



Tyler Wren - NZ Legal Salary Guide 2021/2022



Market Overview

The market is more volatile than ever before and the demand for New Zealand and Australian qualified Lawyers is at an all-time high. The team at Tyler Wren has put together their latest salary guide to give insight into salaries and benefits in NZ. Across the industry salaries are increasing and those firms not offering an attractive salary and package are simply not securing the staff that they need in their teams. Active job seekers are receiving multiple job offers and are able to negotiate both soft and hard benefits to match their personal requirements. Some firms are having open discussions with potential employees in terms of salary, hourly charge out rate, annual budget and daily billing hours to formulate the right balance per individual and new attraction techniques and package options are being adopted to entice the best talent.

The main reasons behind the private practice brain drain are:

- Individuals are heading back on their OEs.
- Australian firms are aggressively recruiting from NZ.
- Due to increased regulation, there is a greater demand for In-house Lawyers within the Commercial sector.
- Financial Services and Insurance sectors are hiring Lawyers within the risk, compliance, regulatory and conduct space and are often offering highly attractive packages in terms of salary and flexibility.
- A lighter intake of graduates in 2019 across the industry creating a knock-on effect for 2 year PQE Lawyers in 2021.
- A steady bleed of Lawyers leaving the industry for mental wellness reasons.

Employers that are able to change and flex their approach to recruitment are securing excellent talent. In addition, job seekers feel more confident in their approach to negotiating salary and benefits. The knock on effect of this is a more bought in and motivated employee, who will add value in terms of productivity and culture to their new firms on a long term basis.

The larger firms especially the Top Tiers are able to offer broad flexibility in terms of start date. Due to the skill shortage firms are prepared to wait for talent for up to six months in some cases. Although a date is needed for team structuring purposes. This is especially for those returning to NZ following an OE with over 4 years PQE. Overseas qualified Solicitors within highly specialist areas eg tech or securitisation are also in demand. Although work from home and flexibility is more common in the legal workplace there is very little appetite for full time remote work arrangements from both employer and employee. Finally, there have been pockets of overseas returners continue their employment from NZ on a remote work arrangement with their often UK based employers for a period of time however many have found this unsustainable due to managing the time difference and joined the New Zealand legal work force.

Marcus Martin, CEO, College of Law gives a brief insight:

With COVID limiting travel, a record number of graduates have been enrolling in Profs as part of their preparation for joining the legal profession. While the large firms continue to employ consistent numbers of graduates the employment opportunities that exist in other private practice firms has seen a significant decline. The exception to this decline is in-house / Government opportunities. Not only are there a high number of graduate placements being made but this particular sector is seen by many graduates as a preferable career choice due to the perception of a better work / life balance as well as little variation in comparative remuneration and associated benefits.

Time will tell as to how the New Zealand legal economy will progress through this new way of working but there are many signs that the trends that we are currently experiencing will be long term and have significant implications on the recruitment approaches of employers in both the private practice and in-house sectors.

Salary

Top Tier Law Firms*	2 Years PQE	3 Years PQE	4 Years PQE	5 Years PQE	6 + Years PQE	Senior Associate	Special Counsel
Auckland	\$75,000	\$85,000	\$105,000	\$120,000	\$140,000	\$160,000	\$170,000
Wellington	\$72,000	\$82,000	\$100,000	\$117,000	\$130,000	\$150,000	\$160,000
Christchurch	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$97,000	\$110,000	\$125,000	\$145,000	\$155,000
Regions	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Mid Tier Law Firms*	2 Years PQE	3 Years PQE	4 Years PQE	5 Years PQE	6 + Years PQE	Senior Associate	Special Counsel
Auckland	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$95,000	\$115,000	\$130,000	\$140,000	\$150,000
Wellington	\$67,000	\$77,000	\$90,000	\$112,000	\$120,000	\$135,000	\$145,000
Christchurch	\$65,000	\$75,000	\$87,000	\$100,000	\$110,000	\$130,000	\$140,000
Regions	\$67,000	\$77,000	\$90,000	\$112,000	\$120,000	\$135,000	\$145,000

Specialist Boutiques*	2 Years PQE	3 Years PQE	4 Years PQE	5 Years PQE	6 + Years PQE	Senior Associate	Special Counsel
Auckland	\$75,000	\$85,000	\$105,000	\$130,000	\$145,000	\$165,000	\$175,000
Wellington	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$100,000	\$130,000	\$140,000	\$160,000	\$170,000
Christchurch	\$65,000	\$75,000	\$95,000	\$120,000	\$130,000	\$150,000	\$160,000
Regions	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$100,000	\$130,000	\$140,000	\$160,000	\$170,000

General Practices*	2 Years PQE	3 Years PQE	4 Years PQE	5 Years PQE	6 + Years PQE	Senior Associate	Special Counsel
Auckland	\$60,000	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$90,000	\$115,000	\$130,000	N/A
Wellington	\$57,000	\$67,000	\$77,000	\$87,000	\$110,000	\$125,000	N/A
Christchurch	\$55,000	\$65,000	\$75,000	\$85,000	\$100,000	\$120,000	N/A
Regions	\$50,000	\$60,000	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$90,000	\$110,000	N/A

* Each band has a variance of + / - \$10,000 NZ

In-House Corporates*	2 Years PQE	3 Years PQE	4 Years PQE	5 Years PQE	6 + Years PQE	General Counsel
Auckland	\$75,000	\$85,000	\$105,000	\$120,000	\$140,000	\$160,000
Wellington	\$72,000	\$82,000	\$100,000	\$117,000	\$130,000	\$155,000
Christchurch	\$70,000	\$80,000	\$97,000	\$110,000	\$125,000	\$150,000
Regions	\$72,000	\$82,000	\$100,000	\$117,000	\$130,000	\$155,000

* Each band has a variance of + / - \$10,000

Benefits

2021 / 2022 is without a doubt a candidate's market! The intrinsic rewards that candidates are making decisions on are pay parity, working conditions (flexibility), and the organisation's and team's culture. However, extrinsic rewards are now coming to the forefront as candidates decide what is next in their career trajectory and what can an employer offer them in building on that experience.

Potential benefits on offer in the legal market include:

- Mental wellness support
- Flexible working
- Work from home capabilities
- Laptops / mobile phones
- Tailored progression plans
- Annual bonuses
- Travel allowances
- Health / life insurance policies
- Full salaried paid maternity leave
- Part time Partnership opportunities
- Relocation packages
- Extended leave
- Sign on bonuses
- Part time options
- Extended maternity pay
- Paternity pay
- Wellness allowances
- Ability to buy / sell holidays
- Kiwi saver on top of salary
- Non budgetary requirements
- Parking
- Secondments

Many firms, especially boutiques and general practices are tailoring their benefits to individuals rather than having a standard list. This has allowed them to calibrate their workforce and attract individuals not just based on salary. This has also allowed them to compete with top tiers offering higher salary bandings.

We'd love to hear your feedback on our commentary and findings and the team is available to talk to employers looking to hire or those wanting to discuss the next step of their career.

Tyler Wren
CAREER EXPERTS

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Te Whare Kura Ture o Aotearoa

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