

<b>Optometrist</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>ANZSCO Code:</b> 2514-11	February 2009
<b>Labour market rating</b>	Shortage
<b>Comment</b>	

### **Occupational Demand**

Optometrists diagnose and treat eye and vision disorders and prescribe corrective lenses, contact lenses and other visual aides. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data show that 75 per cent of primary eye care in Australia is provided by optometrists, with approximately half of the Australian population having long-term eye problems, most requiring spectacles or contact lenses. Demand for optometric services continues to grow with Medicare Statistics showing an eight per cent increase in services provided in the year to December 2008. The AIHW suggests as eye problems increase with age, the ageing of the population (in addition to population growth) is expected to lead to further increases in the demand for optometry services. Latest data from the state boards indicate there are approximately 4600 optometrists currently registered to practice in Australia. Recent Labour Force Survey data suggest employment continued to grow over the last two years.

### **Occupational Supply**

A Bachelor of Optometry degree is required to register with the relevant state Optometry Registration Board to practice as an optometrist in Australia. Graduate completion numbers averaged about 110 per year between 2001 and 2006. The supply of optometrists to Australia through migration is negligible.

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for optometrists was undertaken for this report. Nationally one quarter of surveyed vacancies were filled within six weeks of advertising; a significant fall from the one third of vacancies filled when the profession was assessed in May 2008. Employers received an average of one application per vacancy but employers considered less than one applicant per vacancy to be suitable and nearly half of the vacancies advertised attracted no applications. Applicants considered by employers to be unsuitable generally lacked experience.

Almost one quarter of the advertised vacancies surveyed remain unfilled despite attracting applications from suitably qualified and experienced optometrists, mainly because the applicants did not want a permanent full time position. Other applicants were not prepared to work for the remuneration offered, or preferred not to commute to outer metropolitan locations. Vacancies in regional areas were more difficult to fill than metropolitan vacancies, with some employers expecting vacancies to take several months to fill. Employers suggested that graduates are reluctant to look for employment outside metropolitan areas. Analysis of the data also indicates that smaller optometric groups and private practices are more successful in recruiting optometrists than larger companies. Small groups and private practices successfully filled more than one third of their surveyed vacancies compared with larger companies who filled about 10 per cent.

### **Labour market outlook**

There is no evidence to suggest the labour market rating for optometrists will change over the next six months.