

Child Care Worker		New South Wales (NSW)
ASCO Code: 6312-11	March 2008	
Labour market rating	Metropolitan shortage	
Comment: <i>Shortages were evident in Sydney.</i>		

Occupational demand

This report covers child care workers with Certificate III or higher qualifications. Demand for this occupation has increased in recent years due to higher underlying demand for child care services and increased Commonwealth funding of these services. The number of places in Commonwealth-funded child care centres has been increasing consistently since 2001 and grew by nine per cent in 2007. Census data show that employment of child care workers grew by five per cent a year from 2001 to 2006. The consensus of industry contacts was that demand had grown further over the past year due to the opening of new centres.

Occupational supply

The number of persons completing TAFE Certificate III and diploma courses in child care rose by 12 per cent in 2006 compared with the average for the previous five years. However, based on enrolment data, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) expects that completions fell back to the average in 2007. DEEWR estimates the annual training rate (course completions as a percentage of the employed workforce) for child care coordinators and qualified child care workers at 15.4 per cent, although this is a minimum figure as it does not include early childhood teaching graduates and graduates of accredited private courses. Nevertheless, the supply rate is well above the rate of employment growth which suggests that wastage from the occupation is the main cause of current shortages. Wastage is partly structural in nature as the occupation is female dominated and therefore an above-average proportion of the workforce leaves the occupation each year due to family responsibilities. Net overseas immigration of child care workers from overseas to NSW was negative in four of the past five years.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for qualified child care workers found that 54 per cent of vacancies were filled within the survey period which compares with an 88 per cent filled rate in 2005. Shortages were most evident in long day care centres. Although a small minority of employers in this sector was able to fill positions with few problems, the majority of vacancies remained unfilled or were only filled after repeated advertising extending over a number of months. The most common reasons why applicants were considered unsuitable were lack of suitable qualifications or poor communication skills. Even when suitable applicants did apply, they were often unable to agree on working hours with the employer or turned down job offers in favour of positions at a more convenient location. In contrast, a large majority of vacancies in pre-schools and kindergartens were filled quite readily and the consensus of employers was that this sector was favoured by jobseekers as the working conditions, including holidays and working hours, are considered more attractive. Although a small number of regional vacancies, for example in the Illawarra, remained unfilled there was insufficient evidence to establish a general shortage in regional NSW. The consensus of major employers was that vacancies in regional NSW were generally easier to fill than those in Sydney.

Labour market outlook

Demand for this occupation should remain firm over the next year due to increasing demand for child care services and Commonwealth commitments to increase funding for these services. DEEWR projections do not indicate a significant increase in supply from training completions in the short term. Wastage is partly structural in nature and is therefore expected to remain significant over the short term. As a result, shortages are likely to continue over the next 12 months.