

# Labour Market Research – Health Professionals

## Western Australia July quarter 2018

Occupations in cluster		Rating
2527-12	Speech Pathologist*	No shortage
2524-11	Occupational Therapist	No shortage
2515-11,13	Hospital/Retail Pharmacist	Regional shortage
2525-11	Physiotherapist	Shortage
2346-11	Medical Laboratory Scientist*	No shortage
2512-11	Medical Diagnostic Radiographer	Shortage
2512-14	Sonographer	Shortage
2514-11	Optometrist*	Shortage
2526-11	Podiatrist*	Shortage

[\* Occupations assessed at the national level, separate rating not available for the state]

### Key issues

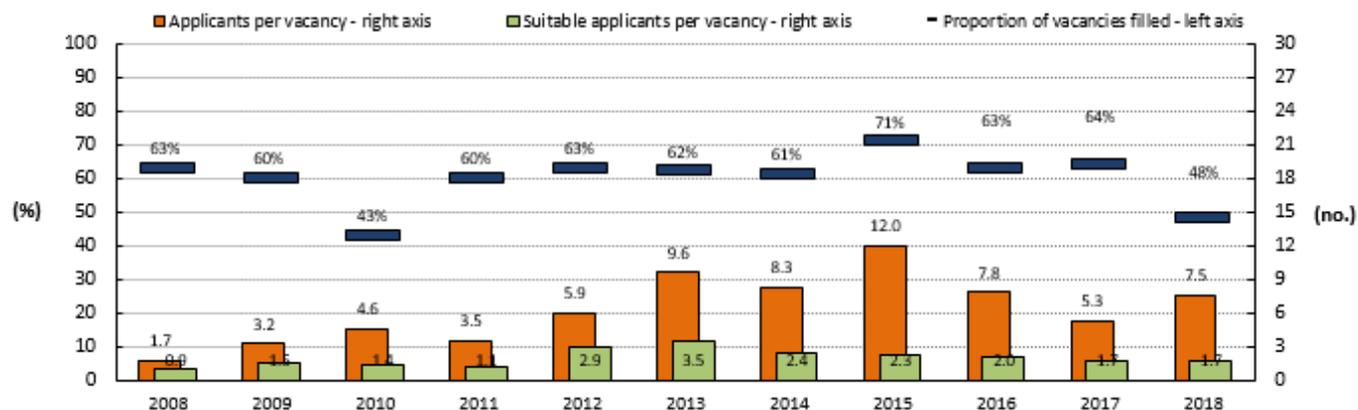
- Overall, surveyed employers filled less than 50 per cent of vacancies in this cluster; however, results for individual occupations varied considerably.
- Surveyed employers seeking occupational therapists filled 80 per cent of their vacancies irrespective of location.
- Surveyed employers seeking with vacancies for hospital and retail pharmacists in the metropolitan area experienced a similar level of success, while those with vacancies in regional areas did not fill any of their vacancies.
- Surveyed employers advertising for medical diagnostic radiographers and sonographers experienced the most substantial difficulty, with the former group filling 13 per cent their advertised vacancies and the latter unable to fill any of their advertised roles.

### Survey results

- This year, surveyed employers filled 48 per cent of vacancies, compared to 64 per cent in 2017.
  - Employers across the metropolitan filled 50 per cent of surveyed vacancies, while those in regional areas filled 31 per cent.
  - Employers with vacancies for occupational therapists filled 80 per cent of their vacancies this year, the highest proportion filled of any occupation surveyed at a state level in this cluster.
  - Overall, employers seeking pharmacists filled 67 per cent of their vacancies. However, while surveyed employers in the metropolitan area filled 80 percent of their roles, surveyed employers were unable to fill any vacancies in regional areas.

