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## These brand sectors are running the worst pitches in Australia



By Adam McCleery | 6 May 2026

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Telcos, banks and utilities are running some of the worst pitch processes in the country, with agency reviews stretching close to a year and payment terms of up to 120 days, according to analysis by TrinityP3.

TrinityP3's third annual State of the Pitch report surveyed agencies across 59 pitches over six months, covering 24 industry categories and fees from \$50,000 to \$10 million.

The overall satisfaction score lifted to 3.22 out of five from 2.99 the previous year.

"For the last few years we've used the American grading system on this report and it feels like agencies last year gave marketers a D and this year they might be scraping a C," TrinityP3 global CEO Darren Woolley told *AdNews*.

"The problem is that three years into the report, there are still too many marketers and their procurement teams who are scoring a D or even an F when it comes to how they run a pitch."

It is the first year the report has named specific categories publicly. With three rounds of data showing the same poor conduct from roughly a third of advertisers, TrinityP3 decided to go public in the hope of forcing change.

Telecommunications ranked as the single worst category for protracted pitches, with three in four telco reviews dragging past four months.

The finding is striking given telco accounts also carry the highest concentration of \$2 million-plus agency fees of any sector, raising the question of whether agencies tolerate poor process because the prize is too large to walk away from.

Woolley draws a distinction between length and mismanagement.

"If the advertiser is up front on the protracted timeline or schedule for the pitch then the agency can decide on if they choose to participate based on the size of the opportunity," he said.

"But that is very different from being part of a pitch that runs over time by weeks or months."

Banking, financial and insurance services was the most active pitching category in 2026 at 13.6% of all pitches, and featured among sectors running the most complex and procurement-heavy processes.

Electricity, gas and water, food and beverage and the charity sector were named as the worst for communication blackouts and providing no feedback to losing agencies.

Health care, beauty and pharmaceuticals, home hardware and building supplies and utilities were singled out for enforcing payment terms of between 90 and 120 days.

Beyond process failures, the report surfaces something more troubling.

One agency respondent described submitting pitch work only to have it handed to the winning agency, who iterated on it and presented it back as their own.

It is not an isolated concern. Some 28.8% of pitches required agencies to assign their intellectual property as a condition of participation, up from 22.9% the previous year.

More than one in four agencies entering a pitch is doing so knowing their ideas could be used regardless of the outcome.

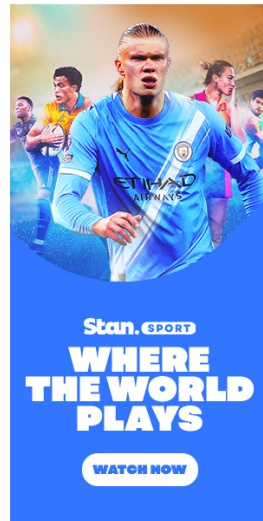
Legal recourse exists in theory, Woolley says, but rarely in practice.

An agency can pursue a copyright claim if it can prove it created the work first and the other party had the opportunity to copy it, but that avenue closes if the agency has already signed an IP assignment clause.

The financial cost of mounting a breach of copyright case, and the risk of reputational



Darren Woolley, Credit: Trinity P3



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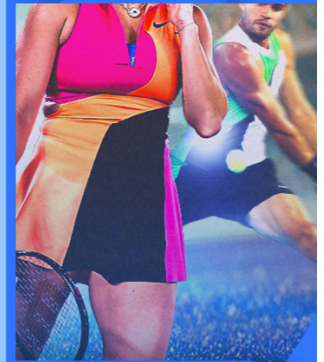
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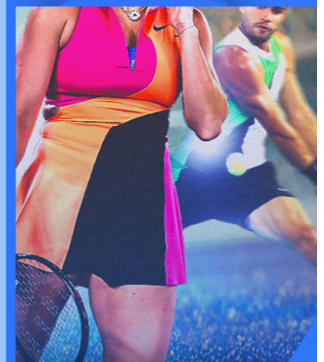
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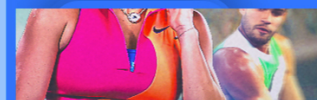
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damage, means agencies almost never act.

The report also flags instances of foreign agencies being granted access to pitches to absorb local market knowledge, with one respondent describing an overseas agency sitting in throughout their process, revealed only 24 hours before in-person presentations.

Nearly one in five pitches, 19%, ended with no apparent outcome, up sharply from previous years.

Two forces are at work. In some cases agencies are ejected from a process and simply never told the result.

