



**THE RESUME  
WRITERS**

THE EXECUTIVE  
CAREER GUIDE



**A NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER****Why we wrote this**

Most executive resume writing advice you can find online is either generic or sales pitch. This guide is neither. It is the document we wish every executive client had read before our first conversation — not because it sells our service, but because it makes the conversation better.

My name is Jacquie Liversidge. I founded The Resume Writers in 2016 after a decade working in training and employment services. Over the years we have built an internal practice specifically for senior leaders — the candidates who have outgrown standard resume templates, who deal with executive search firms rather than online job boards, and whose CVs need to read as instruments of strategic positioning rather than chronological records of employment.

Our senior writers work on executive accounts across federal SES, state senior executive bands, ASX-listed C-suite candidacies, mid-market General Manager appointments, Board-track candidates, and senior public-sector transitions. The work is structurally different from junior-level resume writing. It demands a different kind of writer, a different methodology, and a different conversation with the candidate.

This guide reflects what we have learned from that work. If you are at the executive level — or stepping up into it — the contents are intended to be substantive enough to act on whether or not you engage us. The cost of an undercooked executive CV is rarely the loss of a single opportunity. It is the slow erosion of credibility in front of search consultants who routinely talk to each other about candidates. That is a problem worth taking seriously, and worth investing in solving properly.

I hope you find this guide useful, candid, and worth the time it takes to read.

**Jacquie Liversidge**

*Managing Director · The Resume Writers*

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## SECTION 1

## The 2026 executive market

Australian executive recruitment in 2026 sits at the intersection of several forces: post-pandemic structural change, the rise of activist Boards, accelerated CEO turnover at the top of the ASX, the maturation of generative AI inside large enterprises, and a new wave of regulatory pressure on governance standards. The market is more active than it has been in several years, particularly in financial services, technology, energy transition, and senior government.

<p><b>10.1%</b></p> <p>Forecast CAGR for global executive search market through 2031</p>	<p><b>USD 64B</b></p> <p>Global executive search market size in 2026</p>	<p><b>90–149</b></p> <p>Average days to fill a C-suite role (2026 benchmark)</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Major global retained-search firms in Australia (the SHREK firms)</p>
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### What is actually moving

**CEO turnover is elevated.** ASX 200 CEO succession activity has been running above the long-term average for three years, partly driven by the post-pandemic strategic resets and partly by Board-level activism. This creates a cascade effect: every new CEO triggers consideration of the CFO, COO, CHRO and other direct reports.

**Chief AI Officer is now a recognised role.** Three years ago, almost no Australian organisation had a CAIO. By 2026, the role is established at most ASX 100 companies and is starting to appear at large not-for-profits and state-government agencies. Adjacent roles — Chief Sustainability Officer, Chief Transformation Officer, Chief Customer Officer — continue to proliferate.

**Federal SES recruitment is structurally active.** SES Band 1, 2 and 3 movements have been running at elevated rates as the APS implements the Thodey Review reforms, the new Australian Public Service Strategy 2030, and significant capability uplift programs across digital, data and policy delivery. State senior executive bands are similarly active, with major reform agendas in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and WA.

**Board appointments are increasingly skills-led.** The ASX Corporate Governance Principles and Recommendations (4th edition) require listed-entity Boards to publish a skills matrix and explain how their composition supports the strategy. This has shifted Board recruitment toward identifying specific skills gaps — cyber, ESG, digital transformation, deep sector expertise — rather than appointing based on relationships alone. Genuine skills-led appointment processes favour candidates who can articulate their distinct contribution to the matrix.

## **What is harder than it used to be**

Three dynamics specifically affect senior candidates in 2026.

- AI-generated executive applications are now common, and search consultants increasingly read them with scepticism. The advantage of a substantively human-written CV is larger than it was three years ago.
- The Board has more direct involvement in senior appointments. Chairs and Committee chairs sit in on more interviews and reference calls than they used to. Candidates need to be ready to engage with governance-level questions, not just operational ones.
- Compensation transparency is increasing. The conversation about salary, package and equity is more structured than it was; the candidate who arrives without a clear view on what they are worth (and why) loses negotiating ground quickly.

## SECTION 2

# The executive document set

At executive level, a single “resume” is rarely enough. Most senior candidates need a set of documents, each calibrated to a different audience and a different decision. Understanding which document does which job is the foundation of effective senior positioning.

There are six documents in the full executive set. Most candidates need three or four at any given time.

### 1. The executive CV

The primary positioning document. Usually four to six pages. Written for line executive appointments — C-suite, General Manager, Executive Director, SES, Senior Public Service. Built around a strategic summary, a set of selected capability themes, and a chronological career section.

This is the document that goes to search consultants, hiring committees, and direct line-manager interviewers. It is the document that has to read well in 90 seconds and reward closer reading at 10 minutes.

### 2. The biographical CV

Written in third-person narrative form rather than bullets. Used for Board appointments, advisory roles, conference speaking, prospectus inclusion, AICD profile, and any context where the audience expects a coherent professional biography rather than an employment record. Usually 400–700 words.

Most senior candidates need a biographical CV but do not have one. The first time it is needed is often urgent (a Board nomination, a speaking invitation), and the candidate ends up writing it themselves under time pressure with a result that does not represent them well.

### 3. The Board CV

A specific format that emphasises governance experience, sector breadth, committee memberships, and the contribution the candidate would make to a Board skills matrix. Structurally different from the executive CV — less about operational delivery, more about governance, oversight, and strategic counsel. Usually two to three pages.

Candidates targeting NED appointments need this document as their primary tool, not their executive CV. The two documents look very different and serve different purposes.

### 4. The LinkedIn profile

Not a CV with a photo. A different document with different conventions: longer headline, longer About section, recommendations, endorsements, posts that demonstrate thought

leadership where relevant. At executive level, LinkedIn is a search engine that decision-makers use to validate a candidate before the formal process begins.

The LinkedIn profile should align with the executive CV but cannot be identical. Different audience, different reading patterns, different platform conventions.

## 5. The search-firm intake form

When a candidate is added to an executive search firm's database — either through an active mandate or a proactive submission — the firm typically captures a structured profile: target roles, sector preferences, compensation expectations, mobility, references. This intake form is not the CV; it sits alongside it.

Many candidates fill these in casually, underestimating that the form becomes the principal record the consultant searches against. Filling it in carefully — with specific titles, specific sectors, specific compensation bands — is one of the highest-leverage things a candidate can do in their relationship with a search firm.

## 6. The speaking and bio assets

Short biographies for various contexts: 50-word version for event programs, 100-word version for moderator introductions, 200-word version for industry publications, photo headshot suitable for professional use, and any thought-leadership writing or media appearances that can be referenced.

These do not feel like resume-writing work, but at senior level they make up a meaningful share of a candidate's public professional presence. A candidate without a current professional photo or current speaker bio looks like a candidate who has not been keeping their profile current — which signals more than the candidate may realise.

### HOW WE SEQUENCE THE DOCUMENT SET

In our work with executive clients, we typically build the executive CV first — it is the most demanding document and the work generates material that informs every other document. The biographical CV and the LinkedIn profile follow naturally from the executive CV. The Board CV is built separately if the candidate is genuinely Board-track. Speaking assets and search-firm intake content are usually quick once the major documents are settled.

