



**GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Industrial Relations Act 1979

**IN THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION**

No. CICS 1 of 2026

OF THE COMMISSION'S OWN MOTION

SUBMISSION OF THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Re: 2026 STATE WAGE ORDER

THE STAMP OF THE
WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
COMMISSION
13 MAY 2026

5:00 pm

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Registrar

Filed by:

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Introduction

1. In January 2026, the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission (WAIRC) initiated CICS 1 of 2026 of its own motion. The application seeks to make a State Wage order pursuant to section 50A of the *Industrial Relations Act 1979* (IR Act) to determine minimum rates of pay for the purposes of the *Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993* (MCE Act) and State awards.
2. The WAIRC must make a State Wage order before 1 July each year.
3. In making the State Wage order each year, the WAIRC is required to consider the statutory criteria prescribed in section 50A(3) of the IR Act, including:
 - (a) the need to —
 - (i) ensure that Western Australians have a system of fair wages and conditions of employment; and
 - (ii) meet the needs of the low paid; and
 - (iii) provide fair wage standards in the context of living standards generally prevailing in the community; and
 - (iv) contribute to improved living standards for employees; and
 - (v) protect employees who may be unable to reach an industrial agreement; and
 - (vi) encourage ongoing skills development; and
 - (vii) provide equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal or comparable value; and
 - (b) the state of the economy of Western Australia and the likely effect of its decision on that economy and, in particular, on the level of employment, inflation and productivity in Western Australia; and
 - (c) to the extent that it is relevant, the state of the national economy; and
 - (d) to the extent that it is relevant, the capacity of employers as a whole to bear the costs of increased wages, salaries, allowances and other remuneration; and
 - (e) for the purposes of [section 50A(1)(b) and (c)], the need to ensure that the Western Australian award framework represents a system of fair wages and conditions of employment; and
 - (f) relevant decisions of other industrial courts and tribunals; and
 - (g) any other matters the WAIRC considers relevant.
4. The WAIRC must also set out a statement of principles to be applied and followed in relation to the exercise of jurisdiction under the IR Act to set the wages, salaries, allowances or other remuneration of employees or the prices to be paid in respect of their employment; and ensure employees receive equal remuneration.
5. This submission from the Minister for Industrial Relations (the Minister) outlines key economic and labour market data relevant to this year's State Wage Case proceedings, and addresses important social and fairness criteria the WAIRC is required to consider under section 50A of the IR Act.

Minister's position

6. While not advocating a specific position, the Minister submits that any increase should:
 - (a) take into account cost of living pressures facing award-reliant and minimum wage workers;
 - (b) be sustainable for employers and meet the needs of the low paid; and
 - (c) take account of the Annual Wage Review 2026, to ensure that State system employees are afforded fair minimum pay rates.
7. The State Wage Case decision is significant for employees in the State industrial relations system who are reliant on minimum and award rates of pay, and the businesses that employ them.
8. Employees who depend on the outcome of the State Wage Case for an annual wage increase should have confidence they will receive a meaningful adjustment that ensures their living standards are protected and their needs are met.
9. It is also important to be cognisant of the need to encourage opportunities for employment, and to sustain the vital role of small businesses in the ongoing success of the Western Australian economy.
10. The Minister's submission in this year's State Wage Case emphasises key considerations for the WAIRC in determining a fair and considered increase to minimum and award wages.
11. In the 2025 State Wage Case, the WAIRC decided to increase the State Minimum Wage (SMW) and minimum award rates of pay by 3.75%. This brought the SMW to \$953.00 per week. The 2025 State Wage order was effective from the first pay period commencing on or after 1 July 2025.
12. In the national Annual Wage Review 2025, the Fair Work Commission (FWC) granted a 3.5% increase to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and all modern award wage rates, effective from the first full pay period on or after 1 July 2025.
13. The Minister submits it is desirable that any increase determined by the WAIRC in this year's State Wage Case take account of the decision by the FWC in the Annual Wage Review 2026. This will help to ensure that State system employees are afforded fair minimum wages that are competitive with those applying nationally.
14. It is not yet known whether the FWC will implement any substantive changes regarding the NMW and/or modern award classifications as part of this year's Annual Wage Review. It is acknowledged that if any significant changes are implemented by the FWC, any corresponding review of the SMW and/or the State award framework would need to be conducted outside of this year's State Wage Case, given the tight timeframes involved.

The Western Australian economy and labour market

Overview

15. The Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) has provided an economic overview for the Western Australian economy, which is included at **Attachment A** to this submission. As in previous years, Mr David Christmas, Director of the Economic and Revenue Forecasting Division, will be a witness for DTF in this year's State Wage Case. Mr Christmas' witness statement is included at **Attachment B**.
16. The current economic outlook is impacted by a highly uncertain global environment, which has been exacerbated by the current conflict in the Middle East. A sharp rise in energy prices since the outbreak of conflict in Iran has fuelled inflationary pressures and is undermining confidence in the global economy.
17. Notwithstanding heightened uncertainty in the global economy, the Western Australian economy remains resilient. The domestic economy, measured by State Final Demand, is estimated to grow by 3.5% in 2025-26, with growth underpinned by private demand including a significant lift in business investment, strong growth in dwelling investment and solid household consumption.
18. Overall economic growth, as measured by Gross State Product, is estimated to rebound to 3.25% in 2025-26, as the export sector recovers from weather-related events and structural factors impacting some commodities.
19. The resilience of the economy has flowed through to the labour market, with strong hiring activity in late 2025 and early 2026 seeing employment at record highs in March 2026. Consistent with this, the unemployment rate has remained low and is estimated to average 4.0% in 2025-26.
20. Inflationary pressures have re-emerged both nationally and internationally, driven by higher fuel and transport costs stemming from the Middle East conflict, which are expected to flow through to local inflation in the near-term.
21. Given the uncertainty regarding the duration and scale of the Middle East conflict, the broader macroeconomic effects outside of inflation represent a potential material downside risk to both economic growth and inflation outcomes.¹
22. A more in-depth analysis of Western Australia's economic performance is detailed in **Attachment A**.

Figure 1: Western Australia's economy and labour market²

Perth CPI (annual growth - excluding electricity) = 4.3% (Mar 2026)	State Final Demand (annual growth) = 3.3% (Dec 2025)	Participation Rate = 68.8% (Mar 2026)	WA Population ³ (Sep 2025) = 3.062 m (2.2% annual growth)
Unemployment Rate = 4.2% (Mar 2026)	ABS Job Vacancies (annual growth) = 4.5% (Feb 2026)	WPI (annual growth) = 3.6% (Mar 2026)	Employment Growth (annual) = 1.9% (Mar 2026)

¹ Department of Treasury and Finance (2026), *2026-27 Western Australian State Budget*.

² Figures are current as of 13 May 2026. Figures based on data published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). All labour force figures are seasonally adjusted.

³ Original data. Change from corresponding quarter of previous year.

Increased fuel costs

23. Fuel costs for workers and businesses in Western Australia have risen from March 2026 following the disruption to international oil supplies, as a result of the conflict in the Middle East and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.
24. Through FuelWatch, the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS) monitors and reports daily prices for unleaded petrol (ULP), diesel, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) within the Perth metropolitan area and Western Australian regional areas.
25. Data provided by FuelWatch, illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 below, shows the dramatic increase in average fuel costs following the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East. The emerging decline that can be seen is at least partially due to the Australian Government's temporary halving of the fuel excise, announced on 30 March 2026, and the decision by all State and Territory Governments to forgo increased GST revenue on fuel transactions in order to fund a further 5.7 cents per litre cut in the fuel excise.

Figure 2: Weekly average price of ULP and diesel in the Perth metropolitan region⁴

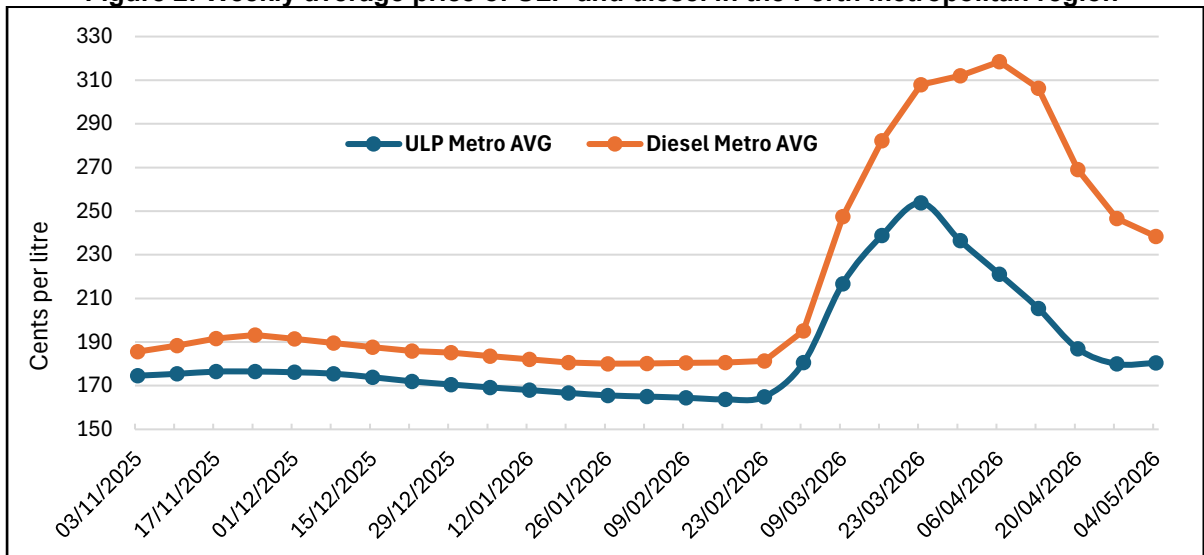
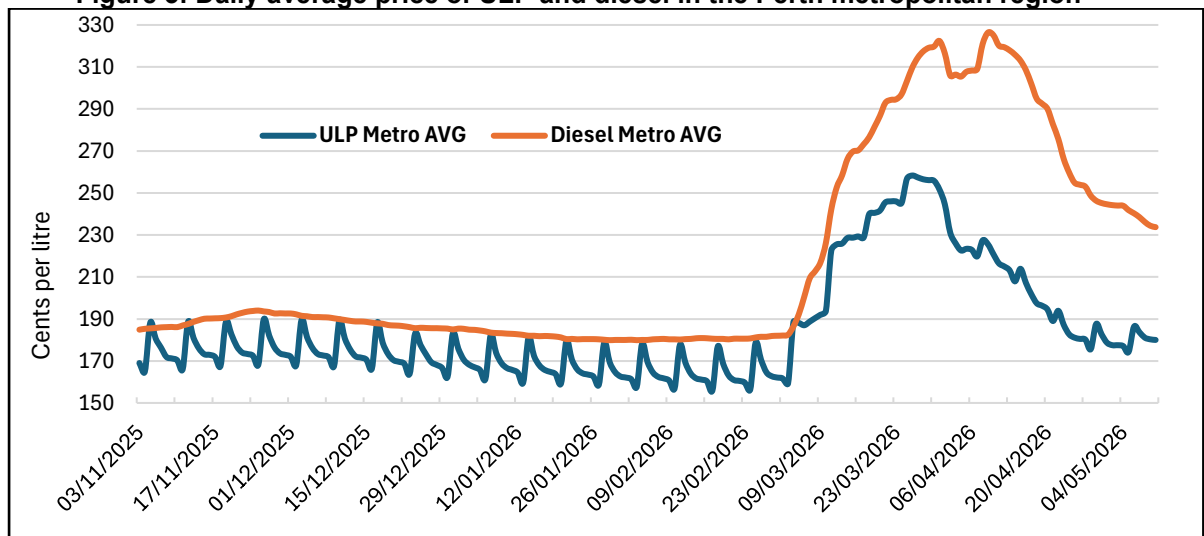


Figure 3: Daily average price of ULP and diesel in the Perth metropolitan region⁵



⁴ FuelWatch data of average fuel prices over the previous six months, extracted on 12 May 2026.

