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| <b>General Waiter</b>       | <b>Australia</b> |
| <b>ASCO Code:</b> 6323-11   | November 2007    |
| <b>Labour market rating</b> | Shortage         |
| <b>Comment:</b>             |                  |

### **Occupational demand**

According to the ABS Labour Force Survey, employment for waiters grew by nearly seven per cent in the year to November 2007 averaging 111 000 for the period. This followed a period of relatively flat employment between 2003 and 2006. Ninety per cent of waiters are employed in the Accommodation, Cafés and Restaurants industry. Useful indicators of the demand for waiters are the number of cafés and restaurants, the turnover of those businesses and the household expenditure on eating out. ABS statistics indicate that the number of businesses increased by 3.6 per cent between June 2004 and June 2007 and that financial turnover in the hospitality sector has steadily increased over the last five years. ABS statistics also indicate that household expenditure on catering services increased by 37 per cent over the last five years, indicating strong demand for related occupations.

### **Occupational supply**

Employers suggested career waiters are a small proportion of the workforce with indications many waiters are students and working holiday visa holders. These workers generally leave jobs and/or the occupation in accordance with their study and holiday plans, contributing to relatively high wastage and turnover. Net migration makes a minor contribution to occupational supply, equivalent to less than two per cent of total employment in 2006-07. The ABS Education and Work Survey (2005) indicates that slightly more than 30 per cent of waiters hold post-school qualifications. Estimates from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) show that student completions of waiter training have been declining, falling from 600 in 2003 to 180 in 2006.

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

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for waiters was conducted with results showing 35 per cent of vacancies were filled within four weeks of advertising. Many employers received few calls in response to their advertisements, and some did not attract any interest from suitable applicants. On average, there were almost four applicants for each vacancy, with less than one applicant per vacancy considered by employers to be suitable.

Several employers described their positions as being vacant for a period of six months or longer before being filled. Casual employment was common and hard-to-fill vacancies were generally for particular shifts, such as late nights or weekends. The majority of employers did not require completion of formal training. Responsible Service of Alcohol certification was required for some positions, although this was generally not a barrier to employment if applicants were willing to undertake training.

There were some notable differences in recruitment experiences across the variety of establishments for which employers were recruiting, which ranged from formal to informal dining establishments. Employers in formal dining generally required experienced waiters and had difficulty recruiting, whereas other employers were generally more flexible in their requirements. Many employers indicated attitude and aptitude were more important than experience when assessing the suitability of applicants. Presentation and personal grooming, an ability to work in a fast-paced environment and positive customer relations were mentioned as important factors in determining suitability. Some employers reported they managed turnover and recruitment difficulty through competitive workplace conditions, including accommodating employee shift preferences and paying above award wages.

### **Labour market outlook**

Survey results indicate that this occupation is currently in shortage and the shortage is likely to persist.