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Pitch frenzy dialled up as big accounts change hands



By **Adam McCleery** | 11 June 2025

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Pitch activity across the Australian agency landscape is tracking upward in the first half of the year, driven by robust demand in key sectors and a more dynamic year-round cycle.

Some agencies report procurement teams have compressed the pitch process and want more for less. But the eventual wins means contracts signed for longer terms.

And big accounts are changing agencies as CMOs put pressure on pricing. These include [Optus, which went to new media player Accenture Song](#) last week.

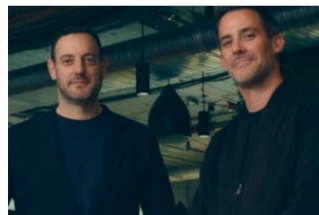
The Australian pitch market is active across banking, QSR and FMCG, according to Matt Michael, CEO of Droga5 ANZ and managing director, marketing practice at Accenture Song.

"There is a lot of movement within senior client ranks, and similarly on the agency side, which has created some churn among accounts," he told *Adnews*.

New Zealand is more static by comparison, with longer-term relationships less likely to shift due to economic conservatism.

Michael said pitch processes remain unchanged, with pricing still tight.

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The Australian pitch market is active across banking, QSR and FMCG, according to Matt Michael (left), CEO of Droga5 ANZ.

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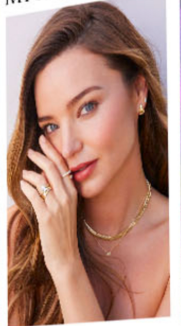


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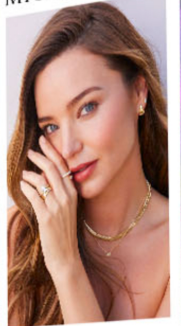
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But he sees increasing demand for creativity and capability integration in the second half of the year.

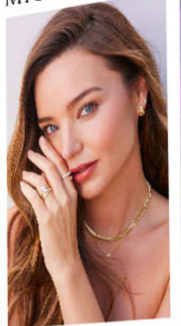
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"The international trend is for more blended scopes," he said.

"It's closer to a classic partnership that businesses once had with their agencies, and ultimately a better, outcomes-focused one."

Independent agencies are reporting increased pitch volumes across automotive, entertainment, retail and tourism categories.

"Agencies have to be prepared to pitch all year round," said Sam Buchanan, CEO of the Independent Media Agencies of Australia (IMAA).

"There's less seasonality around pitches now. It's a year-round process, running from Q4 right through until May."

While the December to January period is quiet, the broader trend is to consistent activity.

"Calendar year Q4 is still the biggest quarter of the year for pitching," he said.

Though the volume is up, Buchanan noted improvements in transparency.

"Clients are more willing to share details like criteria and how many agencies are pitching at each stage. That helps agencies make informed decisions about whether they want to progress with pitches," he said.

"This, alongside the decline in media rate card templates, is a welcome shift."

Carat Victoria managing director, Richard Lehocz, echoed the rise in pitch volumes, describing the market as "resilient" despite economic headwinds.

"There is a diverse breadth of activity across CPG, telecommunications, retail, insurance and tourism with several large-scale reviews still in play," he said.

Lehocz pointed to a more strategic role for procurement and evolving pitch mechanics.

"Procurement teams are demanding greater commercial value and longer contracting phases," he said.

"We're also seeing pitch timelines compress to two to three months and a shift towards project-specific briefs rather than traditional retainer models."

This aligns with what Jen Davidson, managing partner at Tumbleturn, is seeing in market dynamics.

She said much of the current pitch activity, particularly in media, appears to be driven by contractual obligations tied to tenure periods, rather than agency performance.

"Contract governance has tightened significantly, with agreements no longer automatically rolling over as they once did," Davidson said.

She said the structural shifts within holding companies are likely to have further repercussions, though these may not become clear until the first half of 2026.

Carat's Lehocz said NSW dominated the landscape in the March quarter, capturing 70% of all reviews.

Looking ahead, he expects that momentum to continue.

"Economic pressures and tighter budgets aren't slowing down ambition, they're accelerating smart decision-making," he said.

"The agencies that can deliver more value, not just more volume, will be the ones who are rewarded."

TrinityP3 CEO Darren Woolley said pitch volumes for the March and June quarters were higher than the same period last year, though activity had peaked earlier.

"There is particular activity in the services industries including financial services and telecommunications," he said. Overall activity was spread broadly across sectors.

Some recent wins include Assembled Media being awarded the Jayco digital media account, George P Johnson securing the Officeworks pitch, and OMD being named Under Armour's media agency of record.

But Woolley warned that the quality of the pitch process itself is deteriorating.

TrinityP3's 'State of the Pitch' report, based on 70 national pitches, nearly half the market, found satisfaction among participating agencies has fallen from 3.13 to 2.99 out of 5.

"There has been an increased focus on costs, most likely driven by the cost of living, but also exacerbated by the overt promise of faster and cheaper campaign delivery through AI integration," Woolley said.

Common complaints include unclear expectations, inconsistent processes, and late-stage CEO involvement.

"Agencies are reporting longer payment terms and, in media, a renewed focus on buying positions," Woolley said.

"The report also showed that 87% of pitches were unpaid, 66% speculative, and two-thirds ended in failure for participating agencies. Global and state-led pitches received the lowest satisfaction scores."

Internationally, Australia continues to stand out.

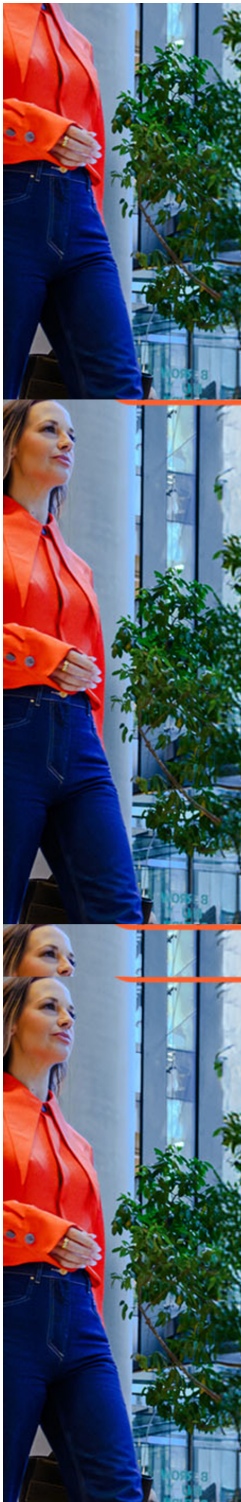


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"Australia remains one of the world's most dynamic and competitive pitch markets," said Carat's Lehocz.

"Compared to other regions, our decision cycles are notably faster, and there's an incredible hunger for locally driven innovation."

Woolley suggested two key reasons for this competitiveness.

"The strength and diversity of the independent agency players in this market offers a real and viable alternative to local advertisers of all sizes."

Buchanan said the recent IMAA Indie Census had shown strong growth predictions for the coming financial year (77%).

"Whether that optimism will translate into a wave of formal pitches remains to be seen," he said.

While volumes grow and procurement tightens its grip, agency leaders say reform of the pitch process itself is overdue.

Without clearer expectations and fairer terms, the burden of pitching may continue to weigh heavily, even in a buoyant market.

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