

Clinical Psychologist		New South Wales (NSW)
ASCO Code: 2514-11		June 2008
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment: <i>There is a shortage of qualified and experienced clinical psychologists across the private and public sector.</i>		

Occupational demand

Census data show a 6.6 per cent growth rate per annum in the number of employed clinical psychologists in NSW between 2001 and 2006. Since then there has been higher demand for clinical psychologists as the NSW Government and Australian Government have increased funding for mental health programs. The NSW Government has allocated \$939 million in additional funding for mental health services over the five years from 2006-07. Demand has also been driven by the five year \$538 million Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) initiative that was implemented in November 2006. In NSW, uptake of the clinical psychologist items in the MBS rose from nil in 2006 to 223 779 in April 2008. The consensus among employers and industry groups was that demand was at a high level.

Occupational supply

The number of newly-registered psychologists averaged 490 a year from 2005 to 2007 which is a supply rate of 5.6 per cent a year. (Separate data for clinical psychologists are not available.) Immigration is not a major supply source to the occupation as overseas-trained psychologists usually need to undertake extra study and supervision to gain registration. Data from Department of Immigration and Citizenship indicate a net loss of three psychologists from overseas migration in 2006-07, compared with an average gain of 21 over the previous five years. The wastage rate based on Census data is 2.2 per cent per annum which suggests that the current supply rate is sufficient to offset wastage and allow for modest employment growth.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for clinical psychologists found that 62 per cent of vacancies were filled within six weeks of advertising. Shortages were mostly for those with three or more years of post-registration experience. Unfilled and hard-to-fill vacancies were evident in the corporate sector, private hospitals and clinics, especially in the specialised areas of trauma, acute care and rehabilitation. A number of such vacancies had been unfilled after six months or more of repeated advertising and in some cases positions were only filled when employers compromised on the experience requirements they had initially sought. Contract, part time and locum positions were also particularly difficult to fill, with some advertisements failing to attract a single applicant. While larger public hospitals generally experienced fewer problems in filling vacancies, there was nevertheless an average of only one suitable applicant per vacancy overall. The consensus of employers was that the recent changes to the MBS had encouraged more psychologists to move to private practice. As a result, the supply of clinical psychologists seeking employment in other sectors had fallen and a number of employers stated that they were unable to match the remuneration on offer in private practice. Several employers noted that there had been a perceptible increase in the number of their staff clinical psychologists moving into private practice, although most still considered the level of turnover to be moderate.

Labour market outlook

Demand for the occupation is likely to increase further in the short-term. Federal funding for the MBS items continues through to 2011 and in the 2008-09 NSW Budget, \$1.1 billion was allocated to upgrading the mental health sector in the financial year. DEEWR projections do not indicate a significant increase in supply from university completions over the short term and shortages are expected to persist over the next year.