- Surveyed employers filled 56 per cent of vacancies for physiotherapists were filled; while employers seeking medical diagnostic radiographers filled 13 per cent and those seeking sonographers did not fill any of their vacancies.
- The location of vacancies and type of professions sought by employers influenced the average number of applicants per vacancy.
  - Overall, surveyed employers attracted an average of 7.5 applicants per vacancy, an improvement on the average of 5.3 applicants per vacancy in 2017.
  - Metropolitan employers attracted an average of 9.3 applicants per vacancy while regional employers attracted 2.6 applicants.
  - Vacancies for hospital and retail pharmacists attracted the highest average number of applicants of all occupations in this cluster (16.2), but attracted the lowest proportion of applicants with a qualification.
  - By comparison, employers seeking medical diagnostic radiographers and sonographers attracted an average of 1.0 applicants per vacancy, the lowest average recorded for any occupation in this cluster.
- This year, surveyed employers attracted an average of 1.7 suitable applicants per vacancy across the occupations in this cluster.
  - Surveyed employers seeking occupational therapists attracted 2.5 suitable applicants per vacancy. This represented the highest average number of suitable applicants of all occupations in this cluster this year.
  - Employers seeking physiotherapists attracted an average of 2.4 suitable applicants. However, 20 per cent of metropolitan and 40 per cent of regional vacancies nonetheless remained unfilled, often due to applicants accepting other roles. An additional 20 percent of metropolitan roles attracted no suitable applicants at all. For these reasons, a rating of shortage has been allocated to physiotherapists this year.
  - Vacancies for hospital and retail pharmacists received an average of 2.0 suitable applicants. However, vacancies in regional areas attracted no suitable applicants and no regional vacancies remained were filled. Consequently, a rating of regional shortage has been allocated to hospital and retail pharmacists this year.
  - Employers seeking medical diagnostic radiographers attracted an average of 0.3 suitable applicants per vacancy and those seeking sonographers attracted an average of 0.1 suitable applicants per vacancy. These low averages and the correspondingly limited proportion of vacancies filled points to a shortage of medical diagnostic radiographers and sonographers throughout Western Australia.
- Surveyed employer seeking professionals in this cluster advised that a lack of suitable applicants was the main reason that vacancies remained unfilled.
  - Other reasons vacancies remained unfilled included applicants declining roles due to the location of the vacancy, accepting a role with another employer, seeking remuneration greater than that offered or requiring hours that did not meet the employer's needs.

**Figure 1: Proportion of vacancies filled (%), average number of applicants and suitable applicants per vacancy (no.), Health Professions, Western Australia, 2008 to 2018**



Source: Department of Jobs and Small Business, Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised

### Unsuitable applicants

- Surveyed employers deemed 63 per cent of qualified applicants unsuitable for their vacancies.
  - The main reason applicants were deemed unsuitable was a lack of experience relevant to individual roles. This typically included a lack of experience or additional qualifications in a specific aspect of an occupation, including Pilates, pharmaceutical compounding, paediatrics, mental health or obstetrics.
  - Surveyed employers also commonly cited a lack of general professional experience and issues with written and verbal communication as reasons why applicants were unsuitable for their vacancies.
- Applicants without a relevant qualification or nearing completion of a relevant qualification were rejected, as were applicants who sought hours that were different to those the employer required or higher pay and conditions than those on offer.

### Demand and supply trends

- The Health Care and Social Assistance industry employs the largest number of people in the state, and is projected to employ a further 13.7 per cent (approximately 22,000 people) by mid-2022.<sup>1</sup>
  - The vast majority of this growth is projected to occur in the North West and South East of the Perth metropolitan area.
- On 1 July 2018, the National Disability Insurance Agency assumed responsibility for the delivery of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in Western Australia (WA). The NDIS will continue to roll out on a geographic basis and will be fully rolled out across the state by July 2020.<sup>2</sup>
  - People taking part in the WA NDIS commenced transfer to the nationally delivered Scheme in a phased approach from April 2018. The transfer of people from the WA NDIS will conclude by December 2018, while nationally delivered NDIS will be phased in for new participants on a region-by-region basis from 1 July 2018. For further information, please refer to the NDIS website.

<sup>1</sup> <http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/GainInsights/EmploymentProjections>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/our-sites/WA/rollout.html>

- Many employers seeking occupational therapists noted they were recruiting staff in response to increased demand associated with the roll out of the NDIS in WA.
- Online vacancies for this cluster of occupations have grown by 9.8 percent over the year to June 2018 and by 60.6 per cent over the last five years.<sup>3</sup>
  - Vacancies for physiotherapists represent the largest proportion of vacancies advertised in this cluster (33 per cent), followed by vacancies for medical imaging professionals (18 per cent) and pharmacists (18 per cent).
- Entry into occupations in this cluster is via the completion of the prerequisite Bachelor or (if available) Master degree and Board or Association registration (such as Physiotherapy Board Australia or Speech Pathology Australia).
  - Data show that Bachelor degree completions for occupations in this cluster have risen by 34 per cent over the five years to 2016.<sup>4</sup>
  - Completions of Master (coursework) degrees relevant to these occupations rose by 46 per cent over the same period, albeit from a comparatively low base.<sup>5</sup>
- Data available from Boards supported by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and featured in this cluster of occupations each show an increase in the number of health professionals holding General Registration in the state. Average increases per year over the last five years are listed below.<sup>6</sup>

<b>National Board</b>	<b>Average growth per year in General Registration over the five years to March 2018</b>
Medical Radiation Practice Board of Australia	1.7 per cent
Occupational Therapy Board of Australia	5.1 per cent
Optometry Board of Australia	2.9 per cent
Pharmacy Board of Australia	2.6 per cent
Physiotherapy Board of Australia	4.2 per cent
Podiatrist	2.1 per cent

<sup>3</sup> Department of Jobs and Small Business, Internet Vacancy Index, June 2018, 12 month moving average

<sup>4</sup> Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Student Data Collection, 2016, customised tables

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/National-Boards.aspx>