

Boat Builder and Repairer		South Australia (SA)
ASCO Code: 4981-13	September 2006	
Labour market rating	No Shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

Boat builder and repairer is a specialised occupation, with around 140 employed persons at the time of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2001 Census. There are only a small number of boat manufacturers operating in South Australia and there are mixed reports of activity levels across the industry. Demand for larger fishing boats has declined due to a reduction in fish stocks in traditional fishing zones, while increased competition from boat builders outside of SA has also impacted on the local market. Higher fuel costs also appear to have dampened demand for new boats. However, some contacts report increased demand for services due to the development of new marinas around the state and associated higher levels of spending on pleasure craft. Demand for boat builders and repairers is difficult to measure as vacancies are rarely advertised in the newspaper, although anecdotal evidence suggests it is low.

Occupational supply

In the past decade, the number of persons commencing a contract of training in boat building and repairing has averaged around three per annum, with completions averaging around one per annum. Industry and training contacts suggest that most persons enter the occupation via informal means, with on-the-job training being the most common method of obtaining the necessary skills to work as a boat builder/repairer. Most of the training done through TAFE consists of short courses (approximately six months duration) aimed at the hobbyist, although a small number of people progress into apprenticeships for the declared vocation of shipwright.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A small number of recently advertised vacancies for a boat builders and repairers were identified for this report and not all employers was not seeking trade level qualifications. This is typical of the industry, as there is almost no trade training for boat builders conducted in South Australia, nor does it appear to be a prerequisite for entering the occupation. Moreover, ABS Census data show that over 40 per cent of boat builders and repairers did not have trade level qualifications, as at 2001. It appears that the majority of employers utilise semi-skilled assemblers (usually from a metal manufacturing background) or persons with fibreglass lamination experience. Contacts in the industry report that it is not always easy to recruit suitably skilled persons, even at this level, and it is anticipated that a new TAFE course will be in operation shortly to address current recruitment difficulties. Some employers indicated that, whilst they would like to employ more boat builders, the weakness in current order books precluded them from doing so. No unfilled vacancies for trade qualified boat builders/repairers were identified and therefore the occupation is rated as 'no shortage'.

Labour market outlook

Supply and demand conditions for this occupation are expected to remain subdued over the short-term and therefore the labour market should remain static.