Labour Market Research - Nurses
Tasmania

June quarter 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations in cluster</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2541-11 Midwife</td>
<td>Regional shortage</td>
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<tr>
<td>2544 Registered Nurse</td>
<td>No shortage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4114-11 Enrolled Nurse</td>
<td>No shortage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Key issues

- In Tasmania, there is currently no shortage of registered or enrolled nurses. Employers were able to fill the majority of the vacancies with suitable applicants.
- There is currently a regional shortage of midwives with very few employers filling their vacancies. Employers attributed the regional shortage to their location and a decline in the number of midwifery graduates.
- In 2016-17, the proportion of vacancies filled for nurses was 62 per cent, which is the lowest since 2012-13.

Survey results

- In this year’s survey of employers who had recently advertised for nurses, 62 per cent of vacancies were filled within six weeks of advertising. This was below the filled rate of 96 per cent in the previous year, but similar to the averages in 2008-09 and 2010-11.
  - The filled rate for metropolitan vacancies (86 per cent) was higher than regional vacancies (39 per cent).
- In 2016-17, both the numbers of applicants per vacancy and the suitable applicants per vacancy were lower than the previous year.
  - The average number of applicants per vacancy declined to 1.9 in 2016-17 from 3.6 in 2015-16 and was below the average for the previous six years.
  - The number of qualified applicants per vacancy declined to 1.6 in 2016-17 from 3.6 in 2015-16.
  - Less than one applicant per vacancy was considered suitable in this survey period and is the lowest since 2008-09.
- Employers seeking midwives found seven per cent of vacancies in regional areas were filled while 100 per cent of their vacancies in metropolitan areas were filled.
  - Recruitment for midwives has been varied over the previous years with 100 per cent of employers filling their vacancies in 2015-16. Employers experienced difficulties recruiting midwives statewide in 2014-15, with 62 per cent of all vacancies filled and no vacancies filled in 2013-14.
Vacancies for midwives required experience in providing antenatal, postnatal and neonatal care as well as specialised education and support to inexperienced staff.

- Employers who had recently advertised for registered nurses found 81 per cent of vacancies were filled within the survey period.
  - This compares with an overall fill rate of 100 per cent in 2015-16 and 89 per cent in 2014-15.
  - The majority of employers indicated they wanted applicants with experience in areas such as General Practice nursing, residential aged care, Primary Health nursing, day surgery and theatre.

- Employers who had recently advertised for enrolled nurses found 100 per cent of vacancies were filled within the survey period.
  - This compares with the result of 91 per cent filled in 2015-16.
  - Employers indicated a desire for applicants with experience in areas such as General Practice nursing, residential aged care, acute hospital aged care, and elderly mental health. Additionally, some employers had a preference for applicants with IV endorsement.
  - While all vacancies were filled, a small number of employers indicated they can encounter difficulties filling their casual pool of enrolled nurses as most applicants would like permanent positions.

Figure 1: Proportion of vacancies filled (%), average number of applicants and suitable applicants per vacancy (no.), Nurses, Tasmania, 2007-08 to 2016-17

Source: Department of Employment, Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised
Note: Occupational coverage varies over time series.

Unsuitable applicants

- The most common reasons cited by employers for applicants being considered unsuitable was a lack of experience in the specific specialisation or field of nursing required for the position or a lack of sufficient experience (as they were in the early stages of their careers).
- Additionally, employers considered midwife applicants unsuitable if they lacked midwifery qualifications.
Demand and supply trends

- Demand for nursing services is driven by factors such as the general health and ageing of the population, the state birth rate and the allocation of government funding to the health sector.
  - In the five years to June 2015, the number of people aged 65 years and over in Tasmania increased by 14.9 per cent.\(^1\) Additionally, as at June 2015, Tasmania had the highest proportion of people aged 65 years and over at 18.0 per cent, compared to 15.0 per cent nationally. Tasmania also has the oldest median age, which is 41.9 years, and the largest increase in median age between 2010 and 2015, (increasing by 1.9 years).\(^2\)

- Demand for midwives is driven by the State’s birth rate with indicators showing a steady decrease over recent years.

- According to ABS data, the number of births in Tasmania has decreased by 14.0 per cent over the five years to 2015.\(^3\) The fertility rate in Tasmania has also been decreasing with a rate of 1.9 babies per 1000 females in Tasmania in 2015, which was a reduction on the number of 2.1 recorded in 2011.\(^4\)

- Data published by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) shows in December 2012, there were 6,130 registered nurses in Tasmania, by December 2016, the number of registered nurses increased to 6,567.\(^5\)

- NMBA data shows the number of registered midwives in Tasmania has been declining with 650 midwives in December 2016, down from 691 midwives recorded in December 2012.\(^6\)

- NMBA data also shows the number of enrolled nurses in Tasmania increased from 1,335 in December 2012 to 1,435 in December 2016.\(^7\)

- Data from the Department of Education and Training indicates the number of domestic students completing general courses for initial nursing registration at Tasmanian university campuses was around 233 in 2015, decreasing from 344 recorded the year before. Student commencements in 2015 were at 617, increasing from 527 recorded the year before.\(^8\)

- Over the last five years there has been a decline in the number of graduates in the two-year Graduate Diploma of Midwifery offered by the University of Tasmania, a main source of supply for midwives.
  - According to data supplied by UTAS, there were eight domestic graduates in 2016, compared to 11 in 2013 and 17 in 2011.\(^9\)

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5. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, *Registrant Data, December 2016 and December 2012*
6. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, Registrant Data, various editions
7. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, Registrant Data, various editions
Other indicators and issues

- On 1 November 2016, new consolidated maternity services commenced in the north-west of the state. As part of the integrated maternity service, the North West Private Hospital at Burnie provides birthing services, while antenatal and postnatal services are delivered by the Tasmanian Health Service at the Mersey Community Hospital, the North West Regional Hospital and some rural outreach locations.  

- Post-natal services at Launceston’s Calvary St Vincent’s Hospital closed in 2017. This was attributed to the inability to successfully recruit practising midwives to secure the necessary staff, leaving no alternative but to close the service. 

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11 Media article, Post-natal care at St Vincent's Hospital to close, The Examiner, 21/12/2016