

<b>Dentist/Dental Specialist</b>	<b>Queensland</b>
<b>ANZSCO Code:</b> 2523-11,13	June 2009
<b>Labour market rating</b>	Shortage
<b>Comment:</b>	

### **Occupational demand**

Dentists diagnose and treat teeth and gums, undertake preventative procedures and conduct surgery. With further study, dental graduates can become Endodontists, Periodontists, Prosthodontists Paediatric Dentists, Oral/Maxillofacial Surgeons and Orthodontists. Most dental professionals work in private practice, but there are also public sector employment opportunities. Demand for these professions has strengthened in line with the State's population growth and economic, social and technological changes making dental care more appealing and accessible. Demand is best indicated by data from the Private Health Insurance Administration Council which show privately funded dental services increasing by 9.2 per cent or by 461 323 services over the year to March 2009. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' Skilled Vacancy Index for Queensland shows newspaper advertisements for dental professionals growing by 37 per cent over the year to May 2009.

### **Occupational supply**

Practicing as a dentist or dental specialist in Queensland requires the completion of a five-year Bachelor of Dental Science program or the combination of a three-year Bachelor of Oral Health in Dental Science and a two year Graduate Diploma in Dentistry. Registration with the Dental Board of Queensland is mandatory. Data from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations indicate the average annual number of students entering dental programs each year between 2003 and 2006 was 53, but that has doubled since that time. Completions have averaged 42 since 2003, but this number is expected to strengthen in line with the growing enrolments, with the first boost to supply anticipated at the end of 2010. A new program commenced in the Far North in 2009 with supply expected to strengthen further at the end of 2013. Department of Immigration and Citizenship arrivals and departures data show that overseas migration may be providing some support to supply for these professions as 106 self-identified dental practitioners migrated to Queensland in 2007-08.

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

This year, only 17 per cent of vacancies for dental professionals were filled within six weeks of advertising. Employers considered 71 per cent of the applicants as unsuitable because they were unlicensed or they had limited experience. Regional employers were specifically seeking experienced dental professionals who could provide a full range of services in either isolation or under very limited supervision and this effectively excluded new graduates. Most respondents reported that apart from emergency care, dental visits are often one of the first health care service casualties of any economic downturn and the last six to twelve months have been no exception as demand progressively eased. Nonetheless, regional and public sector employers reported that they could not fill vacancies and they continue to experience difficulties attracting and recruiting suitable applicants. These employers attribute their inability to fill vacancies to a state-wide shortage of dental professionals but are hopeful that the growth in student numbers will help in bolstering supply. Public sector contacts maintain that demand in the public sector has not been met because remuneration and professional development opportunities are well below that offered in the private sector.

### **Labour market outlook**

In 2008, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare forecast that demand for dental services in Australia is expected to grow on average by 2.2 per cent each year until 2020. When combined with Queensland's ongoing population growth, demand for dental professionals looks set to strengthen. Although student numbers are increasing, any significant aid to supply is not likely to occur until the end of 2010. In the meantime, the Queensland labour market for dental professionals is in shortage and it is likely to remain that way for the next eighteen months.