



ACCOUNTING & FINANCE - TECH FINTECH & DEEP TECH

SALARY GUIDE

2026

The First Finance Hire, First CFO & Established Finance Teams

Tech, Fintech & Deep Tech | Sydney, Melbourne & Brisbane

Built off thousands of conversations with senior finance leaders across Australia.

About Story Recruitment

Story Recruitment is a specialist finance recruitment business with a deliberately narrow focus: I place the first finance hire and the first CFO for founder-led technology, fintech and deep tech businesses across Australia, and I build out the finance teams of established players in the same sectors.

I live in this market every day and I see the offers, counter-offers and packages that actually get the job done.

All of my search processes begins with a bespoke **STORY Post** that primes a network of circa 30,000 accounting and finance professionals across Australia to celebrate and promote your business.

I also produce The CFO Track, a weekly podcast interviewing Australia's best CFOs, which keeps me close to the people and the numbers behind this guide.

HOW THIS GUIDE WAS BUILT

The figures come from the packages I see agreed in live mandates, the numbers candidates tell me they will and will not move for, and what founders and boards tell me they can afford at each stage of growth. Every quarter **STORY** has hundreds of these conversations, over the past year, well into the thousands.

Where my own placement data pointed one way and the wider market pointed another, I have weighted toward what actually get signed off in a venture-backed and high-growth hiring context.

All salary figures are base salary in Australian dollars and exclude superannuation, bonuses and equity, unless otherwise stated.

The 2026 finance talent market

The Australian finance talent market in 2026 is defined by a widening gap between what growth companies need and what they can find.

For venture-backed tech, that gap is the biggest at exactly the point where a founder makes their first serious finance hire.

Salaries have largely held steady, but two roles have moved: Financial Controllers and Heads of Finance.

As capital has tightened, the value of someone who can bring genuine control, forecasting discipline and board-ready reporting into a scaling business has risen and the supply of people who have done it inside a high-growth environment has not kept pace.

For founders the challenge is twofold: knowing the right figure to offer and competing on more than cash.

The winning offer blends a fair base with meaningful equity, genuine scope and a compelling story about where the business is going.

That last part is where **STORY** does it's best work.

The first finance hire is one of the most important hires a founder makes before Series B. Get it right and you have someone who knows what you don't know and catches issues before they're a problem. Get the offer wrong and you never get near the person who can.

Tom Hunter | Founder | **STORY** Recruitment

What we're seeing on the ground

- Fractional leadership comes first.** Founders bring in fractional financial leadership first, then convert to a permanent hire once headcount, complexity and funding justify it. Additionally, the influence of AI supporting founder-led finance lets businesses run leaner for longer, and means the first internal hire is pushed further along the growth curve compared to in the past.
- Timing depends on sector.** An internal hire is typically not needed until late seed for deep tech (depending on size of raise) or Series A or later for tech and fintech. Fintech will depend on the product, financially-driven products (lending, payments etc) hire sooner; compliance or fraud tech later.
- Systems and AI are a genuine premium.** The candidates commanding the top of every band are those who have built automations, created AI workflows and driven process improvement across the finance function.
- Senior talent is more available than the stage suggests.** A wave of senior-finance right-sizing since 2024 has left a deeper pool of experienced leaders, some CFOs are open to Finance Director or Head of Finance mandates. With the right story and package, founders can reach more senior talent than their stage would usually attract. But you must ensure that the role has the right alignment and their skills fit to the complexity of the business

Roles & skills in demand

The roles **STORY** is asked to fill most often, and the capabilities founders and boards are prioritising in 2026.

AI is the defining theme; a finance hire must be using AI in some way, to avoid being left behind.

Most-requested roles

- Financial Controller (first finance hire)
- Head of Finance / Finance Lead
- First CFO (VC-backed scale-up)
- Finance Manager
- Finance Director / Deputy CFO
- Fractional / Virtual CFO

Skills in demand

- Building AI workflows & automations
- Financial modelling & scenario planning
- Systems and analytics platform fluency
- Fundraising, cash-flow & investor reporting
- M&A or liquidity event experience

What sets top candidates apart

- High-growth and startup experience
- Commercial partnering, not just reporting
- Automation-first mindset across finance
- Comfort with ambiguity and pace

Valued certifications

- CA / CPA or equivalent (CIMA, ACCA etc)
- CFA

When to make your first finance hire

One of the most common questions founders ask is when to bring finance in-house.

