

Fibrous Plasterer	New South Wales
ANZSCO Code: 3332-11	September 2009
Labour market rating:	No shortage
Comment: <i>No general shortage of fibrous plasterers was evident in NSW.</i>	

Occupational demand

Census and labour force survey data suggests employment of fibrous plasterers grew by 2.4 per cent a year between 2001 and 2006. Demand for the trade has been more subdued since then, with the real value of building work done in NSW falling by eight per cent in 2008-09 after growing by only one per cent the previous year. The consensus of employers contacted for this report was demand for the trade was weak.

Occupational supply

Supply to the trade from apprenticeship completions has doubled in the past three years to an average of 62 persons per annum. Nevertheless, the training rate (apprenticeship completions as a percentage of employed fibrous plasterers) remains low at one per cent a year, which is well below the average of three per cent for all trades. The consensus of industry sources was most training of fibrous plasterers was now done on-the-job rather than through formal apprenticeships and while this supplements supply, many informally trained plasterers only have a narrow range of skills. Census data indicates from 2001 to 2006 NSW gained 250 fibrous plasterers from overseas immigration but this was almost completely offset by a loss of trades workers interstate.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for fibrous plasterers found 78 per cent of vacancies were filled within four weeks of advertising. While this was below the success rate of 95 per cent in 2008, a large majority of employers were nevertheless able to fill their vacancies with little difficulty, in most cases having a choice of a number of suitable applicants. There was an overall average of 30 applicants per vacancy of which an average of three per vacancy were considered suitable by employers. Employers were generally able to fill advertised vacancies across most sectors of the industry including new residential and commercial building and renovations, maintenance and repair work. Several employers in Sydney and regional NSW reported an increase in the number of fibrous plasterers directly approaching them for work and a number were recently able to fill multiple positions from suitable tradespersons making such unsolicited approaches. In the minority of cases where employers did not fill their vacancies, special circumstances were usually involved: for example, Sydney based employers rejecting qualified and experienced applicants who they considered lived in suburbs which would have made commuting to work too difficult or employers seeking workers with unusual specialised skills such as making moulds for cornices and decorative plaster work. One large company reported a problem in recruiting sufficient teams of licensed subcontractors for residential work in the Hunter region but there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate a general shortage of subcontractors in regional NSW.

Labour market outlook

The Construction Forecasting Council expects a modest recovery in building activity in 2009-10 and, as a result, demand for fibrous plasterers is expected to increase modestly over the short term. DEEWR projections indicate a slight decrease in apprenticeship completions in the short term and consequently the training rate for the occupation is likely to remain well below the average for the trades as a whole. As a result recruitment difficulties may develop when the building industry moves into a sustained recovery.