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Hourly Work Index

AUGUST 2026 EDITION

A detailed look into the state of hourly work across healthcare, hospitality, retail and services in Australia.

Built from Deputy's world of work and industry insights data, analysing month on month changes in the metrics that matter most.

AUSTRALIAN HOURLY WORK INDEX

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THE MONTH IN FOUR NUMBERS

August at a glance

AVERAGE HOURLY PAY · ALL SECTORS

$37.26 ▲ 1.8% MoM

The largest single-month increase in average hourly pay this year, and the second month of the new financial year, consistent with the Fair Work Commission's award increase flowing through pay periods that began on or after 1 July. Every sector recorded higher hourly pay than in July.

HOURS WORKED · ALL FOUR SECTORS

33.4M ▼ 7.7% MoM

The steepest monthly decrease in hours in 2026, and the first month in which all four sectors decreased together. With pay per hour now higher, employers are buying fewer hours rather than fewer people.

EMPLOYEE TURNOVER · ALL SECTORS

▼ 21.4% Month-on-month

28,643 terminations, the lowest monthly total of 2026 and a decrease in every sector. New hires held effectively flat at 22,080 (▲ 0.3%), so teams are holding together rather than turning over.

PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING

8.3 days ahead ▲ 24.1% MoM

The longest average lead time for locking in shifts recorded this year, up from 5.6 days in January. Every sector rostered further ahead than it did in July.

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SECTOR · BY THE NUMBERS

Healthcare

AVG SHIFTS / EMPLOYEE	AVG HOURS / EMPLOYEE	AVERAGE SHIFT LENGTH (HRS)	NEW HIRES (% CHANGE)
9.1 ▼ 8.3%	63.1 ▼ 9.7%	6.97 ▼ 1.6%	▼ 20.4%

EMPLOYEE TURNOVER (% CHANGE)	PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING (DAYS)	AVERAGE SHIFT-PAY ($AUD)	AVERAGE HOURLY PAY ($AUD)
▼ 30.3%	13.5 ▲ 27.3%	$275.86 ▼ 1.8%	$41.70 ▲ 0.8%

Healthcare pulled back harder than any other sector in August, with shifts per employee decreasing 8.3% and hours per employee 9.7%. Shifts also got shorter, the only sector where average shift length decreased more than half a percent. Turnover decreased 30.3%, the largest decrease of any sector, while new hires decreased 20.4%, so the workforce is being held in place and worked less rather than replaced. At 13.5 days, Healthcare rosters further ahead than any other sector by a wide margin.

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SECTOR · BY THE NUMBERS

Hospitality

AVG SHIFTS / EMPLOYEE	AVG HOURS / EMPLOYEE	AVERAGE SHIFT LENGTH (HRS)	NEW HIRES (% CHANGE)
9.7 ▼ 2.0%	65.0 ▼ 2.0%	6.69 — 0.0%	▲ 0.7%

EMPLOYEE TURNOVER (% CHANGE)	PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING (DAYS)	AVERAGE SHIFT-PAY ($AUD)	AVERAGE HOURLY PAY ($AUD)
▼ 20.3%	6.6 ▲ 20.2%	$215.59 ▲ 2.4%	$35.51 ▲ 2.5%

Hospitality held up better than any other sector, with shifts and hours per employee decreasing only 2.0% against a 7.4% decrease across the Index. It also posted the largest pay movement anywhere: hourly pay increased 2.5% and pay per shift 2.4%, the clearest sign of the new award rates reaching the sector most exposed to them. New hires were the only positive in a month of hiring restraint elsewhere, and turnover decreased 20.3%.

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SECTOR · BY THE NUMBERS

Retail

AVG SHIFTS / EMPLOYEE	AVG HOURS / EMPLOYEE	AVERAGE SHIFT LENGTH (HRS)	NEW HIRES (% CHANGE)
9.4 ▼ 5.2%	62.7 ▼ 5.5%	6.65 — 0.3%	▲ 6.6%

EMPLOYEE TURNOVER (% CHANGE)	PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING (DAYS)	AVERAGE SHIFT-PAY ($AUD)	AVERAGE HOURLY PAY ($AUD)
▼ 16.6%	9.6 ▲ 25.8%	$217.10 ▲ 1.6%	$35.13 ▲ 2.0%

Retail was the only sector to combine a meaningful pullback in hours with a genuine increase in hiring: shifts per employee decreased 5.2% while new hires increased 6.6%, the largest hiring increase in the Index. That points to spreading a similar amount of work across more people, most likely ahead of the pre-Christmas ramp. Retail also holds the second-longest planning horizon at 9.6 days, up 25.8% on July.

