

Social Worker	Australia
ASCO Code: 2511-11	June 2007
Labour market rating	No Shortage
Comment	

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who advertised for social workers was undertaken for this report. The Australian Standard Classification of Occupations defines the tasks undertaken by social workers, indicating they may, amongst other things, liaise between clients and community services and make assessments to determine if clients require assistance with social or other problems.

In conducting this survey, a range of vacancies were located across Australia, covering areas from child services to aged care and social workers in the hospital system. Approximately 40 per cent of the vacancies surveyed were in regional areas.

Overall, employers reported filling around 80 per cent of the surveyed vacancies. While the majority of employers filled their vacancies relatively easily, employers in Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory reported a lower than average fill rate. Most of the employers who did not fill advertised vacancies were non-government organisations, with vacancies mainly located in regional areas. These employers often reported they did not receive any applications in response to their advertisements. In these instances, employers believed potential candidates sought employment with larger private or government employers in the hope of attaining higher remuneration. Although many of the unfilled vacancies were in regional areas, the overall fill rate for employers in regional areas was still relatively high at around 70 per cent.

In total, employers received an average of five applications per vacancy, with two applicants per vacancy considered by employers to be suitable. Employers considered applicants to be unsuitable for a number of reasons. Typically, unsuitable applicants lacked experience in social work generally or in specific areas of social work, did not hold relevant qualifications or provided poor applications, which may have failed to address published selection criteria.

On average employers in regional areas reported receiving a higher number of applicants, but a lower number of suitable applicants, than metropolitan employers. Similarly, employers in New South Wales, Victoria, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory reported receiving a slightly lower number of suitable applications, on average, although it should be noted this does not necessarily seem to have had a direct effect on vacancy fill rates in these states and territories.

Overall, most employers filled their vacancies relatively easily and the small number of unfilled vacancies does not suggest there is a shortage of social workers, rather a small number of employers took somewhat longer to fill vacancies for factors which include lower remuneration or difficult location.

Labour market outlook

There is no evidence to suggest the labour market for social workers will change significantly over the next six months.