Building documents in this order is more efficient than building each from scratch. The first document is roughly 60 percent of the total work; the rest follow with proportionate effort.

## SECTION 3

## The executive CV — what good looks like

Most resume advice is written for early- and mid-career candidates. At executive level the rules change. Here is what we have learned from a decade of work with senior candidates about what an executive CV actually needs to do.

### On length

The two-page rule is a myth at senior level. Most executive CVs run four to six pages — sometimes longer for candidates with substantial international careers or extensive Board portfolios. Trying to compress a twenty-year senior career into two pages produces a document that reads as either under-cooked or evasive.

That said, length is not a virtue in itself. Length should be earned by substance. A four-page CV with substantive achievements, calibrated narrative and well-structured evidence reads as authoritative. A six-page CV padded with every project a candidate has touched reads as unfocused. The discipline is to be long enough to do the career justice without being long enough to bore the reader.

### On voice

First-person is conventional at every level, but at executive level the voice should be measured rather than self-promotional. The strongest executive CVs read as if written by a senior consultant about the candidate — considered, evidenced, slightly understated. Overclaiming at executive level is more damaging than at any other level, because the audience reads applications professionally and notices.

*At executive level, the strongest writing sounds like a senior consultant describing the candidate — not the candidate describing themselves.*

## On structure

A typical strong executive CV has the following architecture, in this order. The first three sections are non-negotiable; the rest depend on the candidate's career.

- 1 Strategic professional summary**

Four to seven lines establishing positioning. Not a list of skills — an argument about what this candidate brings to a senior role. Names the level, the sectors, the kind of work the candidate is known for, and the strategic value they have delivered.
- 2 Capability themes (calibrated to target)**

Four to seven themed sections that present the candidate's strongest evidence against the capabilities the target role requires. Each theme is supported by two to four specific examples drawn from the candidate's career. This is the section that does most of the positioning work.
- 3 Career history**

Chronological, most recent first, with each role given enough space to demonstrate scope (team size, budget, P&L, geography), context (the strategic moment the candidate entered), and three to five specific outcomes that demonstrate executive value.
- 4 Board, committee and advisory roles**

Where the candidate has Board, committee or advisory experience, these belong in their own section — separate from operational roles. Position type, organisation, sector, dates, and a one-line description of the contribution made.
- 5 Education, certifications, governance qualifications**

Including the relevant post-nominals (GAICD, FAIM, FCPA, etc), and any executive-education programs (AGSM, Melbourne Business School, INSEAD, Stanford, Wharton, Saïd, AICD Company Directors Course).
- 6 Publications, speaking, media**

Where applicable. At executive level, a published track record — even at modest scale — signals thought leadership in the candidate's domain. Worth listing if it exists.
- 7 Professional memberships and affiliations**

AICD, AHRI, AICD Foundation, sector-specific bodies. Brief and well-curated; not exhaustive.

## SECTION 3 (CONTINUED)

## A worked example — capability theme on an executive CV

Below is a worked example of a single capability theme on an executive CV, written for a CFO-track candidate positioning for a Group CFO or Deputy CFO role. The capability is “strategic financial leadership in transformation contexts.” Names and details have been changed; the structure and proportions are representative.

### WORKED EXAMPLE

#### Capability theme: strategic financial leadership in transformation contexts

##### THEME POSITIONING (35–60 WORDS)

A track record of providing financial leadership through major strategic shifts — acquisitions, divestments, restructures, and capital programs — in contexts where the CFO function needed to do more than report. Recognised within senior leadership teams for combining technical financial rigour with the commercial judgement that transformations demand.

##### EVIDENCE 1 — ACQUISITION LEADERSHIP

Led the financial workstream of [Organisation]’s acquisition of [Target] in 2022, a \$340M transaction. Worked alongside the CEO and Chair to model deal economics, structure the financing package across three tranches, and present the case for Board and shareholder approval. Post-completion, integrated finance functions across both entities within nine months and delivered the synergy commitments published at close.

##### EVIDENCE 2 — TRANSFORMATION FINANCE PARTNERSHIP

Partnered with the CEO and Chief Transformation Officer through [Organisation]’s three-year strategic reset (FY22–FY25), restructuring the cost base by \$58M annually while protecting growth investment in priority business units. The transformation delivered the published EBITDA uplift commitment a full quarter ahead of schedule.

##### EVIDENCE 3 — BOARD REPORTING REFORM

Redesigned the financial reporting framework for the Board in 2024, reducing pack length by 40 percent while expanding strategic commentary and forward-looking risk analysis. The new format was adopted as the template across the parent group, and the FY25 Audit Committee feedback specifically commended the clarity of the financial papers.

Notice the structure. The theme statement positions the capability without listing it. Each piece of evidence is a specific event with quantified scope, context, and outcome. The voice is measured rather than triumphant. The reader can verify each claim mentally; nothing in the writing requires the reader to take the candidate at their word.

This single capability theme is approximately 230 words. A strong executive CV typically presents four to seven such themes, each calibrated to demonstrate a capability the target role requires. Together they form the strategic positioning section that distinguishes an executive CV from a senior-mid-career one.

## SECTION 4

## The executive narrative

At every senior interview, candidates are asked some version of the question: “walk us through your career.” What follows in the next five to seven minutes is, more than any other factor, what determines whether the interview proceeds well. The CV gets the candidate in the room; the narrative determines what happens next.

An executive narrative is not a chronological recital. It is an argument. It explains, in retrospect, why the candidate's career has the shape it does — the strategic logic that connects the choices, the through-line that makes the trajectory coherent. Candidates who can deliver this narrative confidently land very differently from candidates who cannot.

### The three components of a strong executive narrative

**First: the through-line.** What is the underlying logic that connects the moves? It might be sectoral (“I have built and run finance functions in regulated industries”), functional (“I have specialised in commercial leadership of growth businesses”), or developmental (“My career has progressively moved from operational delivery to strategic ownership”). Most strong senior careers have a through-line, even if the candidate has not articulated it before.

**Second: the inflection points.** Three or four moments where the candidate made a deliberate strategic choice — took a stretch role, moved sectors, accepted a turnaround, declined a promotion to develop a different capability. The inflection points are where the candidate demonstrates judgement and intentionality. Drift reads badly at executive level; deliberate movement reads as leadership.

**Third: the arrival point.** Why the candidate is now ready for, and interested in, the role under discussion. Not a sales pitch, but an honest articulation of what makes this opportunity well-aligned to where the candidate is in their career. Strong arrival statements convert a chronological recital into a forward-looking conversation.

#### A COMMON FAILURE MODE

The most common failure in executive narrative is the chronological recital with no underlying argument. The candidate says “then I went to X, where I was responsible for Y, then I went to Z...” and the panel hears no logic, no judgement, no intentionality. The candidate is treating their CV as a script.

The second most common failure is overclaiming the through-line. The candidate retroactively constructs a strategic narrative that does not match the facts of their career.

Panels notice. Honest narrative — including honest framing of moves that were less strategic than they could have been — lands far better than constructed narrative.

