

Dental Specialist and Dentist		South Australia
ANZSCO Code: 2523-11 & 12	May 2009	
Labour market rating	No Shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

Demand for dental services depends on demographic factors such as the size and age of the population, the general economic climate, and the extent of private health cover. Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates show that South Australia's population growth rate has increased from an average of around 0.6 per cent per annum in 2002 to 2004, to 1.1 per cent per annum in 2007 and 2008. Statistics from the Australian Government's Private Health Insurance Administration Council recorded a 4.9 per cent increase in the provision of dental services in 2007-08 among private health insurance members. This compares with a 3.8 per cent increase in 2006-07. As at June 2008, there were 1034 dentists and 140 dental specialists on the Dental Board of South Australia register. Compared to a year earlier, the number of registered dentists increased by 21 per cent and the number of registered dental specialists increased by two per cent. Dental specialists and dentists predominantly work in the health care and social assistance industry. These figures suggest there has been an increase in demand over the past year. This is confirmed by DEEWR's Skilled Vacancies Index which recorded an increase in newspaper vacancies in 2008 following a two year period of lower vacancy levels. Many of the employers contacted reported increasing the size of their workforce over the previous 12 months. However, most of the vacancies surveyed were for replacement staff and employers noted that staff turnover tends to be high. Nonetheless, a majority of employers had no plans to recruit additional staff in the short-term.

Occupational supply

The main source of supply comes from university training. Up to 2005, there was an average of 40 new commencements per annum in the five-year Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree. However, the number of students commencing the dentistry degree course rose to 80 in 2005, though it fell back to an average of 57 per annum in the subsequent three years. As a consequence of the upward trend in commencements, the supply of graduates is likely to increase over the medium term. Skilled migration is a potential source of additional occupational supply. Australian government data show that there was a net migration inflow of 47 dentists to South Australia in 2007-08, compared to 36 in 2006-07. The GCCA Graduate Destination Survey reported that 90 per cent of South Australian dentistry graduates seeking full-time employment were successfully employed in 2008, slightly less than the 95 per cent recorded in 2007.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of recently advertised dentistry vacancies showed that 73 per cent were filled within six weeks, compared to 57 per cent two years ago. On average, there were four applicants per vacancy but since many of these were rated as unsuitable, the ratio of suitable applicants was 1.5 per vacancy. There were greater difficulties in filling positions located in regional or remote localities compared to those in the Adelaide metropolitan area. Positions in the public sector were also more difficult to fill than private sector positions due to differences in wages and conditions. Overall, however, there does not appear to be a shortage of dentists and dental specialists.

Labour market outlook

Current trends suggest demand for dental services will continue to rise over the foreseeable future. Most employers did not believe that the recent economic downturn was likely to have an adverse impact on demand for their services. At the same time, the supply of dentists from university training is expected to increase over the medium term. Consequently, a shortage of dentists or dental specialists is unlikely to emerge over the next year.