Range (inc Super)</b> | <b>Average (inc Super)</b> |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Mail Room/Office Services                            | \$30,000 - \$35,000      | \$32,500                   |
| Reception/Front of House                             | \$42,000 - \$55,000      | \$48,500                   |
| WP Operator  | \$52,000 - \$58,000      | \$55,000                   |
| Floater  | \$58,000 - \$62,000      | \$60,000                   |
| Legal Secretary/AA 1-2 years experience              | \$35,000 - \$45,000      | \$40,000                   |
| Legal Secretary 3-4 years experience                 | \$45,000 - \$55,000      | \$50,000                   |
| Legal Secretary 5+ years experience                  | \$58,000 - \$66,000      | \$62,000                   |
| Legal Secretary/PA (Practice Group Head/Snr Partner) | \$62,000 - \$68,000      | \$65,000                   |
| Mortgage Clerk                                       | \$52,000 - \$58,000      | \$56,000                   |
| Property Clerk                                       | \$55,000 - \$70,000      | \$62,500                   |

## Boutique

| <b>Year Level/Role</b>                          | <b>Range (inc Super)</b> | <b>Average (inc Super)</b> |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Reception                                       | \$35,000 - \$45,000      | \$40,000                   |
| Legal Secretary up to 2 years experience        | \$32,000 - \$42,000      | \$37,000                   |
| Legal Secretary 3-4 years experience            | \$42,000 - \$55,000      | \$48,500                   |
| Legal Secretary 5+ years (to Partner/Principal) | \$52,000 - \$62,000      | \$57,000                   |
| Conveyancing Clerk                              | \$50,000 - \$58,000      | \$54,000                   |



## QUEENSLAND MARKET

The current economic climate is seeing Queensland law firms tighten their belts and cautiously recruit. In this regard, salaries have plateaued and we are expecting minimal, if any, salary increases for support staff this year. New employees are aware of the economic climate and are generally not expecting salary increases when seeking new employment.

We have also found that, even though there are not as many legal support vacancies around at the moment, quality staff are still being snapped up and not remaining on the job market for long.

The main areas of demand in Queensland have been in the insurance (plaintiff and defendant) and commercial litigation areas.

### Legal Secretaries

| Year Level/Role                   | Range (inc Super)   | Average (inc Super) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Corporate</b>                  |                     |                     |
| Senior 5+ years experience        | \$56,680 - \$62,130 | \$59,405            |
| Intermediate 3-5 years experience | \$49,050 - \$55,590 | \$52,320            |
| Junior 1-3 years experience       | \$38,150 - \$47,960 | \$43,055            |
| <b>Litigation</b>                 |                     |                     |
| Senior 5+ years experience        | \$56,680 - \$62,130 | \$59,405            |
| Intermediate 3-5 years experience | \$49,050 - \$55,590 | \$52,320            |
| Junior 1-3 years experience       | \$38,150 - \$47,960 | \$43,055            |
| <b>Property</b>                   |                     |                     |
| Senior 5+ years experience        | \$56,680 - \$62,130 | \$59,405            |
| Intermediate 3-5 years experience | \$49,050 - \$55,590 | \$52,320            |
| Junior 1-3 years experience       | \$38,150 - \$47,960 | \$43,055            |
| <b>WP Operator</b>                |                     |                     |
| Senior 5+ years experience        | \$52,320 - \$56,680 | \$54,500            |
| Intermediate 3-5 years experience | \$45,780 - \$51,230 | \$48,505            |
| <b>Float Secretary</b>            |                     |                     |
| Senior 5+ years experience        | \$54,500 - \$62,130 | \$58,315            |
| Intermediate 3-5 years experience | \$45,780 - \$53,410 | \$49,595            |



## Paralegal

| Year Level/Role                   | Range (inc Super)   | Average (inc Super) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Conveyancing</b>               |                     |                     |
| Senior 5+ years experience        | \$59,950 - \$65,400 | \$62,675            |
| Intermediate 3-5 years experience | \$52,320 - \$58,860 | \$55,590            |
| Junior 1-3 years experience       | \$43,600 - \$51,230 | \$47,415            |
| <b>Banking &amp; Finance</b>      |                     |                     |
| Senior 5+ years experience        | \$59,950 - \$62,130 | \$61,040            |
| Intermediate 3-5 years experience | \$52,320 - \$58,860 | \$55,590            |
| Junior 1-3 years experience       | \$43,600 - \$51,230 | \$47,415            |

## Administration

| Year Level/Role                   | Range (inc Super)   | Average (inc Super) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Accounts Clerk</b>             |                     |                     |
| Senior 5+ years experience        | \$54,500 - \$65,400 | \$59,950            |
| Intermediate 3-5 years experience | \$43,600 - \$53,410 | \$48,505            |



## WESTERN AUSTRALIA MARKET

The Perth job market is extremely similar to all other states with a lack of jobs across the board. There is a recruitment 'freeze' in most firms (both top and mid tiers as well as boutique firms), with vacancies being re-assessed to see if they can be covered by other areas.

There has been an increase in requests for temporary secretarial staff, which we interpret as clients being 'nervous' in regards to hiring a permanent employee given the current economic downturn.

The main areas in demand in Perth are commercial litigation and workers' compensation.

In terms of salaries, most firms have not finalised whether there will be any salary increases. It is likely there will be little or no increase, with some firms even asking staff to take a 10% pay cut to ensure that there are no redundancies. We have found that candidates are prepared to reduce their salary expectations for a good position, as they do understand there is stiff competition for roles.

### Top-Tier, Mid-Tier & Boutique

| Year Level/Role                                   | Range (inc Super)   | Average (inc Super) |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Office Services                                   | \$19,000 - \$40,000 | \$29,5000           |
| Reception   | \$27,000 - \$60,000 | \$43,500            |
| Junior Legal Secretary 0-2 years experience       | \$25,000 - \$40,000 | \$32,500            |
| Intermediate Legal Secretary 2-6 years experience | \$35,000 - \$54,000 | \$44,500            |
| Senior Legal Secretary 6+ years experience        | \$52,000 - \$70,000 | \$61,000            |
| WP Operator                                       | \$45,000 - \$60,000 | \$52,500            |
| Float   | \$45,000 - \$60,000 | \$51,000            |
| Accounts Clerk                                    | \$47,000 - \$66,000 | \$56,500            |
| Librarian   | \$54,500 - \$60,000 | \$57,250            |
| Junior Paralegal                                  | \$35,000 - \$44,000 | \$39,500            |
| Intermediate Paralegal                            | \$44,000 - \$60,000 | \$52,000            |
| Senior Paralegal                                  | \$60,000 - \$75,000 | \$67,500            |