

<b>Aircraft Maintenance Engineer</b>	<b>New South Wales (NSW)</b>
ASCO Code: 4114-11,15	August 2007
Labour market rating	Shortage
<b>Comment:</b> <i>Shortages were particularly evident for specialists in avionics and helicopters.</i>	

### **Occupational demand**

Demand for aircraft maintenance engineers (AMEs) and licensed aircraft maintenance engineers (LAMEs) in the regular public transport sector has declined in NSW in recent years due to the movement of some maintenance work interstate and overseas. This has only been partially offset by the growth of maintenance facilities in regional centres such as Williamtown (Boeing and Jetstar) and Wagga Wagga (Rex). Anecdotal evidence indicates that demand in the general aviation sector was steady in 2006-07 but that the sector had also been affected by the trend towards moving maintenance facilities to lower cost regional and interstate centres.

### **Occupational supply**

Apprenticeship completions of AMEs averaged 235 persons a year in the past two years compared with only 56 a year for the previous five years. However, DEEWR projections indicate that apprenticeship completions will fall back to about 100 a year over the next two years. The annual training rate (apprenticeship completions as a percentage of employed LAMEs and AMEs) averaged 2.4 per cent over the past five years which was slightly below the figure of 2.7 per cent for all trades. The supply of AMEs from net immigration averaged 53 a year over the last five years with no clear upward or downward trend. The movements of RAAF-trained AMEs to the civilian workforce is another traditional source of supply, although the consensus of medium to small employers was that it had declined in the past few years. While there are no precise data on wastage from this trade, employers reported that wastage had increased in recent years as a result of the ageing of the workforce and increased emigration due to higher wages and increasing employment opportunities interstate and overseas.

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

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for AMEs and LAMEs found that 58 per cent of vacancies were filled within four weeks of advertising. Employers seeking AMEs to work on wide-bodied jets had the most success in filling vacancies, which industry contacts attributed to Qantas moving its heavy maintenance from Sydney. Employers, however, were unable to readily fill the majority of other positions. Vacancies proved particularly difficult to fill for LAMEs specialising in avionics and helicopters but a range of other positions for LAMEs and AMES in regular passenger transport and general aviation also proved hard to fill. Employers in both Sydney and regional NSW stated that the majority of local and overseas applicants either did not have relevant licenses or lacked experience on relevant aircraft. Even when advertisements did attract one or two suitable applicants, in most cases the applicants were seeking remuneration which the employer could not afford to pay. The consensus of employers was that remuneration had increased by 20 to 30 per cent over the past three years which made it difficult for small to medium employers to compete on salary or to afford the cost of supporting AMEs while they obtained the relevant licences. Employers in regional NSW pointed to particular problems in enticing AMEs and LAMEs to relocate in the face of higher remuneration offered by interstate employers.

### **Labour market outlook**

Demand for aircraft maintenance engineers may increase moderately over the short term in line with the modest expansion plans of some employers in the regular public transport sector. Current shortages, however, are mainly the result of supply-side factors, including increasing retirements and the strong demand for aircraft maintenance engineers interstate and overseas. With the projected reduction in new supply from 2007-08 shortages are likely to persist over the short term.