Working through the narrative carefully — with someone who can ask the right questions — is one of the most valuable things an executive candidate can do before a senior interview. It is also what we spend a significant portion of our consult on with executive clients.

## SECTION 5

## Demonstrating executive value

At every career level, demonstrating value is the organising principle. But the kind of value that signals “executive” is structurally different from the kind that signals “mid-career strong performer.” Understanding the difference is the first step in writing a CV that lands at the right level.

### Three shifts that distinguish executive evidence

#### Mid-career evidence

- Outcomes I delivered through my own work.
- Projects I led from start to finish.
- Quantified results inside my function.
- Recognition by my manager or sponsor.
- Hands-on technical work.
- Doing the work better than peers.

#### Executive evidence

- Outcomes I caused through orchestrating others' work.
- Strategic positions I shaped that the organisation then executed.
- Quantified results at organisation or business-unit level.
- Trust extended by Boards, shareholders, regulators.
- Judgement on decisions others made.
- Setting the conditions where peers could do their best work.

The pattern is consistent: at executive level, value moves from individual contribution to systemic effect. The candidate is no longer judged on what they personally delivered, but on what they enabled, shaped, or caused. CVs that fail to make this shift sound mid-career even when the title is senior.

### Three types of executive evidence that score

**Scale evidence.** Concrete numbers that establish the breadth of the candidate's executive accountability. Revenue ownership, P&L responsibility, headcount, geographic spread, regulatory scope. These are not vanity numbers — they are the panel's baseline for understanding what kind of role the candidate has actually been doing.

**Complexity evidence.** Situations where the candidate worked through real strategic difficulty: regulatory intervention, hostile acquisitions, public failures, organisational restructures, executive-team conflict, Board-level disagreements. Complexity evidence demonstrates that the candidate has been tested at executive level — not just operated comfortably within a stable environment.

**Judgement evidence.** Decisions the candidate made under uncertainty, with imperfect information, where the choice mattered. This is the hardest evidence to articulate and the most valuable to a hiring panel. Judgement is what panels are ultimately trying to assess, and candidates who can articulate their own judgement clearly land very differently from candidates who present executive work as a sequence of tasks completed.

#### THE JUDGEMENT QUESTION

Many senior interviews ask some version of “tell me about a difficult decision you made” or “tell me about a time you had to make a call without full information.” Candidates who treat this as a STAR question and recite an event miss the point. The panel is asking for evidence of how the candidate thinks, not what they did.

The strongest answers describe the decision frame, the competing considerations, the candidate's analysis of the trade-offs, and the reasoning that led to the call — then briefly note the outcome. The reasoning is what scores. The same logic applies to CV writing: where you can show how you thought about a decision, you almost always score higher than where you only show what happened.

## SECTION 6

## Capability frameworks at executive level

At senior levels, the capability frameworks that govern recruitment become both more specific and more sophisticated. Understanding which framework applies to which role is essential for writing applications that score with hiring panels and search consultants.

### The major frameworks

**Integrated Leadership System (ILS) — federal APS.** Five capability streams, each defined at every classification level from APS to SES Band 3. The framework was substantially refreshed under the Thodey Review reforms and now sits at the centre of all APS executive recruitment. At SES Band 1, 2 and 3, the behavioural indicators become progressively more strategic, more enterprise-wide, and more focused on shaping environments rather than delivering within them.

**State senior executive frameworks.** Each state and territory has its own framework: the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework (Senior Executive focus areas), the Victorian Public Service Executive Capability Framework, the Queensland Government Senior Officer competencies, and so on. They are conceptually similar to the ILS but use different terminology and different behavioural indicators. Applications at senior state-government level need to use the framework's actual language; paraphrasing reads as not having engaged with the framework.

**ASIC and APRA director skills expectations.** For directors of APRA-regulated entities, prudential standard CPS 520 (Fit and Proper) and the relevant industry-specific standards set expectations for director competence. ASIC's regulatory guides similarly specify expectations for directors of listed entities. While these are not application frameworks per se, candidates positioning for Board roles in regulated entities need to be able to demonstrate alignment with these standards in their Board CV and biographical CV.

**ASX Corporate Governance Principles and Recommendations (4th edition).** The principal governance framework for listed entities. Board composition disclosures, skills matrices, diversity targets, and risk management expectations all sit under these principles. NED candidates need to understand the framework as a baseline; Chair candidates need to be conversant in it.

**Sector-specific competency frameworks.** Healthcare, education, financial services, defence and several other sectors maintain their own executive-level competency expectations. Applications at senior level in these sectors should reference the relevant framework explicitly. For example, healthcare executive roles often reference the LEADS framework; defence senior roles reference the Defence Senior Leadership Group competencies.

## How to use frameworks in writing

The trap is to use frameworks mechanically — listing the candidate's experience against each behavioural indicator in the order the framework presents them. This produces applications that read as inventories rather than arguments.

The better approach is to use the framework as the language of evidence, weaving the candidate's strongest examples into a narrative that lands the right indicators in the right order. The candidate's strongest evidence leads; the framework's language provides the connective tissue. A panel reading the application can map the evidence to the framework themselves; the candidate's job is to write the most persuasive version of their own argument.

## SECTION 7

## The TRW Executive Positioning Method

Our internal methodology for executive resume writing is built around a specific principle: an executive CV should not list every capability the candidate has. It should present a calibrated set of six capabilities, drawn from the candidate's full career, that together make the strongest possible argument for the specific role the candidate is targeting.

This is not a fixed taxonomy. The six capabilities are chosen — each time — from the candidate's career evidence and from the specific role's requirements. Two executive CVs we produce for the same candidate, targeting two different roles, will have different capability sets and different supporting evidence.

### Why six, and why calibrated

**Six is the right number.** Fewer than four reads as thin. More than seven reads as unfocused. Six gives enough range to demonstrate breadth without crowding the document with second-tier evidence. Across thousands of executive CVs, we have found six to be the natural fit.

**Calibration is the discipline.** The six capabilities are not the candidate's "top six." They are the six that make the strongest case for this specific role. Some of the candidate's strongest career evidence may not appear on a given CV because it is not relevant to the target. This is the hardest discipline for candidates writing their own CVs — there is a natural pull to include everything strong. Editing requires choosing.

### How we choose the six

During the executive consult, we work through three sources of input:

1. The candidate's career evidence — what they have actually done, with the texture and specifics that a one-hour conversation reveals.
2. The target role's stated requirements — the position description, capability framework if applicable, and any specific guidance from the search firm or recruiting organisation.
3. The strategic context of the role — what the organisation is trying to do, why this role exists now, what success at twelve months would look like. Often this is the most important input, and often it is the input candidates have not thought through.

From these three inputs, we identify the six capabilities that will land hardest with this specific audience for this specific role. The six become the spine of the CV; everything else either supports them or is set aside.

## Examples of the calibration in practice

### EXAMPLE: SAME CANDIDATE, TWO TARGETS

**Candidate:** Senior banking executive, 22-year career, currently a Divisional CEO at a Tier 1 Australian bank.

**Target A — Group CFO at an ASX 100 industrial company.** Six capabilities: strategic financial leadership; capital allocation in transformation; investor and Board engagement; regulatory and audit-committee partnership; commercial judgement at executive-team level; building and leading finance functions through scale change.

