FITGRID / ISSUE 02 / AUGUST 2026

More Jobs. No Relief.

The first improvement in more than a year deserves attention. So does the competition arriving with it. Australia's employment market is turning unevenly, and the candidate's task is becoming more specific.

Nick Kellis / FitGrid · Published 15 October 2026

A market can improve before a job search becomes easier. August is a study in that distinction. SEEK reported a 0.5% rise in job advertisements, the first monthly increase in over a year. Yet the report also placed applications per advertisement at a new high. More opportunity and more competition were present together.

+0.5% Job ads month on month

August release estimate

−4.5% Job ads year on year

August release estimate

22 / 28 Industries below a year earlier

August industry chart

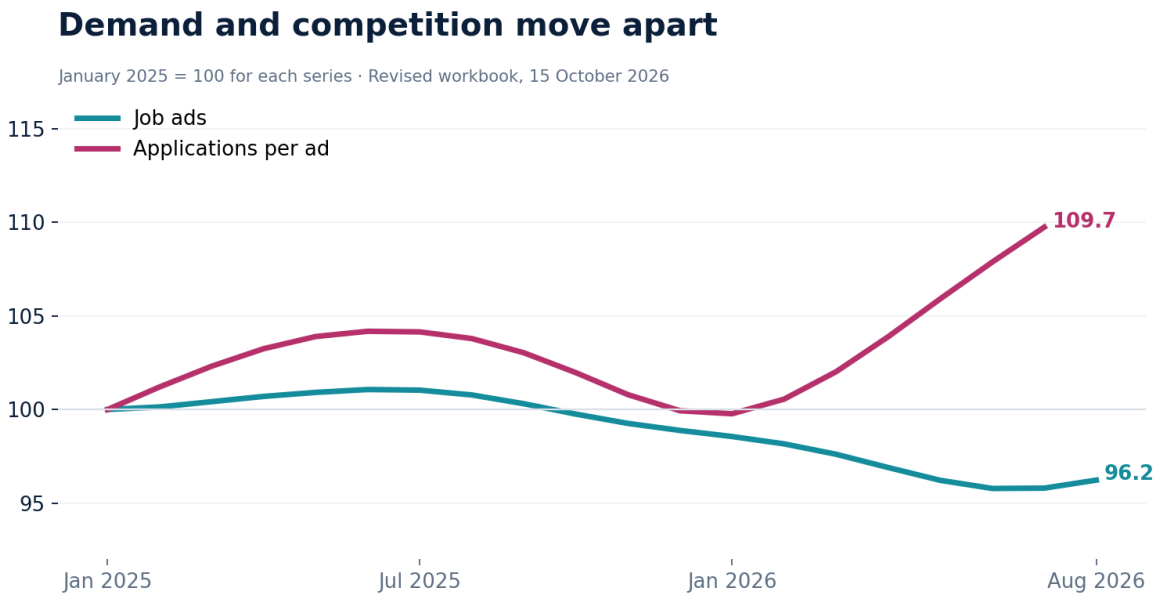
A turn is a change in direction, not a return to normal.

July's public edition, Fewer Jobs. More Competition., described the conditions in SEEK's July release. August changes the first half of that description. A positive monthly result means advertised demand increased relative to the preceding month. It does not mean the market regained the opportunities lost over the preceding year.

SEEK's August release reported job advertisements up 0.5% month on month and down 4.5% year on year. That combination matters: the direction improved while the level remained below the previous year. A candidate can therefore encounter fresh openings and still face a narrower opportunity set than a year earlier.

The improvement should change our language. A continuous-collapse story is no longer defensible. Neither is a broad recovery declaration. The useful question is where the turn is occurring, whether it persists, and whether it reaches the kinds of roles a particular person can credibly pursue.

Our interpretation is that August warrants renewed investigation. It does not justify indiscriminate application. The candidate who uses an improving headline to abandon role discipline may simply enter more competitions without improving their position inside any of them.



Source: SEEK. National and state charts use the revised 15 October 2026 workbook. Industry and AI charts retain the monthly release estimates. Applications have a one-month reporting lag.

The queue can grow while the door opens wider.

Applications per advertisement are a ratio of platform activity, not a count of unique competing people. One person can submit multiple applications. The measure cannot tell us how qualified the applicants are, how many are shortlisted, or why a particular employer rejects a candidate.

It still supplies useful context. The August release reported a further 0.4% increase in applications per ad, using July applications data because the measure arrives with a one-month lag. At the time of publication, SEEK described a new peak. The underlying competition story had not disappeared when advertisements began to rise.

There is a consequential revision. In the 15 October workbook, July applications per ad stand at 231.26, up 1.73% month on month, rather than the 0.4% first published. August subsequently reaches 235.17, up 1.69%. Those are later estimates and later information. We show them explicitly rather than silently rewriting what the August release said.

