

MAY 2026 EDITION

Sydney Supply Confidence Market Report

Jobs, hiring trends, salary insights, skills in demand, and what the business-confidence story means for hiring in Greater Sydney.

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MAY 2026 MARKET SNAPSHOT

<p>ROLES ANALYSED</p> <p>106</p> <p>Direct-employer, cleaned May 19</p>	<p>GDP GROWTH</p> <p>2.6%</p> <p>Q4 2025 annualised — pre-shock baseline</p>
<p>UNEMPLOYMENT</p> <p>4.3%</p> <p>March print holding; April release 21 May</p>	<p>CPI INFLATION</p> <p>4.6%</p> <p>Q1 print — up 90bps from February</p>

KEY THEME THIS MONTH

Business confidence stuck deep in negative territory. NAB index at **-24** in April, a marginal recovery from March's -29 (second-largest monthly drop on record), but conditions still at the second-lowest reading since 2020. With CPI at 4.6%, the RBA's third rate hike of the year to 4.35%, and Hormuz in its third month of closure, Sydney employers are hiring defensively — procurement up, exec-tier holding steady but composition shifted toward cost-out.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Sigma Search is a Sydney-based specialist executive recruitment firm focused on supply chain, logistics and procurement across Australia and New Zealand. This edition analyses **106 direct-employer roles** captured between Seek and Indeed on 19 May 2026. Recruitment agency, government panel, and confidential roles excluded. LinkedIn data reviewed separately and not included in the dataset due to the dominance of agency-promoted listings. Exec-tier analysis (Section 03) is supplemented with targeted exec-title searches across both platforms.

CANDIDATE MARKET

Hesitant at the headline, busy underneath. Essential and procurement hiring continues at pace. Exec-tier holding steady at **17** visible Head-of / GM / Director roles, but the composition has shifted from growth-leadership toward cost-out — procurement, manufacturing operations and logistics leadership now dominate the senior board.

TOP HIRING SECTOR

Procurement is the headline. 36% of all advertised roles this month — up from 31% in April — as cost control becomes the C-suite obsession. FMCG, Industrial and Retail tied for top sector at 17/17/16%.

HOT SKILL RIGHT NOW

Strategic sourcing and category management. Companies want operators who can deliver hard cost-out, supplier consolidation, and contract renegotiation under inflation.

● SECTION 01

Macro Economic Landscape

The Australian economy is now operating under three forces pulling in different directions – sticky inflation that has accelerated, a rate-hiking RBA that thinks it can pause, and a business confidence reading that is barely off the floor. For Sydney supply chain leaders, this is the operating environment that's shaping every hiring conversation right now.

GDP GROWTH (ANNUAL)

2.6%

Q4 2025 – pre-shock baseline

CPI INFLATION (Q1)

4.6%

Up from 3.7% in February

RBA CASH RATE

4.35%

+25bps in May – third hike of 2026

The macro picture has hardened in the four weeks since our April edition. The Q1 CPI print, released 30 April, came in at 4.6% annual – a 90 basis point jump from the 3.7% February reading. Trimmed mean inflation held at 3.3%, so the trimmed-mean disinflation narrative is intact, but the headline jump was enough to confirm what the RBA had been worried about. Automotive fuel was the standout, up 24.2% over the year to March with a 32.8% monthly increase – the strongest monthly fuel-price increase since the series began in 2017. That's Hormuz flowing through to producer prices and, in the next quarter, to retail shelf prices.

The RBA responded at its May meeting with a third consecutive 25bps hike, lifting the cash rate to 4.35%. The vote was 8-1 in favour of the hike. The statement signalled that rates were now likely high enough to give the Board scope to pause and monitor – but with the caveat that risks remain tilted to another rate increase if Hormuz drags on or the Q2 CPI print disappoints. The headline labour market is unchanged: unemployment held at 4.3% in March (the April print lands 21 May, after this report goes out), with employment hitting a record 14.77 million. Sydney's labour market continues to soften at the headline, but as you'll see in Section 02, supply chain is running its own cycle.

