

Hospital Pharmacist, Retail Pharmacist		New South Wales (NSW)
ANZSCO Code: 2515-11, 13	June 2009	
Labour market rating	Hospital pharmacist: No shortage Retail pharmacist: Shortage (regional)	
Comment: <i>Shortages of retail pharmacists are evident in regional NSW.</i>		

Occupational demand

Underlying demand for pharmacists has increased moderately in recent years. The number of admissions/separations occurring in NSW hospitals grew by 2.9 per cent a year over the five years to June 2008. Demand for retail pharmacists has been less strong: the volume of prescriptions dispensed under the pharmaceutical benefits scheme was flat over the four years to 2008 and the number of pharmacies in NSW grew by only 2.3 per cent over the same period. ABS Census data show that the number of employed pharmacists in NSW was stable from 2001 to 2006 and it is likely that growth since then has been subdued.

Occupational supply

DEEWR estimates that completions of entry-level pharmacy courses at NSW universities increased by forty per cent in the three years to 2008 as the first cohorts of students completed the recently-introduced Masters degrees in pharmacy. This gives a training rate (course completions as a percentage of employed pharmacists) of 5.9 per cent per annum. Net immigration of pharmacists from overseas to NSW averaged 140 persons per annum in the two years to 2007-08, which compares with an average of 100 per annum in the previous five years. Registration data suggest that wastage from the occupation was quite high at over 10 per cent per annum between 2004 and 2007.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for pharmacists showed that 91 per cent of vacancies for hospital pharmacists and 50 per cent of vacancies for retail pharmacists were filled within six weeks of advertising. This compares with a success rate of 45 per cent for hospital pharmacists and 80 per cent for retail pharmacists in 2007. Vacancies for retail pharmacists in Sydney were mostly easily filled and, on average, attracted 3.2 suitable applicants per vacancy. On the other hand, the majority of vacancies for retail pharmacists in regional areas remained unfilled or took up to 12 months to fill. Regional retail pharmacy vacancies attracted an average 0.6 suitable applicants per vacancy although over half attracted no suitable applicants.

The consensus among employers of hospital pharmacists was that there are now more applicants for vacancies than has been the case for a very long period of time. This was attributed to the economic downturn and the increase in new university graduates. The economic downturn has reduced the number of positions available in the retail sector as well as making the hospital sector seem a more secure option notwithstanding that the potential rewards in the retail sector are higher. On average, each hospital pharmacy vacancy attracted 2.7 suitable applicants. Several hospital pharmacies stated they had received an unusually high number of unsolicited applications from experienced retail pharmacists. Employers from both the hospital and retail sectors reported no difficulty in filling new graduate positions. Because of the pharmacy course at Charles Sturt University at Wagga Wagga, employers in the Riverina region appear to have less difficulty in filling vacancies than other regional areas in NSW.

Labour market outlook

DEEWR projections indicate that the supply of new graduates will remain high in 2009-10. However, the significant wastage rate from the occupation and the problem in attracting and retaining experienced pharmacists in some regional areas are structural in nature and likely to persist over the short term.