⁵ Ibid.

26. When compared with the corresponding month of the previous year, the average price of ULP in the Perth metropolitan region in March 2026 was 26.8% higher and the price of diesel was 39.4% higher. In April 2026, ULP and diesel were 18.7% and 59.8% higher respectively.⁶
27. Weekly average price data for Western Australia published by FuelWatch indicates that fuel prices in the regions are higher than prices for fuel in Perth.⁷
28. Elevated fuel prices have a significant effect on the low paid, who have limited capacity to shoulder unexpected increases in essential living costs. This is particularly an issue for workers with a higher dependence on personal vehicles for work or commuting, including many living in outer suburban or regional areas.
29. Higher ULP and diesel prices have also created pressure for many businesses, requiring them to absorb increased costs, lift prices for consumers and/or reduce operations.

Labour market conditions in Western Australia

30. The following section presents a selection of labour market data detailing the State's performance over recent months. As most of the data indicates, the labour market in Western Australia remains relatively tight, despite a softening in conditions over much of 2025.
31. At the time of preparing this submission, the current conflict in the Middle East has not, as yet, had any discernable impact on labour force figures.⁸ Labour market indices often trail behind any changed economic circumstances, and the current situation is highly uncertain.

Employment trends

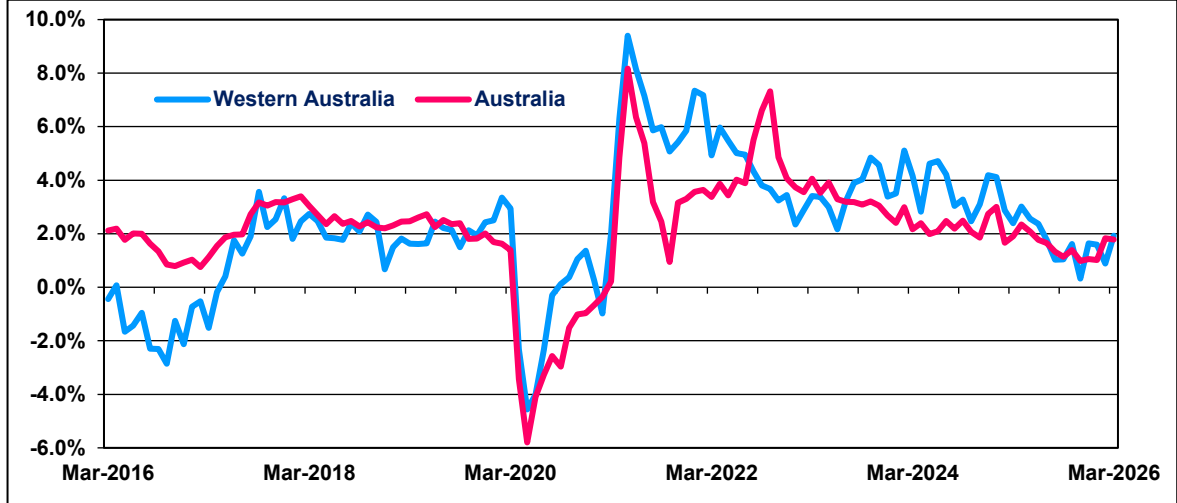
32. As indicated below in Figure 4, total employment rose in Western Australia to a record 1,679,100 people in March 2026. In year-ended terms, total employment rose by 1.9% in the 12 months to March 2026, down from 2.4% growth in the 12 months to March 2025.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Based on FuelWatch's published analysis of weekly average fuel price movements, accessed 11 May 2026.

⁸ The March 2026 Labour Force Survey reference period was 1 March 2026 to 14 March 2026, which was the first two weeks of the conflict.

Figure 4: Annual (year-ended) total employment growth (%), WA and Australia, 2016 to 2026⁹



33. Growth of full time employment in Western Australia has moderated over the last 12 months, in line with an easing in total employment growth. Full time employment grew by 2.0% in the year to March 2026, while part time employment grew by 1.8%.

Figure 5: Annual (year-ended) full time employment growth, WA and Australia, 2016 - 2026¹⁰

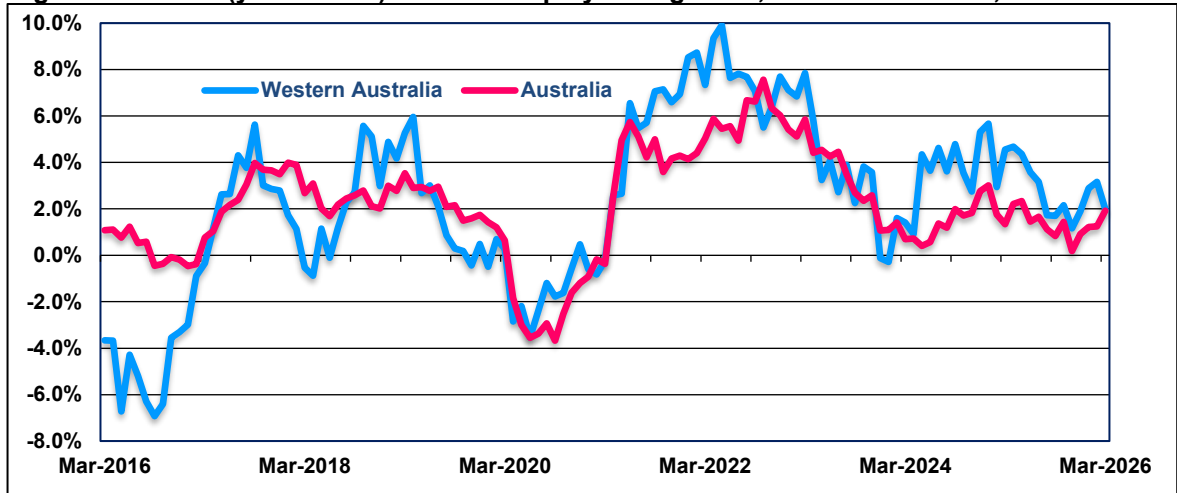
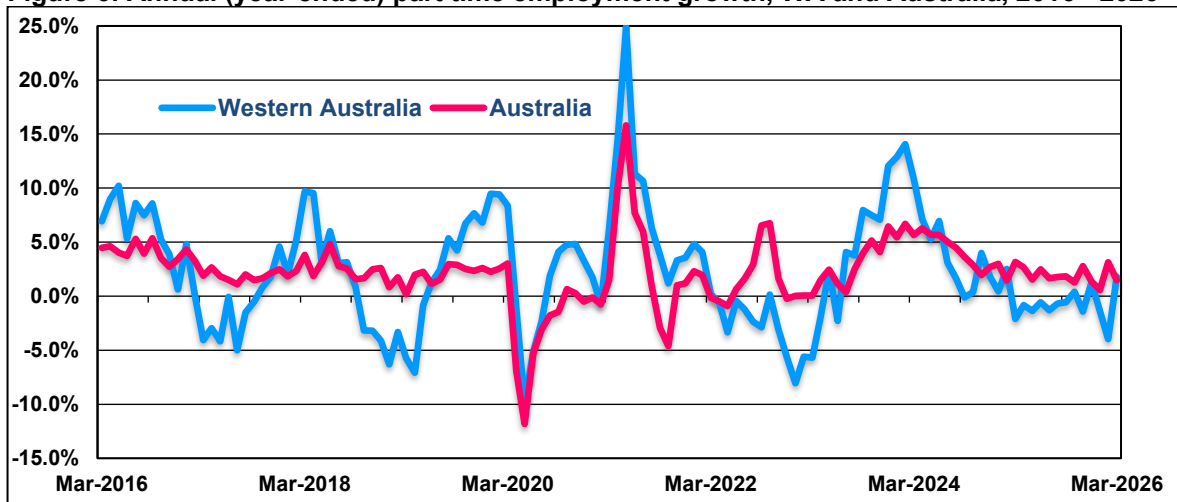


Figure 6: Annual (year-ended) part time employment growth, WA and Australia, 2016 - 2026¹¹



⁹ ABS (2026), *Labour Force, Australia, March 2026*, Catalogue 6202.0, Tables 1 & 8 (seasonally adjusted).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

34. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data regarding average employment within Western Australia indicates mixed results in regard to jobs growth by industry in the year to February 2026. 'Manufacturing' and 'Electricity, gas, water and waste services' both recorded sizable increases in total employment, while 'Mining' recorded a decline. 'Health care and social assistance' continues to be the largest employing industry by quite a margin.

