

Environmental Health Officer		Tasmania
ASCO Code: 2543-13	January 2007	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

There were 86 Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) employed in Tasmania at the time of the 2001 ABS Census. The vast majority of EHOs are employed in the public sector, in local government. The State Government employ a small number and there may also be a small percentage involved with private consultancy work. Demand for EHOs is primarily determined by legislation which requires local councils to enforce laws and regulations concerning environmental protection and public health. Additionally, the World Health Organisation has set a benchmark ratio of one full time EHO to 10 000 population. A 2006 industry profile by the Tasmanian Office of Post Compulsory Education and Training, reports that 11 of the 29 Tasmanian councils are meeting this benchmark.

Occupational supply

The minimum qualification needed to work as an EHO in Tasmania is an Advanced Diploma of Environmental Health. This qualification is presently available through the Tasmanian TAFE system, with the majority of those undertaking the course also working in a cadet position with a local council. In the period from 2001 to 2005, there were a total of 27 people completing the Advanced Diploma in the State. More recently, however, the Tasmanian Director of Public Health has advised that from 2011 the minimum qualification for an EHO will be an approved Bachelor degree. As such, 2007 is the final year of intake for the TAFE Advanced Diploma, which will be taught until 2010. In its place, it has been proposed that the University of Tasmania will develop a Bachelor of Health Science (Environmental Health) course which is anticipated to be available through their Launceston campus in 2008.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Employers who recently advertised vacancies for EHOs filled 50 per cent of all positions. It was reported by employers that unsuitable applicants commonly did not have the necessary qualification or the desired level of experience. Industry sources thought that school leavers were not very aware of opportunities available to them in the area of environmental health and this contributed to low numbers entering TAFE training. It was suggested that the introduction of a University course may raise the profile of the profession and there may be more interest from school leavers. Several industry sources commented that the existing EHO workforce is ageing and predominately male. This is supported by a Department of Health and Human Services 2005 survey which found that 57 per cent of the States EHOs were aged 45 years or more and 79 per cent were male. Employers suggested that the ageing of the workforce may result in further shortages in five to ten years when it is anticipated that many of those currently working in the sector retire.

Labour market outlook

The low percentage of filled vacancies, in conjunction with employer comments, supports a rating of shortage. There is no indication that in the next twelve months shortages will ease.