**Target B — CEO at a mid-cap mutual financial services group.** Six capabilities: customer-centric strategic leadership; regulated-entity Board engagement; transformation of mutual organisations; mid-market scale operations; talent leadership at executive level; stakeholder leadership across members and regulators.

The candidate's career evidence is the same. The two CVs would share perhaps 40 percent of the supporting examples, but the framing, the strategic positioning, the leading capability themes and the language would all differ. Each CV is calibrated to its target; neither is the candidate's "generic" CV.

## SECTION 8

## SES and senior state-government applications

Senior public sector recruitment in Australia has its own conventions, its own document formats, and its own assessment patterns. Candidates who understand these clearly enough land with significantly higher probability than candidates who treat senior public sector applications as a variant of private sector ones.

### Federal APS — SES Bands 1, 2 and 3

SES recruitment runs through merit-based processes governed by the Public Service Act 1999, the APS Commissioner's Directions, and the relevant agency's recruitment guidelines. The typical SES application pack includes:

- A two-page pitch addressing the role's capability requirements through ILS-aligned evidence.
- A current CV (typically four to six pages, in the executive CV format described in section 3).
- Confirmation of Australian citizenship (mandatory for SES positions).
- Any specific additional documents required by the recruiting agency (capability statements, executive summaries, additional referee responses).

The two-page pitch is the single most consequential document. SES selection committees typically read the pitch first; the CV is referenced afterwards to verify the claims. A pitch that reads well to an SES panel — disciplined, evidence-led, framework-aligned, written in the right register — is the difference between progressing to interview and being filtered out.

### What an SES pitch needs to do

An SES pitch is structurally different from an executive cover letter. It is not introductory. It is not narrative. It is a substantive argument that the candidate meets the role's capability requirements at SES level, supported by evidence drawn from the candidate's career.

The strongest SES pitches do three things at once:

- **Demonstrate alignment with the ILS at SES level.** The capabilities at SES Band 1, 2 and 3 are not the same as at EL2. The pitch must show evidence that the candidate operates at the right level — shaping environments, leading across functions, working at enterprise scale.
- **Connect to the specific agency's strategic context.** Every SES role exists within an agency's specific reform agenda, capability priorities, or operating challenges. Pitches that read as generic SES-level positioning land less well than pitches that engage with the specific context the role is in.

- **Use the framework's actual language.** The ILS uses specific terminology: “shapes strategic thinking,” “achieves results,” “cultivates productive working relationships,” “exemplifies personal drive and integrity,” “communicates with influence.” Pitches that use this language explicitly score higher than pitches that paraphrase it.

## **State senior executive applications**

Each state has its own approach. NSW typically uses targeted-question responses calibrated to the Senior Executive focus areas of the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework. Victoria's VPS uses the Executive Capability Framework with substantive cover-letter style submissions. Queensland uses the Leadership competencies for Queensland through one- or two-page pitches. WA, SA and TAS each have their own conventions; the precise format requirements are detailed at the job-advertisement level on each state's recruitment portal.

Two consistent principles apply across all jurisdictions: use the framework's actual language; ground every capability claim in specific evidence at the right level. Generic senior-executive language lands poorly in every jurisdiction; calibrated, framework-aligned, evidence-rich applications land well in all of them.

## SECTION 9

## Board appointments — a different ballgame

Board recruitment is structurally different from executive line recruitment, and candidates who treat the two as variations of the same process do themselves a disservice. Here is what is different about Board appointments and how to approach them well.

### How Board candidates are actually sourced

Most NED appointments are sourced through one of four channels:

1. Direct introduction by an existing Board member, often the Chair. This is still the most common path to a first NED role, particularly at the smaller and mid-cap end of the market.
2. Executive search firms running formal Board mandates. Spencer Stuart, Korn Ferry, Egon Zehnder, Derwent, Watermark and Future Leadership are particularly active in Australian Board recruitment.
3. AICD networks. The Australian Institute of Company Directors maintains networking events, mentoring programs, and Board-readiness pathways. AICD's Company Directors Course is the formal credential most candidates pursue, with the resulting GAICD post-nominal carrying real weight.
4. Government and statutory appointments. Federal and state governments maintain formal processes for appointments to statutory authorities, GBEs, and advisory bodies. These are merit-based, application-led, and typically require a structured submission against the published appointment criteria.

### The skills matrix conversation

Most listed-entity Boards now maintain a published skills matrix — a structured analysis of the capabilities present and absent on the current Board. When a vacancy arises, the Board typically identifies the skills gap that needs filling and recruits specifically against that gap.

For a candidate, this means the conversation about a NED appointment is rarely “are you a good Director?” — it is “what specifically do you bring to this Board's matrix?” Candidates who can articulate their distinct contribution to a specific Board's skills profile land very differently from candidates who present generic governance experience.

#### COMMON SKILLS SOUGHT ON CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN BOARDS

The 2026 ASX governance landscape consistently identifies several skill areas as in-demand on Boards: cyber and information security, digital transformation, data and

analytics, ESG and sustainability, financial services regulatory experience, sector-specific operational depth (mining, energy transition, healthcare, technology), risk management at enterprise level, and remuneration committee experience for those with HR backgrounds.

Candidates positioning for first Board appointments should consider where their executive career has provided distinctive depth in one or more of these areas. The candidate who has run a major cyber program inside a regulated entity has a story to tell that a generalist executive does not.

## The Board CV — what is different

A Board CV emphasises different content from an executive CV. Specifically:

- Governance experience leads. Any existing Board, committee or advisory roles appear before line executive roles.
- Sector breadth is positioned as an asset. Boards value diverse perspective; line executive roles often look more sectorally focused.
- Specific governance qualifications (GAICD, FAICD) are foregrounded.
- Executive achievements are framed in governance language — strategic shaping, risk oversight, stakeholder engagement — rather than operational delivery.
- Length is more constrained. Most strong Board CVs run two to three pages, occasionally four for candidates with substantial Board portfolios.

## GAICD and the Company Directors Course

AICD's Company Directors Course is the principal pre-Board qualification in Australia. The five-day program covers governance practice, the legal environment, financial literacy and performance, risk and strategy, and Board effectiveness. The optional assessments lead to the GAICD post-nominal, which appears on most contemporary Australian Director CVs.

For candidates serious about a Board career, the course is a genuine signalling investment. The certification matters less than the network and the structured exposure to governance thinking. Candidates who have not done the course are not excluded from Board roles — but they are working without a credential that the rest of the candidate pool typically has.

## SECTION 10

## Working with executive search firms

Most executive appointments at senior level in Australia go through search firms rather than open advertising. Understanding how search works — and how to engage with search consultants effectively — is one of the most important things an executive candidate can do for their own career.