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SECTOR · BY THE NUMBERS

Services

AVG SHIFTS / EMPLOYEE	AVG HOURS / EMPLOYEE	AVERAGE SHIFT LENGTH (HRS)	NEW HIRES (% CHANGE)
9.5 ▼ 6.0%	62.5 ▼ 6.3%	6.58 — 0.4%	▲ 6.8%

EMPLOYEE TURNOVER (% CHANGE)	PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING (DAYS)	AVERAGE SHIFT-PAY ($AUD)	AVERAGE HOURLY PAY ($AUD)
▼ 22.3%	8.0 ▲ 33.4%	$235.46 — 0.3%	$40.19 ▲ 1.4%

Services recorded the largest increase in advance scheduling of any sector, with lead times increasing 33.4% to 8.0 days. Hours per employee decreased 6.3% and pay per shift was effectively flat, while hourly pay increased 1.4%, so the same hourly rate is being applied to fewer hours. New hires increased 6.8% and turnover decreased 22.3%, the pattern of a sector adding people while trimming the hours each person works.

EMERGING TRENDS

Month-on-month changes

Looking at the run of monthly data since January, three trends stand out in August.

01

The alternating pattern held, and August broke the record

Shift volumes have flipped direction every month all year: down 4.7% in February, up 9.2% in March, down 6.9% in April, up 8.7% in May, down 2.9% in June, up 3.2% in July and down 7.4% in August. This August decrease is the steepest single-month decline of 2026, and the first in which all four sectors moved down together.

02

Turnover fell off a cliff while hiring held its ground

Terminations had sat between 35,000 and 39,000 every month since January. In August they dropped to 28,643, a 21.4% decrease and the lowest total of the year, with every sector decreasing. New hires stayed flat at 22,080 (▲ 0.3%). Hourly workforces are stabilising, not shrinking.

03

Rosters keep getting locked in earlier

Average lead time for locking in shifts sat at 5.5 to 5.6 days from January to April, then increased to 6.6 in May, 6.6 in July and 8.3 days in August, an increase of 24.1% in a single month and 47% since January. It is now the highest reading in the series, and every sector rostered further ahead than it did in July.

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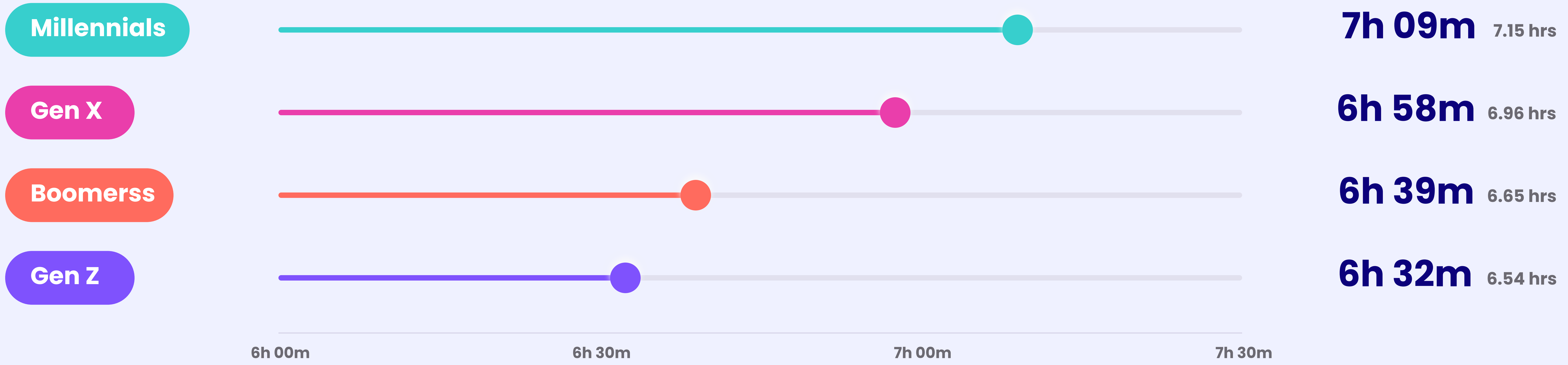
AVERAGE HOURS PER SHIFT · AUGUST 2026

Millennials work 37 mins longer per shift than Gen Z

Average length of a single shift, across healthcare, hospitality, retail and services. Shift length barely moved for any generation month-on-month, so this spread is structural rather than seasonal.



