

<b>Student Counsellor</b>	<b>New South Wales (NSW)</b>
ASCO Code: 2513-19	May 2008
Labour market rating:	Recruitment difficulty
<b>Comment:</b> <i>Recruitment difficulties for those with psychologist registration exist in some locations.</i>	

### **Occupational demand**

The underlying demand for student counsellors (also known as school counsellors) has grown strongly in recent years due to increasing identification of behavioural and mental health problems in the student population and increased emphasis on student support and the management of student behavioural problems in schools. Employment of student counsellors, however, has been limited by funding constraints and school policies in relation to the allocation of resources towards various support services. Census data indicate that employment in this occupation grew by 1.6 per cent a year from 2001 to 2006. The NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) advised that there were 790 counsellors in government schools and that this figure had been fairly stable in the past few years. Contacts in the Catholic and independent school sectors indicated that employment of student counsellors had grown only moderately in recent years.

### **Occupational supply**

School counsellors in government schools are required to have qualifications in teaching, psychology and counselling and at least two years of teaching experience. Some non-government schools have more flexible requirements but prefer qualifications in counselling and psychology or social work. There are a number of university courses aimed at providing training as student counsellors. For example, DEEWR estimates that there was an annual average of 30 completions in the combined Bachelor of Teaching / Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) at Charles Sturt University in the three years to 2007. School counsellor is also a target area for DET retraining programs for existing teachers. Other post-graduate courses in psychology and counselling also provide training acceptable to many non-government schools and therefore exact data on supply from university completions are not available. Immigration data for student counsellors are not available. However, net immigration of all counsellors from overseas to NSW averaged 22 a year in the three years to 2007.

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

A DEEWR survey of non-government schools which had recently advertised for school counsellors found that a substantial majority of positions were filled within the survey period. While most applicants for positions were recent graduates or were experienced in another field of psychology, there was nevertheless an average of over two suitable applicants per vacancy, giving most employers the opportunity to select the best of more than one suitable applicant. A small minority of employers experienced more difficulty in filling their positions, with some vacancies having to be readvertised or filled on a temporary basis pending further recruitment activity. The most difficult to fill vacancies were temporary positions for registered psychologists based in outer-suburban Sydney and regional NSW. For example, one vacancy in regional NSW for a maternity leave position attracted only one suitable applicant who turned down a job offer in favour of another position. The school eventually had to fill the vacancy with two psychology interns under supervision. DET reported an adequate supply of school counsellors to fill substantive vacancies in the metropolitan area with occasional recruitment difficulties in some regional areas and in covering counsellor leave.

### **Labour market outlook**

Employment growth of student counsellors over the short term is expected to be modest. Nevertheless, problems attracting experienced counsellors with specialist qualifications to specific geographic areas of need are likely to persist over the next year.