### Who the major players are

The Australian executive search market is dominated by a small number of global firms supplemented by a substantial set of strong local boutiques. The major retained-search firms candidates are most likely to encounter include:

- **The global “SHREK” firms:** Spencer Stuart, Heidrick & Struggles, Russell Reynolds Associates, Egon Zehnder, Korn Ferry. All have substantive Australian practices. Korn Ferry has the largest local presence by revenue and headcount; Spencer Stuart and Egon Zehnder are particularly strong in Board and CEO succession; Heidrick and Russell Reynolds carry deep sector specialisation across financial services, technology and energy.
- **Major Australian-headquartered firms:** Derwent (Board, CEO and senior leadership across sectors, including government); Watermark (executive search across senior commercial and not-for-profit roles); Future Leadership (formerly Fisher Leadership, with substantive public sector and not-for-profit focus); Johnson Partners (executive search and Board advisory).
- **Specialist and sector-focused firms:** Six Degrees Executive (mid-market commercial), Think & Grow (technology and high-growth), Page Executive (multi-state cross-functional), Robert Half Executive Search (finance and accounting), and a substantial set of sector boutiques in healthcare, legal, mining, education and other domains.

### How retained search actually works

A retained search typically runs across six to twelve weeks. The firm is engaged by the client, paid a fee (usually around 30 percent of the first-year compensation, paid in three tranches), and conducts a structured process: developing the role brief, mapping the candidate market, approaching candidates discreetly, interviewing, presenting a short list, supporting the client through final interviews, and closing the appointment.

From the candidate side, this means most contact with search firms happens through one of three channels: the firm reaching out about a specific mandate; the candidate proactively submitting to the firm's database; or the candidate being introduced through an existing relationship in the firm's network. Each requires a different approach.

## How to engage well with search firms

### THE FOUR PRINCIPLES

**1. Take the call.** Even if the role is not right for you, take the conversation. Search consultants build long-term relationships with senior candidates over decades. A consultant who has had one good conversation with you is far more likely to remember you for the role that does fit, two years from now.

**2. Be specific about what you want.** Vague candidates are hard for consultants to place. Specific candidates — “I’m looking for Group CFO roles in regulated industries, ideally based in Sydney or Melbourne, in the \$850k–\$1.2M total package range” — are far easier to remember and match.

**3. Maintain the relationship.** An annual check-in with consultants you respect, updating them on your work and what you’re considering, keeps you in active mind. The CV update is a useful pretext for the conversation; the real value is the conversation itself.

**4. Be a useful source of referrals.** When a consultant calls about a role that is not for you, but you know someone who would be excellent for it, make the introduction. Senior candidates who give good referrals receive more calls and warmer relationships.

## What not to do

Three failure modes are common and should be avoided:

- Cold-blasting your CV to every search firm in Australia. The CV does not arrive in any meaningful sense; it sits in a database. Consultants source through targeted searches against specific mandates, not by reading inbound CVs.
- Trying to negotiate your candidacy too hard at the first conversation. The early conversation is qualification, not negotiation. The firm needs to understand who you are; serious negotiation happens after you have been short-listed.
- Treating the consultant as an adversary. Search consultants are not the candidate’s representative — they are paid by the client — but they are not the candidate’s enemy either. The strongest candidate-consultant relationships are collaborative and long-running.

## SECTION 11

## The reference and reputation question

At executive level, references and reputation often carry more weight than the CV itself. Most senior recruitment decisions are made partly on what the documents say and partly on what a small number of trusted sources say about the candidate in confidence. Candidates who manage their professional record well over time enjoy compounding returns; candidates who do not, find themselves with a CV that overpromises what their reputation delivers.

### How references actually work at this level

Formal references at the end of a recruitment process are mostly a confirmation step. The real reference work happens earlier, through what consultants and Boards call the back-channel — calls to people the candidate did not nominate, made by people who already know them. These calls are common in Australian executive recruitment, particularly through search firms with deep local networks.

This means three things for senior candidates:

- **Your nominated referees matter, but they are not the whole picture.** Anyone who has worked closely with you is a potential source of input to a hiring decision — not just the people you choose to list.
- **Difficult exits are knowable.** If you departed an organisation under circumstances that are remembered, the search consultant will likely hear about it through the back-channel. The candidate who acknowledges the situation early, in measured terms, fares much better than the candidate who hopes it will not come up.
- **Reputation compounds.** How you behaved as an executive eight years ago still shapes how people describe you now. There is no efficient way to repair a damaged senior reputation — only the slow work of demonstrating different behaviour over a long time.

### Managing the reference conversation

#### FIVE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

**1. Know what your referees will actually say.** An explicit conversation with each referee, before they are called, is professional courtesy. “I’m putting you forward for a role at X. Would you be comfortable speaking to it, and is there anything you’d want me to flag in advance?”

**2. Choose referees strategically.** Not the most senior person who knows you, but the person who can speak most credibly to what the new role specifically requires. A Chair who can speak to your governance judgement is more useful than a CEO who can speak to your operational delivery, if the role is a Board appointment.

**3. Address difficult history proactively.** If you have a difficult exit, a public conflict, or a period of departure that requires explanation, the strongest move is to name it in the interview process before the back-channel does. The reference call then becomes a verification rather than a discovery.

**4. Keep relationships alive.** An annual professional check-in with past managers and Board chairs keeps the relationship current. It also means that when they get the back-channel call, they have something recent to say rather than a memory of who you were five years ago.

**5. Be a good reference for others.** Senior candidates who readily give measured, useful references for others receive better treatment when their own moment comes. The professional courtesy is reciprocal at this level.

## SECTION 12

## LinkedIn for executives

LinkedIn at executive level is a different platform from LinkedIn at general professional level. The conventions are different, the audience is different, and the way the platform is used to validate candidates before any formal contact is different. Here is what is specifically different at senior level.

### Who is reading your profile

At executive level, your LinkedIn profile is read by:

- Search consultants conducting confidential mapping for active mandates. They will visit your profile multiple times during the early phase of a search; the analytics are visible to them but not to you.
- Board chairs and committee chairs reviewing potential candidates between formal interview rounds.
- CEOs and senior peers doing back-channel research before either reaching out for a conversation or referring you to a search firm.
- Journalists, regulators and analysts when you appear in a public context (announcements, conferences, media).

This is a different audience from the one reading the profile of a mid-career manager. The senior audience reads more thoroughly, looks for specific signals, and is less interested in skill endorsements or volume of connections. They are interested in substance, judgement, and trajectory.

### What an executive LinkedIn profile actually needs

- **A current, professional photo.** Headshot quality. Not a holiday photo. Not the photo from 12 years ago when you took the last good one. At executive level, the photo is read as a signal of how seriously you take your professional presence; a dated or casual photo undermines the rest of the profile.
- **A substantive headline that does positioning work.** Not your job title. Headlines like “CFO” or “Group General Manager” waste the most valuable space in the profile. A strong executive headline names the candidate's positioning, the sector, and the kind of leadership they are known for. “Group CFO · Financial services and infrastructure · Capital allocation and transformation” is more useful.
- **An About section written as substantive narrative.** Five to seven paragraphs at most, framed as professional positioning rather than personal storytelling. Strong executive About sections read like the opening pages of a biographical CV, written in first or third person depending on the candidate's preference and audience.