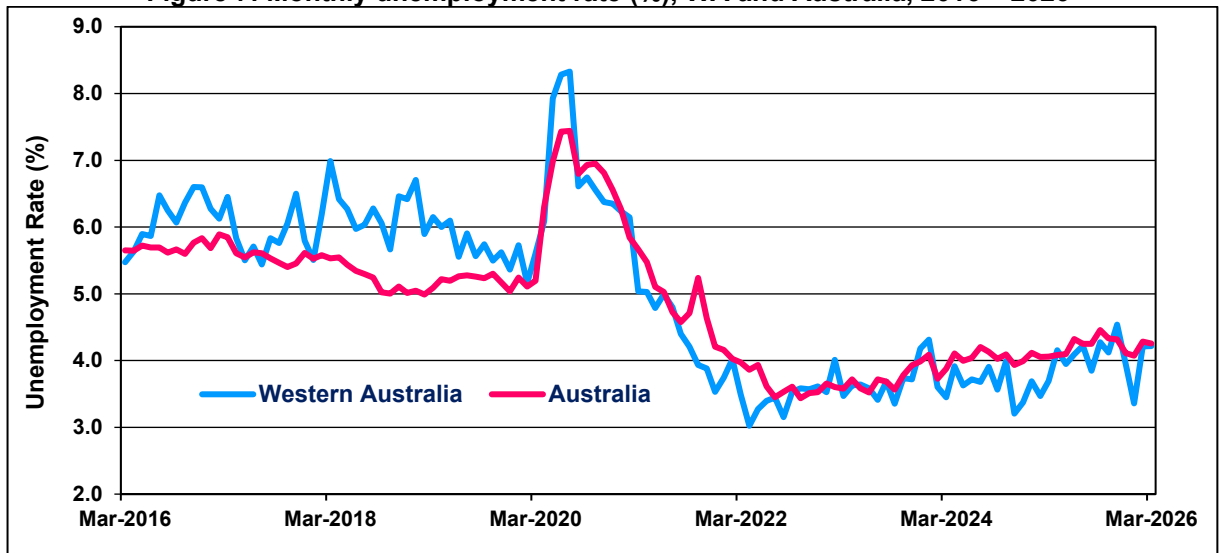
Table 1: Average employment by industry in WA (000s), February 2025 and February 2026¹²

TOTAL EMPLOYED ('000)	Feb-25	Feb-26	Employment growth (000s)	Employment growth (%)
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	34.3	36.2	1.9	5.5
Mining	156.1	143.9	-12.2	-7.8
Manufacturing	78	92.9	14.9	19
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	26.2	40.5	14.3	54.4
Construction	156.5	160.6	4.1	2.6
Wholesale trade	38	40.3	2.2	5.9
Retail trade	140.7	149.8	9.1	6.5
Accommodation and food services	105.7	104.0	-1.7	-1.6
Transport, postal and warehousing	83.9	74.2	-9.6	-11.5
Information media and telecommunications	14.9	13.8	-1.2	-7.9
Financial and insurance services	31.7	28.0	-3.7	-11.6
Rental, hiring and real estate services	22.3	26.9	4.6	20.7
Professional, scientific and technical services	133	132.0	-1.1	-0.8
Administrative and support services	52.4	49.8	-2.6	-4.9
Public administration and safety	102.8	98.2	-4.6	-4.5
Education and training	136.2	136.6	0.4	0.3
Health care and social assistance	237.7	240.0	2.3	0.9
Arts and recreation services	28.1	26.5	-1.6	-5.7
Other services	62.5	66.8	4.3	6.8
Total	1641.1	1660.8	19.7	1.2

35. Western Australia's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 4.2% in March 2026. Over the year to March 2026, Western Australia's average unemployment rate was 4.1%, up from 3.7% in the year to March 2025. Despite the increase, average unemployment remains low by historical standards. Western Australia's monthly unemployment rate has converged on the national figure in recent months.

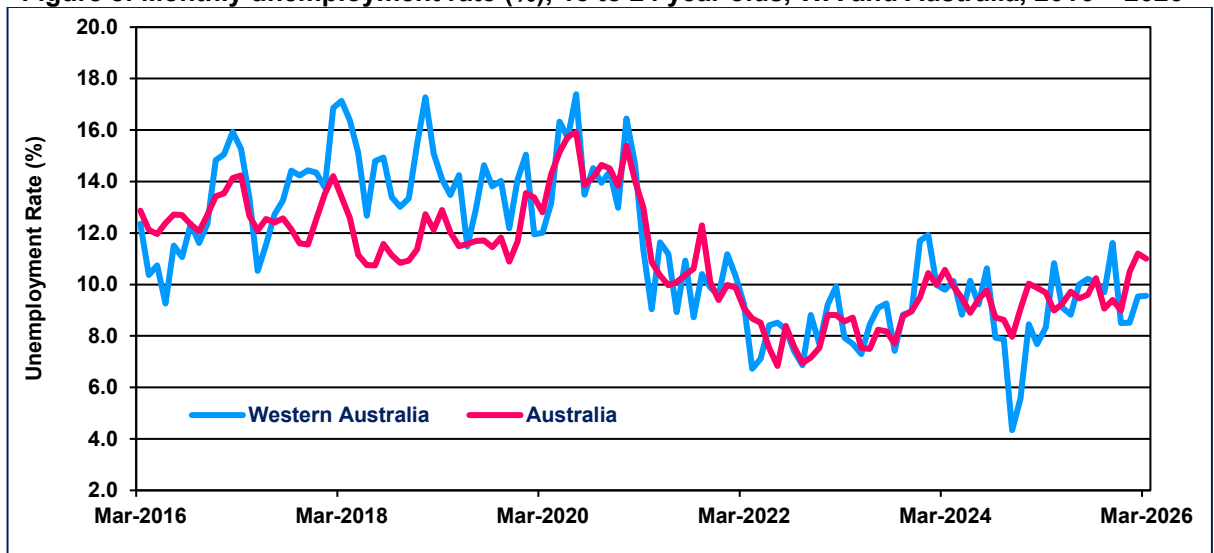
¹² ABS (2026), *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, February 2026*, Catalogue 6291.0.55.003, Table 5 (original data). Note: Industry employment data is only released four times per year and is not seasonally adjusted. Figures displayed here are an average of the four quarters in the year to February 2025 and 2026 respectively. This data collection differs from the ABS monthly Labour Force Survey, and figures may not sum to the total due to rounding.

Figure 7: Monthly unemployment rate (%), WA and Australia, 2016 – 2026¹³



36. Youth unemployment in Western Australia (in original terms) stood at 9.6% in March 2026. Over the 12 months to March 2026, the average monthly youth unemployment rate was 9.7%, up from an average 8.3% in the year to March 2025.

Figure 8: Monthly unemployment rate (%), 15 to 24 year olds, WA and Australia, 2016 – 2026¹⁴



Underemployment

37. The underemployment rate measures the number of underemployed workers (those who are employed but would like more hours of work) expressed as a percentage of the civilian labour force.
38. Underemployment in Western Australia remains low by historical standards, as much of the spare capacity in the workforce has been absorbed. The underemployment rate is comparable to a year ago, and has ranged between 4.7% and 6.2% each month over the past 12 months, standing at 5.6% in March 2026, the lowest of the states. Nationally, the underemployment rate was 5.9% in March 2026.¹⁵

¹³ ABS (2026), *Labour Force, Australia, March 2026*, Catalogue 6202.0, Table 1 & 8 (seasonally adjusted data).

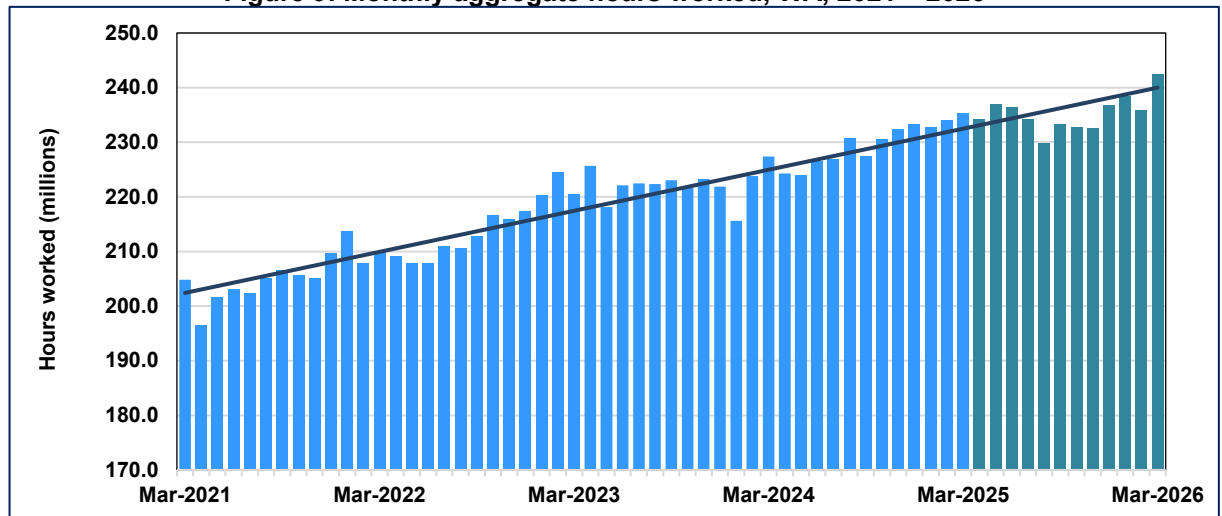
¹⁴ Ibid, Table 16 (original data).

¹⁵ Ibid, Table 23 (seasonally adjusted data).

Hours worked

39. Aggregate hours worked in Western Australia increased over the past year, reaching a high of just over 242 million hours in March 2026. This is consistent with growth in both full time and part time employment over the same period.

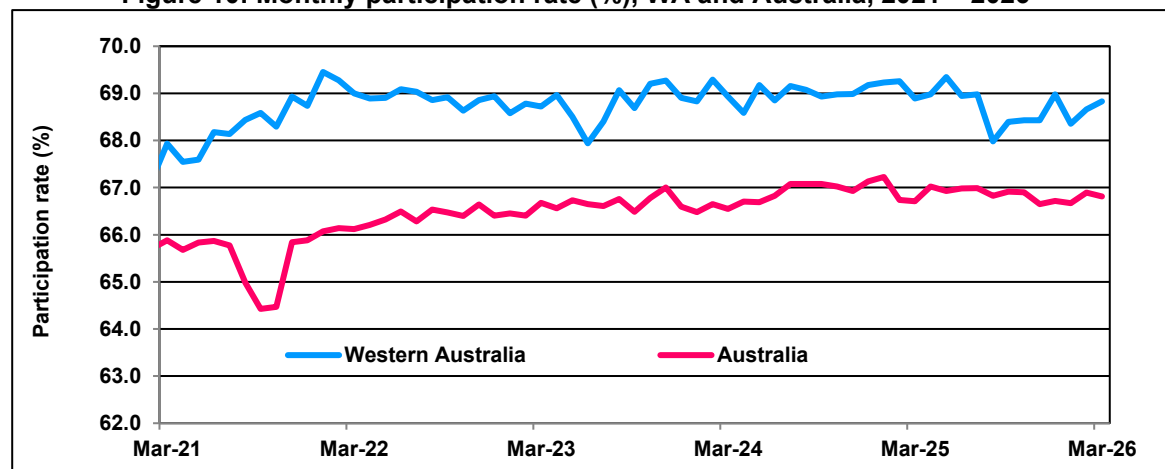
Figure 9: Monthly aggregate hours worked, WA, 2021 – 2026¹⁶



Participation rate

40. Western Australia's participation rate was 68.8% in March 2026, marginally below the rate of 68.9% recorded in March 2025. The participation rate in Western Australia has consistently been above that of Australia, which was 66.8% in March 2026.¹⁷
41. The participation rate is typically about eight to ten percentage points higher for males than females, with the gap more pronounced in Western Australia than in Australia. Longer term trends indicate the participation rate for Western Australian males have gradually declined over time (although it has been relatively stable over the past decade), while the participation rate for Western Australian females has steadily increased.¹⁸

Figure 10: Monthly participation rate (%), WA and Australia, 2021 – 2026¹⁹



¹⁶ Ibid, Table 19 (seasonally adjusted data).

