

Legal Professionals		New South Wales (NSW)
ASCO Code: 2521	June 2007	
Labour market rating	Recruitment difficulty	
Comment: <i>Recruitment difficulties are evident in family law, property, corporate law, mergers and acquisitions, banking and finance and in regional NSW.</i>		

Occupational demand

The number of practicing solicitors increased by 2.5 per cent in 2006, which was around half the average growth for the previous five years. This slower growth in 2006 is consistent with the slower pace of economic activity and domestic demand last year, although this has rebounded in 2007. The Australian Financial Review legal partnership survey for 2006-07 indicated that Australian corporate law firms are, in response to the buoyant economy and booming merger and acquisition activity, expanding their partnerships after several years of freezing or even culling partner numbers.

Occupational supply

DEEWR estimates that about 1700 persons completed accredited degrees and diplomas in law in NSW in 2006 – a 15 per cent fall on 2005 but close to the average for the previous ten years. As many people study law as a general degree rather than to practice as a lawyer, annual admissions of legal practitioners are probably the best source for estimating supply. The number of admissions has increased strongly in recent years. In the three years to 2006 admissions were 20 per cent higher than in the previous three years. The training rate (legal profession admissions as a percentage of the employed workforce) is relatively high at 7.6 per cent a year based on estimated employment of 25 800. Official immigration data show that there was a net loss to the profession of 211 persons from NSW to overseas in 2005-06, compared to a net loss/gain of zero over the previous five years. No recent and reliable data on wastage of legal professionals is available for this report. However, while most small and medium size law firms surveyed experienced fairly low staff turnover, the turnover of staff with two to three years of experience was higher for the larger law firms.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for legal professionals showed 78 per cent of positions were filled within six weeks of advertising. Employers based in Sydney had more success in filling their vacancies (82 per cent) than their regional counterparts (67 per cent) with employers in inland towns having the greatest difficulties. For NSW as a whole, there was an average of two suitable applicants for each advertised vacancy and recruitment difficulties were mainly limited to family law in small and medium practices and in the areas of property, corporate law, mergers and acquisitions and banking and finance in medium and large practices. Employers indicated that there was a ready supply of suitable applicants for graduate positions but intermediate positions for lawyers with two to five years of experience were more difficult to fill. Although a substantial majority of employers were able to fill such positions, in some cases they recruited more junior or senior people than they would have ideally liked.

Labour market outlook

The pick up in domestic demand that has been evident since the latter part of 2006 is likely to continue over 2007 and this should underpin the overall demand for legal professionals. DEEWR projections suggest that the number of persons completing relevant degrees will fall slightly in 2007-08. However, the total supply from new admissions should remain adequate to meet demand for new entrants. The most likely outlook is for recruitment difficulties to continue for experienced lawyers in some specialisations and in regional NSW.

Legal Professional		Victoria
ASCO Code: 2521	April 2007	
Labour market rating	No shortage	
Comment:		

Occupational demand

Demand for legal professionals is broadly generated by overall economic activity. Victoria's economy had relatively strong growth of 2.9 per cent over the year to December 2006, and the Australian economy grew by 3.7 per cent. Demand is also affected by social factors such as the divorce rate and medical litigation. Industry sources have reported a relatively high demand from firms which concentrate on specialised areas of legal practice, such as business law, workplace relations, family law and funds management. DEEWR Skilled Vacancies data show demand for legal professionals declined over the past five years, but commenced trending upward since the latter part of 2005.

Occupational supply

DEEWR estimates the number of persons who completed tertiary education in the field of law in 2005 fell significantly, approximately 15 per cent compared to completions of 2004. Since 2000 completions have been an average of approximately 1500 per year. Supply to the profession of legal professionals from net immigration has decreased, down from last year. There was a net loss from to Victoria during 2005-06.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

The Survey of Employers who Recently Advertised (SERA) found 86 per cent of vacancies were filled. The average number of suitable applicants per vacancy was three and the average number of unsuitable applicants per vacancy was 8.6. The majority of employers surveyed stated the main reason applicants were found unsuitable was due to a lack of practical experience and specific industry skills. Most employers were particularly seeking applicants with at least two years practical experience. Other employers were seeking people with previous long term job stability, while employers who advertised for higher level positions were also seeking candidates with highly developed communication, leadership and analytical skills.