For a candidate, this is a reason to inspect the application funnel. Few interviews could reflect market pressure, weak targeting, insufficiently visible proof, timing or a combination. Aggregate competition establishes the conditions around the case. It cannot decide which explanation controls the case.

An improving market does not remove the need to make a specific, defensible case.

An Australian average is a poor address for a job search.

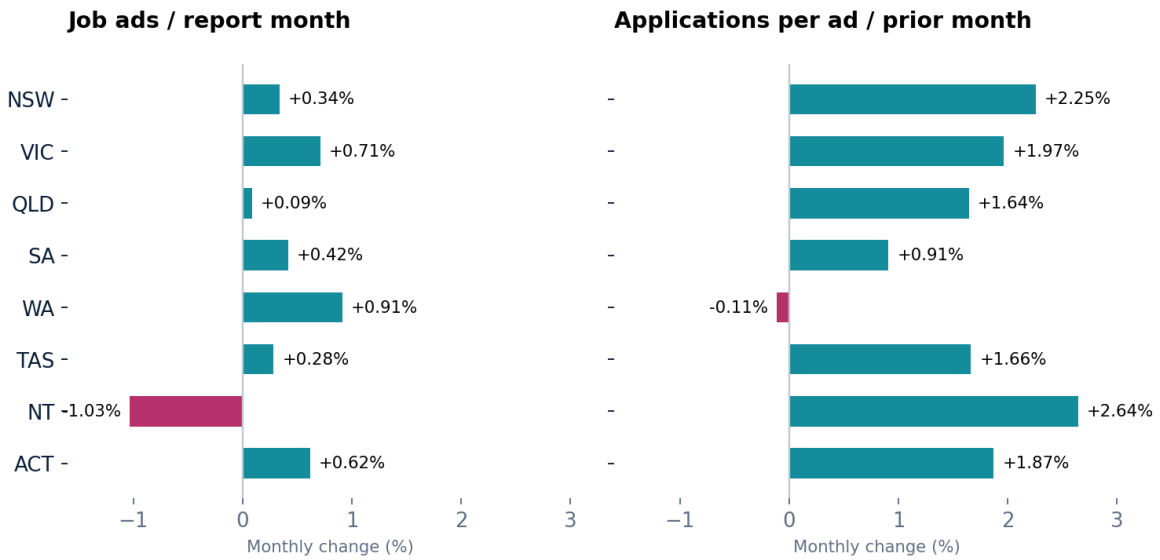
The August release described increases across the states, led by Victoria at 1.1%. Western Australia was the only state with annual growth in that release, at 1.8%. Those were the estimates available when SEEK published the report.

Revised figures sharpen the caution. The October workbook places August annual ad growth at +3.29% in WA and +0.42% in SA, while NSW remains −8.08% and the ACT −10.31%. The NT's revised monthly direction is negative. A later estimate can change both the size and the sign of a movement.

There is a second geographic distinction: demand and application pressure do not move in lockstep. July applications per ad in the latest workbook rose 2.25% in NSW and 1.97% in Victoria, while WA was broadly flat at −0.11%. These are changes within each state's own series. Index levels should not be used to declare that one state has a particular multiple of another state's applicants.

FitGrid inference: geography belongs inside the campaign design, alongside relocation feasibility, travel, work arrangements and genuine employer access. A stronger state headline is an invitation to inspect suitable roles. It is not evidence that a remote applicant will enjoy the same conditions as a local candidate.

One country, different conditions



Source: SEEK. National and state charts use the revised 15 October 2026 workbook. Industry and AI charts retain the monthly release estimates. Applications have a one-month reporting lag.