¹⁷ Ibid, Table 1 and Table 8 (seasonally adjusted data).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Inflation

42. Perth's Consumer Price Index (CPI) grew by 1.2% in the month of March 2026 and 4.6% over the year to March 2026. However, when the electricity component is excluded, Perth's CPI increased by 1.2% in March and 4.3% over the year.²⁰
43. A major contribution to the increased rate of inflation in Perth in March 2026 was the price of automotive fuel,²¹ which rose 32.7% over the month and 25.7% across the year.
44. Price pressures affect both businesses and households alike. Some employees, particularly those who are low paid, may need to draw on savings as the price of goods and services (particularly non-discretionary items) impacts household budgets. Local businesses also face higher input costs, putting pressure on profit margins and cash reserves.
45. Perth's CPI over the year to March 2026 for non-discretionary items, at 5.5%, was considerably higher than for discretionary items, which was 3.4%. This underlines the significant challenges facing low paid households, who have experienced a sharp rise in the cost of living.
46. Underlying measures of inflation at the national level (as measured by the trimmed mean) remain above the Reserve Bank of Australia's (RBA) target range. To control inflation, the RBA increased interest rates between May 2022 and November 2023, with the official cash rate target rising from 0.1% to 4.35%. After three cuts to the cash rate target in 2025, the RBA has entered a cycle of re-tightening in response to inflationary pressures, raising the cash rate target following the February, March and May 2026 meetings to now sit back at 4.35%.
47. The RBA also observes that while consumer sentiment and business confidence have dropped sharply, available data indicates that household consumption has not yet materially slowed and business conditions remain relatively stable. The RBA anticipates that businesses may pass on higher fuel costs through above-average increases in prices to other consumer goods and services from the June quarter onwards, noting that most consumer prices do not yet reflect these higher input costs.²²

Trends in wages

48. Wages growth in Western Australia moderated in the March quarter 2026, with the Wage Price Index (WPI) growing by 0.4% in the quarter. Over the year to March 2026 the Western Australian WPI grew by 3.6%, down marginally from 3.7% growth in the year to March 2025.²³

²⁰ ABS (2026), *Consumer Price Index, Australia, March 2026*, Catalogue 6401.0. Figures for CPI excluding electricity are used for budget purposes, as various State Government and Australian Government electricity credits provided in recent years can significantly distort the headline rate of inflation.

²¹ Automotive fuel includes ULP, premium unleaded, ethanol blended, diesel and LPG.

²² Reserve Bank of Australia (2026), *Statement on Monetary Policy – May 2026*, 5 May 2026.

²³ ABS (2026), *Wage Price Index, Australia, March 2026*, Catalogue 6345.0, Table 2b (original data).

49. Growth in the WPI at the national level has also eased marginally, with the WPI for Australia increasing by 3.2% in the year to March 2026.²⁴

Figure 11: Annual (year-ended) growth in WPI (%), WA and Australia, 2016 – 2026²⁵

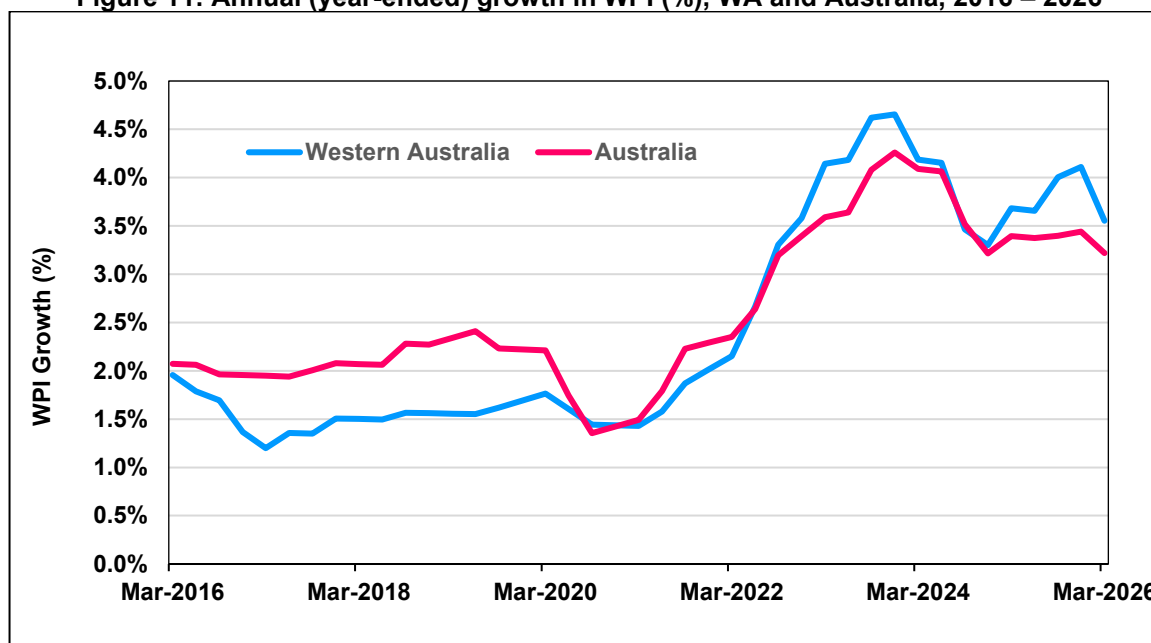


Table 2: Annual growth in CPI and WPI, Western Australia (%)²⁶

	Mar 2023	Jun 2023	Sep 2023	Dec 2023	Mar 2024	Jun 2024	Sep 2024	Dec 2024	Mar 2025	Jun 2025	Sep 2025	Dec 2025	Mar 2026
CPI	5.9	4.9	4.8	4.0	4.1	4.7	4.1	3.5	3.4	2.8	3.1	3.7	3.7
WPI	4.1	4.2	4.6	4.7	4.2	4.2	3.5	3.3	3.7	3.7	4.0	4.1	3.6

50. The WPI measures the change in wages and salaries by controlling the quantity and quality of jobs and excluding compositional factors, such as the growth in part time work. Due to the control for changes in labour market composition, the WPI is the preferred measure for wages growth.
51. While the WPI is generally considered the most useful indicator of wage inflation, the ABS Average Weekly Earnings series is used to provide an indication of earnings in dollar amounts.
52. The latest figures indicate that full time Average Weekly Ordinary Time Earnings (AWOTE) in Western Australia rose by 1.7% over the 12 months to November 2025, from \$2,156.80 to \$2,193.20.²⁷
53. Across the whole workforce, average weekly total earnings in Western Australia increased by 5.9% over the year to November 2025, rising from \$1,591.50 to \$1,685.00.²⁸

²⁴ Ibid, Table 1.

²⁵ Ibid, Tables 1 and 2b.

²⁶ Data is from the ABS (2026), *Consumer Price Index – Australia, March 2026*, Catalogue 6401.0 and ABS (2026), *Wage Price Index – Australia, March 2026*, Catalogue 6345.0. CPI figures relate to Quarterly year-ended growth for Perth, excluding the electricity subcomponent. Quarterly CPI figures have been recalculated following the change to monthly reporting by the ABS.

²⁷ ABS (2026), *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2025*, Catalogue 6302.0, Table 12E (seasonally adjusted data).

²⁸ Ibid.

Equal remuneration

54. The *Industrial Relations Legislation Amendment Act 2024* amended the objects of the IR Act to include a more specific focus for gender equality, with section 6(ac) now identifying that the principal objects of the Act include ‘to promote gender equality in the workplace through equal remuneration and eliminating gender-based undervaluation of work’.
55. The intention of this amendment was to more accurately reflect the purpose of the equal remuneration provisions of the IR Act, with the objects guiding the setting of the wage fixing principles under section 50A(1)(d) that must be applied and followed when the WAIRC exercises its jurisdiction to ensure employees receive equal remuneration.
56. The provision of equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value is also a matter which must form part of the WAIRC’s considerations in the annual State Wage Case, under section 50A(3)(a) of the IR Act.
57. While minimum and award wages apply irrespective of gender, women are more likely than men to be paid at these rates, while men are more likely to be paid above award rates of pay, especially under individual arrangements. This is a structural factor contributing to the gender pay gap both in Western Australia and nationally. In May 2025, 60.7% of all award-reliant non-managerial employees in Western Australia were female.²⁹
58. As indicated in Table 3 below, the gender pay gap in Western Australia decreased from 20.2% to 19.3% in the year to November 2025, with earnings of female employees growing at a faster pace than earnings of male employees. Nationally, the gender pay gap eased from 11.9% to 11.5% in the same period.

Table 3: AWOTE and the gender pay gap, WA and Australia, November 2024 and November 2025³⁰

		Nov 2024	Nov 2025	Change
WA	Male employees	\$2,330.10	\$2,359.70	1.3%
	Female employees	\$1,860.30	\$1,905.30	2.4%
	Gender pay gap	20.2%	19.3%	-0.9 pp
Australia	Male employees	\$2,072.70	\$2,147.80	3.6%
	Female employees	\$1,826.40	\$1,900.60	4.1%
	Gender pay gap	11.9%	11.5%	-0.4 pp

59. As shown in Table 4, while the gender pay gap in Western Australia declined over the year to November 2025, Western Australia continues to have the largest gender pay gap of any Australian state or territory as measured by AWOTE. Notwithstanding this, Western Australian women have the third highest average weekly earnings across Australia, after the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales respectively. The gender pay gap in Western Australia is partly the result of a concentration of men in certain highly paid industries.

²⁹ ABS (2026), *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2025*, Catalogue 6306.0, TableBuilder.

³⁰ ABS (2026), *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2025*, Catalogue 6302.0, Table 2 and Table 12E (seasonally adjusted data).

Table 4: Gender pay gap by state and territory, November 2025³¹

State / Territory	Male AWOTE	Female AWOTE	Gender pay gap
NSW	\$2,184.20	\$1,936.10	11.4%
VIC	\$2,104.70	\$1,869.10	11.2%
QLD	\$2,076.90	\$1,854.70	10.7%
SA	\$1,991.20	\$1,845.10	7.3%
WA	\$2,359.70	\$1,905.30	19.3%
TAS	\$1,825.20	\$1,813.80	0.6%
NT	\$2,037.10	\$1,827.50	10.3%
ACT	\$2,305.40	\$2,175.90	5.6%
AUS	\$2,147.80	\$1,900.60	11.5%

60. The gender pay gap, when measured by average hourly total cash earnings, varies between different methods of setting pay. In particular, the gender pay gap is lowest for employees paid under awards.

Table 5: Average hourly total cash earnings by method of setting pay, WA, 2025³²

Method of setting pay	Male proportion	Female proportion	Male earnings	Female earnings	2025 gender pay gap
Award only	39.3%	60.7%	\$35.70	\$34.80	2.5%
Collective agreement	41.9%	58.1%	\$60.50	\$52.30	13.6%
Individual arrangement	55.0%	45.0%	\$57.90	\$46.50	19.7%
All methods	47.0%	53.0%	\$54.60	\$45.80	16.1%

61. While the objects of gender equality and equal remuneration encompass more than just the gender pay gap, and some matters will need to be addressed on an individual award basis, the greater reliance by women on minimum and award wages nonetheless underlines the importance of the State Wage Case decision in helping to address gender inequality.

