

AUSTRALIA 2026

The Freelance Digital Marketing Opportunity

Why demand for digital marketing is growing, who needs the work done, and how freelancing compares with a full-time marketing job.

$19.8bn
internet ad spend, up 14%

2.8lm
Australian businesses

27 to 1
businesses per employed marketer

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SUMMARY

The opportunity in six figures

Australian businesses are spending more on digital marketing every year, and most of them are too small to employ a marketer. That gap is the freelance opportunity. This report sets out the evidence from public data.

$19.8 billion

spent on internet advertising in Australia in the 2026 financial year, up 14% in a year.

IAB Australia and PwC

2.81 million

actively trading businesses in Australia. About 97% are small businesses.

Australian Bureau of Statistics; ASBFEO

64.4%

of small businesses surveyed in Australia and New Zealand are increasing their marketing budgets in 2026.

Constant Contact survey, June 2026

27 to 1

businesses for every person employed as an advertising or marketing professional.

Our calculation from ABS and Jobs and Skills Australia figures

1.1 million

Australians already work as independent contractors, 7.6% of everyone employed.

Australian Bureau of Statistics

36%

of employed Australians usually work from home. Freelance marketing can be done from anywhere.

Australian Bureau of Statistics

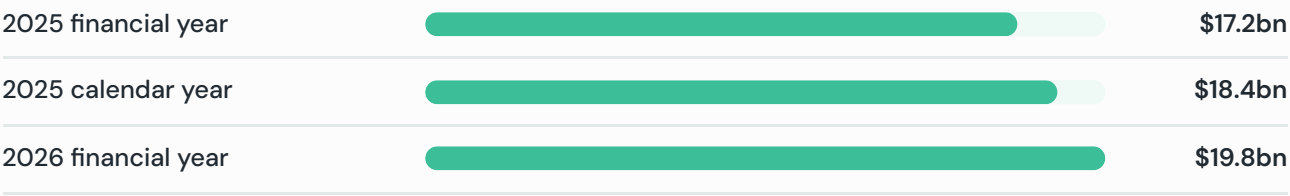
Our conclusion: for someone starting out in marketing today, freelancing offers more demand, more control and more room to grow than competing for a single full-time job.

SECTION 1

Demand for digital marketing is growing

Businesses are moving more of their budgets online every year, and the growth is coming from a wider range of advertisers.

Internet advertising spend in Australia



Source: IAB Australia Internet Advertising Revenue Report, prepared by PwC Australia.

- Spend grew 14% in the 2026 financial year, the strongest financial-year growth since 2022.
- The March 2026 quarter was the strongest March quarter on record, at $4.9 billion.
- IAB Australia says the growth is coming from a broader base of advertisers than before. More businesses are advertising online, not only the big brands.

More businesses, spending more on marketing

+85,130
net new businesses in the year to June 2026

64.4%
of small businesses lifting marketing budgets

67.3%
spending more time on marketing

Sources: ABS, Counts of Australian Businesses, June 2026. Constant Contact small business survey covering Australia and New Zealand, June 2026.

Every one of those businesses needs customers. Search ads, social media, email and a website that converts are how most of them now find customers, and most owners do not have the time or skills to run those channels well.

SECTION 2

Who needs the work done

Most Australian businesses are far too small to hire a full-time marketer. They buy marketing help by the project or by the month.

BUSINESSES IN AUSTRALIA

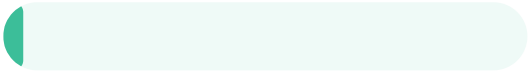
2,814,778



actively trading at 30 June 2026. Fewer than 1 million employ anyone at all.

EMPLOYED MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

103,100



people working as advertising and marketing professionals.

Sources: ABS, Counts of Australian Businesses, June 2026. Jobs and Skills Australia occupation profile. The bars are drawn to scale.

What the gap means

There are about 27 businesses for every employed marketing professional, and those professionals are concentrated in larger organisations. A plumber, a physio clinic or a local retailer is never going to advertise a full-time marketing role on SEEK. They still need someone to run their ads, fix their website and bring in enquiries.

That work goes to agencies and freelancers. For a small business, a freelancer is often the better fit: lower cost than an agency, one person who knows the account, and no long contract.

Small businesses are looking for better providers

Research commissioned by the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman found that nearly 70% of small businesses drop their digital marketing provider within 12 months. Many said they were sold services they did not need.

Why this matters to a new freelancer

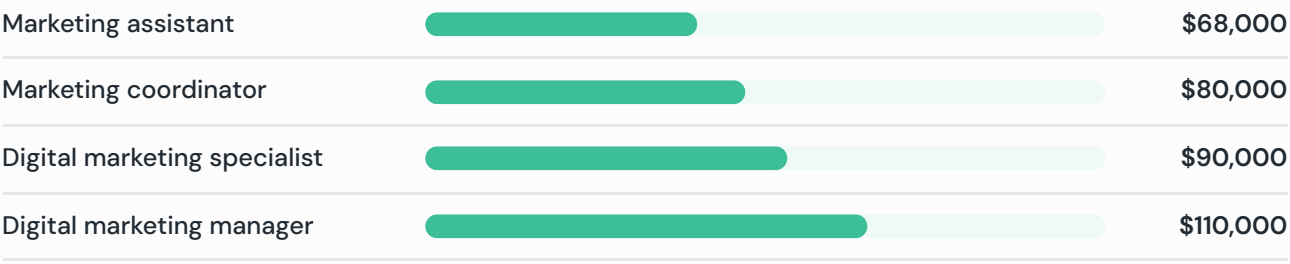
High turnover means small businesses are regularly in the market for someone new. A freelancer who communicates clearly, reports honestly and delivers what was agreed stands out quickly.