53%
OF A FULL TIME MONTH

Why it matters: no generation is being rostered anything close to a full-time month. Against a 164-hour full-time equivalent, Millennials and Gen X were rostered around 86 hours in August, Gen Z 72 and Boomers 69. Even the longest shifts in the Index add up to barely half a full-time job, which is why polyemployment keeps climbing: workers hold two or three hourly roles because no single one fills the week.

PREDICTABILITY

Who is rostering further ahead

SUB-SECTOR	JUL	AUG	CHANGE
In-Home Care · Services	6.0	**12.1**	▲ 102%
Care Facilities · Healthcare	6.9	**10.5**	▲ 53%
NDIS Providers · Services	6.7	**10.2**	▲ 51%
Other Practitioners · Healthcare	11.5	**16.7**	▲ 45%
Cleaning Services · Services	4.7	**6.6**	▲ 42%
Gyms · Retail	8.5	**11.4**	▲ 34%
MOVING THE OTHER WAY			
Personal & Beauty · Services	10.5	**9.6**	▼ 9%
Hospitals · Healthcare	12.3	**11.0**	▼ 10%

Average days between a shift being locked in and the shift starting. Sub-sectors with 8,000+ shifts in the month.

8.3 days, all sectors ▲ 24.1% MoM

The care economy is rostering like retention depends on it. In-home care, residential care facilities, NDIS providers and allied health practitioners took four of the five largest increases in the Index. These are the sub-sectors with the deepest talent shortages, the highest rates of workers holding more than one job and the largest migrant workforces. A roster confirmed ten days out is a retention lever as much as an operational one: it lets a support worker stack a second job around the first, arrange their own care responsibilities, or commit to study.

Where notice shortened, demand arrives late. Hospitals and personal and beauty services were the only sub-sectors to cut lead time. Both cover demand that cannot be known in advance, acute admissions in one and same-week bookings in the other, so flexibility close to the day is worth more than a roster locked a fortnight out.

This looks structural, not seasonal. August is the third consecutive monthly increase and the highest reading in the series, 47% above January. It arrived in the same month hours worked fell 7.7%, which is the tell: businesses absorbing higher award rates are choosing to plan earlier rather than staff thinner at short notice.

QUOTE · COMMENTARY

Certainty is becoming the currency of hourly work

"

86

Hours Rostered

The average hours a Millennial or Gen X worker was rostered in August.

164 hrs

Standard full-time month equivalent

The most striking number in this month's Index isn't a percentage, it's 86. That's the hours a Millennial or Gen X worker was rostered in August, against the 164 that make up a full-time month. No generation came close to half of it. **That is the mechanic behind polyemployment:** people don't hold two or three hourly jobs by choice, they do it because no single roster fills a week.

At the same time hourly pay increased in every sector, hours fell 7.7%, and turnover dropped to its lowest level of the year. Employers absorbing the July wage rise aren't losing people, they're planning harder. Rosters are now locked in 8.3 days ahead, up from 5.6 in January, and care is leading it — aged care, disability care and in-home care posted the largest increases in notice anywhere in the Index.

The businesses that give people a roster they can build a life around will be the ones who keep them."

Ciaran Hale
Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Deputy

ABOUT THE INDEX

Australian Hourly Work Index

The data methodology and processing standards powering Australia's premier index for hourly workforce insights.

Data Foundations

Utilises high-fidelity, anonymised, and aggregated customer and user data directly from Deputy—the leading global people platform for hourly work.

Statistical Normalisation

The raw data has been mathematically normalised to accurately account for seasonality and the natural demand fluctuations of workforces throughout the week (e.g. weekdays vs. weekends).

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Thriving workplaces
in every community