- **Each role with substantive content.** Three to six sentences describing the strategic context, the scope of accountability, and two or three signature outcomes. Empty role entries that list only the title and dates signal a profile that has not been kept current; they read worse than no entries at all.
- **Recommendations from credible names.** Two to five recommendations from senior colleagues are more valuable than fifty endorsements. The recommendations should come from people whose names carry meaning in the candidate's sector — Chairs, CEOs, Board peers, senior commercial partners.
- **Thought leadership where it exists.** Articles published, speaking engagements, panel appearances, media references. Even modest thought-leadership signals carry weight at executive level because they demonstrate that the candidate is willing to engage publicly in their domain.

### What to avoid

- Buzzwords that mean nothing at senior level: “results-driven,” “strategic visionary,” “transformational leader.” Panels and search consultants tune these out.
- Volume posting that adds noise. One thoughtful post or article a month does more for an executive profile than fifteen reposts of motivational content.
- Endorsement-collecting. Endorsements at executive level mean almost nothing; volume of endorsements can suggest the candidate is engaged in performative networking rather than substantive work.
- Outdated information. A profile that still describes a role you left two years ago is more damaging than no profile at all.

## SECTION 13

## Interview dynamics at executive level

Executive interview processes are structurally different from mid-career ones. Multiple stages, multiple audiences, distinct objectives at each stage. The candidate who arrives at each stage with the right understanding of what is happening in that conversation lands far better than the candidate who treats all stages as variations of the same interview.

### The four typical stages of an executive interview process

- 1 The search-firm screen**

Usually 45–60 minutes with the search consultant. The objective is qualification — the consultant is determining whether to put you forward to the client. Questions tend to be exploratory: walk us through your career, what are you looking for, why this role specifically, what's your view on the sector. The consultant is also assessing presence, judgement and articulacy. Treat this as the most consequential conversation, not the least.
- 2 The Chair or CEO conversation**

Usually 60–90 minutes. The objective shifts to chemistry, strategic alignment and judgement at senior level. The Chair or CEO is asking themselves whether they could work productively with you — whether your judgement on the issues facing the organisation is sound, whether you would shape the executive team in ways they value. Less behavioural; more strategic discussion.
- 3 The panel interview**

Usually a small panel — Board members, Committee chairs, sometimes the search consultant. Often two to three hours. Designed to test the candidate against multiple perspectives. Behavioural questions return; capability-based questioning is more common; specific deep dives into named challenges from the candidate's career are typical. This is where the candidate's narrative is tested in detail.
- 4 Reference and back-channel calls**

Conducted after the interview process is well advanced — sometimes after a preferred candidate has been identified. Formal reference calls confirm what is already known; the back-channel calls (which the candidate often does not see) are what actually shapes the final decision. This is why reputation management matters so much (see section 11).

### What to prepare for each stage

Different stages need different preparation:

- **Stage 1 (search firm):** rehearse the career narrative. Articulate the through-line, the inflection points, and the arrival point clearly. Be specific about target roles, sectors, and compensation expectations.
- **Stage 2 (Chair/CEO):** research the organisation in depth. Read the most recent annual report, recent media coverage, analyst commentary if listed. Form a view on the strategic challenges the organisation faces, and be ready to discuss them — not as a critique, but as the start of a conversation.
- **Stage 3 (panel):** prepare three to five substantive examples that demonstrate the capabilities the role specifically requires, with enough texture that you can speak to the judgement involved — not just the events. Anticipate behavioural questions and have specific examples ready.
- **Stage 4 (references):** you cannot prepare for this stage — only for the years of professional behaviour that precede it. Brief your nominated referees clearly before they are contacted. Address any difficult history proactively earlier in the process.

## SECTION 14

## Salary, package and equity

Compensation conversations at executive level are different from mid-career salary negotiations. The conversation is about package structure, not just base salary; about equity vesting and deferred compensation, not just cash; and about long-term alignment with the organisation, not just the rate of pay. Candidates who arrive at these conversations without a clear framework lose negotiating ground quickly.

### The components of an executive package

A typical Australian executive package at senior level includes some combination of:

- **Base salary.** The cash component, paid through standard payroll. The number most candidates focus on, but often the smallest component of total compensation for senior roles.
- **Superannuation.** Currently 12% statutory contribution in Australia. Sometimes negotiated higher for senior executives, particularly in financial services and government.
- **Short-term incentive (STI).** Annual cash bonus tied to performance against agreed KPIs. Typically 20–60% of base salary at executive level, though varies by sector. Usually has personal performance gates and organisational performance gates.
- **Long-term incentive (LTI).** Equity-based, typically vesting over three to five years against performance hurdles. Common forms include performance rights, share appreciation rights, and restricted stock units. Often the largest component of executive compensation at the very senior end.
- **Sign-on payment or buyout.** Compensation for forgone equity or unvested bonus at the previous employer. Often negotiable for executives moving from one substantial role to another.
- **Conditions and benefits.** Notice period, severance terms, expense allowances, company car or transport allowance, professional development budget, Board observer rights, parental leave provisions, sabbatical entitlements.

### The disclosure question

Most search firms, and some hiring organisations, will ask early in the process what your current total compensation is. This question creates difficulty for candidates whose current package is below the level they are seeking; honest disclosure may anchor the new offer too low.

There is no perfect answer. The strongest approach is usually to disclose accurately when asked directly, and to frame the conversation around the value of the next role rather than the value of the current one. Constructions like “my current package is X; my expectation for

this role, given the scope and the responsibilities, is around Y” are honest and forward-looking. Refusing to disclose at all is often read as evasive.

## Negotiating well at executive level

### THREE PRINCIPLES

**Negotiate the package, not just the salary.** Most movement in an executive offer comes through STI structure, LTI grant size, sign-on payment, and notice period — not through base salary increases. Focusing on base salary alone leaves substantial value on the table.

**Negotiate once.** Multiple rounds of negotiation read as petty at executive level. Make your full proposal once, in writing, after the offer has been made. Be specific, well-reasoned, and prepared to close once the response comes back.

**Get the documentation right.** Executive contracts contain provisions — restraint of trade, IP, change-of-control, severance — that matter enormously and are often overlooked. Engage a specialist employment lawyer to review the contract before signing. The cost is trivial compared to what is at stake.

## SECTION 15

## The transition conversation

Every executive interview includes some version of the question: “Why are you considering a move now?” or “Why did you leave your last role?” The answer to this question carries disproportionate weight. Strong candidates answer it well; otherwise-strong candidates have lost senior interviews on this question alone.

### The principles of a good transition answer

- **Lead with the forward-looking reason.** What are you moving toward, not what you are moving away from. “I’m at a point where I want to take on a CFO role at a larger and more complex organisation” lands better than “My current organisation has restructured my role.” Both can be true; the first frames the candidate as in control of their career.
- **Be honest about the catalyst.** If the move was triggered by a restructure, a Board disagreement, a leadership change, or any specific event — acknowledge it. Trying to invent a strategic narrative around a catalyst you didn’t choose reads as inauthentic and rarely survives the back-channel call.
- **Avoid the temptation to criticise.** Even where there is genuine criticism to make of your previous organisation, the interview is not the place. Senior candidates who criticise former employers reliably damage their own positioning, no matter how justified the criticism may be. The discipline is to discuss what you learned, what you would do differently, and what you are seeking next — without litigating the past.
- **Be specific about what you are looking for.** Vague candidates lose positioning relative to specific candidates. “I’m looking for a regulated-industry CFO role with substantial transformation work and Board engagement” positions the candidate as deliberate. “I’m open to a range of opportunities” positions the candidate as adrift.

