

5 Nurse shortages, December 1998

The following information on nursing shortages has been taken from the Internet site of the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB). The web site address is <http://www.dewrsb.gov.au>.

The Skills Analysis and Research Branch of the Department monitors occupational labour markets in Australia and assesses whether skill shortages exist. This work is undertaken by the National Office in tandem with Labour Economics Offices (LEOs) in each State capital city and Darwin. The LEOs provide 'on the ground' intelligence on occupational developments and skill shortages.

The Department defines a skill shortage as follows:

Skill shortages exist when employers are unable to fill or have difficulty in filling vacancies in a recognised occupation or specialisation at the current level of remuneration and conditions of employment, including realistic location. Shortages are typically for specialised and experienced workers, and can coexist with relatively high unemployment. Shortages may be numerically small, or in specific geographic areas.

The Department does not quantify the skill shortage of the occupations that it identifies are in shortage at a particular point in time.

In December 1998 the following registered nurse occupations were experiencing Australia wide shortages – operating theatre, critical/intensive care, neonatal intensive care, accident/emergency, cardiothoracic, midwifery, and mental health.

Some States experienced State wide or regional shortages in additional nursing occupations.

Table 21: Nursing occupations in shortage, States and Territories, December 1998

Nursing occupation in shortage	Australia	NSW/ACT	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT
Operating theatre RN	Y	Y	..	Y	..	..	Y	Y
Critical/intensive care RN	Y	Y	..	Y	Y	..	Y	Y
Accident/emergency RN	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	..	..	..
Cardiothoracic RN	Y	..	Y	Y	Y	..	..	..
Neonatal intensive care RN	Y	..	Y	Y	Y	..	Y	..
Neonatal RN	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	Y
Perioperative RN	..	..	Y	..	..	..	Y	..
Paediatric RN	..	..	..	Y	..	..	..	Y
Renal RN	..	..	..	Y	..	..	Y	Y
Aged care RN	..	..	..	Y	Y	..	..	..
Oncology RN	..	..	..	Y	..	..	..	..
Neuroscience RN	..	..	..	..	..	..	Y	..
General RN	..	..	..	..	Y	Y*	..	..
Registered midwife	Y	Y	..	Y	Y	Y*	..	..
Registered mental health nurse	Y	Y	Y	Y	..	Y	Y*	Y
Enrolled nurse	..	..	Y	..	..	..	..	..

Note: Y means yes, in shortage; Y* means shortage in some regional areas only.

Source: National and State skills shortage lists, DEWRSB.