Employers commented that there is fairly low turnover of existing employees in the occupation due to long term stability and job satisfaction. Many employers are able to retain staff for long periods, particularly large, high profile firms, as they are able to offer more attractive remuneration packages and opportunities for career progression. Community organisations and regional employers though are experiencing particular difficulty in attracting and retaining staff, as they are unable to offer the same remuneration packages. It appears that once large companies have the right employee they will use many tools to retain them.

Labour market outlook

The relatively balanced labour market for legal professionals in Victoria is expected to continue over the next six months.

Legal Professionals		Queensland
ASCO Code: 2521	April 2007	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment: .		

Occupational demand

Legal professionals have traditionally been divided into barristers and solicitors and can be self-employed or employed in private legal practices, government departments, community law centres or business corporations. Legal professionals provide legal advice, prepare and draft legal documents, conduct negotiations on behalf of clients and plead cases before civil, criminal and industrial courts and other tribunals. Demand for legal services depends to a large extent on general economic circumstances and factors affecting particular industries. Particularly buoyant business conditions in Queensland have supported growing demand for legal professionals over recent years, particularly in areas such as property, construction, mining and corporate law. Government policy and funding decisions also affect demand for legal services.

Occupational supply

Entry to this profession in Queensland requires the completion of a bachelor degree with a major in law, which is available as a single or combined degree at five universities across the State. Data from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations show that approximately 800 new students enrolled in these courses each year from 2001 to 2003, increasing to 1100 students in 2004 and 2005. Wastage from education could be high, with an average annual number of 465 students completing studies from 2001 to 2004, while many law graduates do not go on to practise as a legal professional. Obtaining a solicitor's practising certificate requires additional legal training by completing either a recognised Practical Legal Training Course or an articulated clerkship with a legal practice. Overseas departures and arrivals data indicate that direct international migration has contributed small net losses to the overall supply of legal professionals in Queensland over the last two years. However, Labour Force Survey data show a strong increasing trend in the number of employed legal professionals over the same period, indicating that interstate migration is likely to be a significant supplement to local education as a source of supply in Queensland.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

About 35 per cent of the vacancies in this year's survey were filled within six weeks of advertising and less than 20 per cent of the applicants were considered suitable by employers, mostly because they had limited skills or experience. Demand has been very high for specialists in property, construction and mining law, and employers have experienced great difficulty recruiting solicitors with two to five years experience. Contacts reported placing multiple advertisements and using a variety of methods to attract applicants, especially in regional and rural areas. The majority of employers reported that their advertised vacancies had remained unfilled for more than three months. Employers and recruitment specialists reported that newly admitted solicitors who have completed the Practical Legal Training Course but have no work experience are less competitive than those who have completed an articulated clerkship.

Labour market outlook

With the State's population and volume of business activity expected to continue to grow, demand for legal professionals should expand further over the next few years. The labour market for legal professionals with two to five years experience is in particular demand and regional vacancies are exceptionally difficult to fill. While there is some contribution to supply coming from interstate migration, it has not been enough to meet current demand.

Legal Professionals		South Australia
ASCO Code: 2521	March 2007	
Labour market rating	No Shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

In 2006, the ABS Labour Force Survey recorded a workforce of around 2900 legal professionals in South Australia. The most recent annual report prepared by the Law Society of South Australia showed there were 3008 practising certificates issued in 2005-06. This represented a four per cent increase compared to 2004-05. ABS Census data indicated that 83 per cent of legal professionals were employed in the property and business services industry in 2001 with a further 10 per cent employed in government administration and defence.