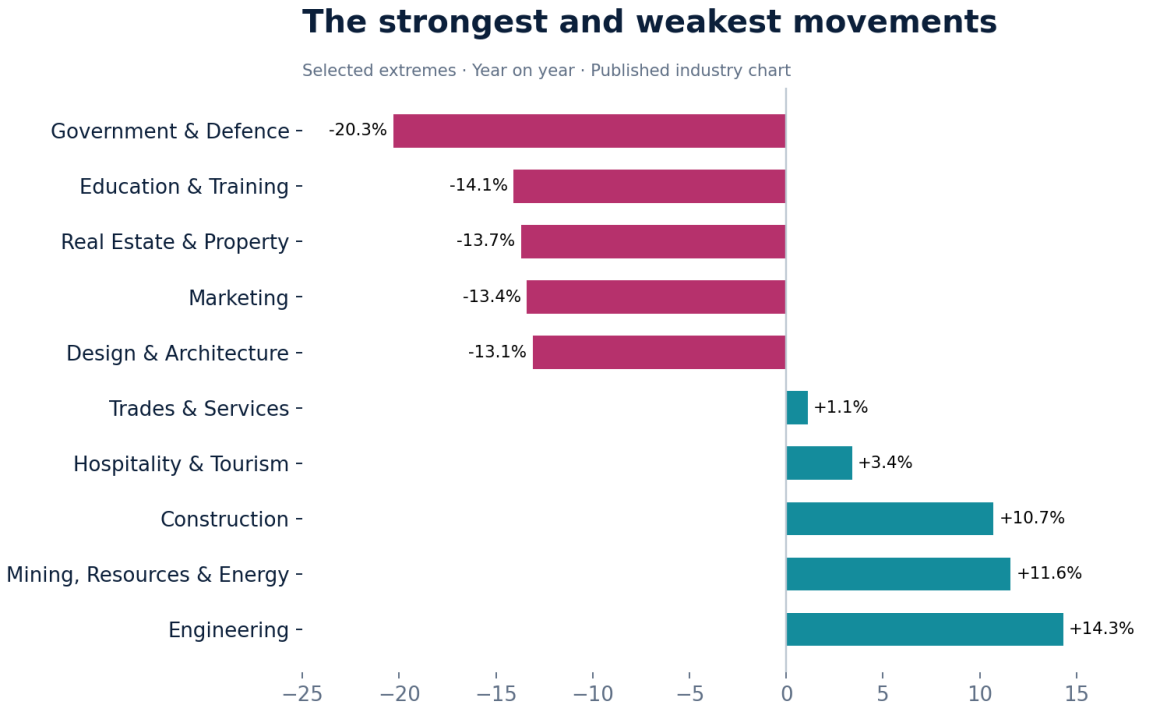
Hospitality accelerates. Annual strength remains concentrated.

Hospitality and Tourism rose 3.6% in August and 6.2% over the quarter. Banking and Financial Services increased 1.5% in the month; Human Resources and Recruitment rose 0.4%; Marketing and Communications rose 0.2%. These movements complicate a simple story that all office or professional work is weakening together.

The annual picture remains more selective. Engineering was up 14.3%, Mining, Resources and Energy 11.6%, and Construction 10.7%. Meanwhile Government and Defence was down 20.3%, Education and Training 14.1%, and Marketing and Communications 13.4%. Only six of the 28 industry categories were above a year earlier.

A monthly improvement and an annual shortfall can coexist inside the same industry. Marketing's +0.2% month and −13.4% year illustrate that precisely. A candidate should neither dismiss a promising vacancy because the annual industry figure is weak nor assume that a small monthly rise makes the whole category easy.

The classification also describes the advertised role category, not a complete account of the employer's sector or the candidate's transferable capability. A finance leader employed by a resources business is not automatically participating in the same demand series as a mining engineer. Translate the evidence to the actual role before drawing a strategic conclusion.



Source: SEEK. National and state charts use the revised 15 October 2026 workbook. Industry and AI charts retain the monthly release estimates. Applications have a one-month reporting lag.

Fast growth. A small share. A more precise question.

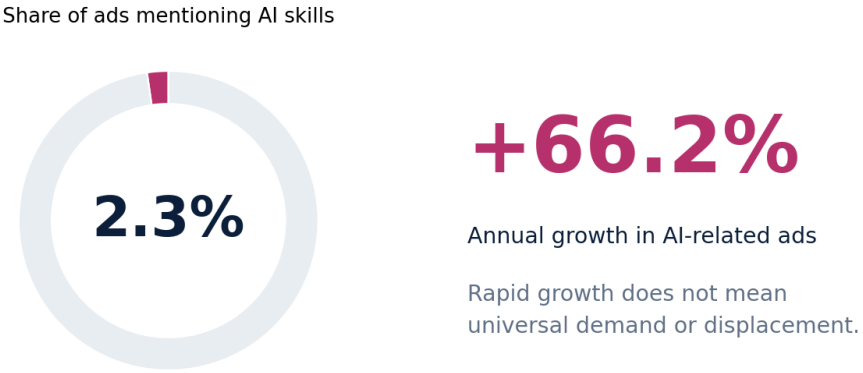
SEEK reported AI skills in 2.3% of advertisements in August, rising to 3.0% in NSW. AI-related ads grew 3.9% in the month and 66.2% over the year. Agentic AI references rose 185.3% annually and AI Ethics and Governance references 153.6%.

Large growth rates deserve attention, but they do not establish that most roles require these skills. The 2.3% share provides the scale that the annual growth headline alone cannot. These figures measure mentions in advertisements. They do not measure productivity, actual adoption, job displacement or an employer's willingness to hire an inexperienced AI practitioner.

The practical question is whether a target role asks for applied AI capability and what credible proof would demonstrate it. For a governance role, that may concern controls and accountability. For an operations role, it may concern a documented workflow improvement. Generic enthusiasm is a weaker signal than relevant evidence.

