

Optometry Australia response to Skilled Occupations List 2017-18:

F78HC8

Are there other occupations that you represent where there is evidence of imbalance in the demand and/or supply of skills in the medium to long-term? Please list them. (1000 character limit)

A recent study addressing the supply of optometrists and the demand for optometry services 2011 to 2036, found that there are sufficient numbers of optometrists to meet demand, with likely substantial excess supply in the short term. Healey, E., Kiely P. M. and Arunachalam, D. (2015) Optometric Supply and Demand in Australia: 2011-2036. *Clinical and Experimental Optometry* 98(3). Using census data corrected to account for the ageing population, attrition, changes in hours worked, new entry level graduates and immigration, they found that 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 demand for services equivalent by around 150 FTE optometrists; in 2021 by close to 630 FTE optometrists; and by 2036 by over 1,200 EFT optometrists.

Please indicate in which part of Australia this imbalance exists. (1000 character limit)

Recent modelling suggests that there may be a minor imbalance of optometrist availability in the Northern Territory and Tasmania, more than offset by surpluses in other states, new graduates coming into the market with a high willingness to work in rural and regional areas, and visiting optometry services. This however, does not represent an optometry workforce shortage just a minor imbalance which we believe will be corrected due to job availability elsewhere.

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

Optometrists are required to be registered by AHPRA for practice in Australia, and to be therapeutically endorsed to prescribe to prescribe scheduled medicines if they initially registered prior to 2014 (entry level standard from this stage now includes all optometrists to be trained in therapeutics). Registration of optometrists continues to grow, from 4,654 in June 2014 to 4977 in June 2016, a growth of 323 optometrists (or 7%) over that three year registration data period. This reflects a significant introduction of new graduates from an optometry entry level course in June 2015. There are now five entry level optometry courses in Australia. <http://www.optometryboard.gov.au/About/Statistics.aspx>

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. (1000 character limit)

The addition of two new optometry schools since 2010 has increased the number of entry-level graduates. Two courses in Victoria now graduate around 125 new entry-level optometrists between them in June (Deakin) and then in December (University of Melbourne). In NSW, there are approximately 50 new graduates per year expected to enter the workforce, in Queensland 34 and in SA, approximately 30.

Please add any document that supports your recommendations.

A detailed and conservative analysis of optometry workforce supply and demand is in Healey, E., Kiely P. M. and Arunachalam, D. (2015) Optometric Supply and Demand in Australia: 2011-2036. *Clinical and Experimental Optometry* 98 (3). Overall, this data suggests the inclusion of optometry on the skilled migration list is no longer warranted. The key finding is that for every year from 2011 to 2036, the projected supply of equivalent fulltime optometrists was much greater than demand for services for each scenario modelled. This does not support the need to maintain optometry on the Skilled Occupation list.