

Civil Engineering Associates		South Australia
ASCO Code: 3122	October 2006	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

The workforce of civil engineering associates consists of around 350 persons in South Australia. Approximately a third are employed in the property and business services industry, with a further 20 per cent employed in the government administration and defence industry and 17 per cent in the construction industry. Demand for civil engineering associates is largely determined by the level of engineering construction activity. The value of engineering construction work commenced increased in 2005-06 by 11 per cent compared to 2004-05 and employment increased in the year to August 2006. Employers contacted for this survey also reported a significant increase in their workforce size over the past 12 months. However, Skilled Vacancy Survey data show that the number of vacancies for civil engineering associates has fallen over the past two years. It appears that some employers have abandoned newspaper advertising and are exploring alternative recruitment methods. TAFE has reported a substantial increase in direct approaches from employers interested in hiring potential staff.

Occupational supply

Around 70 per cent of civil engineering associates have Certificate III or higher qualifications and a third of the occupation has a diploma or advanced diploma qualification. South Australia TAFE offers the qualifications of Diploma of Civil Engineering and Advanced Diploma of Civil Engineering. The Advanced Diploma satisfies the academic requirement for Associate Membership of the Institute of Engineers Australia and membership of the Institute of Drafting and Design Australia. On average, there have been around 150 commencements per annum in the Diploma course over the past four years. Over the same period, there have been approximately 36 commencements per annum in the Advanced Diploma course. Overall, approximately 70 per cent of all commencements result in completions. Although the number of potential completions is high relative to the size of the workforce, not all graduates are employed as civil engineering associates. Other occupations held by graduates include: civil engineer, general manager, building and engineering associate, project and program administrator and mobile construction plant operator.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for civil engineering associates indicated that 40 per cent of vacancies were filled within six weeks, this suggests that employers are experiencing significant recruitment difficulties. On average, employers received around 11 applications per vacancy, but most of these were deemed unsuitable. The main reasons given by employers for rejecting unsuitable applicants were lack of experience and relevant qualifications. High demand and a shortage of experienced drafters to meet this demand were the major factors cited by employers for current recruitment difficulties. Despite the tight labour market conditions and the opportunity for bidding up of wages, staff turnover among surveyed firms remained moderate.

Labour market outlook

Although TAFE course enrolments are expected to increase in 2007, this may be insufficient to meet growing demand. The level of engineering construction activity is likely to increase over the next few years due to a number of large projects including the possible expansion of the Olympic Dam mine and the Air Warfare Destroyers project. The Housing Industry Association has forecast a 15 per cent increase in the value of engineering construction 'work done' in South Australia for 2006-07. As a consequence, demand for civil and structural engineers is expected to grow and current shortages are likely to continue.