Australian Government
Department of Jobs and Small Business

Labour Market Research - Nurses
Queensland   June 2018

ANZSCO Code	Occupations in cluster	Rating
2544	Registered Nurse	No shortage
2541-11	Midwife	No shortage
4114-11	Enrolled Nurse	No shortage

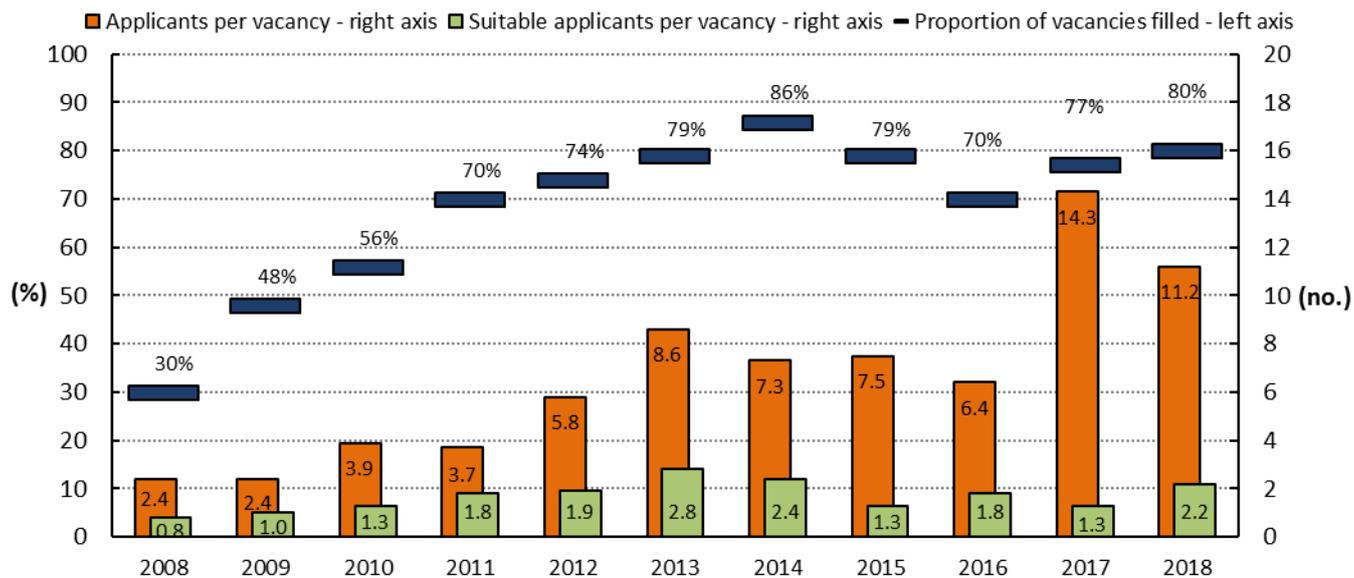* Occupations assessed at the national level, separate rating not available for Queensland

