



# Building Cleaning, Pest Control and Other Support Services

*This industry consists of those providing cleaning, pest control and maintenance services to buildings and structures, both commercial and domestic.*

## Industry Developments and Workforce Challenges

**Demand.** Property services is a fast growing industry.<sup>1</sup> Latest national figures project a 13.1% employment growth in the building cleaning, pest control and swimming pool service sub-sector over 5 years to 2023. Across the same period, significant growth is anticipated in cleaners and laundry workers (4%), commercial cleaners (3.7%), domestic cleaners (5.2%), housekeepers (12.5%) and laundry workers (4.5%).<sup>2</sup> According to IBIS *World* revenue from commercial cleaning services has grown due to rising demand from businesses and households over the past 5 years, nationally, anticipating a further rise at an annualised rate of 4.1% over the five years through 2018-19 to \$12.1 billion.<sup>3</sup> Building cleaning services predominantly comprise of small operators<sup>4</sup> with growth in the domestic sector dependant on disposable income of working households. Meeting the growing demand will be a significant challenge as industry already struggles to find suitable candidates to meet current demand.

**Cost Pressures.** The cleaning industry operates in a highly competitive, labour intensive market with high employment costs<sup>5</sup> and small profit margins reduced by discerning clients. Changes to the Cleaning Services Award have placed significant pressure on employers faced with a 2.5% increase in labour costs, already struggling to remain competitive while keeping costs down and maintaining high levels of service. Declining revenue and increased cost of labour have seen a reduction in staffing levels. In an effort to reduce costs, companies are streamlining operations, optimising processes<sup>6</sup> and increasing worker productivity. High industry competition has contributed to profitability declining over the past five years.<sup>7</sup>

**Green Cleaning.** Aligned with a focus on renewable energy and green buildings, discerning clients are seeking more environmentally responsible cleaning solutions and opting towards safer, greener cleaners.<sup>8</sup> There is a move towards eco-friendly products and equipment to reduce industry's environmental impact and benefiting health.

**Technology.** Although some time away for these industry sectors, as technology (such as Building Information Modelling) matures it will become the enabler of a virtual representation of the built environment, connecting and integrating all services provided to and for a property throughout its lifecycle. Meanwhile, emerging technologies and the automation of business processes can create efficiencies and reduce overall operating costs. Software tools have the capability to generate reports and metrics to inform profitability and margins, and assist businesses to operate more strategically.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the Internet of Things (IoT) continues to support the commercial cleaning industry, collecting

<sup>1</sup> Artibus Innovation, [Property Services IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work](#), 12 March 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government, Department of Jobs and Small Business, Labour Market Information Portal, Employment Projections, [Occupation projections five years to May 2023](#).

<sup>3</sup> IBISWorld, *Commercial Cleaning Services - Australia Market Research Report*, March 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Artibus Innovation, [Property Services IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work](#), 12 March 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Facility Management, [The Australian cleaning industry: a clearer perspective](#), March 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Hubstaff, [6 of the Most Innovative Approaches in the Cleaning Industry to Watch For](#), October 2019.

<sup>7</sup> IBISWorld, *Commercial Cleaning Services - Australia Market Research Report*, March 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Services Magazine, [Industry Trends and Projections](#).

<sup>9</sup> Jobber Academy, [7 Business Trends for Residential Cleaners in 2019](#).



data to improve business intelligence from connected cleaning and maintenance equipment to IoT enabled devices.<sup>10</sup> Overseas companies are investing in smart cleaning devices such as autonomous floor cleaning robots for commercial operations to reduce employment costs.<sup>11</sup> Reportedly, these technological changes are fundamentally altering the way business owners manage their companies and how employees conduct their work.<sup>12</sup> Benefits span the supply chain from social media marketing and administration processes to purchasing, time management and inventory, critical to sustainability and competitiveness. While user friendly websites can showcase a business, social media platforms, on-line and mobile friendly systems improve client connectivity, communication and ease of access. A digital presence responds to changing customer expectations<sup>13</sup> including online scheduling, automated quotes and booking features. In the pest management industry online reporting and use of smart devices are being integrated into business activity.

**Marketing.** With many small companies vying for contracts, the competitive environment requires more than quality service delivery. Organisations need to stay connected with their clients in order to maintain communication and be responsive to their needs. Social networking and social media marketing are effective ways to promote and differentiate a business, inform clients and connect to new growth opportunities. Service providers need to foster interactive relationships with existing clients and utilise breadth of communication platforms to market themselves.<sup>14</sup>

**Training.** Except for some specialist services, industry sub-sectors (such as secure cleaning and medical contracts) and larger employers, the cleaning sector typically does not engage in nationally accredited vocational training. The sector is a large employer of people from non-English speaking backgrounds with entry level skills. It tends to be characterised by limited (if any) training, particularly in domestic service delivery, with some targeted micro-skilling and equipment-based training.