KEY MACRO SIGNALS FOR SUPPLY CHAIN PROFESSIONALS

- **Business confidence still in retreat:** NAB Business Confidence Index at **-24 in April**, a modest recovery from March's -29 (the second-largest monthly drop on record). Business conditions at +3, the second-lowest reading since 2020. Capex intentions down 8 points – the sharpest drop since the post-pandemic rebound.
- **Margin squeeze is real:** Purchase costs rose 4.5% quarter-on-quarter in the NAB survey. Selling prices only 1.8%. That gap is what's driving the procurement hiring surge.
- **Hormuz still closed:** Brent crude trading \$105-\$111 through May. EIA forecasting \$106 average for May-June. Strait of Hormuz still effectively shut; some flows expected to resume late May or early June, though nothing structurally resolved.
- **Defence & Aerospace still accelerating:** AUKUS momentum holding. Advanced Navigation, Thales, BAE Systems, Anduril, Honeywell all visible in May hiring data.
- **Retail SC loud and concurrent:** Coles Group, Coles Supply Chain, Kmart, Woolworths (via Primary Connect), Metcash, Endeavour Group all running multiple SC searches in the May data.
- **3PL build-out continues:** DSV particularly active in Western Sydney with four concurrent freight & logistics specialist roles. Mid-market 3PL hiring tracking well above March/April pace.

LABOUR MARKET INSIGHT

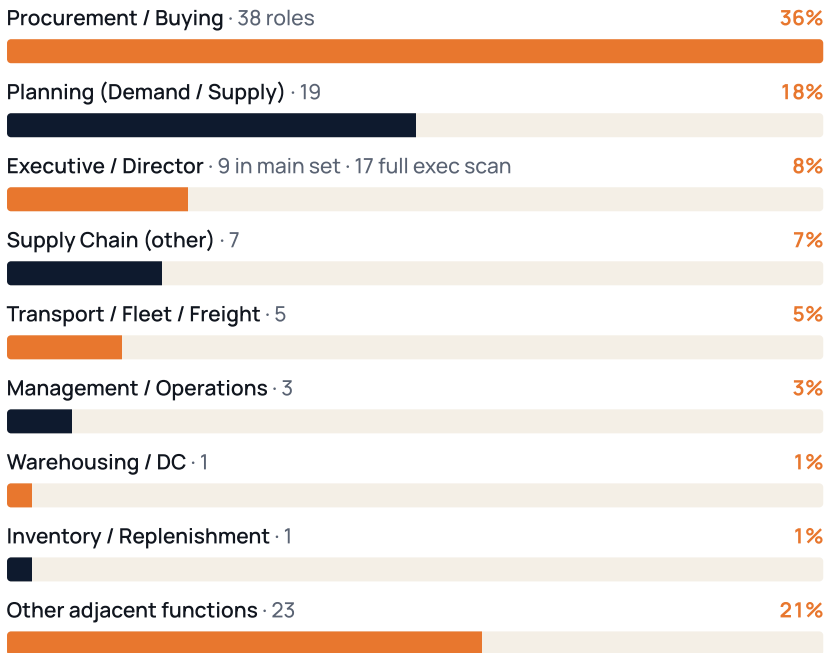
The macro picture this month is the cleanest illustration we've had this year of why hiring intent and hiring action have decoupled. NAB business confidence is barely above its worst-ever monthly reading, but procurement hiring is up materially – 36% of May's advertised roles, against 31% in April and 30% in March. The reason is straightforward. When confidence collapses and cost pressure intensifies, the first hire isn't the growth hire. It's the operator who can take cost out. Procurement, category management, strategic sourcing and contract renegotiation skills are the most-asked-for capability set in Sydney right now. Essential operational hiring continues unchanged, and at the exec tier, employers are still committing to hires – but the composition has shifted noticeably toward cost-out leadership and away from transformation and growth.

● SECTION 02

Job Market Overview

Our analysis of 106 direct-employer supply chain roles captured in the Sydney market on 19 May 2026. Recruitment agency, government panel and confidential advertiser roles have been excluded to focus on genuine employer demand. The May dataset is 18% larger than April's 90, with the bulk of the increase coming from procurement and planning roles.

