

<b>Dentist</b>	<b>Northern Territory</b>
<b>ANZSCO Code:</b> 2523-12	May 2009
<b>Labour market rating</b>	Shortage
<b>Comment:</b>	

### **Occupational demand**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data show there were 58 dentists employed in the NT in 2006, a similar level of employment to that recorded in 2001. Employment for the occupation is too small in the NT for the ABS Labour Force data to provide a meaningful indicator of employment growth for the period following the 2006 Census. Employers commented that demand for dentists in the NT had been growing in line with the increasing population. The Australian Government Private Health Insurance Administration Council reported 37 354 dentist general treatments were claimed in the NT through private health insurance in the March 2009 quarter and the number of treatments claimed has increased significantly since June 2002.

### **Occupational supply**

There are currently no dental schools in the Northern Territory. Attracting dentists from interstate and overseas is therefore required for retaining and increasing the dentist labour market. However, ABS Census data indicate that over the five years to 2006 there was less interstate migration of dentists to the NT than for professional roles overall (30 per cent of employed NT dentists from interstate compared to 36 per cent of employed professionals overall).

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for dentists was undertaken for this report. Employers indicated they struggled to fill advertised vacancies for permanent roles but were able to fill short-term locum positions. Unsuitable applicants lacked clinical competencies or did not suit conditions at remote locations. Some employers said they thought the current competitive market for dentists made it harder to attract applicants to the NT, which is often perceived as a less desirable location because of its small size and relative isolation, when there are alternative options. It was particularly difficult to attract candidates to regional areas.

Recruits are mainly from overseas or interstate; when attempting to recruit, employers go to great lengths to attract applicants to dentist vacancies. Advertising in local and national papers, dental journals and using recruitment agencies is the standard approach. Employers surveyed said there were wage pressures in attracting dentists to consider relocation from interstate, and the public sector struggled to compete with private sector employers when trying to fill roles.

When vacancies arise some practices rely on covering them with short-term locums. It is often easier to find a dentist willing to fill a locum role than it is to attract dentists to relocate for a longer term placement. Visiting dentists will often be happy to fill a locum position as part of a working holiday. Some dental practices in Darwin recognised there was sufficient demand for expansion, however tended to concentrate on retaining their current capacity due to the difficulties in filling dental roles. Employers reported dentists are typically keen to learn new technologies and so are attracted to private practices with the latest equipment in addition to the highest remuneration. Just under half of the employers surveyed ran a graduate recruitment program.

### **Labour market outlook**

The labour market for dentists is not expected to change over the coming year, with vacancies being difficult to fill. The occupation is, therefore, expected to remain in shortage.