Key issues

- While demand for nurses in Queensland continues to increase because of the growing and ageing population, the number of students completing nursing undergraduate courses has also been trending upwards in recent years.
- Midwives are no longer in shortage or a recruitment difficulty for the first time in over seven years. The previous two years saw the occupation rated as a regional shortage. Enrolled and registered nurses remain not in shortage (Figure 3).
- Applicants were deemed unsuitable mostly because employers were seeking applicants with experience relevant to their industry sector or area of specialisation.
- Employers in aged care sometimes found it difficult to compete with the remuneration and penalty rates offered in hospitals.
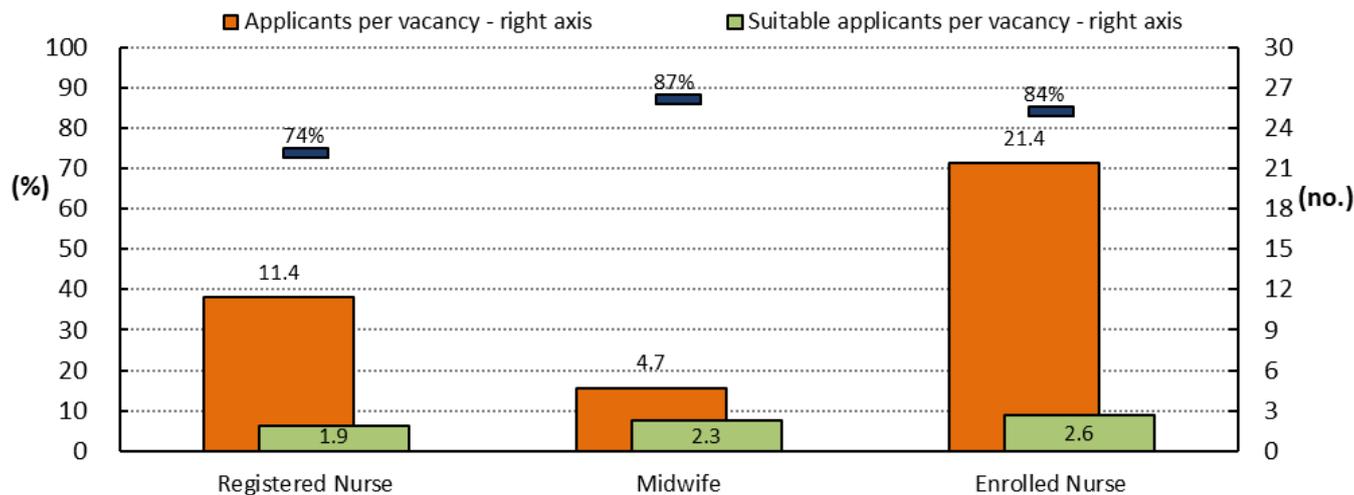
Survey results

- The Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised (SERA) was conducted for nursing professionals in Queensland between April and June 2018. Private and public sector employers surveyed sought nurses in a diverse range of fields such as surgical, clinical, emergency, paediatrics, aged care, prison health, general practice, plastic surgery, skin cancer care and Indigenous health.
- During this year's survey period, 80 per cent of vacancies were filled.
  - The proportion of vacancies filled for midwives was 87 per cent, higher than the proportions filled in 2017 (75 per cent) and 2016 (50 per cent) (Figure 2).
- The average number of applicants per vacancy decreased from 14.3 in 2017 to 11.2 but remains relatively high at 11.2.
- Despite the decrease in the number of applicants, the average number of qualified and suitable applicants increased. The average number of qualified applicants per vacancy was 9.8 in comparison to 8.4 in 2017.
  - The average number of suitable applicants per vacancy was 2.2 in comparison with 1.3 in 2017, and has remained between 1.3 to 2.4 suitable applicants over the past five years (Figure 1).
  - This year, metropolitan employers considered an average of 2.8 applicants per vacancy as suitable compared with 1.5 for regional employers.

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

■ Applicants per vacancy - right axis ■ Suitable applicants per vacancy - right axis ▬ Proportion of vacancies filled - left axis

Year	Applicants per vacancy	Suitable applicants per vacancy	Proportion of vacancies filled
2008	2.4	0.8	30%
2009	2.4	1.0	48%
2010	3.9	1.3	56%
2011	3.7	1.8	70%
2012	5.8	1.9	74%
2013	8.6	2.8	79%
2014	7.3	2.4	86%
2015	7.5	1.3	79%
2016	6.4	1.8	70%
2017	14.3	1.3	77%
2018	11.2	2.2	80%

Source: Department of Jobs and Small Business, Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised
Note: Occupational coverage varies over time series.