Our marketing implication is similarly bounded. AI can support a targeted learning conversation. This report cannot support a claim that everyone must retrain urgently or that a course will protect someone from displacement.

Read the growth rate beside the share



Source: SEEK. National and state charts use the revised 15 October 2026 workbook. Industry and AI charts retain the monthly release estimates. Applications have a one-month reporting lag.

06 / THE CANDIDATE DECISION

Start where the campaign is actually stopping.

A capable person with few interviews needs a different investigation from someone receiving interviews but no offers. The first case requires a close look at lane, role fit, evidence and application execution. The second moves attention toward interview translation, employer concerns, proof and final-stage competition. Neither diagnosis follows automatically from SEEK's national figure.

Begin with a bounded record: target role families, location and level; a representative set of live advertisements; the résumé and LinkedIn evidence; and applications, screens, interviews and offers by date. Record active applications separately from completed decisions so that slow employer processes do not masquerade as rejection.

Then state a primary hypothesis and a credible alternative. If the hypothesis is that experience is being misread, identify the exact requirement the evidence fails to make visible. If the alternative is poor underlying fit, specify what would distinguish it. A diagnosis becomes useful when it can be contradicted.

For the next five to ten suitable applications, keep the test narrow enough to interpret. Change the leading evidence or one target cluster, record the employer response, and preserve what you learn. A small campaign test cannot prove causation, but it can replace an unexamined story with better evidence.

The prize is a better next decision, followed by an application that can survive scrutiny.

07 / WHAT WE CHANGED OUR MIND ABOUT

The evidence should be allowed to push back.

August supports the proposition that the market is not one market. The state and industry differences are too material to hide inside a national mood. It also strengthens the case for interpreting demand and competition separately.

It weakens a blanket account of professional opportunity. Banking, HR and Marketing each improved in the month, even while several annual series remained negative. It rejects continuous deterioration as the only narrative and gives us no warrant for AI fear marketing.

The line 'More applications cannot fix the wrong market' remains a strategic hypothesis, not a diagnosis of every unsuccessful search. A well-targeted candidate may still need sufficient volume, time and channel coverage. The discipline is to distinguish productive repetition from repeated pursuit of an unsupported role.

That is the standard for this publication: report the movement, expose the limits, and change the interpretation when the evidence changes. Certainty should increase because the questions become more answerable, not because the language becomes louder.

08 / THE FIELD GUIDE

Turn the evidence into a better next decision.

FIND

Locate the campaign bottleneck. Distinguish market, lane, role, evidence, application and conversion hypotheses.

KNOW

Match real role requirements to verified achievements, scope and constraints. Keep missing evidence visible.

CHOOSE

Pursue where fit, proof and access justify the effort. Investigate uncertainty. Pass on unsupported essential requirements.

SHOW

Lead with relevant, retrievable proof in the application and interview. Clarity must preserve the truth.

GROW

Record employer responses, objections, decisions and the next test. Retain contradictions and revise the hypothesis.

August opens a possibility. It does not settle the outcome. The useful response is to look again, choose more precisely and make each pursuit leave evidence behind.

Read the full series at fitgrid.com.au/insights. Connect the evidence to your campaign at fitgrid.com.au/book.

Sources and reading discipline

Primary release: https://au.seek.com/about/news/article/seek-employment-report-august26

Historical workbook: https://au.seek.com/about/news/article/seek-employment-data. Vintage 15 October 2026. SEEK is the source of employment figures. FitGrid is responsible for charts, interpretation and candidate implications.

Applications per ad are reported one month later than demand. The August release pairs that month's ads with the preceding month's applications. The national chart aligns observations by actual month and independently rebases each series to January 2025 = 100.

The release headline and the latest historical estimate are different vintages. August ads were published at +0.5% and are now +0.44%. July applications per ad were published in August at +0.4% and are now +1.73%. September ads are +0.62%; August applications per ad are +1.69% in the current workbook. Industry release figures have not been retrospectively revised here.

SEEK moved headline reporting to trend estimates from August 2025. Do not splice trend and seasonally adjusted headline movements. Trend smoothing revises observations and can change a recent direction.

Company listings enter the reported series from November 2025, affecting composition and comparability. The January 2016 applications series break and COVID trend breaks limit long-run continuity. No growth rate is inferred across those older breaks here.

Industry categories and state series do not supply precise occupation, seniority and location cross-tabulations. State indices are not comparable absolute applicant counts. AI mentions do not measure displacement or actual adoption.

Applications are not unique people. SEEK activity does not describe the entire labour market, vacancy quality, screening reasons or individual offer probability. The evidence does not establish causation or guarantee an employment outcome.

This publication builds on July's Fewer Jobs. More Competition. and should be read alongside the other monthly edition. July retains its original release figures; later revisions are explicitly identified in this issue.