In others and Woolley considers this the more telling pattern, marketers go to market specifically to survey what is available, then decide not to change agencies at all.

What looks like an abandoned pitch is, in effect, a decision to do nothing, made on the back of free agency labour.

"It is a severe breach of professional respect to leave an agency hanging after they have invested heavily in a response," the report states.

The report tracks satisfaction scores against who manages a pitch, and the results complicate the familiar narrative that procurement is the villain.

Consultant-led pitches scored highest at 3.60 out of five, with agencies describing them as "clear, well-managed, communicative and real."

Consultants also dramatically outperformed on scope clarity, with 70% providing agencies a clear brief including budget. Just 20.8% of marketer-led pitches did the same.

In a notable result, procurement-led pitches scored 3.23, outperforming marketer-led pitches at 3.13 for the first time.

Despite frequent complaints about procurement's lack of category expertise, adherence to structured timelines produced a less chaotic experience than marketer-led processes, which the report notes can suffer from shifting goalposts.

On feedback, procurement was the worst offender with almost 32% providing nothing to losing agencies, a pattern Woolley attributes to a belief in some procurement cultures that minimising vendor communication is a hallmark of governance.

Marketers gave no feedback in more than 20% of pitches. Consultants had zero incidence of providing nothing at all.

Geographically, 37.5% of local and state pitches provided zero feedback to agencies, compared to 26.1% of national pitches.

"The themes for doing it appear to be either, too busy, too procurement driven or simply too inconsiderate to do it," Woolley said.

More than 76% of pitches offered agencies zero compensation for their time. Two thirds demanded speculative creative work or media trading exercises without payment.

And 27% of agencies received no feedback after a pitch.

The numbers land against a paradox Woolley flags as the industry's central problem: since COVID, the number of marketers running pitches has increased and so have agency complaints about how those pitches are run.

Both are moving in the wrong direction at the same time.

Woolley points to the UK's Pitch Positive Pledge as a model worth examining locally, with the report now running in the US and Canada and set to expand to Germany and Asia-Pacific later this year.

He also notes the AANA and MFA's combined pitch guide, published during the pandemic five years ago, served the industry well at the time and says it is overdue for a refresh.

"As an industry, we can and should work together to collaborate on a better process that equips marketers and their teams better," Woolley said.

"If you look at something like the UK's Pitch Positive Pledge, this is a clear example of what can be done to help achieve better outcomes which serves both marketers and their agencies."

The complication, however, is who the guide would actually reach.

Large national advertisers, the core membership of bodies like the AANA, are increasingly running in-house agencies, making pitching a minor issue for them at best.

When they do go to market, the prize is large enough that agencies participate willingly and processes tend to be better resourced.

The real problem sits elsewhere. It is smaller advertisers running project pitches, putting too many agencies through full strategic and creative processes, or abandoning pitches mid-stream, who are driving the data.

"What about all of the smaller advertisers? The ones running a pitch for a project and yet put too many agencies through a full strategic and creative process for which they may never recoup the cost?" Woolley said.

"Or invite too many agencies to pitch and then get overwhelmed and simply abandon the process without a resolution? These are the advertisers and marketers we need to educate and support."

Who should lead that effort remains an open question.

"If you know, introduce them to me, I have a significant amount of research to help shape what is needed," Woolley said.

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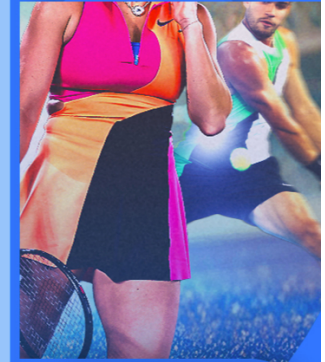
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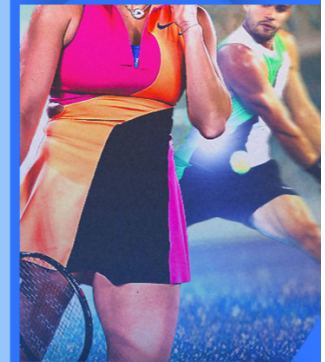
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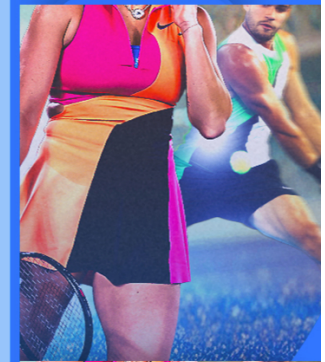
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