**Language Barriers.** Largely, the cleaning industry attracts a migrant workforce, commonly with limited English language skills. While issues associated with poor communication skills are largely averted in after-hour work arrangements due to limited likelihood of interaction with clients and customers, these become prevalent in areas frequented by the public, such as shopping centres, when English proficiency is essential.

**Staff Retention.** These industries are traditionally seen as a stop gap and attract a very transient workforce. To improve staff retention it is imperative industry has a long term career path, provides flexible work arrangements and adequate remuneration to sustain financial commitments. This will help attract people into the industry that want to stay and develop skills while embracing new training that is available.

**Regulatory Requirements.** The pest management industry is heavily regulated by the Department of Health, Pesticide Safety who not only stipulate the training requirements of those working in the industry but also the training providers able to deliver the training. These requirements will be reassessed once Artibus Innovation completes its current review of the Certificate III in the Urban Pest Management. Set for AISC approval, units within the Certificate III have been updated to reflect core urban pest management competencies with more optional or specialised units included as electives. A number of units have been upgraded from level AQF 3 to AQF 4 and incorporated into a new Certificate IV in Urban Pest Management. The new qualification includes new units which focus on requirements for pest management in food, beverage or pharmaceutical manufacturing and handling sites which had been identified as a gap.<sup>15</sup>

**Ageing Workforce.** The pest management industry is one that attracts new entrants later in life, often those looking for a change of career or a more flexible job role. As those currently in the workforce retire, the attraction of younger, long term entrants to the industry is essential to ensure supply is able to keep up with the expected growth in demand in the ensuing years.

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<sup>10</sup> ThingLogix, [IoT is Transforming the Commercial Cleaning Industry](#), February 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Foremost, [5 cleaning industry trends for 2019](#).

<sup>12</sup> Hubstaff, [6 of the Most Innovative Approaches in the Cleaning Industry to Watch For](#), October 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Jabber Academy, [The Top 11 Home Service Business Trends, Predictions, and Statistics for 2018](#).

<sup>14</sup> Services Magazine, [Industry Trends and Projections](#).

<sup>15</sup> Artibus Innovation, [Project: Urban Pest Management](#), documents listed on website viewed on 26 June 2019.



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## Industry Workforce Priorities

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**Risk Awareness and Safety.** Many workers employed in the cleaning industry come from non-English speaking backgrounds with low English proficiency. Effective communication with these workers is a key priority to ensure safety. The use of colour coded chemicals and safety information translated into different languages continues to be an effective way of maintaining staff safety. Similarly, the main priority for employers is ensuring staff have a solid understanding of areas such as OSH practices, infection disease control and public liability issues. As cleaners work in a diverse range of environments, employers need to provide adequate duty of care for their staff which can be achieved by maintaining current training that is site specific.

**Staffing.** Attraction of new workers to both the pest management and cleaning industries remains difficult due to remuneration and employment conditions, job stability, availability of full time hours and perceived lack of career progression. Promoting the positives of each industry, such as flexible hours, autonomous job roles and potential business ownership, is essential to attracting people into the sector and have them recognise long term career viability. Artibus Innovation is looking to develop a new Certificate II in Property Pathways to attract and support new entrants to the property industry by providing a streamed training pathway to its sub-sectors and enhance articulation into high level vocational qualifications.<sup>16</sup> This may have positive implications for both the cleaning and pest control sub-sectors if these articulate into employment outcomes.

**Skills Development.** As many individuals working in pest control and cleaning services run their own micro or small business, small business management skills are critical for business longevity. These skills are essential for the continued growth of these sectors as they support businesses to remain viable in a highly competitive market. Skills to be able to implement and navigate automation processes will require business owners to have a working understanding of software application. Self-managed websites, use of social media platforms for marketing purposes and the integration of smart devices into work processes rely on computer literacy capability and need to be developed. Communication and customer service skills continue to be important in settings where services are being delivered domestically or in populated areas, requiring client interaction. As staff move from general cleaning positions to supervisory or leadership roles the skills they require change. To ensure those taking on more responsibility are appropriately skilled and working efficiently, industry will have to prioritise training in people to address time management, productivity rates, planning, budgeting and cultural diversity. Although limited in response rate, Artibus's skills forecast survey of property services providers have identified adaptability, work ethic, business management, empathy, entrepreneurship and LLN as the highest ranked skills for broader industry.<sup>17</sup>

**Training Package Changes.** Artibus Innovation have identified a number of projects in their review of the CPP Property Services Training Package and their initial scoping of industry needs. Once developed, the new Certificate II in Property Pathways should provide a good pathway into Certificate III in Urban Pest Management (currently under review and nearing completion). However, it is questionable whether uptake of cleaning qualifications improves once reviewed (proposed for 2020-21) as industry tends not to use VET qualifications for employment.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Artibus Innovation, [Property Services IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work](#), 12 March 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Artibus Innovation, [Project: Urban Pest Management](#), documents listed on website viewed on 26 June 2019.