Operating conditions for Western Australian businesses

Gross operating surplus plus gross mixed income

62. The criteria in section 50A(3) of the IR Act require the WAIRC to consider the capacity of employers as a whole to bear the cost of increased wages and the likely effect of its State Wage order on the economy and employment levels.
63. While there is limited data available to assess the health of specific businesses likely to be impacted by the State Wage order, select macroeconomic figures can be used to gauge the profitability of Western Australian businesses by industry in a given year. The figures below relate to the 2024-25 financial year.
64. Figures produced by the ABS indicate that Gross Operating Surplus (GOS) plus Gross Mixed Income (GMI) increased across several industries over the course of the 2024-25 financial year, with a notable increase observed in 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing'. While this data reveals little about the profitability or otherwise of individual businesses, the measure provides some broad insight into local conditions at the aggregate industry level.

³¹ ABS (2026), *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2025*, Catalogue 6302.0, Table 2 and Tables 12A-12H (seasonally adjusted data).

³² ABS (2026), *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2025*, TableBuilder. Figures relate to non-managerial employees.

65. As illustrated in Table 6, a total of 10 out of 19 industries recorded a rise in GOS plus GMI, led by 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' (up 23.2%) due to bumper grain harvests, and 'Health care and social assistance' (up 22.0%) due to increased demand for key health programs and services.³³
66. Conversely, GOS plus GMI declined across several industries, in particular 'Professional, scientific and technical services', 'Administrative and support services', and 'Mining' (due to weather disruptions and maintenance activities, especially in oil and gas production).³⁴
67. Across all industries, GOS plus GMI declined by 4.4% in 2024-25.³⁵ This was largely due to the Mining industry, and its significant impact on aggregate figures across Western Australia.³⁶

Table 6: Gross Operating Surplus (GOS) and Gross Mixed Income (GMI) by industry, WA, current prices, 2024 and 2025³⁷

Industry	GOS + GMI June 2024 (\$m)	GOS + GMI June 2025 (\$m)	Annual increase (\$m)	Annual increase (%)
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	4,960	6,112	1,152	23.2%
Mining	168,802	151,192	-17,610	-10.4%
Manufacturing	9,380	9,932	552	5.9%
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	3,573	3,438	-135	-3.8%
Construction	8,675	8,434	-241	-2.8%
Wholesale trade	5,703	5,687	-16	-0.3%
Retail trade	5,101	5,056	-45	-0.9%
Accommodation and food services	2,961	2,946	-15	-0.5%
Transport, postal and warehousing	6,645	6,230	-415	-6.2%
Information media and telecommunications	1,998	2,117	119	6.0%
Financial and insurance services	9,432	9,945	513	5.4%
Rental, hiring and real estate services	3,903	4,120	217	5.6%
Professional, scientific and technical services	5,278	4,398	-880	-16.7%
Administrative and support services	742	624	-118	-15.9%
Public administration and safety	2,531	2,762	231	9.1%
Education and training	1,924	2,003	79	4.1%
Health care and social assistance	2,965	3,618	653	22.0%
Arts and recreation services	602	632	30	5.0%
Other services	2,132	2,404	272	12.8%
Total all industries	269,794	258,012	-11,782	-4.4%

³³ ABS (2025), *Australian National Accounts: State Accounts, 2024-25 financial year*, Catalogue 5220.0, Table 6 (original data).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

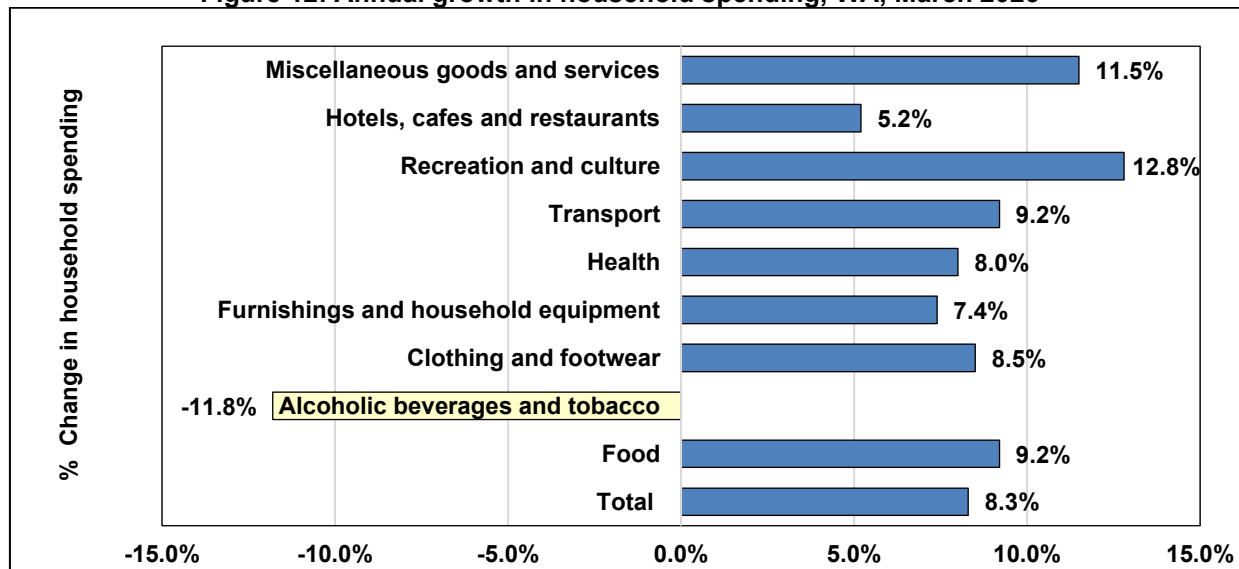
³⁶ It is noted that very few employees in the Mining industry itself are subject to the State industrial relations system.

³⁷ ABS (2025), *Australian National Accounts: State Accounts, 2024-25 financial year*, Catalogue 5220.0, Table 6 (original data). The 'total all industries' figures include ownership of dwellings, meaning it is greater than the sum of all individual industries in the table.

Household spending

68. Western Australia recorded robust growth in household spending in the year to March 2026. In seasonally adjusted terms, solid increases were recorded in all categories measured, with the exception of 'Alcoholic beverages and tobacco' (which has experienced a long-term decline).

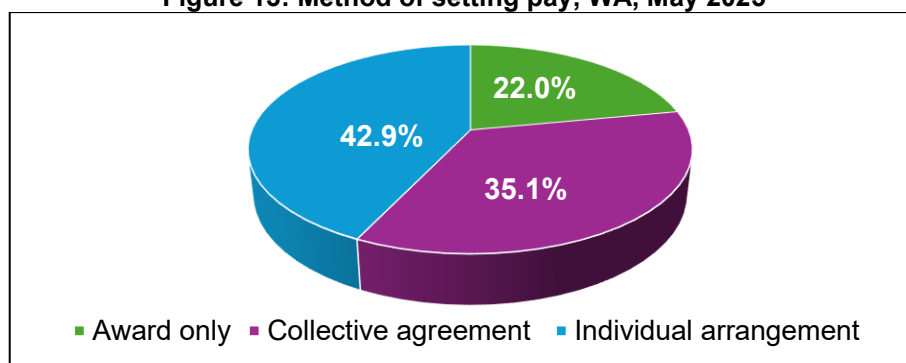
Figure 12: Annual growth in household spending, WA, March 2026³⁸



Coverage of the State Wage order

69. The most recent 'Employee Earnings and Hours' (EEH) data from 2025 indicates award reliance has increased in Western Australia, albeit it remains lower than the national average.³⁹
70. According to the latest available data, award reliance amongst non-managerial employees in Western Australia increased moderately, from 19.9% in May 2023 to 22.0% in May 2025.⁴⁰ This equates to approximately 308,000 employees being paid exclusively under a State or national award in 2025.

Figure 13: Method of setting pay, WA, May 2025⁴¹



³⁸ ABS (2026), *Monthly Household Spending Indicator, March 2026*, Catalogue 5682.0, Table 7 (seasonally adjusted data). Figures are for the 12 months ending March 2026.

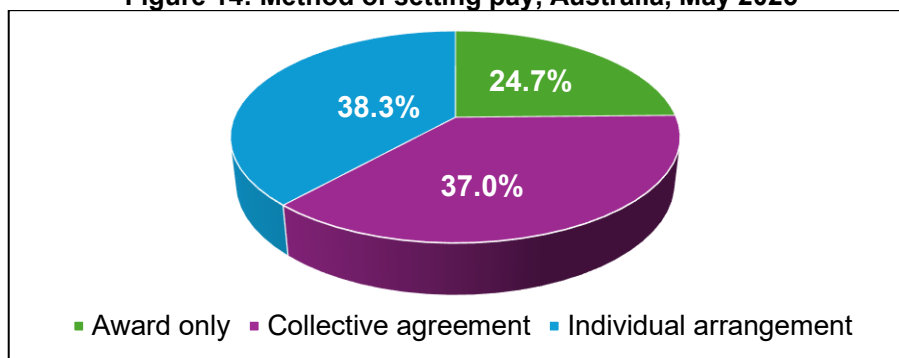
³⁹ ABS (2026), *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2025*, Catalogue 6306.0. Figures relate to non-managerial employees. It is noted that this data is not limited to State awards only.

⁴⁰ ABS (2026), *Employee, Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2025*, Catalogue 6306.0 and ABS (2024), *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2023*, Catalogue 6306.0.

⁴¹ ABS (2026), *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2025*, Catalogue 6306.0.

71. Nationally, award reliance decreased marginally between 2023 and 2025, from 25.0% to 24.7% of non-managerial employees.⁴² As at May 2025, approximately three million Australian employees were paid exclusively under an award.

Figure 14: Method of setting pay, Australia, May 2025⁴³



72. The latest EEH data also reveals that award-reliant employees in Western Australia are much more likely to be female, work part time hours, and be employed on a casual basis.⁴⁴
73. Employees in Western Australia aged 15 to 24 years are the most likely to be paid an award rate, with a significant drop in award reliance as employees age.⁴⁵
74. The EEH data also indicates that in Western Australia, medium-sized organisations are the most likely to pay their employees at award rates.⁴⁶
75. Table 7 illustrates proportions of employment by industry in Western Australia and shows that those industries known to have a high degree of award reliance (such as 'Accommodation and food services', 'Health care and social assistance', 'Retail trade'; and 'Administrative and support services' make up a notable proportion of the State's workforce.

⁴² ABS (2026), *Employee, Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2025*, Catalogue 6306.0 and ABS (2024), *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2023*, Catalogue 6306.0.

⁴³ ABS (2026), *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2025*, Catalogue 6306.0.

⁴⁴ Ibid. TableBuilder.

⁴⁵ Ibid. TableBuilder.

⁴⁶ Ibid. TableBuilder. This also correlates with research published by the Fair Work Commission in 2026 (*Research note – Award use at the employer level: Overview using the Business Longitudinal Administrative Dataset Environment (BLADE), February 2026*, Josh Tomlinson and Josh Lipp), which found that medium-sized businesses across Australia have the highest incidence of award reliance.

