

Hospital / Retail Pharmacist		Northern Territory
ANZSCO Code: 2515-11, 13	May 2009	
Labour market rating	No Shortage	
Comment:		

Occupational demand

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data show that there were 92 hospital and retail pharmacists employed in the Northern Territory (NT) in 2006, a 30 per cent increase from the 2001 figure. The Australian Government Private Health Insurance Administration Council reported 2887 pharmacy general claims in the NT through private health insurance in the March 2009 quarter and the quarterly number of claims has remained steady since March 2005.

Occupational supply

In 2006 Charles Darwin University (CDU) introduced a full pharmacy degree course and had their first graduates (4) for the course in 2008. The number of continuing students in the pharmacy degrees at CDU has increased over the past three years. ABS Census data indicate that recruits from interstate frequently leave the Northern Territory within a short period of time. As an indication (based on ABS Census data) on the reliance of interstate recruitment for pharmacists, in 2006 17 per cent of pharmacists employed in the NT had moved to the NT from interstate within the previous year and 37 per cent had moved to the NT within the previous five years. These figures indicate a moderately higher reliance on interstate supply for physiotherapists than for professionals overall.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Employers contacted for both hospital and retail pharmacy roles were able to fill all of their advertised vacancies, a significant improvement from 2007 fill rate of 50 per cent. Nearly half (47 per cent) of all applicants were considered suitable. Hospital pharmacy employers indicated they were seeking applicants with hospital experience and that most unsuitable applicants lacked this experience or weren't qualified. Employers tended to advertise in local and national newspapers and online websites in an effort to attract applicants. Some employers found it difficult to attract people to the NT which commonly is perceived as unattractive by potential applicants because of its small size, relative isolation and cost of living. Employers offered relocation expenses, accommodation assistance and, for the hospital pharmacists, retention bonuses as incentives to attract applicants.

Demand for pharmacists has typically been driven by turnover of existing staff rather than growth in the overall number of positions. There is currently a strong focus on attracting local pharmacists for vacancies and high turnover is an issue with graduate pharmacists often returning interstate to work within one or two years of working in the NT. Hospital pharmacy employers suggested remuneration for hospital roles was now more competitive compared with retail pharmacy roles, and that retail pharmacists may begin looking at hospital pharmacy roles for better remuneration and regular hours.

The majority of employers have a graduate recruitment program. Employers surveyed noticed an increase in supply of graduates attributed to the CDU pharmacy course and expected a further supply increase of local graduates in the coming year. Retail pharmacy employers commonly indicated that demand had fallen and they have reduced pharmacists' hours from full-time to part-time. They attributed this fall in demand to reduced sales resulting from the global recession.

Labour market outlook

Over the next year increased local graduate supply is expected and the labour market for pharmacists is expected to remain steady with no shortage. Demand will vary according to economic conditions but increased demand associated with economic recovery is not expected to create a shortage of pharmacists in the NT within the next year.