ANZSCO 4111
Ambulance Officers and Paramedics

Labour market rating
No Shortage

Comments
There has been a significant rise in training of paramedics through the university system, and there is now evidence to suggest that some graduates experience difficulty gaining initial employment. Entry level vacancies for ambulance officers and paramedics are usually filled without difficulty (and graduate employment outcomes have weakened in recent years), although employers recruiting for intermediate and senior positions sometimes have difficulty attracting people with the specific mix of skills and experience they need.

Survey results

- In 2017, employers generally recruited ambulance officers and paramedics with ease.
  - Around 93 per cent of surveyed vacancies were filled.
  - There was an average of 3.5 applicants per vacancy, of whom 3.3 were qualified and 2.3 were suitable.
  - Around 60 per cent of employers attracted at least five applicants for each advertised vacancy, with a quarter attracting ten or more.
- Recruitment success, though, varied depending on the seniority of the role.
  - While almost all entry level positions were filled, around a third of intermediate/senior vacancies remained unfilled.
  - On average, entry level vacancies attracted more than double the number of suitable applicants per vacancy compared with intermediate/senior roles.
- Some employers stated that they regularly receive unsolicited applications.

Unfilled vacancies

- Despite the vast majority of vacancies being filled, one third of employers had at least one unfilled vacancy. These were principally senior positions. Reasons vacancies were unfilled included
  - not attracting enough suitable applicants (particularly for recruitment rounds involving multiple vacancies)
  - suitable applicants rejecting offers of employment
  - difficulty attracting applicants to remote locations.

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1 This labour market includes paramedics, intensive care paramedics and patient transport officers
2 The methodology underpinning this research is outlined at Skill Shortage Research Methodology | Department of Employment - Document library, Australian Government and can also be accessed by the QR code
3 For the purposes of this report ‘qualified’ refers to applicants with at least a relevant diploma

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Unsuitable applicants

- Almost all applicants were qualified but around 34 per cent were regarded as unsuitable.
  - Unsuitable applicants generally lacked the minimum length of experience required.

Profile of respondents

- Surveyed employers included government and private providers offering emergency and non-emergency services, by road, air and on-site (events and mines).
- As part of this research, some employers of ambulance officers and paramedics were cold canvassed.
  - Many of these employers do not advertise vacancies, and instead find suitable candidates from a steady stream of people undertaking internships and placements.

Employer requirements

- Employers recruiting paramedics and intensive care paramedics (ICPs) typically required applicants to have a bachelor degree in the field of paramedical studies, but a small number accepted applicants who held a relevant diploma.
- Employers recruiting patient transport officers (PTOs) generally required a Certificate III in Non-Emergency Patient Transport.
  - Victorian legislation has recently changed to allow registered nurses to be employed as PTOs. Some employers, however, noted that nurses without an emergency background would require considerable on-the-job training before being job ready.
- Many entry level positions require applicants to have completed a minimum of 400 hours of clinical placement.
  - Employers noted that there is strong demand for clinical placement opportunities and stated that they are often restricted in how many hours they can offer. They suggested that, due to larger student numbers in recent years, fewer hours are now being offered per student, noting that many now complete some of their clinical hours after they graduate.
  - Some employers suggested they find it difficult to recruit new graduates who have completed the minimum hours. The Council of Ambulance Authorities also raised this as an issue.
- Other employment requirements included a driver’s licence, certificate for manual handling, Certificate III in Mine Emergency Response and Rescue, and state based requirements (such as a Certificate to Practice – required for ICPs in New South Wales).

Demand and supply trends

- There were 17,800 ambulance officers and paramedics in February 2017, 6.8 per cent higher than five years earlier (in line with average growth for all occupations).
- The vast majority of ambulance officers and paramedics are employed, directly or indirectly, by state and territory government ambulance services.

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4 Leading Age Services Australia Victoria, New Non-Emergency Patient Transport Regulations, 21 April 2016
5 Council of Ambulance Authorities, Position Statement - Higher Education Paramedic Student Enrolment Numbers, 10 June 2015
6 ABS, Labour Force, February 2017, Department of Employment trend
• Demand for government funded ambulance services is, in part, influenced by the number of incidents that require an ambulance response.
  ○ Nationally in 2015-16, there were 3.4 million incidents that required 4.3 million responses (there can be multiple responses to a single incident).  
• There is also some demand from the private sector which provides patient transport services and paramedics at events, mines and other work sites.
• There has been a shift in the educational profile of the ambulance officers and paramedics workforce, with the majority now holding a bachelor degree or higher qualification.  
  ○ Previously, the main pathway was a traineeship through the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system leading to a diploma qualification.
  ○ The main pathway is now through a bachelor degree in the field of paramedical studies. All state and territory government ambulance services now require this as the minimum qualification, with the exception of Ambulance Services of New South Wales which continue to offer the option of a traditional traineeship.
  ○ For paramedics with extensive experience, a diploma is generally sufficient to gain employment.
• Reflecting the changing training path, commencements in related VET courses fell by 62 per cent over the five years to 2015, while bachelor degree commencements more than doubled (Figure 1).
  ○ Bachelor degree completions increased by 39 per cent between 2013 and 2015.

Figure 1: Commencements in related bachelor degree and VET courses, 2010 to 2015

Source: NCVER, Government Funded Students and Courses, 2015, domestic students, counting commencements in courses with the intended occupation of ambulance officers and paramedics; Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Student Data Collection, 2015, domestic students, customised tables, counting commencements in paramedical studies

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9 NSW Government, Health, Ambulance Services of NSW, accessed 2 May 2017
10 NCVER, Government-funded Students and Courses, 2015, domestic students
11 Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Student Data Collection, 2015, domestic students, customised tables
12 Cannot compare to earlier completions data for Bachelor of Paramedical Studies as the course was in its infancy
13 Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Student Data Collection, 2015, domestic students, customised tables

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Employment outcomes for paramedical studies university graduates have weakened in recent years. In 2016, 75.4 per cent were working full-time four months after graduating, down from 86.0 per cent in 2013. They remain, however, stronger the average for all undergraduate degree graduates (70.9 per cent).  

- Around 69 per cent of those who found full-time work were employed as ambulance officers and paramedics.

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14 Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2016, customised tables. Data are a proportion of undergraduates available for full-time employment, in full-time work four months after graduation

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