



ANZSCO 2415 Special Education Teachers

Victoria
March 2017

Current labour market rating

No Shortage

Previous labour market rating (February 2016)

No Shortage

Comments

The survey found no shortage of special education teachers in Victoria.¹ Employers were generally able to fill their advertised vacancies without difficulty.

Survey results

- The Department of Employment 2017 Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised (SERA) for special education teachers found that 100 per cent of vacancies were filled from averages of 6.6 applicants and 2.0 suitable applicants per vacancy. The high fill rate for 2017 is consistent with the trend over the last decade where the lowest fill rate was 82 per cent in 2015.
- All positions required a qualification in education, such as a Bachelor of Education and registration with the Victorian Institution of Teaching (VIT).
- Comparing the results of the 2016 and 2017 SERA surveys:
 - Both surveys recorded a 100 per cent fill rate, however, vacancies in 2017 had more applicants and more suitable applicants on average than in 2016.
 - In 2017, regional vacancies attracted fewer applicants but more suitable applicants on average than metropolitan vacancies. In 2016, while regional and metropolitan employers had similar numbers of applicants per vacancy on average, regional vacancies attracted more suitable applicants than metropolitan vacancies.
 - There were fewer qualified applicants overall in 2017 (89 per cent) than in 2016 (96 per cent), but more suitable qualified applicants in 2017 (33 per cent) compared with 2016 (25 per cent).
- The majority of the surveyed vacancies were seeking teachers for particularised settings, such as special developmental schools, but also included mainstream and independent schools which catered to students across a spectrum of intellectual and physical abilities.

¹ In Victorian government schools, teachers applying for ongoing positions in special settings (Special Developmental Schools, for example) are required to have completed an approved year of post graduate study in an appropriate special education discipline. In some cases, however, ongoing positions can be filled by teachers without a special education qualification provided they have had three or more years' continual employment in a special education setting and gain the approval of the school principal. The majority of positions in government schools surveyed were contract positions and no special education qualification is required for contract (non-ongoing) positions in government schools.

Employer requirements

- A post graduate qualification in special education was not mandatory for most vacancies. Some employers, however, required a specific special education qualification (e.g. for teaching vision impaired students).
- Most employers preferred at least one to three years teaching experience in a similar role in a comparable environment. A small number of employers, however, were willing to consider new graduates who had experience working with specific cohorts and/or who were undertaking some additional study in a specialised area.
- Many respondents believed that a special education qualification was not a guarantee that a candidate was suitable. Rather, they indicated that a good teacher would be able to adapt their teaching methods to suit their students.
- All employers sought applicants who were able to respond flexibly, effectively and sensitively to students' learning needs. A good understanding of student behaviour and its impact on teaching and learning, as well as on family engagement, was also valued.
- Applicants were assessed on their ability to plan well, demonstrate a good classroom manner and aptitude for classroom control, as well as produce interesting and varied lessons.
- In addition to exhibiting a passion for special education, employers sought people who worked well in a team and were good communicators, socially adept, and tactful.

Unsuitable applicants

- Eighty nine per cent of the applicants were appropriately qualified, however, two thirds of these were found to be unsuitable. The main reasons were that applicants:
 - Had not addressed the selection criteria appropriately, or had not provided satisfactory responses to the questions asked at interview
 - Did not have sufficient experience in a similar role or environment
 - Did not demonstrate a good understanding of the special setting environment or show enthusiasm for working with students with special needs (or their carers).

Demand and supply trends

- Demand for Victorian special needs teachers is largely driven by student enrolment numbers. Underlying demand for special needs teachers has grown strongly in recent years due to the increased identification of students with behavioural problems, mental health disorders and disabilities such as autism spectrum disorders and other special learning needs.²
- Data from the Victoria State Government Department of Education and Training (DET) show that the number of students enrolled in Victorian government and non-government special education schools in 2016 grew by 5.2 per cent compared to 2015. A longer term comparison over a five year period shows that enrolments in 2016 increased by 23.3 per cent compared to 2012.³
- The latest available data from DET also shows that, as of February 2017, there were 106 special education schools in Victoria across all sectors, compared with 99 in 2015.⁴

² Victorian Auditor-General, *Report: Programs for Students with Special Learning Needs*, August 2012

³ Victorian State Government Department of Education and Training, *Statistics for Victorian Schools*, Table 2: Number of Enrolments by Region, Sector, School Type, Enrolment Type and Enrolment Sex (2007-2016), February 2016

⁴ Victoria State Government Department of Education and Training, *Statistics for Victorian Schools*, Table 1: Number of Schools by Region, Sector, School Size and School Type, April 2017

- It is a legal requirement for all teachers employed in early childhood/school settings in Victoria to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). In 2016, there were 99,873 registered teachers in Victoria, an increase of one per cent on 2015.⁵
- As part of the Victorian Government's Special Needs Plan, from September 2016 all registered teachers must undertake specific professional development activities for teaching students with disabilities.⁶

⁵ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Annual Report 2016, 1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016.

⁶ Victoria State Government Department of Education and Training, *Inclusive Education for All Students with Disabilities and Additional Needs – The Government's Response to the Review of the Program for Students with Disabilities*, April 2016.