

<b>Building Associate</b>	<b>New South Wales (NSW)</b>
ASCO Code: 3121-11	December 2006
Labour market rating	Shortage
<b>Comment:</b> <i>There is a shortage of estimators and forepersons with over three years of experience in medium to large commercial projects.</i>	

### **Occupational demand**

Building activity fell in 2005-06, with a significant drop in the residential sector partly offset by continued growth in non-residential building. Building activity was weak in Sydney but grew moderately in regional NSW. The consensus of employer and industry contacts was that demand for building associates held up well in 2006 due to the solid performance of non-residential construction. This is consistent with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) Skilled Vacancies Index, which shows a moderate increase in newspaper vacancies for building associates over the last year.

### **Occupational supply**

The level of qualification sought by employers varies with the demands of the particular position being advertised. Most surveyed employers who were seeking estimators were looking for workers with formal studies in the field, while positions for forepersons sometimes required only a trade certificate and relevant supervisory experience. The number of persons completing Certificate IV and diploma level courses in building studies and quantity surveying fell by 30 per cent over the two years to 2005 and is estimated to have remained at a similar level in 2006. Net immigration is not a significant source of supply to this occupation, averaging less than 20 persons a year over the last five years.

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

The DEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for building associates showed that 60 per cent of vacancies were filled within six weeks of advertising. There were on average 11 applicants per vacancy but an average of just over one applicant per vacancy was considered suitable by the employers. Employers and recruitment agencies reported that a large majority of applicants had no relevant qualifications or had insufficient relevant experience or had poor communications skills. A significant number of applicants were based overseas and were seeking sponsorship in order to migrate to Australia and most of these applicants were rejected by employers. Positions for estimators and forepersons with over three years of experience in medium to large commercial projects proved to be the most difficult to fill. Several employers required experience in their particular sector of the industry (for example demolitions, strip-outs of commercial premises, development of recreational centres) and were unable to find applicants with the required experience. Other unsuccessful advertisers were more general in their requirements, seeking any relevant construction qualification and experience and, in the case of estimators, familiarity with relevant software. Conversely, employers seeking building associates to work in the project home sector generally experienced few problems in filling their vacancies.

### **Labour market outlook**

The Construction Forecasting Council expects building activity to remain fairly flat in 2006-07 but to recover strongly in 2007-08. The most likely outlook is for a modest increase in demand for building associates from the second half of 2007. No significant increase in supply from local training or net immigration is expected over the short term and shortages should persist in 2007.