Introduction

Skilled Occupations List

The Department of Education and Training is currently updating its advice on the Australian Government's Skilled Occupations List (SOL) for 2016-17.

We are seeking your input on the occupations/industry sectors your organisation represents or that you belong to as an individual. In particular, we are seeking evidence of:

- skill demand and supply imbalance,* both nationally and regionally
- medium to long-term demand and supply trends which may impact upon Australia’s employment outlook
- formal licensing or registration requirements.

Note: The SOL is concerned only with 'medium to long-term' skills needs rather than immediate skills shortages. As such, the Department of Education and Training is only seeking to obtain information on longer term trends, rather than immediate shortages and costs. For the purposes of this exercise, 'medium to long-term' is defined as a period of around two to ten years.

*Skill demand and supply (im)balance occurs when the quantity of a given skill supplied by the workforce and the quantity demanded by employers diverge at existing market conditions. Labour market supply and demand for occupational skills are continuously fluctuating. At a certain point in time, there will be labour market imbalances and accompanying skill imbalances if there is disequilibrium between the demand for and supply of skills.

Privacy

All information, including name and address details, contained in submissions will be made available to the public on the Department of Education and Training website unless you indicate that you would like all or part of your submission to remain in confidence. Automatically generated confidentiality statements in emails do not suffice for this purpose. Respondents who would like all or part of their submission to remain in confidence should provide this information in an email to SOLSubmissions@education.gov.au. Legal requirements, such as those imposed by the Freedom of Information Act 1982, may affect the confidentiality of your submission.
Details

Applicant Details

Given Name *

Skye

Surname *

Cappuccio

Organisation

Optometry Australia

Contact Details

Please provide the name, position and contact details of a person within your organisation who is willing to be contacted if any further information or follow-up is required.

Given Name *

Skye

Surname *

Cappuccio

Position

National Policy Manager

Contact Number *

0423 277 571

Email (receipt will be sent to this address) *

s.cappuccio@optometry.org.au
Industry

Type of Industry
What are the industry/industries and ANZSCO occupation/s that you or your organisation represents for the purposes of this submission? *
(select all that apply)

- All Industries
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
- Construction
- Wholesale Trade
- Retail Trade
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Transport, Postal and Warehousing
- Information Media and Telecommunications
- Financial and Insurance Services
- Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- Administrative and Support Services
- Public Administration and Safety
- Education and Training
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Arts and Recreation Services
- Other Services

Occupation

Occupation
The three dropdowns below accord with the ABS ANZSCO classification of occupations. Selections are required at the 'Occupation Group' 2-digit level and at the 'Occupation Unit (4-digit)' level, but can also be made down to the Occupation (6-digit) level depending on the occupation/s to which your submission relates.

Occupation 1 of 1

Occupation Group *
Health Professionals

Occupation Unit *
2514

Occupation *
251411

For the 2016-17 SOL please indicate advice about your nominated occupation

- Include
- Exclude
- Maintain status quo
A recent study of the projected supply of optometrists and the demand for optometric services 2011-2036, found that there are currently sufficient numbers of optometrists to meet demand and that there is likely to be a substantial excess supply in the short term. Healy et al. (2015) projected 2011 census data on people listing optometry as their major qualification over a 25-year period, accounting for factors such as concordance with figures for registered optometrists, ageing, attrition, hours worked, new graduates and immigration. Data were compared to the numbers of optometrists calculated as necessary to meet the demand for services to 2036 using 9 different scenarios. On the highest projected demand scenario and lowest rate of dedicated clinical hours per FTE, it was estimated that supply of FTE optometrists in 2016 would outstrip service demand by around 150 FTE optometrists; in 2021 by close to 630 FTE optometrists; and by 2036 by over 1,200 EFT optometrists.

Are there any occupations that you represent where there is evidence of imbalances in the demand and supply of skills in the medium to long-term? Please list them.

Is there evidence of imbalances in the demand for and supply of skills in the medium to long-term in non-metropolitan areas?

- Yes
- No

Please indicate in which part of Australia this imbalance exists.

There has been no comprehensive assessment of the current or projected optometry supply/demand balance relative to remoteness. However, there are indications of workforce mal-distribution despite an overall supply/demand balance. National Health Workforce Survey Data show a clear discrepancy between coverage of the current workforce in urban versus rural and remote areas (HWA 2014). Anecdotal evidence also attests that some regional and rural areas suffer from ongoing undersupply. There are indicators that distribution is improving. Analysis of our member database suggests greater numbers of early career optometrists pursuing rural or regional practice. Initiatives being introduced by Schools of Optometry to support higher numbers of rural students and positive rural practice experiences are expected to help improve future distribution. As the experience in medicine has suggested (see: Birrell, B. 2003), it is unlikely that workforce size alone can fully correct issues of distribution.

Are there any occupations which require formal licensing or registration arrangements in order to practice/perform.

- Yes
- No

Please provide details.

Optometry is a registered health profession; in order to practice optometry in Australia, practitioners must be registered with the Optometry Board of Australia. To obtain registration, optometrists are required to have completed an accredited Australian or New Zealand entry-level university course or hold recognised international qualifications and/or pass an exam to practice in Australia. To retain registration, optometrists must also meet specified requirements including in relation to recency of practice and professional development.
Is it expected that your employment sector will be impacted by any medium to long-term trends which will impact upon demand and/or supply (excluding costs associated with training, labour hire, and international sponsorship)?

- Yes
- No

Please provide evidence (e.g. data source, policy document) which substantiates these claims. *

For example:

- New benchmarks for childcare centres mandate increased staff-to-child ratios and higher qualification standards for childcare workers.

Two additional Schools of Optometry have opened (in addition to 3 existing). As a result, there will be a substantial increase in the number of graduates entering the profession from 2015. Enrolment figures for 2013 suggest there may be more than double the number of graduates in 2015 (approx. 300) compared to 2011 (136). From 2015 graduate numbers averaging close to 300 per year are expected. As above, Healy et al.’s study suggests supply is already adequate to meet demand and that increasing numbers of new Australian–trained entrants to the profession will see an increasing imbalance between supply and demand, where supply outstrips demand.

Government changes to Medicare rebates for optometry consultations (effective from 1/2015) appear to be linked with a reduction in access per 100,000 people to Medicare rebate-able optometric services. Per capita use of Medicare items for optometry consultations had grown each year from 2010/11 but decreased between 2013/14 and 2014/15.

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**Additional Information**

Please provide any additional information you consider relevant evidence to support your submission. For example, you may know of independent studies about your occupation that supports your advice to us.


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Please add any document that supports your recommendations.

**Supporting Document**