There is no single answer, it depends on sector, complexity and how the business is funded.

This is the pattern I see across thousands of conversations.

IT VARIES BY SECTOR

Deep tech is usually first. Often when there is operational complexity with inventory, stock and a large R&D component, there are greater requirements for an internal finance person. A fractional CFO can cover the strategic layer and the first internal hire waits until late seed or until revenue and complexity build.

Tech can stay lean for longer. A single-product SaaS business can run on a fractional CFO and a strong external Accountant until Series A or later, before it needs a dedicated internal finance leader.

Fintech is the exception. Financially-driven products (lending, payments) pull the first hire forward; compliance or security fintech looks more like other tech, and is later.

A RULE OF THUMB ON HEADCOUNT

A highly capable Accountant or Bookkeeper covers the basics to around 15 people.

A fractional or virtual CFO can carry the strategic layer to around 60.

The first internal senior finance hire; Finance Manager, Financial Controller or Head of Finance typically happens between 20 and 30 heads, depending on complexity.

Sydney

The First Finance Hire

Role	Typical stage	Low	Mid	High
Senior Accountant	Seed to Series A	\$115,000	\$130,000	\$145,000
Finance Manager	Series A	\$140,000	\$155,000	\$170,000
Financial Controller	Series A to B	\$160,000	\$180,000	\$190,000
Head of Finance / Finance Lead	Series B	\$180,000	\$200,000	\$230,000

The First CFO & Senior Finance Leadership

Role	Typical stage	Low	Mid	High
Finance Director / Deputy CFO	Series B to C	\$220,000	\$260,000	\$320,000
CFO (first CFO, VC-backed)	Series B+	\$275,000	\$330,000	\$400,000
CFO (scale-up / pre-IPO)	Series C+	\$300,000	\$350,000	\$425,000

Established Businesses, by Sector (base range)

Role	Tech	Fintech	Deep Tech
Chief Financial Officer/SVP Finance	\$330-430k	\$350-480k	\$340-440k
Head of Finance/VP Finance	\$220-270k	\$240-280k	\$225-275k
Finance Director	\$230-300k	\$250-310k	\$240-305k
Head of FP&A	\$200-230k	\$220-250k	\$205-235k
Financial Controller	\$185-235k	\$190-240k	\$180-230k

MARKET COMMENTARY Sydney is the largest and most competitive market for finance talent in Australian tech and typically sets the ceiling on base salary nationally. Fintech commands the highest sector premium.

STORY placements at the senior end include CFO roles agreed well above \$350,000 base in fintech and lending.

Melbourne

The First Finance Hire

Role	Typical stage	Low	Mid	High
Senior Financial Accountant	Seed to Series A	\$110,000	\$125,000	\$140,000
Finance Manager	Series A	\$140,000	\$150,000	\$165,000
Financial Controller	Series A to B	\$160,000	\$175,000	\$190,000
Head of Finance / Finance Lead	Series B	\$180,000	\$190,000	\$210,000

The First CFO & Senior Finance Leadership

Role	Typical stage	Low	Mid	High
Finance Director / Deputy CFO	Series B to C	\$205,000	\$245,000	\$300,000
CFO (first CFO, VC-backed)	Series B+	\$250,000	\$315,000	\$370,000
CFO (scale-up / pre-IPO)	Series C+	\$300,000	\$330,000	\$400,000

Established Businesses, by Sector (base range)

Role	Tech	Fintech	Deep Tech
Chief Financial Officer	\$300-400k	\$340-450k	\$315-410k
Head of Finance	\$195-250k	\$215-270k	\$200-255k
Finance Director	\$220-270k	\$240-280k	\$225-275k
Head of FP&A	\$190-215k	\$205-235k	\$195-220k
Financial Controller	\$170-210k	\$180-220k	\$175-215k

MARKET COMMENTARY Melbourne’s deep tech and enterprise-software base gives it a strong pipeline of finance leaders. It sits roughly on par with Sydney at Financial Controller level and trails modestly at CFO and Finance Director level.

