

Hospital and Retail Pharmacist		Victoria
ANZSCO Code: 2515-11, 13		June 2009
Labour market rating:	Hospital pharmacist - no shortage. Retail pharmacist - no shortage	
Comment:		

Occupational demand

Pharmacists supply, dispense and manufacture medicines and drugs. A hospital pharmacist operates as part of a healthcare team and prepares drugs, counsels patients and advises health professionals. A retail pharmacist prepares and dispenses drugs, provides primary health care advice and supports and advises health professionals on drug selection and usage. After completing a period of supervised training, graduates must register with the Pharmacy Board of Victoria before commencing practice.

Demand for pharmacological services is broadly in line with the rate of population growth but with demand increasing with age. Between 2004 and 2007 the average population growth rate in Victoria varied between 1.2 and 1.5 per cent per annum and the median age increased slightly from 36.5 years to 36.9 years over the same period. The median age varies with geography and ranges from 36.1 in Melbourne to 43.1 years in East Gippsland.

Occupational supply

The supply of pharmacists has increased due to a number of factors. Education data show a marked increase in the number of completions in the period 2004-07 when an average of 181 persons attained the required bachelor degree in each year compared with an average of 123 in each of the preceding three years.

Migration data show a relatively stable net increase of an average of 70 persons in each of the years 2004-05 to 2007-08 compared with just 21 persons in 2003-04. All overseas trained pharmacists (except those from New Zealand) are required to have their qualifications assessed. Those qualified in the UK, Ireland, USA or Canada must complete a period of supervised practice and pass an assessment by the Board. Applicants with qualifications obtained in other countries require formal examinations, longer periods of supervised practice and a final assessment of competency.

Registrant numbers have increased by up to 4 per cent in each of the past four years with 5040 registrants in 2004 and 5365 in 2007. The number of new registrants has increased appreciably from 149 in 2004 to 239 in 2007, with growth in this period exceeding the population growth rate.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for pharmacists found that 91 per cent of vacancies were filled, attracting 3.4 suitable applicants per vacancy. Employers were generally very satisfied with the quality of applicants. Respondents found these recent recruitment exercises relatively easy to fill as a result of a trend increase in the number of graduates over the last decade and, to a lesser extent, due to increased immigration. Additionally, recent EU regulatory changes mean that Australian qualified pharmacists are no longer streamlined for registration in the UK thus reducing emigration to that destination.

Hospital pharmacists were a little more difficult to recruit due to the different set of skills involving more complex formulations for critical illness treatment. Some respondents reported that hospital pharmacists sometimes work additional hours as part time or casual retail pharmacists and that the generally higher remuneration of retail pharmacists tends to attract more candidates. Some employers suggested there are far fewer locum positions as pharmacists now seek more secure full time work. One agency reported that they have 200 locums on their database. In 2001 the state government introduced an expanded pharmacy intern program and a coordinated recruitment and retention strategy. In six years, the number of positions rose from 444 in 2001 to 606 in 2007 and the vacancy rate also improved from 8 per cent to 2 per cent.

Labour market outlook

The labour market is not expected to change over the outlook period.