

Pharmacist	Tasmania
ANZSCO Code: 2515-11,13	June 2009
Labour market rating	Shortage
Comment: <i>Vacancies for experienced pharmacists and those in rural areas were hardest to fill.</i>	

Occupational demand

The total number of pharmacists in Tasmania recorded at the 2006 Census was 407, an increase of just over 10 per cent on the 2001 figure. As at May 2009, there were 542 pharmacists registered to practice in the State, but not all of these would actually be practicing. This is due to circumstances such as women who have temporarily withdrawn from the workforce for child rearing purposes wishing to maintain their registration, and also to interstate owners of pharmacies not actually living here, but still required to register in the State. According to 2006 Census data, 84.2 per cent of pharmacists are working as retail pharmacists, 13.1 per cent as hospital pharmacists, and just under 3 per cent as industrial pharmacists. Demand for pharmacists is linked to the frequency of medical conditions in the community that require medication. The opening hours of pharmacies can also influence demand for pharmacists, as can the hours pharmacists wish to work. In the hospital sector, turnover of patients is the major demand factor. Industry sources suggest that the trend now is for shorter patient stays in hospitals, which means they are discharged more often, and this usually results in an increase in demand for pharmacy services. Industry sources also indicated an increasing tendency for pharmacists to prefer part-time work due to both the ageing of the workforce and the increasing numbers of female pharmacists wishing to combine work and family responsibilities. This means a larger number of pharmacists is required to provide the same number of pharmacist hours.

Occupational supply

The University of Tasmania offers a four year Bachelor of Pharmacy degree at its Hobart Campus. There has been an average of around 32 pharmacy graduates per year over the 10 years to 2007. However, approximately 30 per cent of total enrolments in all years are overseas students who are likely to return to their countries of origin and will therefore not contribute to supply for the local labour market. According to Census data, 54 pharmacists arrived in the State between 2001 and 2006, with 12 coming from overseas and the remainder from interstate.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for pharmacists was undertaken for this report. Around half the employers reported they had successfully filled their positions, but all advised that the successful applicant was already employed in another pharmacy. All of the advertised vacancies were in the retail/community sector. Hospitals that were contacted about hospital pharmacists advised that they believed it would be difficult to fill vacancies if they had them, indicating that community pharmacists tend to get paid significantly more than those in the hospital, sector making it more difficult to attract and retain staff. A major public hospital advised that they regularly have positions unfilled for lengthy periods due to their inability to attract suitable applicants. The point was also made that it is much harder to recruit experienced pharmacists than new graduates, particularly in the hospital sector.

Labour market outlook

The low filled rate of vacancies, combined with other industry feedback suggests that there is a shortage of pharmacists in Tasmania, particularly experienced ones. Contacts report it is particularly difficult to fill vacancies outside the major urban centres, and hospitals have greater difficulty than the retail sector. This is unlikely to change in at least the next 12 months.