Table 7: Employment and award reliance by industry, WA, May 2025⁴⁷

Industry	% of workforce	% of employees paid by award
Agriculture, forestry and fishing ⁴⁸	N/A	N/A
Mining	6.8%	0.0%
Manufacturing	6.2%	22.0%
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	1.2%	3.4%
Construction	6.8%	12.7%
Wholesale trade	2.9%	16.3%
Retail trade	9.6%	31.6%
Accommodation and food services	6.8%	67.1%
Transport, postal and warehousing	4.0%	14.3%
Information media and telecommunications	0.5%	0.0%
Financial and insurance services	2.3%	0.0%
Rental, hiring and real estate services	1.9%	29.9%
Professional, scientific and technical services	7.3%	8.1%
Administrative and support services	5.1%	48.1%
Public administration and safety	5.9%	6.2%
Education and training	9.2%	4.0%
Health care and social assistance	18.3%	27.1%
Arts and recreation services	1.6%	39.4%
Other services	2.9%	31.0%
All industries	100.0%	22.1%

76. Employees in the State industrial relations system receiving wage rates only marginally above the relevant award minimum rates of pay may be indirectly impacted by the WAIRC's decision in this year's State Wage Case, as increases in the award rates of pay may require their current wage to be adjusted accordingly.
77. Similarly, employees who have their wages informally linked to the State Wage Case, such as where an employee is paid a particular margin above a State award, or rates of pay are reviewed in line with the outcome of the State Wage Case, may also be affected. The reach of the State Wage Case is therefore likely to extend beyond just those employees paid exclusively under a State award or the SMW.
78. LGIRS has analysed the top 10 mostly frequently accessed award summaries for private sector awards on its website, which are outlined in Table 8 below.

⁴⁷ ABS (2026), *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2025*, Catalogue 6306.0, TableBuilder.

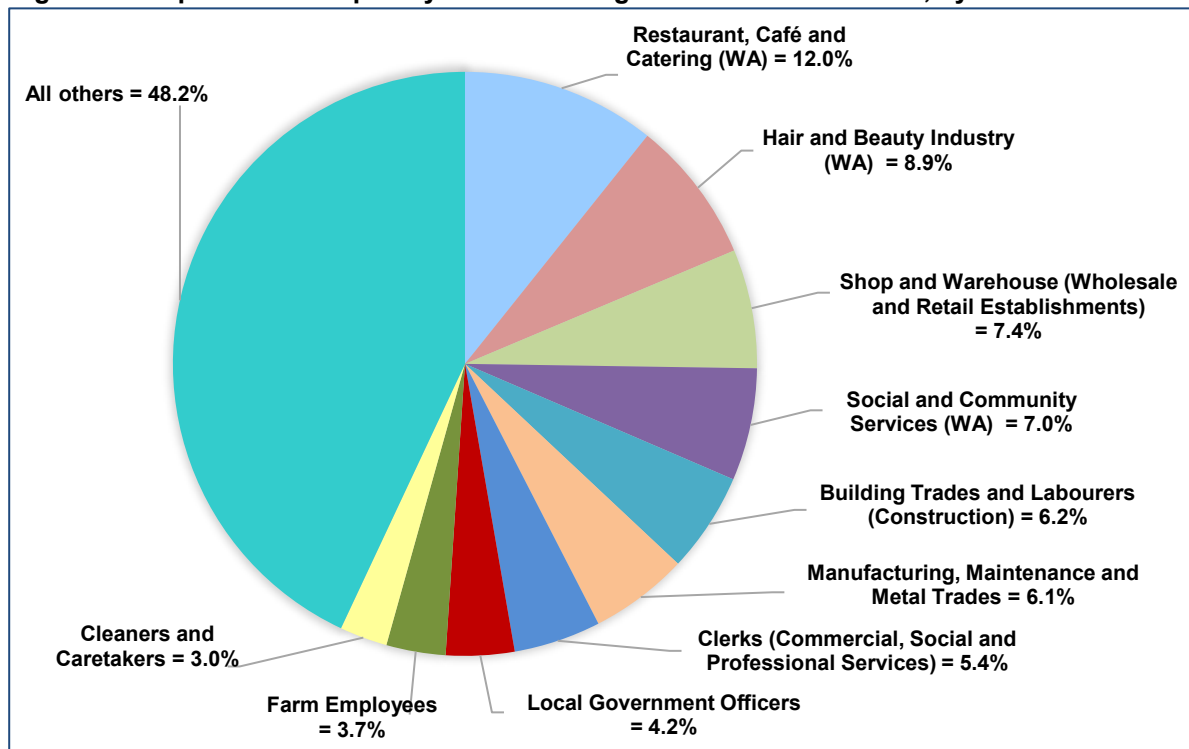
⁴⁸ The 'Agriculture, forestry and fisheries' industry is outside the scope of the *Employee Earnings and Hours* survey.

Table 8: Top 10 most frequently accessed Wageline award summaries prepared by LGIRS⁴⁹

Rank	Award
1	Restaurant, Café and Catering (WA) Award ⁵⁰
2	Hair and Beauty Industry (WA) Award
3	Shop and Warehouse (Wholesale and Retail Establishments) Award
4	Social and Community Services (Western Australian) Interim Award
5	Building Trades and Labourers (Construction) Award
6	Manufacturing, Maintenance and Metal Trades Award ⁵¹
7	Clerks (Commercial, Social and Professional Services) Award
8	Local Government Officers' (Western Australia) Award
9	Farm Employees' Award
10	Cleaners and Caretakers Award

79. Figure 15 charts the top 10 most frequently accessed award summaries as a percentage of all award summaries accessed. As can be seen, the top 10 award summaries account for over half of all the award summaries accessed.

Figure 15: Top 10 most frequently accessed Wageline award summaries, by % of web hits⁵²



⁴⁹ Refers to the award summaries produced by LGIRS' Wageline service that were the most frequently viewed between 1 July 2025 and 13 April 2026. The data relates to unique visits by individuals, including multiple visits to award summaries by the same individuals. It should be noted information produced by Wageline for award free employees is also generally viewed quite extensively.

⁵⁰ Includes downloads of the former Restaurant, Tearoom and Catering Workers' Award summary.

⁵¹ Includes downloads of the former Metal Trades (General) Award summary.

⁵² Refers to the award summaries produced by LGIRS' Wageline service that were the most frequently viewed between 1 July 2025 and 13 April 2026. The data relates to unique visits by individuals, including multiple visits to award summaries by the same individuals. LGIRS currently produces 45 award summaries for the most commonly used awards.

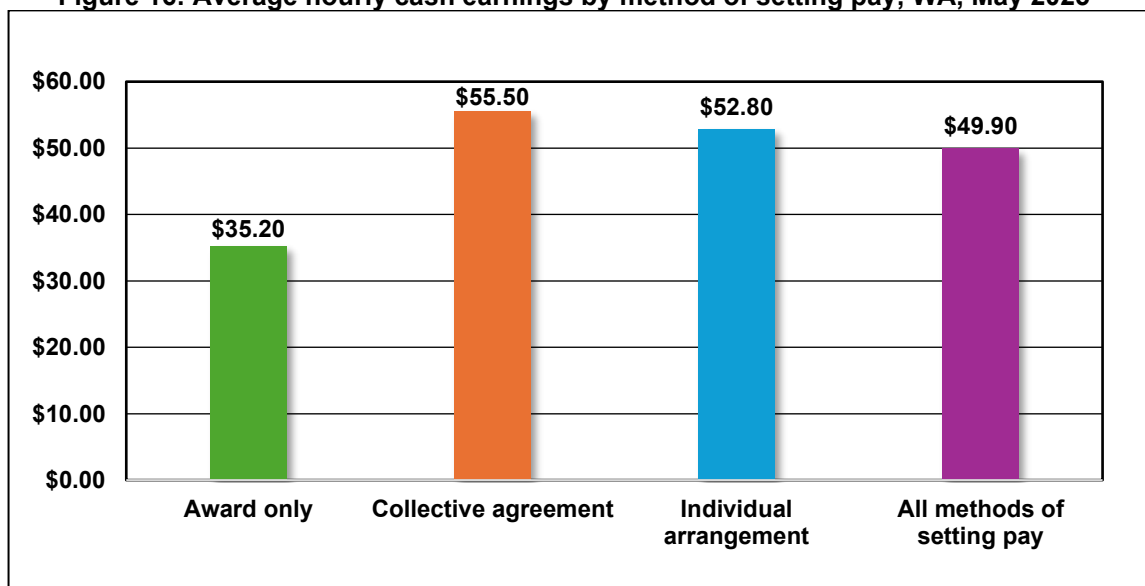
- 80. The above information indicates that State awards in the hospitality, social and community services, retail (including hairdressing), building trades, metal trades, clerical, local government, agricultural and cleaning sectors are some of the more widely utilised. It is also known that the transport and electrical contracting industries employ a number of State system employees.
- 81. While there are still some award free employees in the State industrial relations system, a variety of applications initiated by the WAIRC under section 37D of the IR Act to expand award scope in recent times has reduced the number of employees without award coverage.

Fairness, living standards and the needs of the low paid

Award-reliant employees

- 82. The minimum and award wage framework acts as a critical safeguard in protecting the needs of the low paid and ensuring their living standards are maintained and improved in line with those in the broader community.
- 83. As illustrated in Figure 16 below, the most recent EEH data from 2025 indicates that award-reliant employees in Western Australia receive significantly lower average hourly rates of pay than those engaged under collective agreements and individual arrangements.

Figure 16: Average hourly cash earnings by method of setting pay, WA, May 2025⁵³



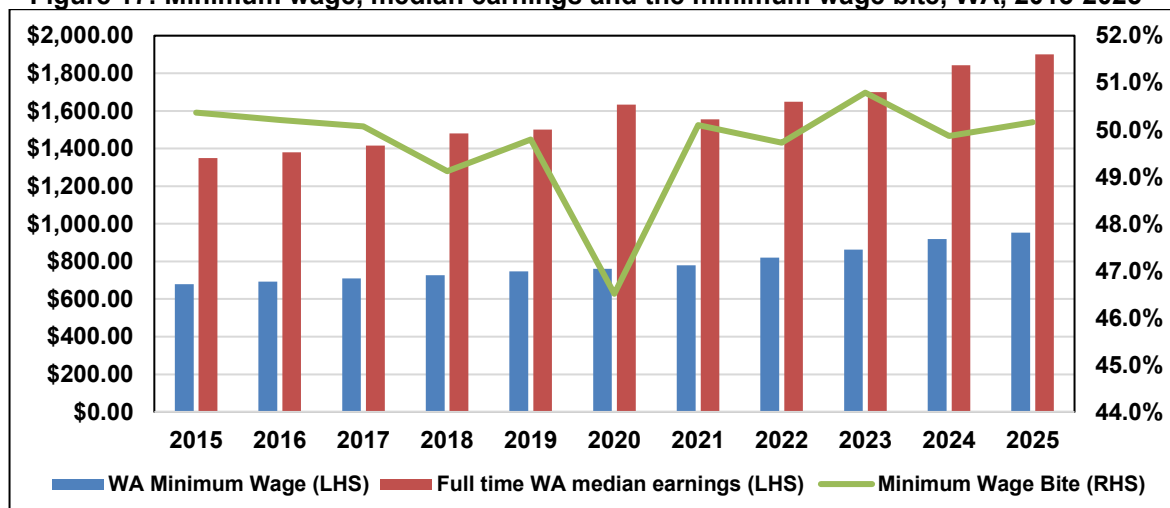
- 84. Many low paid workers are dependent on increases awarded in the State Wage Case to meet their everyday living costs, particularly as households have been faced with significant cost of living pressures.
- 85. As noted above, there remain sections of the workforce that are currently award free in the State jurisdiction, including workers engaged in occupations that would traditionally be considered award-type work. Employees who are award free have significantly fewer protections than those who are covered by an award and are particularly reliant on adjustments to the statutory minimum pay rates that occur as part of the State Wage Case process.

