

Legal Professionals	Australian Capital Territory (ACT)
ASCO Code: 2521	June 2007
Labour market rating	No Shortage
Comment	

Occupational demand

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' Labour Force Survey for February 2007 shows that legal professionals are a relatively large occupational group in the ACT, with over 2000 legal professionals employed. Employer contacts suggest that legal professionals are in strong demand in the public and private sector.

Occupational supply

Undergraduate and postgraduate courses in law are available at the Australian National University and the University of Canberra in the ACT. Entry to this occupation requires a Bachelor degree in law followed by a period of practical training, which can be completed as a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice at the Australian National University. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations data show that there has been an increase in the number of people completing this diploma, from 179 in 2001 to 225 in 2006. However, Department of Immigration and Citizenship data show net migration to the ACT for this occupation has decreased steadily in recent years, with net losses of 12 in 2003-04 and 47 in 2005-06.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who recently advertised for legal professionals was undertaken as a basis for this report and surveyed vacancies included the specialisations of solicitors and legal officers. All employers surveyed received multiple applicants for the positions advertised, and a high proportion (80 per cent) found multiple suitable applicants.

One third of applicants were considered by employers to be suitable for the advertised vacancies and two thirds of the positions were filled within six weeks of advertising. Employers were generally satisfied with the number and quality of applicants but some noted they were disappointed with the number of applicants with relevant experience.

Interestingly, some employer contacts observed that legal professionals with a mid-level of experience were the most difficult to recruit compared with graduate and more senior professionals. Some employers commented that young lawyers tend to leave the ACT after a few years of experience to find job opportunities elsewhere. Employers further noted that there were very few legal professionals with three to five years experience entering the ACT, which attenuates recruitment problems.

Labour market outlook

There is little evidence to suggest that the labour market for legal professionals will change significantly in the next six months.