



Explainer: Labour Market for Nurses

- Recent media articles suggest there are significant differences in the labour market for nurses across Australia. For example, there are reported shortages in Tasmania, while there are reports of an oversupply of graduate nurses in Western Australia.
- This fact sheet provides an overview of information produced by the Department of Jobs and Small Business and other available data relating to this workforce.

What has the Department found?

The Department’s 2018 research found differences in employers’ recruitment experiences for nursing occupations across states and territories (Table 1). While there was little evidence of pervasive shortages for registered or enrolled nurses, shortages of midwives appeared more widespread. These findings are based on the Department’s Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised and further detail is available [on the Department’s website](#).

Table 1: Labour market ratings for nursing occupations, 2018

Occupation (ANZSCO)	NSW*	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUS
Registered Nurses (2544)	NS	R-D	NS	R	NS	D	NR	NS	NS
Enrolled Nurse (411411)	S	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	S	NR	NS
Midwife (254111)	NS	M	NS	R	NR	NR	S	NR	S

Key: NS = No Shortage; S = Shortage; R = Regional Shortage; M = Metropolitan Shortage; D = Recruitment Difficulty; R-D = Regional Recruitment Difficulty; NR = No Rating.

* The Department did not assess this labour market in NSW in 2018. Ratings provided are for 2017.

Source: Department of Jobs and Small Business, [Labour Market Analysis of Skilled Occupations](#)

It is important to understand that many different factors may affect employers’ success in recruiting. For example, recruitment experiences for experienced workers may be very different to those for new graduates, and experiences also vary across locations, even within individual states.

How large is the workforce and how quickly is it growing?

Employment in nursing occupations has been growing significantly faster than the average across all occupations, and this is generally expected to continue. Employment levels are shown in Table 2, together with the recent change and the projected change in employment.

Table 2: Employment in nursing occupations, February 2019, five-year change and projections

Occupation	Employment ('000, Feb 2019)	Five-year change (% to Feb 2019)	Projected change (% five years to May 2023)
Registered Nurses	281.0	18.7	18.4
Enrolled Nurse*	27.7	17.0	7.6
Midwife	19.3	29.3	16.6
All occupations	12,774.6	11.3	7.1

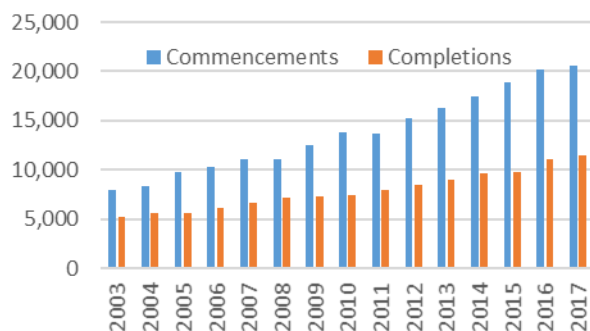
* Figures are for Enrolled and Mothercraft Nurses (4114). Enrolled Nurses represent around 99% of this group.

Source: ABS, Labour Force, Department of Jobs and Small Business trend; Department of Jobs and Small Business, [Occupation Employment Projections](#)

What do we know about the training pipeline?

The number of students undertaking nursing qualifications has increased significantly in recent years, with higher education commencements rising by 85 per cent over the ten years to 2017 (Figures 1, 2), compared with an increase of 48 per cent over all fields of education.

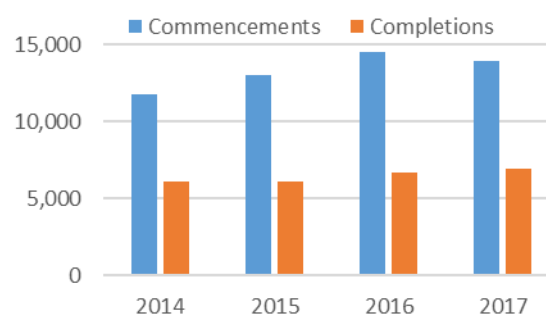
Figure 1: Higher education students, nursing courses, 2003-2017



Figures refer to domestic students in general nursing courses required for initial registration.

Source: Department of Education and Training, [Higher Education Statistics Data Cube](#).

Figure 2: Vocational education students, enrolled nursing courses, 2014-2017



Figures refer to students in courses associated with the occupation 411411 Enrolled Nurse.

Source: NCVER, [Total VET Students and Courses, VOCSTATS](#).

Employment outcomes for higher education nursing graduates are fairly strong. In 2018, 78.7% of university nursing graduates were employed full-time four months after graduating, higher than the average for all graduates (72.9%). (Source: QILT, [Graduate Outcomes Survey](#).)

Other data sources

- The Department's [Internet Vacancy Index](#) tracks online vacancies, including advertised vacancies by occupation.
- The Department has published [occupation profiles](#) based on 2016 Census data which show location, full-time/part-time and other characteristics of the workforce.
- The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia publishes [quarterly workforce data](#) based on registrant data. These reports include breakdowns by category of registration and by state and territory.
- The Department of Home Affairs publishes data on the [Temporary Work \(Skilled\) visa program](#), including visas granted by occupation.

About these occupations

- [Registered nurses](#) and [enrolled nurses](#) provide nursing care to patients in a range of settings, including hospitals, health care facilities and in the community. They have different scopes of practice, and different qualification and registration requirements.
- [Midwives](#) provide care and advice throughout pregnancy, labour and childbirth, as well as postnatal care in a range of hospital and other settings.
- These are registrable occupations and all nurses and midwives appear on the [public register of health practitioners](#).

Other resources from the Department of Jobs and Small Business

Workforce analysis research program

jobs.gov.au/skillshortages

Australian labour market information

lmip.gov.au

Australian Jobs publication

jobs.gov.au/australian-jobs-publication

Guide to Australian careers

joboutlook.gov.au

Labour Market Research and Analysis Branch
Department of Jobs and Small Business