SECTION 3

Freelancing compared with a full-time job

A salary is fixed by an employer. Freelance income is set by your rate and the number of clients you hold.

What marketing jobs pay



Average advertised salaries. Source: SEEK, updated 7 January 2026.

What freelance work can bill

ILLUSTRATIVE SCENARIO	ASSUMPTIONS	BILLED IN A YEAR
Part-time, alongside a job	10 billable hours a week at $100 an hour, 44 weeks	**$44,000**
Full-time, steady	20 billable hours a week at $100 an hour, 44 weeks	**$88,000**
Full-time, established	25 billable hours a week at $120 an hour, 44 weeks	**$132,000**

Scenarios are arithmetic examples, not forecasts or typical results. The hourly rates sit within the A$100 to A$140 an hour that Expert360 lists as indicative for mid-level freelance digital marketers in Australia. Newer freelancers usually start lower. Figures are before business costs, tax and super, and exclude GST.

A full-time job

- Pay, hours and location are set by the employer
- One source of income
- You compete with other applicants for each role
- Paid leave and super are included

Freelancing

- You set your rate, hours and location, and can raise your rate as results build
- Income is spread across several clients
- A business owner can say yes after one conversation
- You cover your own leave, super and quiet periods

SECTION 4

Where the risk sits

Corporate marketing roles are among the jobs being restructured as employers adopt AI. Freelancers who use AI to deliver results are on the other side of that change.

MOST AI-EXPOSED OCCUPATIONS

+5.6%



employment growth, November 2022 to February 2026

LEAST AI-EXPOSED OCCUPATIONS

+9.5%



employment growth over the same period

Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, AI and employment in Australia, July 2026. Advertising and marketing professionals are among the occupations classed as more exposed.

Employer announcements in 2026

EMPLOYER	WHAT WAS ANNOUNCED	SOURCE
Qantas	About 850 corporate roles affected over several years. Marketing is in the first wave	Information Age
Bunnings	350 technology roles cut as tasks move to AI	Yahoo Finance Australia
Officeworks	Hundreds of jobs moving offshore alongside more use of AI	Information Age

What it means

- The government report found no broad AI-driven job loss so far. The pressure is on routine, in-house production work.
- An employee depends on one employer's decisions. A freelancer with six clients does not lose their income when one of them restructures.
- Small businesses have access to the same AI tools as everyone else and little idea how to turn them into customers. A freelancer who can do that is selling a result, which is much harder to automate than a task.

SECTION 5

What freelancing takes

The opportunity is real, and so is the work. This is what a new freelance digital marketer needs.

YOU NEED	WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE
One or two practical skills	Paid ads, SEO, copywriting or email, learned well enough to get a result for a real business
Proof	Two or three short case studies with before and after numbers
A specific offer	One service for one kind of business, such as Google Ads for local trades
Steady outreach	Regular, relevant contact with businesses that fit the offer
The basics of running a business	An ABN, simple invoicing, money set aside for tax, and GST registration once turnover reaches $75,000

How most people start

- They begin alongside their current job, with one client.
- They choose the industry they already know from their previous career.
- They start with a small paid project and turn it into monthly work.
- They raise their rate once they have results to point to.

The trade-offs, plainly

Freelance income varies from month to month, especially in the first year. There is no paid leave and you fund your own super. It suits people who are comfortable finding their own work. For many, that is a fair exchange for control over their income, hours and location.



ABOUT THIS REPORT

Method and sources

This report compiles published figures from Australian government agencies, industry bodies and named surveys. We did not run a survey. Each figure is reported as its source states it. Where we have calculated a figure ourselves, we say so. The income scenarios are arithmetic examples built on stated assumptions and are not forecasts. Figures were checked on 18 November 2026.

1. IAB Australia, Internet Advertising Revenue Report, prepared by PwC Australia (FY2025, calendar 2025, March quarter 2026 and FY2026 editions).
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, July 2022 to June 2026.
3. Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, small business counts, and commissioned research on digital marketing providers.
4. Constant Contact, small business marketing survey covering Australia and New Zealand, June 2026.
5. Jobs and Skills Australia, Advertising and Marketing Professionals occupation profile.
6. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Working arrangements.
7. SEEK, Highest marketing salary in Australia, updated 7 January 2026.
8. Expert360, indicative rates for freelance digital marketers.
9. Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, AI and employment in Australia, 8 July 2026.
10. Information Age (ACS) and Yahoo Finance Australia, for employer announcements.

General information only, not financial, tax or career advice. Income examples are illustrative and are not typical or promised results. Published by DMA Academy.

Is remote digital marketing a good fit for you?

Take the one-minute quiz. It looks at your background and what you want from work.

Take the 1-minute quiz