



ANZSCO 3622-12 Arborist

Australia
August 2014

Current labour market rating

Shortage

Previous labour market rating (August 2013)

Shortage

Comments

A relatively large proportion of vacancies remain unfilled as employers face difficulty recruiting qualified, ticketed and experienced arborists. The vast majority of employers require qualified arborists to fill their vacancies, but there were few qualified applicants and more than half the qualified applicants were considered by employers to be unsuitable.

Employer requirements

- The vast majority of surveyed employers were seeking arborists for private businesses, with a small number of positions with local councils.
 - The main duties were for the care and maintenance of trees in urban environments.
- Nearly all surveyed employers sought applicants with at least a Certificate III in Arboriculture.
 - Employers often requested this qualification due to contractual occupational health and safety obligations for council work.
 - A small number of employers were also willing to consider applicants who were working towards the certificate III, although these were for generally more junior roles.
 - Councils were generally unable to compromise on the qualifications criteria.
- Employers often required applicants to hold additional tickets and licences. These included a Construction Induction Card (white card), truck licence, chainsaw licence, Elevating Work Platform licence, Limits of Approach ticket and a Traffic Management certificate.
- In conjunction with the qualification and tickets, most employers sought arborists with at least two years of post-qualification industry experience.
- Employers had varying skill requirements depending on the nature of their arboricultural work. In addition to general tree maintenance skills, some commonly sought skills included
 - an ability and willingness to climb large trees
 - experience with stump removal and wood chipper equipment
 - the ability to identify and treat plant diseases and pests.
- There were few vacancies identified in the research period for senior arborists.
 - Employers' comments suggest it is preferable to train crew leaders and supervisors from within a businesses.
 - Those senior vacancies surveyed generally required at least five years post-qualification experience.

Survey results

- There is greater availability of qualified arborists in 2014, but shortages persist.
 - Shortages have been evident for the last decade.
- Employers continue to have difficulty filling arborist vacancies in 2014.
 - Some employers have rolling advertisements or advertised repeatedly to fill positions.
 - A higher proportion of vacancies were filled, although the proportion remains relatively low (58 per cent compared with 39 per cent in 2013)
 - Candidate fields were smaller, with an average of 8.6 applicants per vacancy compared with 10.1 in 2013. There was, though, a larger number of qualified applicants (2.2 per vacancy compared with 1.7) and suitable applicants (1.2 compared with 0.6).
- There were marked differences in the response to advertised vacancies.
 - Vacancies which attracted a significantly larger number of applicants were generally more junior roles (requiring one to two years experience) or were council based.
 - Around a quarter of employers attracted one or two applicants. A small proportion of these vacancies were filled (29 per cent).
 - One third of employers attracted more than ten applicants. These employers filled 60 per cent of their vacancies.
- There were few surveyed vacancies in regional areas but these were harder to fill.
 - Employers in regional areas filled 44 per cent of their vacancies compared with 67 per cent in metropolitan areas.
 - Regional employers attracted an average of 0.6 suitable applicants compared with 1.5 in metropolitan areas.
- Around one third of unfilled vacancies attracted suitable applicants. The reasons they remained unfilled are varied, but include applicants securing employment elsewhere and being able or willing to relocate.
- Arboricultural work is heavily regulated and some employers were willing to provide training in additional tickets or licences for qualified applicants who met their skill requirements but did not have the required certification.

Unsuitable applicants

- Generally only qualified applicants were considered for employment, and only 27 per cent of applicants were qualified.
- Slightly more than half of the qualified applicants were considered to be unsuitable, the key reason being inadequate work experience.

Demand and supply trends

- The arboricultural labour force is small, with around 4400 arborists employed at the time of the 2011 Census¹. More than 60 per cent of arborists held a certificate III or higher qualification.

¹ ABS, *Census of Population and Housing, 2011*

- Detailed analysis of arborist employment by industry in the ABS Census is consistent with the surveyed sample.
 - Around 59 per cent work in gardening services and 14 per cent work for local governments².
- The entry pathway for this occupation is generally through a Certificate III in Arboriculture.
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research data for apprenticeships and traineeships³ show that, at the certificate III qualification level
 - commencements decreased significantly in 2013 (from 730 in 2012 to 430), after continuous rises since 2007
 - the number of completions has continually risen since 2011 to stand at 420 in 2013.

² *ibid*

³ NCVER, *Apprentices and Trainees*, March 2014, estimates (limited to certificate III)