Occupational supply

The major source of supply is successful completion of a law degree from either the University of Adelaide or Flinders University. To become a legal practitioner, students must also undertake practical training. Since the Flinders University degree course incorporates practical training, graduates are entitled to admission to legal practice in the State. Students enrolled in the University of Adelaide's law degree course who wish to enter legal practice are also required to successfully complete the Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice offered by the Law Society of South Australia in the final two terms of the law degree. Aggregated data indicate there has been an increase in university commencements over the past few years with around 300 commencement in 2005 compared to 280 in 2004 and 260 in 2003. Additionally, there was a 16 per cent increase in completions in 2005, following a 6 per cent fall in the previous year. The GCCA Graduate Destination Survey indicates that 90 per cent of South Australian law graduates seeking full-time employment were successfully employed in 2005 compared to 83 per cent in 2004. However, the data does not show in which occupations they were employed. Immigration has a negative impact on supply. Permanent and long-term arrivals and departures data for South Australia show that there was a net loss of 64 legal professionals in the 2005-06 financial year, following a net loss of 13 in 2004-05.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for lawyers and solicitors in a metropolitan newspaper indicated that around 87 per cent were filled within six weeks. This represented a slight reduction compared with the previous survey in 2005 which recorded a vacancy filled rate of 93 per cent. Most employers had little difficulty filling positions, although there was a consensus that lawyers experienced in commercial and financial litigation were harder to source than most others. There was also a view in the government sector that it was difficult to attract lawyers from private law firms to fill senior government roles due to the significantly different pay rates between the two sectors. In addition, it appears that in-house or corporate positions are easier to fill than positions in public practices. Employers did not report any difficulties recruiting newly admitted lawyers as evidenced by the large number of graduate applicants for entry-level positions.

Labour market outlook

Over the past eight years demand for legal practitioners, as measured by the number of issued practising certificates, has grown at around three per cent per annum. This rate of growth is slightly above the average employment growth rate for the State over the same period. It is unlikely that demand for lawyers will deviate significantly from this growth rate in the foreseeable future. Based on this assumption, and given that the number of persons graduating from law courses is expected to remain high in 2007, shortages of lawyers are unlikely to emerge in the next 12 months.

Legal Professionals	Western Australia
ASCO Code: 2521	March 2007
Labour market rating:	Recruitment difficulty in regional areas
Comment <i>The most difficult to fill vacancies are those for lawyers with 2-5 years of post Restricted Practice commercial experience in particular industries and also for community legal centres in regional and remote areas.</i>	

Occupational demand

The ABS Labour Force Survey indicates that the number of Legal Professionals employed in WA fell by 10.4 per cent over the four quarters to November 2006, to reach an annual quarterly average of 3400. However, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations skilled vacancies count shows that the number of newspaper vacancies for Legal Professionals during January-December 2006 increased slightly (by 2.6 per cent) over the same period the previous year. The establishment of major resource corporation offices in Perth in recent years has increased demand for experienced commercial lawyers.

Occupational supply

Current trends show that many law students enrol in 5-year double-degree courses. Increasing numbers of students study law, with more 3-year graduate entry courses and a fourth law school from 2005. However, a decreasing proportion of graduates currently do Articles and go on to practise law. From 2008 law graduates will be able to do a 12-month Practice Legal Training course instead of Articles, at a local accredited training provider such as the Perth office of the College of Law, followed by a two-year Restricted Practice period. The period of Restricted Practice for those law graduates who do a year of Articles will be 18 months. These changes could lead to an increase in the medium-term future supply of new legal practitioners in WA. Net overseas migration contributed a net average of approximately 75 lawyers per annum to WA over the four years to 2004-05. However, there was a net migration loss of 72 legal professionals in 2005-06.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Slightly more than eighty per cent of the advertised vacancies surveyed in 2007 were filled, compared with 56 per cent of the vacancies filled in the previous survey of legal professionals in 2005. More than one third (37 per cent) of applicants were considered suitable and the main reason applicants were considered unsuitable by employers was the lack of relevant skills and/or experience within a particular field of law. Several employer and agency contacts had no difficulty filling their vacancies. However, some remote regional employers reported recruitment difficulties. Advertised positions with community legal centres and some government agencies could not offer higher salaries obtainable in large corporate and legal firms and instead sought applicants with a strong focus on social justice. Contacts suggest many legal professionals with two to five years experience travel interstate and overseas for more experience, higher salaries and life style. Vacancies for legal professionals with two or more years' experience are the most difficult to fill. Several employers received large numbers of applications from people who are yet to complete their year of Restricted Practice. Lawyers with considerable commercial and particular industry experience in the corporate sector can be difficult to recruit.

