

Petroleum and Gas Plant Operator		New South Wales (NSW)
ASCO Code: 4987-13	September 2006	
Labour market rating	No shortage	
Comment <i>No significant shortages were reported in Sydney or regional NSW.</i>		

Occupational demand

Employment in this occupation is dominated by a small number of oil refining and gas distribution companies. The consensus of employers contacted for this report was that demand for petroleum plant operators has been subdued in recent years while there has been an increase in demand for gas plant operators due to the expansion of the network of pipelines in NSW. However, as almost all natural gas used in NSW is generated interstate, the extent of this increase has been limited.

Occupational supply

While an Australian Apprenticeship exists in process plant operation, most workers who undertake this training are existing workers rather than new entrants to the industry. Employers surveyed for this report stated that entry to the occupation is usually through on-the-job training and new entrants are recruited as they are needed. The consensus of employers was that low wastage from the occupation had limited entry-level recruitment in recent years. Immigration is also a minor source of supply. Data from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship show that net overseas immigration of chemical, petroleum and gas plant operators to NSW averaged only three persons a year over the last five years.

Employers stated that wastage and turnover from the occupation was low, especially for petroleum plant operators, as wages were above the average for occupations requiring a similar skill level. However, employers noted that the age profile of the occupation was above average and that wastage was likely to increase significantly over the medium term.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

All surveyed employers who had recently advertised vacancies for this occupation were successful in filling them. Positions for gas plant operators proved slightly more difficult to fill as remuneration was generally lower than in the petroleum sector. Therefore, while the surveyed vacancies in the gas distribution sector each attracted a number of suitable applicants, employers were not always able to negotiate a mutually satisfactory remuneration. Nevertheless, employers were able to successfully recruit applicants with an aptitude for the work and experience in a similar field, such as tradesmen or production workers from other industries.

Labour market outlook

The consensus of employers was that any growth in demand for this occupation over the short term would be limited. Although wastage from the occupation is likely to increase in the future, this is unlikely to have a significant impact in the short term. As a result, no significant shortage of petroleum and gas plant operators is expected in 2007.