Labour Market Research - Nurses
Victoria
June quarter 2016-17

Occupations in cluster | Rating
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2541-11 Midwife | Regional Shortage
2544 Registered Nurses | Shortage
4114-11 Enrolled Nurse | No Shortage

Key issues
- There has been a steady tightening of the labour market since 2012-13. While demand for nurses in Victoria continues to increase as a result of the growing and ageing population, the number of students completing nursing undergraduate courses has been trending down in recent years.¹
- This cluster has experienced several shortages and recruitment difficulties between 2007-2008 and 2016-17, particularly midwives.²

Survey results
- The Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised (SERA) was conducted for nursing professionals in Victoria between May and June 2017.
- Overall, 62 per cent of nursing vacancies were filled, a slight increase from the previous year’s result but still below the ten year peak recorded in 2012-13 of 84 per cent.
- The survey recorded the lowest applicant figures of the past five years for nursing occupations with 4.4 applicants, on average, per vacancy and 3.8 qualified applicants, on average, per vacancy.
- The average number of suitable applicants per vacancy for all nursing occupations (1.1) has remained steady since 2014-15, declining from the ten year peak of 1.7 in 2013-14.

Figure 1: Proportion of vacancies filled (%), average number of applicants and suitable applicants per vacancy (no.), Nurses, Victoria, 2007-08 to 2016-17

Source: Department of Employment, Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised

¹ Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Student Data Collection, 2015, customised tables
² Department of Employment, SERA data time series 2007-08 to 2016-17, June quarter 2017, Nurses, Victoria
Occupational analysis

- While the labour market for nurses has tightened over the past few years, there is considerable variation in labour market conditions between individual nursing occupations.
  - Registered nurses have become increasingly difficult to recruit, with the current data indicating a tightening market. The fill rate fell to a ten year low in 2016-17 with only 49 per cent of vacancies being filled.
  - Vacancy fill rates for midwives have recovered from the ten year low of 40 per cent recorded in 2009-10 to a fill rate of 72 per cent recorded in 2016-17.
  - Enrolled nurses recorded the highest vacancy fill rate (84%) and average suitable applicant per vacancy count (2.5) of all nursing occupations.

Unsuitable applicants

- Some employers identified difficulties filling mental health and aged care nursing roles.
- Most employers required applicants to possess a minimum of one year’s clinical experience in a specific clinical specialisation and stated that staffing, resourcing and/or time constraints often reduced their ability to retrain or upskill applicants lacking specific experience in the advertised tasks.
- Some applicants were not hired, despite being fully qualified and possessing requisite experience, because of family commitments that made them unable to work the required hours of the position.³

Demand and supply trends

- Nurses in Victoria are primarily employed in the public and private health services sectors, including hospitals, outpatient clinics and residential aged care.⁴ Demand for these services continues to grow in line with population growth and ageing.
- 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 Victorian public and private hospitals increased by an average of 2.3 per cent every year from 2011 to 2015.⁵
- The Department of Employment’s Internet Vacancy Index average of Victorian vacancies advertised online for registered nurses, midwives and enrolled nurses has increased 33.6 per cent in the past two years, reflecting ongoing demand and growth in the health sector.⁶
- Completions for nursing undergraduate courses have been trending down over the five years to 2015, with a 3.8 per cent decrease in completions since 2011. Total completions by course specialisation have increased by 1.1 per cent since 2011 (and are trending upwards) but have decreased by 2 per cent since the ten year peak reached in 2013.⁷

³ The nursing occupation is predominantly female (AHPRA Nursing and Midwifery Board, Nurse and Midwife Registration Data, December 2012 to December 2016).
⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011 Census, Occupation by industry of employment
⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
⁶ Department of Employment
⁷ Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Student Data Collection, 2015, customised tables
• The latest data from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) show that as at 31 March 2017, there are 90,763 practising nurses in Victoria, an increase of 2.89 per cent compared to 31 March 2016.\(^8\)

**Outlook**

• Nationally, registered nurses stand out as an occupation with strong employment growth of 23.0 per cent projected over the five years to May 2022, with midwives experiencing a more modest growth projection of 10.20 per cent. Enrolled and Mothercraft nurses are expected to grow by 2.5 per cent.\(^9\)

• A number of recent reports have raised concerns about interest in nursing and long term commitments from existing nurses, due mainly to pay and conditions.\(^10\)

• 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.\(^11\)

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\(^8\) Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia  
\(^9\) Department of Employment, *Employment projections for the five years to May 2022*  
\(^10\) Health Workforce Australia 2014, *Australia’s Future Health Workforce – Nurses Detailed*  
\(^11\) Health Workforce Australia, *Australia’s Future Health Workforce*