Brisbane

The First Finance Hire

Role	Typical stage	Low	Mid	High
Senior Financial Accountant	Seed to Series A	\$110,000	\$120,000	\$135,000
Finance Manager	Series A	\$125,000	\$145,000	\$160,000
Financial Controller	Series A to B	\$160,000	\$175,000	\$190,000
Head of Finance / Finance Lead	Series B	\$170,000	\$190,000	\$210,000

The First CFO & Senior Finance Leadership

Role	Typical stage	Low	Mid	High
Finance Director / Deputy CFO	Series B to C	\$200,000	\$240,000	\$295,000
CFO (first CFO, VC-backed)	Series B+	\$240,000	\$300,000	\$360,000
CFO (scale-up / pre-IPO)	Series C+	\$275,000	\$320,000	\$380,000

Established Businesses, by Sector (base range)

Role	Tech	Fintech	Deep Tech
Chief Financial Officer	\$295-385k	\$330-430k	\$305-395k
Head of Finance	\$190-245k	\$210-260k	\$195-250k
Finance Director	\$215-270k	\$240-275k	\$220-260k
Head of FP&A	\$180-210k	\$200-235k	\$185-220k
Financial Controller	\$160-205k	\$180-220k	\$170-215k

MARKET COMMENTARY Brisbane is the fastest-growing of the three markets and has closed much of the gap to the southern capitals, now trailing Sydney by roughly 5 to 10% at senior level. A widening base of funded tech and deep tech businesses is driving demand.

Total remuneration

In venture-backed and high-growth tech, base salary is only part of the picture. The offers that actually close blend base, short-term incentive and equity.

BONUS & SHORT-TERM INCENTIVE

Finance hires below CFO level typically carry a 5–15% target bonus. Outside of business performance, this is tied to reporting milestones, audit readiness or a funding event.

At Head of Finance and CFO level, 20–30% of base is common and higher again in established and listed businesses, increasingly linked to runway, gross-margin and fundraising outcomes.

EQUITY & ESOP

Equity is where startups compete when they cannot, or choose not to, compete on cash. At CFO level it is often the most significant part of the package, I regularly see option worth \$400,000 or more, and well beyond that at later stage.

Equity offers are best presented as the number of options and what those options will mean in the event of a potential event/outcome. The figures presented below are dollar values based on current valuation of the business, at the point of offer.

Indicative ranges for first-time finance appointments in VC-backed businesses:

Indicative equity ranges

Role	Typical equity (ordinary/ESOP) Value of options at current business valuation	Typical vesting
Finance Manager / Snr Fin. Accountant	\$50-150k	4 yrs, 12-mo cliff
Financial Controller	\$100-400k	4 yrs, 12-mo cliff
Head of Finance	\$300k-1m	4 yrs, 12-mo cliff
First CFO	\$400k-1.5m	4 yrs, 12-mo cliff

THE FRACTIONAL CFO OPTION

Many businesses take on financial leadership before they can justify a full-time CFO.

From my conversations, fractional and virtual CFOs typically engage on an hourly or day-rate basis. Senior operators around \$250-275 per hour or \$1,500 per day, often one to two days per week. If as an individual rather than via a firm, it is frequently on a blend of cash and equity.

It is typically the bridge to a permanent first CFO hire.

Hiring your first finance leader

Benchmarks tell you what a role costs. They do not tell you how to win the person.

STORY exists to solve that: the hires that are too important and the candidates too passive for a generic process.

WHY THE FIRST FINANCE HIRE IS DIFFERENT

This is rarely a hire you can post and fill; the strongest candidates are employed, performing and not looking.

Before I approach anyone, I publish a bespoke **STORY** Post celebrating the business to a highly engaged network of circa 30,000 finance professionals, so when I speak to candidates they already know who you are.

Every candidate then receives a detailed Executive Brief covering the role, the leadership team and what success looks like, reviewed with you before the search begins. So they have a complete understanding of the expectations within the role and they are under no illusions.

WORKING WITH STORY

18% FEE of the candidate's total guaranteed remuneration package	6 months GUARANTEE free-replacement period on every search	85% RETENTION RATE across two years for all placements
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Talk to me about your next finance hire

Free advice - No obligation chat

Book a call →



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Figures are indicative base salary and will vary with company stage, sector, funding and individual experience.