

Environmental Health Officer		Australia
ASCO Code: 2543-13	January 2008	
Labour market rating	Recruitment Difficulty	
Comment		

Occupational Demand

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data show there were slightly more than 3700 environmental health officers employed in Australia in 2006. The Australian Institute of Environmental Health currently has around 1600 practitioner members. Most officers are employed in the government administration and defence industry. Demand has increased since 2001, with employment growing by 14 per cent over the 2001-2006 period (ABS Census).

Occupational Supply

ABS Education and Work data show that 50 per cent of occupational and environmental health professionals have a bachelor degree or post graduate qualifications. There are ten accredited courses available in Australian universities, one each in New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory. Victoria and Western Australia both have two universities offering accredited courses, as does Queensland. Department of Immigration and Citizenship data show net migration makes a minimal contribution to occupational supply, equivalent to less than one per cent of total employment of occupational and environmental health professionals in 2007.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for environmental health officers found that 72 per cent filled their vacancies within six weeks of advertising, similar to the fill rate recorded in 2007 of 73 per cent. Despite the high fill rate employers stressed the shortage of experienced environmental health officers and that most positions were filled with recent graduates.

On average there were about six applicants per vacancy, and slightly more than two of these were suitable. Employers most often found candidates unsuitable because they lacked qualifications as an environmental health officer and were unable to obtain membership in the Australian Institute of Environmental Health. It was not uncommon for employers to receive applicants with science or related degrees who did not realise the position called for a specialised degree. Some councils required experienced candidates as the job can involve a broad range of tasks and activities, and in a small regional locations a number of roles are combined into one. A few employers reported that it was difficult to compete for environmental health officers with a limited budget and salary package.

Labour market outlook

There is no evidence to suggest the labour market for environmental health officers will change significantly over the next six months.