

Electrical Engineering Associate Professionals		South Australia
ASCO Code: 3123	March 2007	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

In 2006, there were approximately 600 electrical engineering associates employed in South Australia. ABS Census data show that over 30 per cent were employed in the manufacturing industry in 2001. Other major employing industries include the electricity, gas and water supply industry (18 per cent), construction industry (16 per cent) and property and business services (11 per cent). Although business levels in the State's manufacturing sector are currently subdued, the State has experienced a considerable increase in electricity related engineering construction activity. According to the ABS, there was a sharp increase in the value of electricity generation, transmission and pipelines construction in the four quarters to the September quarter 2006. The value of work yet to be done also increased during this period suggesting that engineering construction activity levels will remain high in the short to medium term. DEEWR's Skilled Vacancies Index data show that the number of newspaper vacancies for electrical engineering associates has remained steady over the past three years.

Occupational supply

The major source of supply into this occupation is through completion of trade training. According to the 2001 ABS Census, around 61 per cent of electrical engineering associates have Certificate III (trade) or IV as their highest qualification. Another major source of supply is graduates of the Advanced Diploma of Electrical Engineering offered by SA TAFE. Approximately 40 per cent of students are tradespeople seeking to upgrade their qualifications. Most tradespeople only complete the minimum modules required to obtain a Diploma in Engineering and therefore do not undertake further studies to acquire the Advanced Diploma. Around half of students that are non-tradespersons do not complete their studies. An average of nine persons per annum completed the Advanced Diploma in the period 2002 to 2005, but in 2006 there were three completions. The number of commencements has also fallen sharply in the last two years. In addition to supply to the occupation from formal training, there was a net inflow from overseas migration of seven electrical engineering associates in 2005-06. Although a small number, this represents a significant increase on previous years.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for electrical engineering associates indicated that 18 per cent of vacancies were filled within six weeks. It therefore appears that significant recruitment difficulties exist. Employers reported less difficulty attracting graduates than in recruiting experienced personnel. On average, employers received around seven applicants 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. A number of employers reported receiving applications from overseas but these applicants were deemed unsuitable due to poor English language skills. Employers cited growth in demand as the major factor contributing to current skill shortages. There was also concern that graduates and some experienced personnel may chase higher paying jobs in the mining industry and therefore exacerbate shortages in other industries in the State.

Labour market outlook

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. As a consequence, demand for electrical engineering associates is expected to grow and current shortages are likely to continue.