ROLES BY FUNCTION



MARKET COMPOSITION

106 roles

from direct employers – agencies, panel and confidential roles excluded

Broad-based

across Industrial & Manufacturing (17%), FMCG (17%), Retail (16%), 3PL (8%), Healthcare/Pharma (7%)

Procurement share climbed

from 31% (April) to 36% – cost-out hiring leads

Executive tier steady

at 17 Head-of / GM / Director roles – matching April, composition shifted toward procurement and manufacturing

KEY TAKEAWAY

Procurement and buying roles now sit at **36% of all advertised direct-employer positions** – up from 31% in April and 30% in March. This is the largest single-function share we've measured. The hiring driver has shifted decisively from supplier diversification (April's Hormuz response) to direct cost control. Category Manager titles dominate the list – across Endeavour Group (Packaging & Consumables, Wine, Beer), Geely Auto, Metcash, Vinarchy, Vittoria, Amazon Commercial Services, Amazon Procurement Operations, Nutrien Ag Solutions (\$207k–\$345k), and TABCORP. Planning roles continue to grow share (18% vs 16% in April), with FMCG demand and supply planning the main drivers. Executive-tier hiring is holding steady at **17 visible Head-of / GM / Director roles – matching April** – but the composition has shifted decisively. April's exec list was a mix of growth-leadership and transformation-director roles; May's exec list is dominated by procurement, manufacturing operations and logistics leadership. The cost-out story is now visible at the very top of the board.

SECTION 03

Who's Hiring

A snapshot of the most active employers in the Sydney supply chain market for the week of 19 May 2026. Recruitment agencies and government panel roles have been excluded.

MOST ACTIVE EMPLOYERS – MULTIPLE OPEN ROLES

COMPANY	OPEN ROLES & FUNCTIONS	SECTOR
DSV	4 roles Freight Forwarder (AOG); Dangerous Goods Compliance Specialist; Value Add Logistics Specialist; VAL Operator Specialist	3PL / Freight
VISY	3 roles GM Packaging & Consumer Goods; GM Linehaul; State Logistics Manager ▲ +1 ON APRIL	Industrial / Packaging
Endeavour Group	3 roles Procurement Category Manager (Packaging & Consumables); Supplier Lead (Beer & Premix); Supplier Lead (Commercial Wine)	Retail / Beverages
JDE Peet's	2 roles Supply Chain Planning Specialist; Supply Chain Planning Lead	FMCG / Coffee
Kimberly-Clark Australia	2 roles Transport Manager; Customer Engagement Lead	FMCG
Transdev Australasia	2 roles Sourcing & SC Manager (Light Rail); Strategic Asset Manager	Rail / Transit
Primary Connect (Woolworths)	2 roles Senior Business Analyst PC+; PC+ Systems SME	Retail SC arm
Amazon Corp / Commercial Services	2 roles Category Manager (Home & Leisure); Category Manager (Australia Procurement Operations)	E-commerce

VISY moves up to 3 concurrent SC exec roles this month – a notable build-out at the top of the table.

RECENTLY ADVERTISING AT SENIOR / EXECUTIVE LEVEL · 17 direct-employer exec roles, alphabetical

COMPANY	ROLE	SECTOR
Abbott Laboratories	Head of Supply Chain	Medical Devices
Advanced Navigation	Head of Procurement and Logistics	Defence Tech
Avis Budget Group	Senior Procurement Manager, APAC	Mobility / Rentals
Bin X	General Manager – Skip Bin Operations (Sydney Branch)	Waste / Operations
Hubbed Pty Ltd	Head of Network – PUDO \$130-150k + bonus	Logistics / Parcel Network
Laser Clinics Australia	Head of Procurement	Healthcare
Lynch Group	Procurement Leader	Wholesale / Floriculture
MESHKI	Head of Merchandise Planning (12-mth Maternity Cover)	Retail / Fashion
NEXTDC Limited	Head of Global Integrated Operations	Data Centres / Tech Infra
Parnell Manufacturing	Head of Operations – New Product Introduction	Pharma Manufacturing
QSR Pty Limited (Taco Bell Australia)	Head of Operations	QSR / Food
Spirax Sarco	National Logistics and Facilities Manager	Industrial / Steam & Thermal
Temple & Webster Group	Head of Supply Chain Technology	E-commerce / Furniture
VISY	General Manager – Packaging and Consumer Goods	Industrial / Packaging
VISY	General Manager – Linehaul	Industrial / Packaging
VISY	State Logistics Manager	Industrial / Packaging
Woolworths Group	Head of National Transport Operations	Retail