### Handling difficult history

If your transition includes genuinely difficult history — a public conflict, a regulatory issue, a forced exit, a litigated departure — there is no formula that makes the conversation easy. But there are principles that consistently fare better than the alternatives:

1. Acknowledge the situation early in the process, before the back-channel does. The candidate who names it carries the conversation; the candidate who hopes it will not come up loses it.
2. Be precise about what happened. Vague or evasive descriptions invite suspicion. Specific descriptions, delivered without defensiveness, are easier for panels to absorb and easier for them to set aside.

3. Show what you learned. Senior candidates are expected to have made mistakes; what panels look for is evidence of reflection and learning. Articulate what you would do differently and how your subsequent behaviour reflects that learning.
4. Demonstrate your subsequent track record. The strongest response to difficult history is a credible run of work since. Where this exists, foreground it. Where it does not yet exist, acknowledge that and frame how you are rebuilding.

This is one of the most consequential conversations a senior candidate has, and one of the most useful to rehearse with someone who can ask the right follow-up questions. Executive coaching specifically around this conversation is one of the highest-leverage interventions we offer.

## SECTION 16

## Executive redundancy and transition

Redundancy at executive level operates differently from redundancy at lower levels. The financial mechanics, the public optics, the recruitment dynamics afterwards, and the personal experience are all distinct. This section is for the executive who has been told their role is being made redundant, or who is anticipating the conversation.

### The immediate practical considerations

1. Engage a specialist employment lawyer immediately. Executive redundancy packages frequently involve negotiable components that are not obvious without legal advice — deferred LTI vesting, restraint-of-trade modifications, garden leave structure, communications wording. The legal cost is small relative to what is at stake.
2. Understand the full package before any verbal acceptance. Notice period, severance multiple, accrued leave, long-service leave, vested and unvested equity, deferred bonus, sign-on retention, change-of-control provisions — each is calculated separately and each has tax implications. Have your accountant review.
3. Negotiate the announcement wording carefully. How the organisation describes your departure publicly shapes how the market will read your candidacy in subsequent roles. This is negotiable in most senior departures. Push for neutral, dignified, mutually-acceptable language.
4. Plan the public optics deliberately. LinkedIn announcement, professional networks, the conversation with current Board roles and committee memberships. Senior departures are public events; managing them deliberately is preferable to letting them unfold.
5. Time the next search realistically. Senior transitions take three to nine months on average. A confident search is generally preferable to a rushed one; the financial bridge of a well-negotiated severance package is precisely what enables a thoughtful next move.

### Outplacement at executive level

Most large Australian organisations now offer outplacement support as part of senior redundancy packages. The quality of provider varies enormously. Senior executive outplacement should include:

- A senior consultant assigned to the engagement — not a junior coordinator with a senior signature.
- Substantive document work — executive CV, biographical CV, LinkedIn profile, Board CV if relevant. Not a template-driven process.
- Search-firm introductions where the provider has relationships. This is one of the most valuable components of strong outplacement.

- Interview coaching specific to senior-level processes, including coaching on difficult-history conversations.
- Sustained support across the full search period — typically six to twelve months at executive level — not a six-week package.

#### OUR OUTPLACEMENT PRACTICE

We provide outplacement support to organisations making senior roles redundant. Our executive practice handles individual support for departing C-suite, SES and senior executive staff, including all the components named above.

**Outplacement enquiries:** Marc Cayzer leads our outplacement and tender practice.  
Direct contact: [calendly.com/marc-524/15-minute-call](https://calendly.com/marc-524/15-minute-call)

## SECTION 17

## Executive coaching alongside the document work

At executive level, the document work is rarely sufficient on its own. The CV, biographical CV and LinkedIn profile establish positioning; what happens in the conversations that follow determines whether the positioning converts to an offer. For most of our executive clients, some form of coaching alongside the document work substantially increases the value of the engagement.

### What executive coaching covers

Coaching at executive level is structurally different from coaching for general interview preparation. The conversations tend to focus on:

- **Career narrative articulation.** Working through the through-line, the inflection points and the arrival point until the candidate can deliver the narrative confidently in five to seven minutes, in any context, without notes.
- **The difficult-history conversation.** Where the candidate has a contested exit, a public conflict, a regulatory issue or any other history that needs to be addressed proactively, working through how to name it, frame it and move past it during interview.
- **Strategic positioning for specific roles.** Once a specific opportunity is in front of the candidate, working through the specific positioning argument for that role — what to lead with, what to emphasise, what to be ready to defend.
- **Search-firm relationship management.** For candidates new to working with executive search firms, coaching on how to handle initial conversations, maintain ongoing relationships, and engage productively with consultants over years rather than weeks.
- **Board interview preparation.** Specific preparation for Board, Chair and committee interviews — a structurally different process from executive line interviews, with different questions, different dynamics and different success patterns.

### How we structure coaching engagements

Our executive coaching engagements are scoped to the candidate's specific situation. Most fall into one of three patterns:

#### 1

##### **Narrative and positioning intensive**

Two to three sessions over two to three weeks. Focused on articulating the career narrative cleanly, working through any difficult-history elements, and developing strategic positioning for the candidate's target role types. Useful before a candidate begins active search.

## 2 **Specific-role preparation**

One to two sessions in the week before a senior interview. Focused on the specific organisation, the specific panel, the specific role requirements, and the specific positioning argument the candidate will deploy. Useful when a major opportunity is in flight.

## 3 **Sustained engagement**

Monthly or fortnightly sessions over six to twelve months. Used by candidates managing an extended senior search, often with multiple opportunities in flight simultaneously and a complex situation requiring ongoing strategic counsel. Common for candidates who have just been made redundant from senior roles.

Coaching is typically delivered through Microsoft Teams. Sessions run one to two hours. Material from each session is captured and made available to the candidate afterwards.

## SECTION 18

## How we work with executive clients

Our process for executive clients is structurally different from our standard service. Different writers, longer consult, deeper preparation, more iteration. Here is what to expect if you engage us at executive level.

- 1 Initial discovery call**

A 15 to 30-minute conversation — no charge, no obligation — to scope what you need. We use this conversation to understand your current situation, your target roles, your timeline, and the document set that will best serve your aims. From this, we provide a quote calibrated to your specific scope.
- 2 Executive consult**

Typically 90 minutes to two hours — longer than our standard one-hour consult, because executive positioning requires substantially more material. Delivered via Microsoft Teams with a word-for-word transcript provided afterwards. The consult is conducted by a senior writer with executive-track experience. We ask about your career in detail — not just what you did, but how you thought about it and what you took from it. Many candidates describe the consult as the most useful conversation they have had about their own career.
- 3 Drafts within seven to ten business days**

Executive document drafts take longer than standard ones — the calibration work is more substantial, and the supporting research (target organisations, sector context, framework alignment) is more extensive. Drafts arrive in Word and PDF, unwatermarked, for your full review.
- 4 Iteration over a 21-day window**

Executive engagements typically include a 21-day editing window (longer than our standard 14 days). Within this window, edits are uncapped and processed within three business days. Most executive clients want to iterate through several rounds; the longer window is built for this.
- 5 Coaching engagement, if relevant**

If coaching is part of the engagement, sessions are scheduled around your interview activity — not on a fixed schedule. We work to your timeline, not ours.

