

| Chef and Cook | | Western Australia |
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| ANZSCO Codes: 3513-11, 3514-11 | September 2009 | |
| Labour market rating: | 3513-11 Chef – Metropolitan - No Shortage, Regional – Recruitment difficulty 3514-11 Cook – Metropolitan – No shortage, Regional – Recruitment difficulty | |
| Comment: <i>There is no shortage of qualified Chefs and Cooks in metropolitan Perth, however regional areas are reporting ongoing difficulties in finding and retaining staff as many are attracted to the greater work options available in Perth.</i> | | |

Occupational demand

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006 Census data for Western Australia (WA) indicates the majority of Chef's work in cafes and restaurants, followed by accommodation, public bars and taverns and in catering services. Chefs are an occupation which is spread over a wide range of various other industries, such as hospitals, defence and in the resources sector. The occupation of Cook is very similar; however, there is a significant demand for Cooks in the Child Care industry. ABS data shows the number of Chefs in WA has increased between 2001 and 2006 by 11 per cent to 4005. Cooks increased by nine per cent to 4467. The ABS Labour Force Survey shows the number of Chefs working in WA had decreased slightly between May 2008 and May 2009 to 5140. On the other hand, this survey showed the number of Cooks increased considerably in the same period to 5040. Demand tends to vary for the recognised four levels of skill, being commis Chefs, Chef de partis, sous Chefs, and head (or executive) Chefs. The DEEWR Skilled Vacancy Count of newspaper advertisements shows the number of vacancies for Chefs and Cooks had remained fairly steady from late 2007 until early 2009. Since then there has been a significant decline in advertised vacancy numbers in line with the general economic downturn.

Occupational supply

Formal supply is by way of an apprenticeship as a Chef which involves completion of TAFE study at the Certificate III level. The apprenticeship title of 'Chef' has taken over from the 'Cooking' apprenticeship and so there is, for a period, some overlap of the completing apprenticeships. The Chef and Cook apprenticeship completions in the period 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 totaled 206. Previous year's completions were 202 in 2007-08 and 218 in 2006-07. ABS 2006 Census data shows 60 per cent of Chefs have completed a Certificate III or above. Many working Chefs have no formal qualifications and 11 per cent had completed year ten or below. Census data also shows only 19 per cent of Cooks have completed a Certificate III or above and the majority have no formal qualifications. Overseas migration has provided a net gain to WA of Cooks and Chefs (combined figure as per immigration data) of 228 persons in 2007-08, which was more than the result of 2006-07 when overseas migration provided a net gain of 190.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEEWR Survey of Employers who had Recently Advertised (SERA) for Chefs showed 83 per cent of vacancies were filled within four weeks of advertising. There were 11 applicants per vacancy of whom approximately two per vacancy were considered by employers to be suitable. The main reason applicants were unsuitable was a lack of qualifications. Some employers commented although they received a large number of applications in response to their vacancies, most applicants did not possess any form of equivalent qualification for the highly skilled positions on offer. Employers commented some applicants were experienced in cooking for large number of people, but this did not qualify them to work in a commercial establishment.

DEEWR has also conducted a separate survey of employers who had recently advertised for Cooks and 92 per cent of vacancies were filled within four weeks of advertising. There were 18 applicants per vacancy of whom approximately three per vacancy were considered by employers to be suitable.

Employers noted the main reasons why applicants were not suitable was limited English skills and the lack of any formal qualifications.

Generally employers were of the opinion demand for Chefs and Cooks in the mining and resource sector had declined, effectively increasing the availability of qualified Chefs and Cooks of varying levels in the metropolitan area. Some employers commented returning Chefs did not have the experience to work in an a la carte restaurant while others felt there was now a good balance in supply and demand for staff. According to the industry body for Chefs and Cooks, contacted by DEEWR, employers have retained staff where possible as the expressed concern they will be unable to recruitment staff when activity in the mining and resource industry increases.

Rural employers for both occupations commented finding and retaining qualified staff was difficult outside of the Perth metropolitan area. Some employers in regional areas commented they were happy to employ overseas trained workers and often relied on young working holiday makers and back packers at peak times. This is in contrast to other regional employers who would not hire any applicant who did not speak fluent English. The industry body contacted reported some of the hospitality schools are working heavily with 457 visa holders and assisting in work placements during training periods.

Labour market outlook

It is expected there will be an ongoing recruitment difficulty for Chefs and Cooks in regional areas of WA, with no shortages expected in the metropolitan area in the short term. An increase in population and an expected up turn in the Western Australian economy is expected to provide growth in employment opportunities for Chefs and Cooks in the longer term.