Labour market outlook

Employers report strong demand for lawyers with five years or more of relevant experience, whereas there seems to be a sufficient supply of inexperienced graduates. Community legal centres are having difficulty recruiting lawyers because of their inability to pay competitive salaries, particularly in regional and remote areas where the cost of living is relatively high. Demand for legal professionals in regional areas is increasing, as these towns expand in association with mining and resources developments.

Legal Professionals		Tasmania
ASCO Code: 2521	April 2007	
Labour market rating	Regional Recruitment Difficulties	
Comment <i>Recruitment difficulties exist on the north-west coast of Tasmania, but the labour market is in balance elsewhere.</i>		

Occupational demand

Demand factors for lawyers tend to vary according to the field of activity in which lawyers to operate. For example, crime rates tend to drive demand for criminal lawyers, divorce rates and custody disputes tend to be the main drivers of demand for family lawyers, while improvements in general economic conditions increase demand for commercial and property lawyers. Since around mid-2001 economic activity in Tasmania has improved, with increases both in the level of building, and property prices. Increased demand for commercial and property lawyers can be linked to these increases. Census data show very little change in the numbers of legal professionals between 1996 and 2001 at just over 500, but unpublished data from the ABS monthly labour force survey suggest numbers had increased to around 1200 by November 2006.

Occupational supply

The major source of supply of legal professionals locally is the University of Tasmania. People wishing to practice law in Tasmania must complete a five year degree which combines law with one other discipline, most commonly arts or commerce. They then must complete a six month Graduate Certificate in Legal Practice before they can gain admission as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Tasmania. There have been an average of around 59 people complete the graduate certificate course over the last seven years, varying between a low of 48 in 2001, and a high of 72 in 2002 and 2004. Between 1996 and 2001, 42 legal professionals moved to Tasmania from interstate or overseas.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Of the vacancies advertised for lawyers in the lead up to this report, 90 per cent were filled, and most employers had a good field of applicants. There were some variations both in terms of experience sought and the location of vacancies. For example, the only vacancy that remained unfilled was on the north-west coast of Tasmania, and industry sources indicated that it is much more difficult to fill positions for lawyers outside Hobart generally, but particularly on the north-west coast. In addition, in the area of estate planning for example, higher than average salaries were offered in order to attract suitable applicants. The comment was made by some employers that if they had not been able to attract experienced applicants they would have taken one of the new graduates who had applied.

Labour market outlook

The high fill rate of vacancies for legal professionals in Tasmania supports the view that there are few recruitment problems at present. The exception appears to be on the north-west coast of Tasmania, as industry sources suggest there are long-standing difficulties in recruiting lawyers in that region.

Legal Professionals		Northern Territory
ASCO Code: 2521	March 2007	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment: shortage limited to legal professionals with two years plus experience		

Occupational demand

Based on ABS Census data there were 396 legal professionals working in the Northern Territory (NT) in 2001. ABS Labour Force Survey data indicate the number of legal professionals employed trended upwards from 2002 to 2005 before dropping back toward 2001 levels in 2006. The Law Society NT branch has issued 443 practicing certificates for the 2006-07 year, which is a decrease from the 2004-05 year when 491 practising certificates were issued. However the DEEWR skilled vacancies survey recorded an increase in advertised vacancies for legal professionals in 2006.

