

Environmental Health Officer		Victoria
ASCO Code: 2543-13	February 2007	
Labour market rating	Recruitment Difficulty	
Comment: <i>Recruitment difficulties restricted to vacancies requiring tertiary qualifications.</i>		

Occupational demand

Demand for environmental health officers is broadly determined by the general state of the economy and population growth. Victoria's economy has grown by an average of 3.2 per cent over the four years to 2005-06 and the population grew by 1.3 per cent over 2006. Growing public awareness of environmental issues is also influencing the level of demand. However, demand is primarily determined by the amount of health-related legislation as the occupation is concentrated in government agencies responsible for regulatory compliance. Legislation, such as the *Food Act 1984* (recently amended in October 2006), requires that 'authorised officers' conduct compliance and other duties prescribed by the legislation. There is also a small level of private sector demand in the areas of environmental and food safety auditing/management. DEEWR Skilled Vacancies Index data suggests that demand for environmental health officers fell moderately between 2000 and 2005 however vacancies have remained relatively stable over the last year.

Occupational supply

ABS Education and Work figures suggest around 60 per cent of employed environmental and occupational health and safety professionals have bachelor degrees. DEEWR estimates the number of persons who completed tertiary education in the field of health surveying and environmental health increased approximately 15 per cent in 2004 from 2003 completions. Supply to the profession from net immigration has significantly increased from last year, contributing around 17 occupational and environmental health professionals in 2005-06.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

The Survey of Employers who Recently Advertised (SERA) found almost two thirds of vacancies were filled. The average number of suitable applicants per vacancy was 1.1 and the average the number of unsuitable applicants was 4.2 per vacancy. Many advertised vacancies were listed by local Victorian councils and other public sector agencies with only a small number being advertised by the private sector. Many public sector employers commented that it was becoming more difficult to employ environmental health officers due to the competitive remuneration packages offered by private sector employers. This is due to increased private sector interest in the occupation. Employers in regional Victoria cited further difficulties in their recruitment process as taking the position would require a considerable lifestyle change for potential metropolitan based candidates. Regional employers also felt that the drought and bushfires occurring in regional Victoria was deterring people from relocating, rather encouraging them to stay in metropolitan areas. To attract and retain candidates employers were providing in-house training packages. Some of the employer's surveyed were seeking tertiary qualifications and industry experience and this was the main reason these employers found candidates unsuitable. Generally employers described the occupational turnover as relatively low. However, local council employers reported they are finding it difficult to retain staff because of other competitive markets, such as mining.

Labour market outlook

The relatively balanced labour market for environmental health officers in Victoria is expected to continue over the next six months, with recruitment difficulties persisting for vacancies requiring tertiary qualifications.