

Occupational Therapist	ACT
ANZSCO Code: 2524-11	May 2009
Labour market rating	No Shortage
Comment	

Occupational demand

Occupational therapists work in a broad range of settings such as hospitals, specialised rehabilitation centres, mental health facilities, aged care facilities, private practices and educational facilities. Demand for occupational therapists has grown steadily in recent years due to higher demand for health services, the ageing of the population and the increasing role of the profession in patient care and rehabilitation.

Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey data show that occupational therapy is a small occupation in the ACT. The data show the number of occupational therapists in the ACT increased over the year to February 2009 to approximately 190. ABS Census 2006 data also shows the number of occupational therapist in the ACT increased over the five years to 2006.

Occupational supply

Completion of a four year accredited bachelor degree is required to practice as an occupational therapist in Australia. An accredited university course for this occupation is not available in the Australian Capital Territory and therefore new supply to the ACT occupational therapy workforce is dependent on graduates moving to the ACT from other states and overseas.

Membership of OT Australia and completion of the Accredited Occupational Therapist Program is not a pre-requisite to practice but is highly regarded. Some employers suggested that loss of occupational therapists to overseas and child rearing is common within a few years of graduation. This is supported by Department of Immigration and Citizenship data which show a net loss of occupational therapists in the ACT to overseas over 2004-05 to 2006-07. While there was a net gain to the ACT over 2007-08 the numbers were negligible.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market.

A survey of ACT employers who had recently advertised for occupational therapist was undertaken for this report. All employers surveyed filled their vacancies within six weeks of advertising.

On average, employers received about four applications per vacancy, with 2.9 applicants per vacancy considered suitable by employers. All employers advertised to replace occupational therapists who had left and vacancies were in the areas of aged care, mental health and rehabilitation. Although registration for this occupation is not compulsory in the ACT, most employers specified in their advertisement they were seeking applicants eligible for membership of OT Australia.

Employers cited lack of qualifications lack of experience and presenting poorly at interview as the main reasons applicants were considered to be unsuitable. Generally, employers reported that they were able to fill advertised vacancies with little difficulty.

Labour market outlook

There is no evidence to suggest the labour market for occupational therapists will change significantly over the next six months.