⁵³ ABS (2026), *Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2025*, Catalogue 6306.0.

Minimum wage bite

86. The minimum wage bite measures the value of the minimum wage relative to median full time earnings. A higher minimum wage bite can help to reduce inequality and poverty, as well as boosting consumer spending and economic activity.
87. As at August 2025, the SMW equated to 50.2% of median earnings for full time Western Australian workers.⁵⁴ This was a marginal increase from August 2024, when the minimum wage bite stood at 49.9%. The minimum wage bite has remained relatively steady in recent years, apart from a dip in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic was significantly impacting workers and businesses.
88. By all conventional measures, employees receiving the SMW would be classed as low paid. However, the WAIRC's decision to re-align the SMW to the C13 classification in 2024 significantly improved the standing of the lowest paid workers in the State industrial relations system.

Figure 17: Minimum wage, median earnings and the minimum wage bite, WA, 2015-2025⁵⁵



89. In the national industrial relations system, the weekly NMW (\$948.00) currently equates to 54.5% of national median earnings (\$1,741). The minimum wage bite is higher in the national system primarily due to the higher median earnings in Western Australia (which lowers the minimum wage bite in the State jurisdiction).

Living Cost Indexes

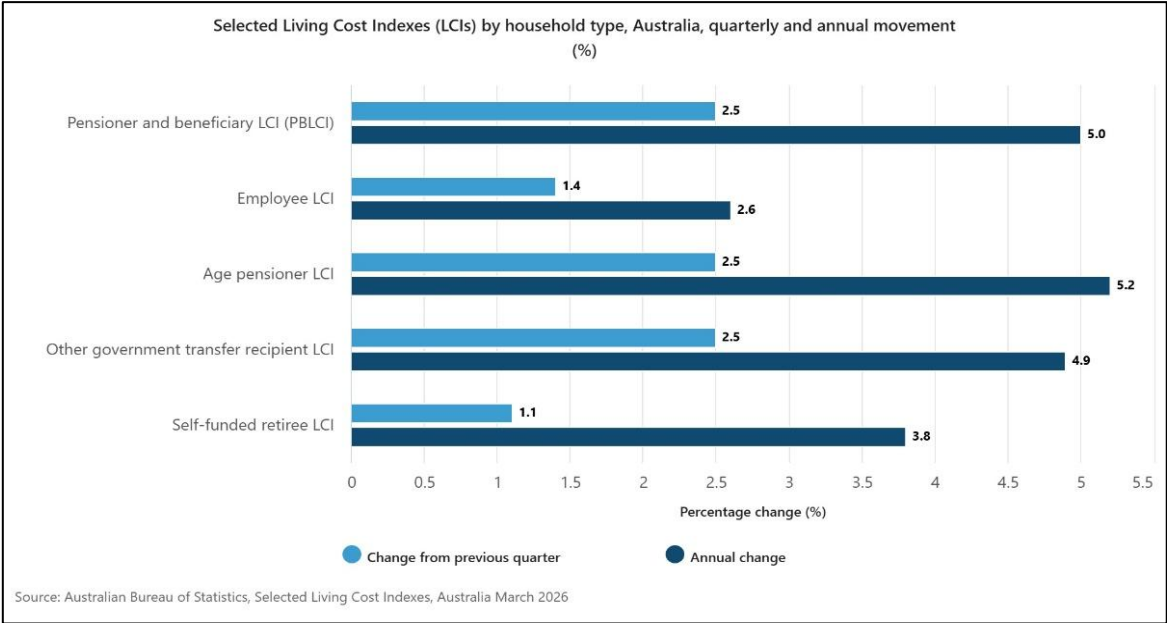
90. The ABS recently released Selected Living Cost Indexes (LCIs) relating to the March 2026 quarter. LCIs measure the price change of goods and services and its effect on living expenses of selected household types, which are published at the national level only.
91. There are five LCIs in total, concerning the following household types:
- Pensioner and beneficiary LCI;
 - Employee LCI;
 - Age pensioner LCI;
 - Other government transfer recipient LCI; and
 - Self-funded retiree LCI.

⁵⁴ ABS (2025), *Employee Earnings, August 2025*, Catalogue 6337.0.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

- 92. The 'Employee' LCI is the most relevant when it comes to minimum and award wage adjustments, as it reflects the purchasing power of households whose primary source of income is wages and salaries.
- 93. LCIs differ from the CPI, as an LCI reflects changes over time in the purchasing power of households' after-tax incomes. It measures the impact of price movements on the out-of-pocket expenses households incur to be able to access a fixed basket of consumer goods and services. In contrast, the CPI is designed to measure price inflation for all households and 'is not the conceptually ideal measure for assessing the changes in the purchasing power of the disposable incomes of households'.⁵⁶
- 94. Another important distinction between the LCIs and the CPI is that the LCIs include changes in interest paid on mortgages, which is not included in the CPI.
- 95. All five LCIs rose in the March 2026 quarter, with all household types recording larger rises compared to the December 2025 quarter. 'Age pensioner', 'Other government transfer recipient' and 'Pensioner and beneficiary' households experienced the biggest increases in living costs, with 'Pensioner and beneficiary' households experiencing the largest quarterly rise on record. The main contributors to the rise in living costs for all household types were Housing, Health and Transport. Housing costs were impacted by an increase in electricity costs due to the extended Commonwealth Energy Bill Relief Fund rebates being used up.⁵⁷
- 96. Over the 12 months to the March 2026 quarter, all LCIs rose, with the annual increases ranging from 2.6% for 'Employee' households to 5.2% for 'Age pensioner' households.⁵⁸
- 97. The LCI for 'Employee' households, the most relevant LCI for State Wage Case proceedings, rose by 1.4% in the March 2026 quarter and 2.6% in the year to March 2026, as shown in Figure 18.⁵⁹

Figure 18: Selected Living Cost Indexes by household type, Australia, March 2026⁶⁰



⁵⁶ ABS (2026), *Selected Living Cost Indexes, Australia methodology, March 2026*.

⁵⁷ ABS (2026), *Selected Living Cost Indexes, Australia, March 2026, Catalogue 6467.0*.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

98. The 2.6% annual increase experienced by ‘Employee’ households in the year to March 2026 remains lower than in recent years. This partially reflects the timing of interest rate movements and their impact on mortgage holders over the 12 months in question. The ABS notes that:

Mortgage interest charges makes up a higher proportion of expenditure for Employee households. Mortgage interest charges rose 1.5%, up from a fall of 2.8% in the December 2025 quarter. All banks passed on interest rate rises in full to variable home loans following the Reserve Bank of Australia’s decision to increase the cash rate in February. However, most of the effects of the RBA’s cash rate hikes in both February and March 2026 will be seen in the June 2026 quarter due to the timing of the changes in the cash rate. The rise in mortgage interest charges this quarter was driven by higher mortgage debt levels.⁶¹

99. As shown in Figure 19 below, mortgage interest charges have begun to rise again following a period of easing. The RBA’s February, March and May decisions to successively raise the cash rate target, flowing on to interest rates, will increase mortgage interest charges going forward, reducing the purchasing power of employee households with a mortgage.

100. Higher interest costs can also impact rental costs if mortgage costs are partially passed on through higher rents, decreasing the purchasing power of employee households who rent. Overall, the effect of recent interest rate increases is that living costs are likely to rise for employee households in the coming quarters.

Figure 19: Employee LCI and Mortgage interest charges, Australia, quarterly movement, March 2026⁶²



101. The Minister notes that elevated living costs are particularly challenging for low-income employee households. Many employees reliant on minimum and award wages have limited bargaining power and are unable to negotiate higher rates of pay, either individually or through collective agreements. These workers are particularly susceptible to experiencing poverty, debt and even homelessness, and a fair and considered increase in wages is essential to help safeguard their interests.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Protecting employees who are unable to bargain

102. Section 50A of the IR Act requires that, when making the State Wage order, the WAIRC considers the need to protect employees who may be unable to reach an industrial agreement.
103. An analysis of current industrial agreements registered by the WAIRC reveals that almost all agreements are concentrated in the following sectors:
- Western Australian public sector;
 - private schools;
 - social, community, health and disability support organisations;
 - local government;
 - registered political parties;
 - security services; and
 - unions / labour organisations.
104. It is noted that the sectors outlined above exclude several industries known to have high levels of award reliance - in particular hospitality and retail. As a result, smaller, unincorporated businesses in the hospitality and retail sectors are more likely to pay wages directly or indirectly based on rates of pay in the relevant State awards. A fair and considered increase in award rates will help to protect such employees.

Skills development

105. Under section 50A(3) of the IR Act, the WAIRC must take into consideration the need to encourage ongoing skills development when making the State Wage order.
106. While there are a variety of factors that can incentivise skills development, the State Wage order itself can only set and adjust the rates of pay for employees, including those undertaking training.⁶³ This section focuses on apprenticeships and traineeships, and provides key data on commencements and total numbers in training for 2025 and previous years.⁶⁴
107. This data has been supplied by the Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) and is included to provide guidance on longer-term trends in the take up of apprenticeships and traineeships in Western Australia.
108. To assist the WAIRC with the State Wage order, the Minister has included an updated list of Industry Skill Levels for training packages at **Attachment C**.
109. In developing the updated list of Industry Skill Levels, DTWD has reviewed the 2025 Industry/Skill List and updated the list to align with the national database of training packages and the traineeships identified in the *Classification of Prescribed Vocational Education and Training Qualifications (14 April 2026)*.

⁶³ In most cases, training rates for apprentices and trainees are adjusted automatically in line with established formulas.

⁶⁴ Data is for apprentices and trainees in both the State and national industrial relations systems. It does not break down the proportion of these employees working in the State jurisdiction.

