Circus Trainer Salary Survey 2025 Summary

Introduction

TNA conducts a Salary Survey of small-to-medium performing arts organisations biennially. It captures the salaries, benefits, professional development budgets, tenure, and representation of performing arts companies in Australia across theatre, dance, circus and multi-artform organisations.

This survey has arisen in response to requests from the youth circus sector. In conjunction with this year's Salary Survey, TNA conducted a short survey of circus trainer salaries and payment rates to capture data and provide a scan of how the sector operates across the country.

The Circus Trainer Salary Survey captured input from a diverse range of Australian organisations. It included circus schools and youth training centres of various sizes teaching adults or young people, and some smaller touring companies that deliver circus workshops or training as part of their practice.

The Circus Trainer Salary Survey received 22 valid responses including at least one organisation from every state and territory, as well as organisations based in both regional and metropolitan areas.

Employment Types and Rates of Pay

Most organisations surveyed employ circus trainers on a mix of employment types (e.g. casual, permanent part-time, seasonal).

Most circus trainers are employed casually (77%).

91% of respondent organisations refer to an award to help them set their payment rates for their circus trainers.

The awards that were referenced by organisations were the:

- Fitness Industry Award
- Live Performance Award (LPA)
- Sporting Organisation Award
- National Employment Standards

15 out of 22 organisations use the Fitness Industry Award to determine their pay rates for circus trainers. Two organisations noted that they use these awards as a guide to set pay above award rates.

82% of respondent organisations described at least three different levels of pay rates for circus trainers (e.g. junior trainer, trainer, senior trainer).

A quarter of respondent organisations use five or more different levels of circus trainer payment rates. The number of different levels of pay rates used by an organisation didn't correlate to the size of the organisation or number of circus trainers employed, with several very small organisations using a large range of levels to determine pay rates.

Organisations described considering the following when determining different circus trainer pay rates:

- Years of coaching experience
- Age of circus trainer
- Whether the trainer is class lead or assistant trainer
- Whether the trainer is first aid qualified
- Whether the class being taught is an advanced or specialty class, or private lesson
- Whether the class is onsite or offsite

Teaching experience was the most common factor used to determine circus trainer pay rates. One third of respondent organisations considered the age of the trainer, in addition to experience level, to determine pay rates.

The pay rates for the most senior levels of circus trainers ranged from $35/hr to $56/hr.

The pay rates for the most junior levels of circus trainers ranged from $16/hr to $35/hr. These align with Fitness Industry Award rates including rates for under-20-year-olds calculated at a lower percentage of the adult rates.

Specialist trainers such as disability program trainers, remote community trainers or festival trainers' pay levels ranged between $60/hr and $70/hr.

Work outside class hours

86% organisations surveyed pay circus trainers for work outside of class contact hours including any of the following:

- Setup and pack down
- Team meetings
- Lesson planning
- Professional development
- Administration

More than half described paying circus trainers for setup and pack down which ranged from 5 minutes to 30 minutes before class start time.

Allowances

73% of respondent organisations pay circus trainers some type of allowance to cover travel costs, meals and equipment, when delivering outreach workshops or offsite projects. (Note: organisations who responded 'no' to this question might not deliver this type of workshop).

Allowances included any of the following:

- Transporting equipment
- Flights
- Accommodation
- Overnight holding allowance
- Travel time
- Fuel allowance
- Own vehicle allowance
- Per diems

One organisation noted that if a circus coach has developed their own curriculum or methodologies, the organisation will hire them as a contractor to compensate them for their intellectual property.

Future Surveys

With preliminary data gathered from this pilot Circus Trainer Salary Survey, TNA will explore questions, format and scope for future surveys. The next Circus Trainer Salary Survey will be conducted in 2027 alongside our Salary Survey of small-to-medium performing arts organisations.

The full report on TNA's 2025 Salary Survey is free for TNA members, or available for purchase at $360.

In 2024, TNA released its fourth Indie Survey Report, designed to gather data that reflects the realities of making it as an independent artist or arts worker in Australia, including fees, rates and working conditions. It is available for free: This Is How We Do It 2024: Indie Survey Report.

We will be conducting the next Indie Survey in 2026, which will provide further provocation for discussion, evaluation, and benchmarking. Circus trainers who are independent contractors (not salaried) employees of companies are welcome to participate in this survey.

Contact

We welcome the sector's feedback and ideas. You can contact us at info@tna.org.au