Figure 2: **Proportion of vacancies filled (%), average number of applicants and suitable applicants per vacancy (no.), Nurses, Queensland, 2018**

■ Applicants per vacancy - right axis   ■ Suitable applicants per vacancy - right axis

	Applicants per vacancy	Suitable applicants per vacancy	Proportion of vacancies filled
Registered Nurse	11.4	1.9	74%
Midwife	4.7	2.3	87%
Enrolled Nurse	21.4	2.6	84%

Source: Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised

Unsuitable applicants

- The proportion of qualified applicants considered unsuitable across this cluster of occupations improved from 79 per cent in 2017 to 67 per cent in 2018.
- The most prevalent reasons cited by employers for deeming applicants unsuitable was a lack of sufficient work experience or specialised experience relating directly to the advertised role. For example, new graduates with insufficient antenatal and post-natal experience when the employer was seeking a minimum two to three years' experience.
- Employers also considered qualified applicants unsuitable because of poorly presented applications, lack of cultural fit, inadequate soft skills including high-level communication, and unwillingness to relocate to regional locations such as Mareeba, St George and Hervey Bay.

Demand and supply trends

- Registered nurses, midwives and enrolled nurses work predominantly in public and private hospitals, aged care residential services, general practice and specialised medical 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) shows that, as at March 2018, the total number of nurses registered was 79,715 compared with 76,534 in March 2017, an increase of around 4.1 per cent. [1]
- The number of separations for public and private hospitals (episodes of care) in Queensland has increased by 5.6 per cent since 2015-16 to 2,497,230 (2016-17). [2]
- Figures from the Department of Jobs and Small Business Internet Vacancy Index show that vacancy numbers in Queensland increased marginally for enrolled and registered nurses from May 2017 to May 2018. The number of online vacancies for midwives remained relatively steady. [3]
- ABS Labour Force State Industry data indicates a 9.9 per cent increase over the past two years in Hospitals while Residential Care services was slightly below at 9.5 per cent. [4]
- Figures from the Department of Jobs and Small Business project the Health Care and Social Assistance sector as the largest growth industry across Queensland with a 15.6 per cent increase in employment over the next five years to May 2022. Growth in regional areas (18.1 per cent) is projected to be higher than metropolitan areas (13.6 per cent), with Wide Bay, Gold Coast and Fitzroy listed as the top three areas in regional Queensland. [5]
- Across this cluster of occupations, the supply of nurses through further education pathways in Queensland has steadily increased during 2012-2016.
  - Undergraduate bachelor degree commencement and completion numbers have trended upwards with 4926 commencements (30 per cent increase since 2012) and 2446 completions (21 per cent increase since 2012) in 2016. [6]
- Temporary resident skilled migration has mostly been used for registered nurses however has continued to decrease by around 64 per cent from 2012-13 (300) to 2017-18 (109). This source of supply is minor for midwife and enrolled nurse occupations (less than five per year over the same period). [7]

Other indicators and issues

- Some employers reported that it was difficult to attract or secure applicants when competing with remuneration, penalty rates and allowances offered by private and public hospitals.
- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that the age group profile of nurses and midwives is changing: the size of the middle age group is decreasing while younger and older age groups are growing. From 2013 to 2016, the number of employed nurses and midwives aged 20–34 increased by 15,500, or 19 per cent. The size of the group aged 35–54 fell by 3,500 or 2.1 per cent, and the group aged 55 and over grew by 11,000, or 15 per cent.' This observation may support the difficulty employers are experiencing with sourcing applicants with a specific type or level of experience. [8]

[1] Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (APHRA), Performance report, Jan to Mar 2018, Table 1
[2] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Admitted patient care 2016-17, Australian hospital statistics, Table 2.2
[3] Department of Jobs and Small Business, Internet Vacancy Index, 12 month average, May 2018
[4] ABS, Labour Force State industry data, May 2018
[5] Department of Jobs and Small Business, LMIP, Employment projections
[6] Department of Jobs and Small Business, Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Statistics data cube, 2016
[7] Depart of Home Affairs, Temporary resident skilled visas granted, March 2018
[8] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Australia's Health 2018, Chapter 2.3

Table 1:   Queensland SERA Ratings time series, by occupation, 2011 to 2018

ANZSCO	Occupation Title	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
254111	Midwife	S	R	R	R	R-D	R	R	NS
2544	Registered Nurses	S	S	R	NS	R	NS	NS	NS
411411	Enrolled Nurse	R	R	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

Key to ratings: S = Shortage, NS = No Shortage, R = Regional Shortage, R-D = Recruitment difficulty in regional areas