<p>FMCG / FOOD & BEV (17%)</p> <p>Largest hiring sector tied with Industrial. Kimberly-Clark, Mondelez, Mars, Nestlé, Diageo, JDE Peet's, McDonald's, Bubs Australia, PepsiCo, Vittoria, Vinarchy, Magnum Ice Cream, Refresco. Margin pressure from input cost inflation driving sustained procurement and planning hiring.</p>	<p>INDUSTRIAL & MFG (17%)</p> <p>VISY (three concurrent SC exec roles), Boral, InfraBuild, ACCIONA, Downer EDI, Anchor Packaging, Eaton Electrical, Henkel, Dematic, Honeywell, Yorkshire Bridge, ABB, GWA, Vertiv, CHEP, Spirax Sarco, Parnell Manufacturing. Procurement and operations roles dominant. Energy transition and infrastructure spending sustaining hiring through the confidence dip.</p>	<p>RETAIL (16%)</p> <p>Coles Group, Coles Supply Chain, Kmart, Endeavour Group, Metcash, Primary Connect (Woolworths), Calvin Klein, MESHKI, Modibodi, Rockwear, Harvey Norman, Temple & Webster, WH Smith. Category management and SC technology the dominant hiring themes. Woolworths in for a Head of National Transport Operations.</p>	<p>3PL / DEFENCE / HEALTHCARE</p> <p>3PL (8%): DSV (4 roles), Linfox, Ingram Micro, efm Logistics, Hubbed PUDO. Defence (2%): Advanced Navigation (Head of Procurement and Logistics), Thales, Anduril, BAI Communications. Healthcare/Pharma (7%): Abbott Labs (Head of SC), AbbVie, Alcon, DBG Health, Laser Clinics (Head of Procurement), Medtronic, Cochlear, Philips, Wesfarmers Health.</p>
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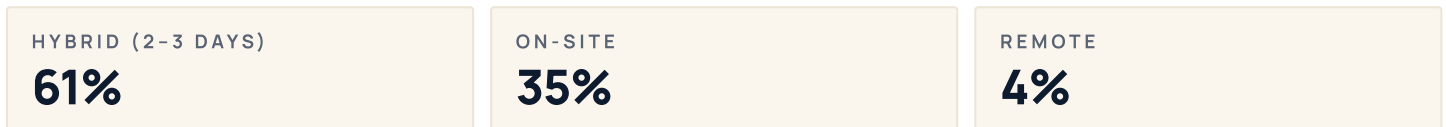
SECTION 04

Salary Insights & Hiring Trends

Our data captures roles advertised at \$80,000+ base salary, representing the mid-to-senior end of the market – typically professionals with 3+ years experience, team leaders, managers and directors.



WORK ARRANGEMENT BREAKDOWN



AVERAGE SALARIES BY ROLE LEVEL (\$80K+ MARKET)

ROLE LEVEL	AVERAGE	TYPICAL RANGE	MOVEMENT VS APRIL
Supply Chain Director / VP	\$245k	\$200k – \$295k+	▲ +\$5k
Head of Procurement	\$220k	\$190k – \$260k	▲ +\$10k – procurement premium widening
General Manager – SC / Logistics	\$200k	\$170k – \$250k	– flat
IBP / S&OP Manager	\$168k	\$150k – \$195k	▲ +\$3k
Supply Chain Manager	\$162k	\$142k – \$185k	▲ +\$2k
Senior Buyer / Category Manager	\$152k	\$135k – \$175k	▲ +\$4k – busiest segment
Logistics Manager	\$138k	\$122k – \$160k	– flat
Demand / Supply Planner	\$128k	\$115k – \$148k	▲ +\$3k
Procurement Officer / Buyer	\$116k	\$100k – \$130k	▲ +\$2k
Warehouse Manager	\$98k	\$85k – \$115k	– flat

