

Chemical Engineer		South Australia
ANZSCO Code: 2331-11	February 2009	
Labour market rating	No Shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

ABS Census data show a twelve per cent decline in the number of chemical engineers employed in South Australia over the five years to 2006. There were less than 100 chemical engineers working in the state according to the last Census count. The main employing industries are manufacturing, mining and water supply. A number also work in organisations providing engineering design and consultancy services. Employment opportunities are therefore influenced by activity levels in these industry sectors. Conditions in both the manufacturing and mining industries have been adversely affected by the global economic downturn and therefore demand conditions have deteriorated in these sectors. Engineering construction activity related to water storage and supply, sewerage and drainage grew solidly through the year to September 2008, although this does not appear to have translated into any significant increase in demand for chemical engineers. DEEWR's Skilled Vacancies Index data show that the number of advertised vacancies for chemical engineers remained low and stable over the past year.

Occupational supply

Entry into the profession usually requires completion of a university degree in chemical engineering. A four-year bachelor degree is available through the University of Adelaide. Over the five years to 2007, the number of students commencing a degree in chemical engineering at this institution averaged 37 per annum. Over the same period, completions averaged 29 per annum. DEEWR projections suggest graduate numbers will be at a similar level in both 2008 and 2009. An additional potential source of supply is skilled migration, although in the case of chemical engineers this is not significant.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Few vacancies for chemical engineers were advertised in the previous six months. Of the small number of vacancies identified for this report, one position was filled without difficulty, while the other was withdrawn due to the economic downturn. Both vacancies attracted large numbers of applicants, including people from interstate and from the mining industry. Feedback from employers cold-canvassed for this report suggest that current demand for chemical engineers is low and there were no reports of either recruitment difficulties or unfilled vacancies amongst these additional contacts. Moreover, there was anecdotal evidence that some chemical engineers had recently been laid-off as a result of the worsening economic conditions. Overall, the research findings indicate that underlying demand for chemical engineers is relatively low and there was no evidence that the occupation is currently in shortage.

Labour market outlook

Demand for chemical engineers is expected to remain weak over the short term given the unfavourable outlook for industries which are major employers. At the same time, supply levels are projected to remain stable and therefore a shortage of chemical engineers is unlikely to emerge during the next twelve months.