Labour Market Research - Nurses
Queensland
June 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations in cluster</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2544 Registered Nurse</td>
<td>No Shortage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2541-11 Midwife</td>
<td>Regional Shortage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4114-11 Enrolled Nurse</td>
<td>No Shortage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Key issues and trends

- The Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised (SERA) for nurses in Queensland was conducted from April to June 2017\(^1\). Employers advised that vacancies for registered and enrolled nurses were filled within the six week timeframe without difficulty; however regional employers with vacancies for midwives reported a shortage.

- A number of employers sought nurses in specialist fields such as surgical, orthopaedics, oncology, dermatology, mental health, intensive care, prison health services, aged care, emergency department and general practice. In the absence of experienced applicants some employers were prepared to accept new graduates or applicants with minimal experience.
  - While some regional employers were prepared to recruit less experienced nurses, they noted that this increased the need for experienced staff to provide adequate supervision.

- Some regional employers cited their location as a disadvantage in recruiting experienced nurses.

Survey results

- Employers surveyed included private and public hospitals, private medical centres, specialist services and aged care facilities.

- In this year’s survey, 77 per cent of nurse vacancies were filled, an increase from 70 per cent in the previous year.
  - A total of 86 per cent of metropolitan vacancies were filled and the fill rate for regional vacancies was 66 per cent.

- In comparison to 2015-16, the number of applicants in 2016-17 more than doubled from 6.4 to 14.3. In the same period, the number of applicants considered suitable by employers decreased from 1.8 to 1.3 applicants.

\(^1\) 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.
Depending on the specific nurse occupation and geographic location, employers had varying success attracting suitable applicants and filling advertised vacancies.

The average number of qualified applicants per vacancy was approximately 8.4 however the average number of suitable applicants was only 1.3.

The proportion of vacancies filled was very similar across all categories of nursing however employers who advertised for midwives attracted the lowest number of applicants (5.9) per vacancy and experienced increasing difficulty as distance from the state capital increased.

Unsuitable applicants

The most common reason cited by employers for the unsuitability of applicants was that they lacked the relevant qualifications for the particular occupation.

Another common reason was that applicants had insufficient depth or length of experience. Employers seeking nurses with higher level qualifications also tended to more frequently report a lack of specialised experience as a reason for unsuitability.
Employers across all the nursing occupations noted that applicants were considered unsuitable if they performed poorly at the interview, had poor applications or did not adequately address selection criteria.

**Demand and supply trends**

- Registered nurses, midwives and enrolled nurses work predominantly in hospitals, aged care residential services and other medical and health care services. Entry to these professions is via a diploma or bachelor degree. Registered nurses can also undertake a postgraduate qualification in midwifery. All nurses must be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) to practice in Queensland.

- The latest data from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) show that as at 31 March 2017, there are 68,434 practicing nurses in Queensland, an increase of 4.7 per cent compared to 31 March 2016.²

- The latest figures available from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Authoritative Information and Statistics to promote better health and wellbeing, show that the number of admitted patient episodes of care (separations) in all Queensland public and private hospitals increased by an average of 5.8 per cent every year from 2011 to 2015.³

- The Commonwealth Department of Health’s report, *Australia’s Future Health Workforce – Nurses– Detailed Report August 2014* states on page 5 that ‘Australia’s demand for nurses will significantly exceed supply, with a projected shortfall of approximately 85,000 nurses by 2025...under current settings.’ The report suggests that a combination of ‘improved retention of nursing students within education, improved employment rates following graduation, and increased early career retention’ may reduce the shortfall to 39,000 by 2025.⁴

- The Department of Employment’s Internet Vacancy Index average of Queensland vacancies advertised online for registered nurses, midwives and enrolled nurses has increased 20 per cent in the past two years reflecting ongoing demand and growth in the health sector.⁵

- Temporary skilled migration is considered to be a moderate source of supply for the registered nurses but only a minimal supply for enrolled nurses and midwives. There were on average of 161,457 visas granted per year for registered nurses over the years 2013-14 to 2016-17.⁶ This equates with around seven per cent of the number of domestic students completing bachelor of nursing courses.⁷

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² Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
⁴ Health Workforce Australia, Australia’s Future Health Workforce
⁵ Department of Employment
⁶ Department of Immigration and Border Protection
⁷ Department of Education and Training
Employers in regional areas have reported persistent difficulties with recruiting midwives resulting in ratings of regional shortage or regional recruitment difficulty for the last six years.

In contrast the ratings for registered nurses have moved from a Queensland shortage in 2011 and 2012 to no shortage in 2016 and 2017.