SALARY INTELLIGENCE

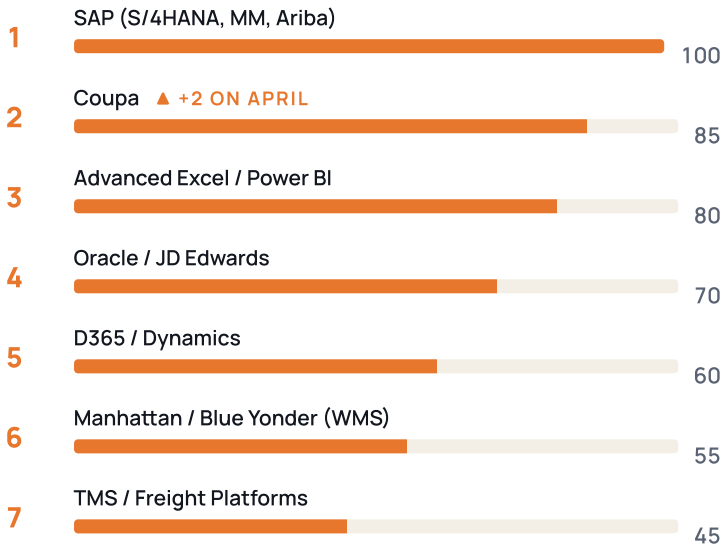
The May salary picture is most easily read through the lens of what the market is paying for procurement skill. Head of Procurement averages have moved up another \$10k since April – a 5% lift in a single month – reflecting how seriously boards are treating cost-out leadership right now. Senior Buyer and Category Manager benchmarks are also up materially. Nutrien Ag Solutions' Category Manager – National Horticulture role (\$207k–\$345k) is the standout outlier of the May market and a useful anchor on what specialist category leadership can now command. At the other end, Warehouse Manager and Logistics Manager benchmarks are flat – operational tier remains well-supplied with candidates, particularly with the unemployment headline ticking up. Counter-offers are still routine at the \$140k–\$180k band, but employers are being slower to commit to the offer in the first place – average days-from-shortlist-to-offer in our retained pipeline has lengthened from 11 days in April to 17 days in May. That's the confidence story in microcosm.

SECTION 05

Skills & Systems in Demand

The procurement-led hiring market is reshaping the skill priority list. Strategic sourcing, contract renegotiation, supplier consolidation and analytics fluency have moved up sharply. In the May market, the skills that get a CV to the top of the pile are the ones that translate directly to dollars-out.

TECHNICAL SKILLS & ERP SYSTEMS



HARD SKILLS

- Strategic sourcing & category management
- Contract renegotiation under inflation
- Supplier consolidation & rationalisation
- S&OP / IBP process ownership
- Demand forecasting (statistical + scenario)
- Data analytics (SQL, Python, Power BI)
- Lean / Six Sigma / continuous improvement

SOFT SKILLS

- Commercial acumen & financial fluency
- Crisis leadership & calm under pressure
- Stakeholder management (cross-functional)
- Executive communication (board-level)
- Supplier relationship management
- Change & transformation leadership

Coupa has moved up two spots on April – direct reflection of procurement-led hiring and source-to-pay technology investment.

