

Overview of demand for managers, professionals and technicians: Australian Capital Territory – June 2009

Economic Background

Just as Gross Domestic product (GDP) is used as an indicator of the nation's economic growth, Gross State Product (GSP) can be used as an indicator of a state's economic growth. The average growth of GSP, in real terms, in the ACT from 2001-02 to 2006-07 was 2.9 per cent per year. This is below the average growth, in real terms, of GDP of the nation over the same period which was 3.4 per cent per year. ACT Treasury forecasts that the growth of GSP, in real terms, for ACT will fall to one per cent over the period 2008-09, and drop even further to 0.5 percent during the 2009-10 period. Australian demographic statistics from the ABS show that the population in the ACT has grown by 1.8 per cent in the year between March 2008-09. ACT Treasury forecasts the population to grow by one percent in the ACT in the 2009-10 financial year.

The ACT has a relatively small work force, employing approximately 193 500 people, which is less than two per cent of total employment in Australia. In the year to June 2009 the ACT trend employment growth was -1.4 per cent, implying that the number of people employed in the ACT has fallen during the year. The unemployment rate in the ACT was 3.6 percent in June 2009, which has increased by 0.9 percentage points from the previous year.

Since 2001-02 the ACT Government has made major investments into the Territory's infrastructure to sustain the growing population and economy. The 2008-09 ACT Budget includes an initiative to invest \$300 million in the health system which includes \$90 million for a Women's and Children's Hospital, \$37.6 million for mental health facilities and \$18 million for a new Community Health Centre in Gungahlin. The ACT Government also plans to establish four new early education schools and open a high school in Harrison. Another \$250 million is planned to be spent over four years on transport facilities, including improving roads and replacing the ACTION bus fleet.

13 Specialist Managers

Engineering Managers were examined in the ACT in this year's program and were found to be in shortage. Demand for Engineering Managers appears strong, with their numbers increasing by approximately 11 per cent between the 2001 and 2006 Census.

According to the 2006 Census almost 40 per cent of all Engineering Managers in the ACT are employed in the public administration and safety industry. The defence sector and the engineering design and consulting services sector each employ about a quarter of the total number of Engineering Managers in the Territory. The Construction Forecasting Council have forecast that the value of long term, non-residential and engineering construction in the ACT will have shrunk by less than five percent between 2007 and 2008. This may slow down the demand for Engineering Managers in the ACT in the near future.

23 Design, Engineering, Science and Transport Professionals

The occupations in this group researched in the ACT were Civil, Structural, Transport, Electrical and Mechanical Engineers as well as Surveyors. All these occupations experienced shortages

during the year with the exception of Electrical Engineers, which experienced no shortage, and Mechanical Engineers, which experienced recruitment difficulties. The number of people employed in these occupations in the ACT has increased by around 23 per cent between 2001 and 2006. The only occupation which experienced a decrease in the number of people employed was mechanical engineers, which fell by 12 per cent between 2001 and 2006. More recent Labour Force Survey data show that there has been a three fold increase in the number of Industrial, mechanical and production engineers employed in ACT in the year to November 2008.

The demand for these occupations is influenced by the amount of non-residential and engineering construction activity. The Construction Forecasting Council collect data on the amount of non-residential construction and construction related to engineering in the ACT. The Construction Forecasting Council found that during 2007-08 the construction level did not grow from the previous year. However, the Council forecasts that the amount of construction in the ACT during 2008-09 will be almost 25 per cent above the amount in 2007-08.

The demand for Surveyors is influenced by the level of residential construction activity as well as non-residential and engineering construction activity. ABS Building Approvals data for the ACT indicate that there was a 19 per cent rise in the value of building (residential and non-residential) approvals in the year to January 2009.

Demand for Mechanical Engineers in the ACT is predominantly driven by activity in professional, scientific and technical services as well as manufacturing. The manufacturing industry accounts for two per cent of total employment in the ACT.

24 Education Professionals

Early Childhood (Pre-primary School), Primary School and Secondary School Teachers were researched for this group in the ACT this year. The research into these occupations produced mixed results. Early Childhood teachers were found to be in shortage, while there was no shortage of Primary School Teachers, and there was recruitment difficulty for Secondary School Teachers. ABS 2006 Census data show that the number of people employed in the ACT increased in each of the occupations between 2001 and 2006. The total number of people employed in the ACT across the three occupations increased by approximately eight per cent between 2001 and 2006.

Demand for Education Professionals in the ACT is driven by the number of students enrolled in school in the Territory. The ACT School Census (February 2009) published by the ACT Department of Education and Training recorded that the number of students enrolled in the ACT increased by 767 (1.2%) between 2008 and 2009. This increase is the largest increase in the past four years in the Territory. The number of primary school enrolments has increased by 834 (2.4%) in the ACT between 2008 and 2009, which is the largest increase in primary school enrolments in the last four years. However, the number of secondary school enrolments has decreased by 68 (0.2%) in the same period.

25 Health Professionals

Health Professionals examined in this year's program in the ACT were Registered Nurses, Midwives, Dentists, Dental Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and Hospital

and Retail Pharmacists. Community Health, Perioperative and Surgical were the only Registered Nurse specialisations that did not experience a shortage. Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and Hospital and Retail Pharmacists were all in shortage, while Midwives and Dentists were in shortage. Dental Specialists was unable to be rated due to insufficient advertisements collected.

Demand for Registered Nurses in the ACT is strong with ABS 2006 Census data showing that the number of Registered Nurses employed in the ACT has increased by almost 10 per cent between 2001 and 2006. Dentists and Dental Specialists did not experience an increase in the number employed between 2001 and 2006. Both occupations experienced a decrease in the number of people employed in the ACT which suggests that the demand for these occupations has not been strong over the 2001-2006 period. The number of Retail Pharmacists, Physiotherapists and Midwives employed in the Territory has increased over the same period and Hospital Pharmacists has decreased by one person.

27 Legal, Social and Welfare Professionals

Student counsellor was the only occupation examined in this group during this year's program. It was unable to be assigned a rating because no job vacancies were identified during the survey period. Employment for Student Counsellors appears to be quite stable and little turnover means there is little demand for this occupation in the ACT.

Between the 2001 and 2006 Census, employment of Student Counsellors in the ACT has reduced by six per cent to just fewer than 80 employed. 2006 Census data indicates that approximately three quarters of ACT Student Counsellors were employed in the Education and Training sector with about ten per cent employed in the Health Care and Social Assistance sector, and roughly another ten per cent employed in Public Administration and Safety.

41 Health and Welfare Support Workers

Enrolled nurses were examined in this year's program and were found to be in shortage. The number of enrolled nurses employed in the ACT increased by one per cent between the 2001 Census and the 2006 Census. More recent data from the ACT health Annual Report 2008-09 shows that there were 855 enrolled nurses registered in the ACT at 30 June 2009. This is an increase of 3.5 per cent from June 2006.