

The 2009 Revision 1 of the *Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) Dictionary* introduced some new detailed occupations which had previously been part of another larger ANZSCO occupation. One example is Body Artists with the new code 451814.

There are other emerging specialisations. The typical pattern is that such specialisations begin as part of an existing occupation, but with their job duties being concentrated on a sub-set of the originating occupation's tasks. Over time, that concentration brings about changes in skill requirements for the new specialisation, generally of greater skills, and perhaps a different pathway into the work. If maintained and employment grows for the specialisation, it can begin to be accepted as a distinct occupation. Mystery Shoppers are one example.

Mystery Shoppers

Mystery Shoppers have become a more prominent specialisation locally. It (and other new job specialisations) could feasibly be upgraded to the status of a separate ANZSCO occupation in a forthcoming revision. At the present time, Mystery Shoppers are classified to another larger occupation – or should that be two other ANZSCO occupations? The Coder of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) now classifies “Mystery Shopper” to Other Sales Support Workers code 639911, which has no published statement of job duties.

The other ANZSCO occupation which can also lay claim to coverage of Mystery Shoppers is Survey Interviewers code 561511, whose summary of job duties, as included in *Job Markets Australia*, reads “interview people and record their responses to survey and market research questions on a range of topics. May work in a call centre.” The main job duties consist of obtaining information from people and recording responses, albeit to “survey and market research questions”.

The classification by the ABS Coder to the sales support field makes sense when the job duties of Mystery Shoppers entail posing as shoppers. They could ascertain the prices, range, quality and presentation of retail products and usually purchase them to round off the exercise or for comparison with products in the competing store, supermarket or wholesaler that organised the mystery shopping exercise, directly or through a contracting firm. It was with that kind of focus that the occupation was established in Australia, and over time anonymous checks were added regarding store cleanliness, staff members' customer service standards, honesty, product explanations and knowledge of the employer's procedures. Price Checkers, a sub-stream of Mystery Shoppers, check solely on the prices of goods and services in competing organisations.

The alternative classification of Survey Interviewers recognises that there are now many Mystery Shopper jobs that put far greater emphasis on a structured approach and completion (after the assignment) of a detailed questionnaire. The job duties for these Mystery Shoppers go beyond basic questioning of staff, and the necessary skills of eliciting more in-depth information and responses in an orderly way are akin to those required for Survey Interviewers.

In fact, Mystery Shoppers is no longer the only title for this type of work when performed outside the retail sector, whether in a store or supermarket, online or by phone. The title of

Mystery Consumers implies something more than shopping. One can be a consumer of services offered by telecommunications companies, gas and power utilities, roadside service, educational institutions, and even government departments, among other industry types. The title of Mystery Clients extends the job duties even further, into what could be called professional streams, including law firms, hospitals and health centres, expensive motor vehicle dealerships, and upmarket or costly services of whatever kind. These require a more skilled person in the role.

As noted above, the need for more specialised knowledge and a wider range of inter-personal and social skills is becoming more apparent in the jobs coming under the Mystery Shoppers title. The higher skill demands are likely to be required more often in the future as service industries make regular use of systematic monitoring of their workplaces, not just for checking adherence to the employer's policies and procedures but, in some instances, ethical tests and detection of fraud and field-trials of new policies and procedures.

Other Sales Support Workers would be the correct classification for Mystery Shoppers undertaking the original duties for the occupation. Survey Interviewers would be the appropriate classification for Mystery Shoppers carrying out in-depth questioning and eliciting detailed responses which must be properly recorded. The newer titles of Mystery Consumers and Mystery Clients and their jobs are best coded to Survey Interviewers, given their core tasks of eliciting information and responses more intensively and in an orderly way.

Here is a general statement of job duties:

- receive instructions about the purpose, location and date/time of the assignment, which is to remain undisclosed to personnel in the store or other establishment
- prepare for the assignment perhaps by reading background papers or viewing video etc, clarifying issues as necessary with the supervisor
- visit or otherwise contact the retail store or another establishment, observing customer service standards and interacting with staff, which may or may not end in purchasing
- obtain information about products and services and the establishment's policies and procedures on such topics as refunds for unsatisfactory goods and likely delay in providing the service, and any other specific issue raised in the assignment
- make notes at the time and immediately after the visit or phone/online contact and complete the various sections of the assignment report/s

It is not permitted legally to record another person's speech without their prior permission, except under defined circumstances, the main one being law enforcement activities. Neither is it permitted to record visually in a situation where the other person or persons have a reasonable expectation of privacy. There is some crossover between the kind of duties outlined here and those of Private Investigators (aka Private Inquiry Agents or Mercantile Agents), who must be licensed. According to the www.scamwatch.gov.au website, some vacancies for Mystery Shopper jobs have been associated with scams, even those on well-known vacancy and media websites. Payment in kind (namely, the goods purchased in the exercise) may at times be made, rather than a wage or contracting fee.

If you have another new interesting job specialisation, why not sent details to
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