CERTIFICATIONS THAT STAND OUT



WHERE THE ROLES ARE: SYDNEY GEOGRAPHY

Western Sydney	Macquarie Park	CBD / Surry Hills / North Sydney	Port Botany / Alexandria / Botany
<p><i>Wetherill Park, Eastern Creek, Moorebank, Kemps Creek, Bella Vista, Marsden Park</i></p> <p>DSV (4 roles), Primary Connect (2 roles) and VISY (GM Packaging, State Logistics) leading the activity. 3PL operations, Woolworths SC arm and packaging manufacturing all running hot. Spirax Sarco National Logistics & Facilities at Marsden Park. The highest-volume zone in May.</p>	<p><i>Corporate FMCG / Retail belt</i></p> <p>Kimberly-Clark, Metcash, Mondelez, Nutrien Ag, Coles Group all hiring concurrently. Procurement and category management dominant.</p>	<p><i>Corporate HQ belt</i></p> <p>Endeavour Group, Optus, Mirvac, Temple & Webster (Head of SC Technology, St Peters), BAI Communications, Diageo, Calvin Klein, Abbott Laboratories (Head of SC), NEXTDC (Head of Global Integrated Operations). Corporate SC strategy and procurement leadership.</p>	<p><i>Port precinct</i></p> <p>Freight forwarding, customs and logistics specialists. DSV (Alexandria, Len Waters), Advanced Navigation (Head of Procurement and Logistics, Botany), Parnell Manufacturing (Head of Operations NPI, Alexandria). Under sustained pressure from re-routed Asia-Europe volumes.</p>

SECTION 06

The Business Confidence Story

Three months after Hormuz, two CPI prints into the resurgence, and one RBA rate hike further than the market wanted, Australian business is operating in a confidence environment that's barely off its worst-ever reading. Here's what's actually happening – and what it means for hiring in Sydney supply chain.

STATUS AS AT 20 MAY 2026

NAB Business Confidence at **-24 in April**, up modestly from March's -29 (the second-largest monthly drop on record). Business conditions at +3 – the second-lowest reading since 2020. Capex intentions down 8 points, the sharpest single-month drop since the post-pandemic rebound. The Q1 CPI print at 4.6% (released 30 April) confirmed the upside inflation risk. The RBA hiked another 25bps to 4.35% at the May meeting. Hormuz is now in its 12th week of closure, with some flows expected to resume late May. Brent crude sits at \$105-\$111 through May.

THE FOUR FORCES SHAPING HIRING DECISIONS THIS MONTH

<p>CONFIDENCE RECOVERY STALLED</p> <p>NAB index at -24 – better than -29 but still deep negative. Capex collapsed 8 points. Forward orders, cash flow and employment intentions all well below long-run norms. Hiring managers say one thing on intent surveys, sign something different on actual job requisitions.</p>	<p>MARGIN SQUEEZE DRIVING PROCUREMENT HIRES</p> <p>Purchase costs up 4.5% qoq vs selling prices up 1.8%. That 2.7-point gap is structural and it's what's making procurement the C-suite priority. Every margin point eaten by input cost is one a Category Manager is now being hired to claw back.</p>	<p>RBA NOW IN "WAIT AND WATCH" MODE</p> <p>The May 25bps hike to 4.35% was the third of the year. Statement guidance suggests Board now content to pause unless Hormuz worsens or Q2 CPI surprises. Rate-cut pricing pushed firmly into late 2026. Capital is expensive – and stays expensive.</p>	<p>HORMUZ SETTLING INTO STEADY STATE</p> <p>Strait still 95% blocked. Some flows expected to resume late May. Brent has stabilised in the \$105-\$111 range. Insurance, war-risk premiums and Cape routing now baked into FY27 budgets. Disruption is now the operating norm, not the exception.</p>
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WHERE WE ARE NOW – DISRUPTION TIMELINE

<p>WEEK 1-2 · MARCH</p>	<p>Booking stops, surcharges, vessel rerouting, insurance withdrawal from Hormuz.</p>
<p>WEEK 3-5 · MAR-APR</p>	<p>Cape routing normalised; first wave of diverted cargo arrives at Sydney & Melbourne.</p>
<p>WEEK 6-8 · APRIL</p>	<p>Port congestion, fuel pass-through, fertiliser supply gaps visible, contract renegotiations accelerating.</p>
<p>WEEK 9-12 · NOW</p>	<p>Q1 CPI at 4.6%, RBA at 4.35%, business confidence at -24. Structural cost uplift locked in. Procurement hiring surges as cost-out becomes the C-suite priority. Some Hormuz flows expected to resume late May.</p>
<p>MONTH 4-6 · Q3 FORECAST</p>	<p>If Hormuz fully reopens, fuel pass-through eases by Q4. If not, permanent re-routing becomes base case. Insurance and war-risk markets settle at new equilibrium.</p>

SECTION 06 (CONT.)

