

<b>Earth Science Technical Officer</b>		<b>Western Australia</b>
ASCO Code: 3112-13		February 2007
<b>Labour market rating</b>	No shortage	
<b>Comment</b>		

### **Occupational demand**

The Department of Treasury and Finance mid-year review forecasts the WA economy to continue to grow strongly. During 2005-06 the value of minerals and natural gas/petroleum produced in WA was \$43.2 billion (\$28 billion minerals and \$15.2 billion natural gas/petroleum), a 29 per cent increase in the value of output the previous year. This industry contributes approximately 30 per cent of Gross State Product, 80 per cent of WA's export income and one-sixth of employment. WA hosts 560 commercial mineral projects, embracing 1222 operating mine sites that produce over fifty different minerals (mainly iron ore, alumina, nickel, gold, base metals copper, lead, zinc, and mineral sands), and has 67 operating oil and gas fields.

Earth Science Technical Officers collect and test earth and water samples, record observations and analyse data in support of geologists, geophysicists and hydrologists.

### **Occupational supply**

Earth science technical officers usually need a TAFE or equivalent Diploma or at least three years relevant experience for this technical field and laboratory work. However, geological assistants (also called "geotechs") who help exploration geologists in the field and "pit technicians" who help in mine site operations usually do not have formal training and they are trained entirely on the job by their employer.

The WA Water Corporation offers a small number of trainee hydrographer positions to applicants who complete a Certificate IV in Hydrography through practical physical and theoretical on-the-job training.

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

Ninety four per cent of vacancies surveyed were filled, with position mainly for work with mining, laboratory services, drilling, and surveying companies and the Water Corporation. More than 60 per cent of vacancies were located in regional areas and most of the Perth-based positions involved travel to regional areas. Employers reported that their advertised positions usually attracted plenty of applicants. However, many lacked relevant industry experience and/or technical skills specific to the job. Slightly more than 15 per cent of candidates were considered to be suitable, with an average 2.8 suitable applicants per vacancy. Although employers indicated that applicants with well developed analytical skills are hard to find in the Goldfields region, they fill entry level technician and on-the-job trained positions and use fly in/fly out people for some drilling and surveying services. Some employers who require people with a technical tertiary degree indicated that applicants with poor communication and reporting skills were unsuitable.

The WA Labour Economics Office has not previously assessed this occupation.

### **Labour market outlook**

A high level of activity in the WA resources sector is expected to continue over the next six to 12 months. The WA Department of Industry and Resources has estimated more than \$81 billion is pledged or planned for future resources projects in WA, therefore, demand for earth science technical officers is likely to be steady. No shortage of earth science technical officers is anticipated over the next six to 12 months.