SCALEUP
Recruitment

TALENT INTELLIGENCE PARTNER
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MARKET & SALARY BRIEFING

What your skills are worth *right now*.

If you are a Senior Data Engineer working natively across modern cloud platforms (AWS, GCP, Azure) and the modern data stack, **you are currently sitting in the most constrained and highly valued micro-cohort in the Australian tech market.**

I spend my entire week speaking with CTOs, Heads of Data, and Principal Engineers. Companies have moved past basic cloud migrations; the race is now on to build complex Lakehouse and real-time architectures that can actually support Agentic AI and GenAI models in production.

931	38%	1.8 yrs	$220k+
SENIOR DATA ENGINEERS (AU)	OPEN TO NEW MOVES	MEDIAN TENURE	PREMIUM FOR TOP TIER

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01 The Scarcity Premium.

Because you sit at the centre of this shift, I recently ran a complete mapping of the Australian Data Engineering market to see exactly where the talent sits. I wanted to share these numbers with you, alongside what I am seeing regarding your market value across both permanent and contract engagements this year.

We just mapped the entire Senior Data Engineering talent pool across Australia. Here is what the live data shows:

- There are roughly **931 Senior to Principal-level Data Engineers** nationally working across the modern data stack, against a broader pool of 2,315 mid-to-senior practitioners growing at 27% YoY.
- The cohort is heavily Azure-skewed. **Only a small fraction explicitly boast the AWS plus modern data stack overlap** that buyers are paying a premium for right now.
- This talent is heavily hoarded by a handful of major players. **CommBank, NAB, Block (Afterpay), and Macquarie Group** lead the pack, with strong external demand also coming from **Atlassian, Canva, Mantel Group, Servian, Coles, Woolworths and Telstra**.

If you can demonstrate the AWS plus modern data stack crossover, or you are an Azure expert moving into multi-cloud, you sit in a candidate pool of less than 150 people nationally. That scarcity commands a significant premium.

02 Live permanent salary benchmarking.

With high demand and low supply, counter-offers from current employers like CBA and NAB are the norm. If you are assessing your internal value or looking externally for a permanent move, these are the live base salary bands right now:

BAND	BASE SALARY (EX. SUPER)
The Baseline (25th Percentile)	**$165,000**
The Market Median (50th Percentile)	**$185,000**
The Premium (75th Percentile)	**$220,000+**

Note: *Engineers hitting that $220k+ base mark are generally those demonstrating strong commercial acumen, mentoring capabilities, and the ability to design CI/CD and IaC deployments end-to-end.*

03 The contract market: daily rates.

Given the high demand for greenfield platform builds, many top-tier engineers are opting for the contract market. Right now, more than 480 senior engineers nationally are explicitly open to contract work. Organisations are willing to pay a premium for "hired guns" who can come in, establish a Medallion architecture, and upskill the permanent team.

Current daily rates (Inc. Super) for senior Data Engineering specialists:

TIER	DAILY RATE (INC. SUPER)
Standard Senior Contract Rate	**$900–$1,100 / day**
Premium / Lead Contract Rate (Multi-Cloud + Architecture)	**$1,100–$1,500+ / day**

Note: *The upper end of this spectrum ($1,500+) is strictly reserved for engineers who can operate autonomously, face off against C-level stakeholders, lead the architectural strategy on day one, and bring real-time streaming chops (Kafka/Flink).*

04 Equity vs. base cash vs. contracting.

When you look at your next move, you will likely be weighing three very different engagement models currently dominating the market:

TECH SCALE-UP PLAY

Permanent
$180k–$200k base + RSUs

Offering competitive base salaries ($180k–$200k) heavily supplemented by aggressive RSUs, stock options, and "unlimited" leave policies.

ELITE CONSULTANCY

Permanent
Pushing $220k base

Fighting back by offering absolute top-of-market base cash (pushing the $220k mark), guaranteed architectural variety across multiple enterprise clients, and zero-hierarchy structures.

PREMIUM CONTRACT

Daily Rate
$1,100–$1,500+ / day

High yield, high autonomy, but lacks the long-term equity or partner-level pathway of the consultancies and scale-ups.

05 What the top 5% are looking for.

When the best engineers in your cohort decide to move out of places like CommBank or Block, they aren't just moving for an extra $10k or $50 a day. They are moving to escape legacy red tape. The top talent is currently flocking to environments that offer:

01 Greenfield Complexity

Building new real-time Lakehouse and Agentic AI infrastructure rather than maintaining legacy data swamps.

02 Zero-Hierarchy

Environments that treat you like an adult, with no corporate bureaucracy.

03 Elite Tech Access

Companies with top-tier Strategic Collaboration Agreements (e.g., AWS, Databricks, Snowflake) that give you access to beta tools and GenAI gateways before the rest of the market.

Where do you sit in the current market?

Whether you are actively looking for something, exploring the jump from perm to contract, or want to quietly benchmark your current rate against what tier-one tech firms are paying right now, ***let's connect.***

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