What This Means for Hiring

Strip the macro back to what we're actually seeing across briefs and conversations with Sydney clients this month, and the picture is sharper than the headline confidence number suggests.

- 01 Procurement is the standout. Across the board.**
 36% of advertised direct-employer roles in May – the highest single-function share we've measured. Companies are getting serious about cost control. Strategic sourcing, category management, contract renegotiation and supplier consolidation are now the most-requested capability set. If you're a category manager or strategic sourcing lead, your phone should be ringing.
- 02 Essential hiring continues at pace.**
 Operational and replacement roles are moving normally. Planners, buyers, demand and supply roles, transport and logistics ops – the day-to-day SC machine still needs to run, and recruitment for these positions has not slowed. What's slowed is the discretionary expansion hire.
- 03 Exec-tier holds at 17 – but the composition has flipped toward cost-out.**
 Executive-tier hiring is holding steady at **17 direct-employer Head-of / GM / Director roles – matching April exactly.** But what's on the exec board has changed materially. The growth-leadership and transformation-director roles that featured in April's list are scarce in May. Instead, the exec board is dominated by procurement and supply chain leadership (Abbott Labs Head of SC, Advanced Navigation Head of Procurement & Logistics, Laser Clinics Head of Procurement, Avis Budget Senior Procurement Manager APAC, Lynch Group Procurement Leader), and by manufacturing and operations leadership (Parnell Manufacturing Head of Operations NPI, QSR Pty Head of Operations, Bin X GM Skip Bin Operations). VISY is in market for three concurrent SC exec roles (GM Packaging, GM Linehaul, State Logistics Manager) – a notable build-out signalling sustained NSW capacity investment in packaging and consumer goods. Average days from shortlist to offer in our retained pipeline has lengthened from 11 to 17 – hiring managers are doing more reference work and more board sign-off before committing.
- 04 Counter-offers persistent, especially at \$140k-\$180k.**
 The most contested band remains. Counter-offers routinely reach 15-20% above the original. Procurement candidates with hard cost-out track records are fielding three or more approaches.
- 05 Fixed-term creeping further up.**
 Now 14% of advertised market (from 13% in April, 12% in March). 12-month transformation contracts, particularly for cost-optimisation projects, are the preferred way to hedge a confidence-constrained budget cycle.

ABOUT SIGMA SEARCH

Sigma Search is a Sydney-based specialist executive recruitment firm focused exclusively on supply chain, logistics and procurement roles across Australia and New Zealand. With 15+ years of executive search experience, we work on retained and exclusive assignments to source senior talent that is typically off-market and cannot be found through traditional advertising channels.

Our clients engage us because we bring market intelligence, not just CVs – and in a market defined by uncertainty, that intelligence is never more valuable.

Jon-Paul Hilton
 Principal Consultant
 +61 423 929 471
jhilton@sigmasearch.com.au
sigmasearch.com.au
 Level 6, 115 Pitt Street, Sydney

WHY RETAINED SEARCH DELIVERS BETTER OUTCOMES

<p>Off-Market Access</p> <p>The best supply chain candidates at \$140k+ are not browsing job boards. They respond to direct, confidential approaches from recruiters who understand their specialisation.</p>	<p>Speed of Process</p> <p>In a market where top candidates field multiple approaches, a structured retained search with clear milestones moves faster and wins more often.</p>
<p>Market Intelligence</p> <p>Retained search includes live salary benchmarking, competitor mapping and candidate feedback – intelligence that improves the hire and informs workforce planning.</p>	<p>Commitment & Focus</p> <p>Retained assignments receive dedicated resourcing and senior consultant time from day one, rather than competing for attention in a contingent pile.</p>

This report has been prepared by Sigma Search for general market information purposes. Salary data represents market observations from advertised roles and direct candidate engagement and should be used as a guide only. All role data sourced from direct employer advertising in the Sydney metropolitan area. Recruitment agency, government panel and confidential roles excluded. © Sigma Search 2026.