Occupational supply

Charles Darwin University offers Bachelor degrees, Graduate Diplomas and Masters in law. Enrolments have been decreasing since 2004, and there is a completion rate of approximately 25 per cent. Employers commented that the number of suitably experienced legal professionals is not sufficient to meet demand and that law graduates do not have sufficient experience to fill the demand. Employers rely on sourcing qualified legal professionals through interstate recruitment. Although the local training rate (based on the number of graduates compared to the number employed in the profession) is not low, there is a significant degree of wastage with graduates not going on to gain admission to practice law.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Many of the employers contacted were unable to fill advertised legal vacancies and there was a fill-rate of 56 per cent. Although vacancies typically attracted multiple applicants, only 34 per cent were considered suitable and some suitable applicants turned down offers deciding against relocation to the NT. Applicants were typically considered by employers to be unsuitable due to a lack of relevant legal experience. Employers suggested that there is a competitive labour supply at the graduate level for jobs at top-tier law firms. However, the supply of legal professionals with at least two years experience and specialised knowledge in areas such as native land title and intellectual property is low. Employers commented that it is particularly difficult for community law centres to recruit experienced legal professionals as they cannot compete with the remuneration offered by corporate firms.

Employers typically advertised vacancies on the internet recruitment sites and on their company website and also used recruitment agencies in an effort to source suitable applicants. Some employers undertook creative recruitment advertising to attract applicants such as including scenic local pictures and encouraging applicants wanting a 'change of lifestyle' to apply. Vacancies arose due to both increased demand and turnover within roles. Turnover of legal professionals was considered to be high as legal professionals often work one or two years in the NT to gain experience and then relocate elsewhere.

Labour market outlook

Demand for legal professionals with two years or more experience is expected to remain strong and the difficulty attracting experienced legal professionals to the NT is expected to continue. The occupation is therefore expected to remain in shortage over the coming year.

Legal Professionals	Australian Capital Territory (ACT)
ASCO Code: 2521	June 2007
Labour market rating	No Shortage
Comment	

Occupational demand

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' Labour Force Survey for February 2007 shows that legal professionals are a relatively large occupational group in the ACT, with over 2000 legal professionals employed. Employer contacts suggest that legal professionals are in strong demand in the public and private sector.

Occupational supply

Undergraduate and postgraduate courses in law are available at the Australian National University and the University of Canberra in the ACT. Entry to this occupation requires a Bachelor degree in law followed by a period of practical training, which can be completed as a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice at the Australian National University. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations data show that there has been an increase in the number of people completing this diploma, from 179 in 2001 to 225 in 2006. However, Department of Immigration and Citizenship data show net migration to the ACT for this occupation has decreased steadily in recent years, with net losses of 12 in 2003-04 and 47 in 2005-06.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who recently advertised for legal professionals was undertaken as a basis for this report and surveyed vacancies included the specialisations of solicitors and legal officers. All employers surveyed received multiple applicants for the positions advertised, and a high proportion (80 per cent) found multiple suitable applicants.

One third of applicants were considered by employers to be suitable for the advertised vacancies and two thirds of the positions were filled within six weeks of advertising. Employers were generally satisfied with the number and quality of applicants but some noted they were disappointed with the number of applicants with relevant experience.

Interestingly, some employer contacts observed that legal professionals with a mid-level of experience were the most difficult to recruit compared with graduate and more senior professionals. Some employers commented that young lawyers tend to leave the ACT after a few years of experience to find job opportunities elsewhere. Employers further noted that there were very few legal professionals with three to five years experience entering the ACT, which attenuates recruitment problems.

Labour market outlook

There is little evidence to suggest that the labour market for legal professionals will change significantly in the next six months.