

<b>Legal Professionals</b>		<b>Northern Territory</b>
ASCO Code: 2521	March 2007	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment: shortage limited to legal professionals with two years plus experience		

### Occupational demand

Based on ABS Census data there were 396 legal professionals working in the Northern Territory (NT) in 2001. ABS Labour Force Survey data indicate the number of legal professionals employed trended upwards from 2002 to 2005 before dropping back toward 2001 levels in 2006. The Law Society NT branch has issued 443 practicing certificates for the 2006-07 year, which is a decrease from the 2004-05 year when 491 practising certificates were issued. However the DEEWR skilled vacancies survey recorded an increase in advertised vacancies for legal professionals in 2006.

### Occupational supply

Charles Darwin University offers Bachelor degrees, Graduate Diplomas and Masters in law. Enrolments have been decreasing since 2004, and there is a completion rate of approximately 25 per cent. Employers commented that the number of suitably experienced legal professionals is not sufficient to meet demand and that law graduates do not have sufficient experience to fill the demand. Employers rely on sourcing qualified legal professionals through interstate recruitment. Although the local training rate (based on the number of graduates compared to the number employed in the profession) is not low, there is a significant degree of wastage with graduates not going on to gain admission to practice law.

### Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Many of the employers contacted were unable to fill advertised legal vacancies and there was a fill-rate of 56 per cent. Although vacancies typically attracted multiple applicants, only 34 per cent were considered suitable and some suitable applicants turned down offers deciding against relocation to the NT. Applicants were typically considered by employers to be unsuitable due to a lack of relevant legal experience. Employers suggested that there is a competitive labour supply at the graduate level for jobs at top-tier law firms. However, the supply of legal professionals with at least two years experience and specialised knowledge in areas such as native land title and intellectual property is low. Employers commented that it is particularly difficult for community law centres to recruit experienced legal professionals as they cannot compete with the remuneration offered by corporate firms.

Employers typically advertised vacancies on the internet recruitment sites and on their company website and also used recruitment agencies in an effort to source suitable applicants. Some employers undertook creative recruitment advertising to attract applicants such as including scenic local pictures and encouraging applicants wanting a 'change of lifestyle' to apply. Vacancies arose due to both increased demand and turnover within roles. Turnover of legal professionals was considered to be high as legal professionals often work one or two years in the NT to gain experience and then relocate elsewhere.

### Labour market outlook

Demand for legal professionals with two years or more experience is expected to remain strong and the difficulty attracting experienced legal professionals to the NT is expected to continue. The occupation is therefore expected to remain in shortage over the coming year.