



**Australian Careers
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Nursing in Australia

It's a known fact that the world economy is currently experiencing a downturn. As the number of people losing their jobs increase, there are still a number of professions that have been identified as recession-proof – nursing is one of them. It is among the top ten jobs that will remain to be in-demand amidst the economic crisis.¹

In Australia, the high demand for nurses has resulted to an employment shortage currently being faced by the Health and Community Services Industry. According to a study by the University of California, Australia will be short of 40,000 registered nurses (RNs) by 2010. At present, there are only 966 RNs per 100,000 individuals in the country.² The insufficient number of nurses has actually forced patients to wait months to undergo critical surgeries in some hospitals. Doctors and equipment are readily available; the lack of nurses to staff beds is the problem.³

The Health and Community Services Industry is the third largest industry in Australia, employing 10.6 percent of the country's total workforce as of February 2008.⁴ Based on the study prepared by the Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), the industry is expected to grow 2.7 percent annually, which is equivalent to around 159,600 new jobs, from 2008 to 2012/2013 as compared to 1.5 percent growth for all industries during the same period. Out of its six sectors, Hospitals and Nursing Homes has the largest population number of employees amounting to 44.3 percent of the industry. DEEWR expects this sector to create 75,600 new jobs by 2012/2013. Other sectors, such as Medical and Dental Services and Community Care Services, are expected to be in demand of new employees as well in the coming years.

The increase in need of workers for the Health and Community Services Industry is influenced by various reasons. One of these is Australia's ageing population.⁵ The Australian Bureau of Statistics that in 2007, there were 2.4 million citizens under the 65 to 84 years old age group. This number will steadily increase annually and is projected to reach 6.4 million by 2056. Furthermore, the quantity of citizens aged 85 years and above will increase from 344,000 (2007) to 1.7 million (2056).⁶ Hence, as the ratio of the elderly in the population expands in the imminent future, more workers will be needed to cater to this segment of society, particularly with needs related to health and wellbeing.

In addition to the increase in patients, majority of current employees of the healthcare industry are getting older, bringing about the need for more nurses and other healthcare workers. The Health and Community Services Industry has an above average percentage of workers who are approaching retirement. In 2007, 46.1 percent of the industry's workforce was 45 years old

¹ Tara Weiss, "Recession-Proof Jobs," [Forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com/2008/07/18/recession-proof-jobs-lead-careers-cx_tw_0718recessionproof.html) 19 July 2008, 24 April 2009 <http://www.forbes.com/2008/07/18/recession-proof-jobs-lead-careers-cx_tw_0718recessionproof.html>.

² Jean Ann Seago, PhD, RN, "The Global Nursing Shortage and Migration," [University of California](http://www.cpath.org/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/seago_nurse_migration_slides.ppt) 24 April 2009 <www.cpath.org/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/seago_nurse_migration_slides.ppt>.

³ "Australia nursing shortage cause surgery delays," [Visa Bureau](http://www.visabureau.com/australia/news/14-04-2008/australia-nursing-shortage-causing-surgery-delays-.aspx) 14 April 2008, 24 April 2009 <<http://www.visabureau.com/australia/news/14-04-2008/australia-nursing-shortage-causing-surgery-delays-.aspx>>.

⁴ Australia, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, "Employment Outlook for Health and Community Services," [SkillsInfo](http://www.skillsinfo.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/F6896EFA-C4F0-41D5-A933-72B5E66F2247/0/08169IndustryOutlook_HealthCommunityServices_WEB.pdf) July 2008, 24 April 2009 <http://www.skillsinfo.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/F6896EFA-C4F0-41D5-A933-72B5E66F2247/0/08169IndustryOutlook_HealthCommunityServices_WEB.pdf>.

⁵ Australia, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, "Employment Outlook for Health and Community Services," [SkillsInfo](http://www.skillsinfo.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/F6896EFA-C4F0-41D5-A933-72B5E66F2247/0/08169IndustryOutlook_HealthCommunityServices_WEB.pdf) July 2008, 24 April 2009 <http://www.skillsinfo.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/F6896EFA-C4F0-41D5-A933-72B5E66F2247/0/08169IndustryOutlook_HealthCommunityServices_WEB.pdf>.

⁶ Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Future Population Growth and Ageing," [Australian Bureau of Statistics](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features10March%202009) 25 March 2009, 24 April 2009 <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features10March%202009>>.



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and above.⁷ The average age of a nurse, as reported by the Australian Health Workforce Institute is 45. And by 2020, 90,000 nurses are expected to retire.⁸

Australia requires 12,000 RNs to graduate each year in order to meet the needs of the industry. However, only half of this quantity is met.⁹ As a result of this, along with all the information provided earlier, it can be said that nursing is a very lucrative and reliable profession in this country. Nurses, as well as those studying nursing from other countries are encouraged to develop their careers in Australia.

The Australian Government recognizes the country's high demand for nurses. Priority processing is given to visa applications for nurses, and a number of visa options – such as Student and Skilled Migrant, are offered to applicants.¹⁰ Furthermore, nurses of all skill levels and varying degrees of qualifications are all presented with career opportunities. Based on educational attainment and length of experience, nurses may work as Enrolled Nurses, Registered Nurses or Nurse Practitioners, among others.¹¹ New nursing graduates receive salaries over \$40,000¹² and experienced nurses earn around \$60,000 to \$85,000.¹³

⁷ Australia, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, "Employment Outlook for Health and Community Services," *SkillsInfo* July 2008, 24 April 2009 http://www.skillsinfo.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/F6896EFA-C4F0-41D5-A933-72B5E66F2247/0/08169IndustryOutlook_HealthCommunityServices_WEB.pdf.

⁸ Karen Davis, "Australia faces major nurse shortage," *The Age* 22 October 2008, 24 April 2009 <<http://news.theage.com.au/national/australia-faces-major-nurse-shortage-20081022-569d.html>>.

⁹ Helen Isbister, "Critical health problem in nursing jobs," *Career FAQs* 7 April 2009, 24 April 2009 <http://www.careerfaqs.com.au/news055_nursing_health_problem.asp>.

¹⁰ Department of Immigration and Citizenship, "Working in Australia as a Nurse - Doctors and Nurses - Workers – Visas and Immigration," 25 April 2009 <<http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/medical-practitioners/nurses.htm>>.

¹¹ Australian Nursing Federation, "A snapshot of nursing careers, qualifications and experience," 24 April 2009

<http://www.anf.org.au/anf_pdf/shared_reports/Snap_Shot_Nursing_Career_Paths.pdf>.

¹² Australian Nursing Federation, "GradStats," 2008 February, 24 April 2009

<<http://www.anf.org.au/>>.

¹³ Helen Isbister, "Critical health problem in nursing jobs," *Career FAQs* 7 April 2009, 24 April 2009 <http://www.careerfaqs.com.au/news055_nursing_health_problem.asp>.



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