Training packages

110. As per previous years' arrangements, the updated Industry/Skill List only shows current training packages. When qualifications are superseded, there is usually a 12-month transition period and trainees who are unable to complete their training contract before this period are enrolled in the newer qualification.
111. Most traineeships align to a qualification in a training package. Where an industry training need is not met by a training package qualification, a specialised accredited course may be developed. DTWD has identified seven traineeships offered through an accredited course:
- (1) 52922WA Certificate II in Building and Construction Technical Support, nominal duration 12 months (replaced 52825WA Certificate II in Building and Construction (Pathway - Para Professional));
 - (2) 52893WA Certificate II in Building and Construction (Pathway - Trades), nominal duration 12 months;
 - (3) 52890WA Certificate II in Community Health and Wellbeing, nominal duration 12 months;
 - (4) 52904WA Certificate III in Defence Industry Pathways, nominal duration 12 months (replaced 52864WA Certificate III in Defence Industry Pathways);
 - (5) 22603VIC Certificate IV in Cyber Security, nominal duration 24 months (replaced 22334VIC Certificate IV in Cyber Security);
 - (6) 22460VIC Diploma of Applied Technologies, nominal duration 36 months (non-current, expired 31 December 2023); and
 - (7) 52889WA Diploma of Civil and Structural Engineering, nominal duration 36 months.
112. As these traineeships are not components of a training package, they are not identified in the 2026 Industry/Skill List.

Commencements

113. Training commencements increased significantly during 2021 and 2022 as a result of the Australian Government's investment in wage subsidy incentives, which led to elevated levels of apprentices and trainees in training. The reduction of Commonwealth incentives in July 2022 saw commencements drop, particularly for traineeships, affecting the overall number in training.

Apprenticeship commencements

114. As shown in Table 9 below, apprenticeship commencements remained largely unchanged in 2025, declining marginally from 10,926 to 10,800.

Table 9: Apprenticeships commenced in WA, 2015 to 2025⁶⁵

Year	Total
2015	7,887
2016	6,424
2017	6,440
2018	6,852
2019	7,077
2020	8,677
2021	12,414
2022	12,547
2023	11,053
2024	10,926
2025	10,800

115. After reaching a low in 2016, apprenticeship commencements increased, rising sharply from 2020 to 2021. Although they have since declined, the number of commencements remains meaningfully higher than in 2020 and prior years.

Table 10: Apprenticeship commencements by trade category, 2015 to 2025⁶⁶

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Apprenticeships	7,887	6,424	6,440	6,852	7,077	8,677	12,414	12,547	11,053	10,926	10,800
Arts, Sport and Recreation	5	2	3	2	1	2	3	2	2	1	-
Automotive	1,048	1,026	1,253	1,538	1,744	2,044	2,910	3,007	2,730	2,791	2,627
Building and Construction	2,330	1,499	1,277	1,142	1,153	1,603	2,688	2,624	2,262	2,322	2,510
Community Services, Health and Education	6	10	11	16	7	17	29	29	27	16	21
Electrical	1,493	1,116	1,157	1,199	1,241	1,502	2,169	2,262	2,081	2,129	2,235
Food	217	206	203	181	167	186	240	197	157	152	142
Hospitality and Tourism	428	481	370	391	362	360	544	482	337	260	222
Light Manufacturing	319	242	202	195	197	276	320	328	304	272	237
Metals, Manufacturing and Services	1,231	1,071	1,275	1,440	1,418	1,718	2,250	2,356	2,064	1,987	1,814
Primary Industry	78	73	74	53	60	103	126	186	165	140	169
Process Manufacturing	-	17	6	11	37	32	28	55	38	57	27
Utilities, Electrotechnology and Printing	108	93	77	122	177	157	231	257	195	170	204
Wholesale, Retail and Personal Services	624	588	532	562	513	677	876	762	691	629	592

⁶⁵ Department of Training and Workforce Development, data extracted on 23 March 2026 and provided on 10 April 2026.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Traineeship commencements

116. As outlined in Tables 11 and 12 below, traineeship commencements have more than halved since 2022.

Table 11: Traineeships commenced in WA, 2015 to 2025⁶⁷

Year	Total
2015	19,437
2016	15,085
2017	14,686
2018	11,490
2019	10,943
2020	12,821
2021	17,921
2022	19,264
2023	12,670
2024	10,816
2025	9,014

Table 12: Traineeship commencements by trade category, 2015 to 2025⁶⁸

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Traineeships	19,437	15,085	14,686	11,490	10,943	12,821	17,921	19,264	12,670	10,816	9,014
Arts, Sport and Recreation	252	268	323	302	320	310	376	388	127	121	111
Automotive	143	136	135	122	124	174	244	239	225	178	177
Building and Construction	744	405	557	420	386	541	560	276	204	251	259
Community Services, Health and Education	1,776	1,337	1,239	1,150	1,464	1,885	2,739	3,526	3,503	2,658	2,397
Electrical	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	40	-	4	-
Finance, Property and Business Services	4,608	3,800	3,290	1,933	2,391	2,770	3,990	3,696	1,433	1,123	735
Food	295	227	219	223	191	385	200	400	98	91	73
Hospitality and Tourism	2,836	2,560	2,241	1,970	1,386	1,116	2,130	2,354	1,461	1,168	1,058
Light Manufacturing	52	77	41	51	27	34	43	25	24	58	45
Metals, Manufacturing and Services	259	105	127	175	123	323	273	336	382	341	449
Mining Industry	1,550	1,327	1,885	2,087	1,961	2,095	2,746	2,939	2,067	1,618	1,692
Other	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Primary Industry	500	440	409	471	347	409	504	512	438	344	271
Process Manufacturing	2,529	958	1,111	344	353	393	368	510	396	802	369
Public Administration	218	213	199	153	165	167	212	254	369	360	318
Transport and Storage	1,480	1,350	1,111	763	505	533	1,241	1,186	646	572	378
Utilities, Electrotechnology and Printing	536	429	395	172	125	323	390	496	303	224	178
Wholesale, Retail and Personal Services	1,657	1,453	1,404	1,154	1,074	1,362	1,902	2,087	994	903	504

Total numbers in training

117. The total number of apprentices in training declined marginally between 2024 and 2025, from 26,141 to 25,549. This follows seven consecutive years of increases to 2024. The recent decline correlates with an easing in commencements.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

118. The total number of trainees in training has continued its trend of decline, falling from 12,785 to 10,457 between 2024 and 2025.

119. Across Western Australia, the total number of people in training (apprentices and trainees) decreased from 38,926 to 36,006 between 2024 and 2025.

Table 13: Apprentices and trainees in training by trade category, 2015 to 2025⁶⁹

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total apprentices in training	17,320	15,697	15,082	15,225	15,704	18,289	22,172	24,601	25,949	26,141	25,549
Arts, Sport and Recreation	6	6	8	6	6	4	5	4	4	3	-
Automotive	2,665	2,462	2,702	3,171	3,750	4,529	5,491	6,120	6,436	6,608	6,385
Building and Construction	4,379	3,797	3,301	2,887	2,627	3,042	4,132	4,784	5,048	5,020	5,127
Community Services, Health and Education	21	21	22	27	28	37	46	57	62	57	65
Electrical	4,089	3,649	3,453	3,283	3,233	3,630	4,368	5,017	5,559	5,886	5,925
Food	358	389	391	367	298	355	405	399	351	317	278
Hospitality and Tourism	600	666	619	609	562	610	718	778	566	496	405
Light Manufacturing	587	533	487	457	401	498	577	642	650	613	568
Metals, Manufacturing and Services	3,168	2,785	2,856	3,169	3,439	3,975	4,555	4,658	5,167	5,168	4,974
Primary Industry	176	164	151	140	130	176	219	293	328	313	311
Process Manufacturing	-	16	22	33	67	71	68	98	91	112	76
Utilities, Electrotechnology and Printing	294	258	181	199	305	358	424	492	483	451	444
Wholesale, Retail and Personal Services	977	951	889	877	858	1,004	1,164	1,259	1,204	1,097	991
Total trainees in training	21,978	19,044	17,002	13,560	11,553	14,091	18,215	19,461	15,001	12,785	10,457
Arts, Sport and Recreation	90	87	111	93	86	75	124	151	94	83	71
Automotive	193	107	126	102	120	178	199	205	193	178	174
Building and Construction	855	657	629	496	450	631	633	402	207	208	204
Community Services, Health and Education	2,307	1,761	1,500	1,308	1,516	2,239	3,072	3,684	4,295	4,063	3,545
Electrical					1	1	3	34	16	5	
Finance, Property and Business Services	5,350	4,699	4,290	2,506	2,118	2,850	4,014	3,877	1,990	1,180	794
Food	329	288	217	227	206	410	356	443	290	149	64
Hospitality and Tourism	2,571	2,704	2,336	2,146	1,475	1,226	1,877	2,169	1,443	1,313	1,113
Light Manufacturing	54	71	56	59	41	39	37	31	11	34	38
Metals, Manufacturing and Services	301	183	133	189	153	333	300	324	421	388	467
Mining Industry	1,638	1,604	2,036	2,329	2,297	2,356	2,624	2,768	2,224	1,744	1,568
Other	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Primary Industry	395	349	327	395	334	413	513	492	361	317	272
Process Manufacturing	3,378	2,245	1,439	918	558	660	669	590	557	859	772
Public Administration	195	215	165	113	133	143	171	193	276	275	224
Transport and Storage	2,228	2,260	2,007	1,387	883	819	1,274	1,445	1,054	822	484
Utilities, Electrotechnology and Printing	490	448	415	190	148	330	507	649	439	277	183
Wholesale, Retail and Personal Services	1,602	1,366	1,215	1,102	1,034	1,388	1,842	2,004	1,130	890	484
Total apprentices and trainees in training	39,298	34,741	32,084	28,785	27,257	32,380	40,387	44,062	40,950	38,926	36,006

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Conclusion

120. The annual State Wage Case proceedings are an essential part of the State industrial relations framework. Many low paid employees rely on annual adjustments to minimum and award wages to meet their everyday living costs and make ends meet.
121. The Minister supports a minimum and award wage framework that protects the interests of Western Australian workers and provides fair remuneration, whilst ensuring that any increases are sustainable and take account of the prevailing economic conditions.
122. Last year's State Wage order delivered a meaningful increase in minimum and award rates of pay, assisting many low paid workers facing increased costs of living.
123. This year's State Wage Case is taking place through a period of significant uncertainty due to the conflict in the Middle East and the resulting disruption to global oil supplies. This has impacted the global economy and exacerbated domestic inflationary pressures, with higher fuel and transport costs expected to flow through to local inflation in the near-term. The impact will depend on the length and extent of the Middle East conflict.
124. The Western Australian economy and labour market have remained resilient in the past year, with strong workforce participation, record employment and growth in State Final Demand (underpinned by private demand, including a significant lift in business investment).
125. Western Australian workers who are reliant on award wages continue to experience challenges in meeting their essential needs. Cost of living pressures include increased fuel costs and higher mortgage repayments.
126. Similarly, Western Australian businesses are facing increased operating costs and uncertainty in the global trading environment.
127. The Minister submits that the WAIRC should deliver a fair and considered increase to the SMW and award rates of pay in this year's State Wage Case that takes into account cost of living pressures for award-reliant and minimum wage workers, is sustainable for employers and meets the needs of the low paid, and takes account of the FWC's Annual Wage Review 2026 decision to ensure that State system employees are afforded fair minimum pay rates.
128. The Minister appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this year's State Wage Case proceedings and looks forward to making further contributions in due course.