## **6 Sustained support across the campaign**

Once the documents are settled, we stay engaged through the rest of your search. Quick updates, target-specific calibrations, search-firm submission support — the work continues across the search period rather than ending at draft sign-off.

## WORKING WITH US (CONTINUED)

### Our executive practice

#### Who works on executive accounts

Executive accounts are assigned to senior writers with directly relevant track records — typically writers who have worked on hundreds of senior accounts including SES, C-suite, EL2 and senior state-government candidates. Each executive account also has an editor who reviews the final documents before delivery.

Three principles consistently apply to our executive practice:

- **Australia-based, internal team.** We do not outsource executive work to overseas contractors or freelance marketplaces. The senior writer you work with is an employee of TRW, working from Hobart, with the editorial review provided by another senior team member.
- **No AI drafting.** Generative AI is widely used in resume writing in 2026; we do not use it for any client-facing executive content. Our reasoning: at senior level, the cost of AI-generated content being detected by a search consultant or panel is severe, and the work is too consequential to outsource to a model that has no understanding of the candidate's specific career. Executive clients pay for human craft and senior judgement; that is what we deliver.
- **No template-driven production.** Every executive CV we produce is built from scratch around the candidate's specific career and target. We do not work from templates and we do not produce variants of a standard format. The calibration to candidate and target is the work, and templates undermine it.

#### Our executive guarantee

Every executive engagement is backed by our rewrite guarantee. It works in two parts.

##### HOW THE GUARANTEE WORKS

**Within the 21-day editing window, you have uncapped revisions** — we continue editing until you are genuinely satisfied with the documents. Edits are processed within three business days.

**If, despite the editing period, the documents do not represent you well,** we will rewrite them from scratch at no additional cost. *The guarantee exists because we stand behind the work — not because we expect to need it. In practice, our consult-led methodology means we get calibration right the first time more often than not.*

## **Confidentiality**

All executive engagements are conducted in strict confidence. We do not name executive clients in marketing materials. We do not share material between accounts. We do not retain documents beyond the duration of the engagement unless specifically requested for ongoing use. The confidentiality framework is built into the engagement and is non-negotiable.

## SECTION 19

## Tools, associations and reading

For executive candidates who want to take the work further, these are the resources we consider most valuable. The list is short and deliberately curated; we have not tried to be exhaustive.

### Governance and director credentials

#### Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD)

The principal Australian body for director education and governance practice. The Company Directors Course (leading to GAICD post-nominal) is the gold-standard pre-Board credential. AICD also offers Boardroom Mastery, Foundations of Directorship, and specialised industry variants (healthcare, not-for-profit, government).

[aicd.com.au](http://aicd.com.au)

#### Governance Institute of Australia

Professional body for governance and risk professionals. Offers postgraduate qualifications in governance, applied risk and corporate compliance, and runs substantial professional development programs. Particularly relevant for candidates positioning for Company Secretary, Chief Risk Officer, or governance-focused executive roles.

[governanceinstitute.com.au](http://governanceinstitute.com.au)

### Senior public sector pathways

#### APS Jobs

The federal recruitment portal for all APS positions, including SES Band 1, 2 and 3 appointments. Filterable by classification, agency, and capability requirement.

[apsjobs.gov.au](http://apsjobs.gov.au)

#### APS Work Level Standards

The published standards defining capability expectations at each classification, including SES. Essential reading for candidates targeting SES roles — the standards define what the panel is assessing against.

[apsc.gov.au](http://apsc.gov.au)

## Search firm directories

Most executive search firms maintain their own candidate registers. Senior candidates serious about Board appointments or executive search engagement typically have profiles with three to five firms simultaneously — the global SHREK firms and two or three Australian boutiques. The major firms candidates most often work with include:

### **Spencer Stuart**

Strongest in Board and CEO succession at ASX 100 scale. Particularly active in financial services and consumer.

[spencerstuart.com](https://spencerstuart.com)

### **Korn Ferry**

Largest search firm by global revenue. Strong cross-industry C-suite practice across Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

[kornferry.com](https://kornferry.com)

### **Egon Zehnder**

Australian practice established 1973. Particularly strong in family business succession and assessment-led executive search.

[egonzehnder.com](https://egonzehnder.com)

### **Russell Reynolds Associates and Heidrick & Struggles**

The two remaining SHREK firms. Both maintain substantive Australian practices across financial services, technology, energy and the resources sectors.

[russellreynolds.com](https://russellreynolds.com) · [heidrick.com](https://heidrick.com)

### **Australian-headquartered firms**

Derwent, Watermark, Future Leadership (formerly Fisher Leadership), Johnson Partners, Page Executive, Six Degrees Executive, Think & Grow. Each has its own sector strengths; the right firm to engage depends on the candidate's target sector and role type.

[Various — see individual firm websites](#)

## Our free tools

**Executive Readiness Assessment**

A short diagnostic for candidates considering a step up to executive-level roles (SES, C-suite, EGM, GM and above). Identifies where you are ready and where you have ground to make up.

[theresumewriters.com.au/executive-readiness-assessment/](https://theresumewriters.com.au/executive-readiness-assessment/)

**Leadership Style Quiz**

Identifies your natural leadership style. Useful before any executive interview where leadership approach is being assessed.

[theresumewriters.com.au/leadership-style-quiz/](https://theresumewriters.com.au/leadership-style-quiz/)

**Free ATS Resume Check and Free Resume Critique**

Submit a current resume for a free parsed suitability check or a free expert critique from our senior writers.

[theresumewriters.com.au/free-resume-report/](https://theresumewriters.com.au/free-resume-report/)

## IF YOU'D LIKE TO PROCEED

## Next steps

If you have read this far, you have a substantial picture of how executive recruitment works in 2026 and what it takes to position yourself well within it. That is the value we wanted to provide regardless of what happens next.

If you would like to engage us, the next step is a 15-minute discovery call to scope your situation. We use this conversation to understand your current role, your target roles, your timeline, and the document set that will best serve you. From there we provide a quote calibrated to your specific scope, and you decide whether to proceed.

There is no obligation. Many of the candidates who book a discovery call end up not proceeding with us, for a range of legitimate reasons. The call itself is useful regardless — most candidates leave the conversation with a clearer view of their situation, even if they decide to handle the work themselves or with another provider.

### WHAT TO DO NEXT

**Book a 15-minute discovery call:** [calendly.com/d/cq2y-hrh-24b](https://calendly.com/d/cq2y-hrh-24b)

**Discuss outplacement or B2B engagement with Marc:** [calendly.com/marc-524/15-minute-call](https://calendly.com/marc-524/15-minute-call)

**Call or email directly:** 1300 272 477 · [hello@theresumewriters.com.au](mailto:hello@theresumewriters.com.au)

***We look forward to working with you.***

*Jacquie and the executive team at The Resume Writers*