

Furniture Upholsterer		Australia
ASCO Code: 4942-11	October 2006	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment		

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for furniture upholsterers was undertaken for this report. The survey suggests demand for specialist and custom upholstery skills is strong.

Overall, employers received little response to advertisements for skilled upholsterers, although some had significant interest from unqualified or semi-skilled workers.

Around 40 per cent of the surveyed vacancies were filled, with fill rates being reasonably consistent across the States and Territories. This is a slightly higher fill rate than that recorded in 2005 when slightly less than a third of surveyed vacancies were filled. The 2006 survey however shows vacancies in rural areas were more difficult to fill than those in metropolitan areas.

Overall, about three applications were received for each advertised vacancy, with one suitable applicant on average for each position. The majority of applicants who were considered by employers to be unsuitable did not have the experience sought by employers, or were unqualified. A smaller number were not considered to be suitable because they had poor work history or attitude. Many regional vacancies in particular remained unfilled, despite attracting interest from suitable applicants, as applicants were unwilling to relocate.

A number of employers believe they found it difficult to fill vacancies as the work they perform is of a specialised nature. For example, many employers were looking for tradespeople with experience in upholstery repair, 'traditional' upholstering and the production and upholstering of custom furniture.

Many employers in Western Australia and the Northern Territory mentioned furniture upholsterers are leaving the trade for employment in the mining, building and general manufacturing industries in search of higher salaries. Some employers who were unable to find suitable employees, especially those seeking specialised skills, mentioned they had recruited furniture upholsterers from overseas or were investigating the prospect of doing so.

A number of employers suggested there are fewer apprentices entering the occupation because many were looking to the mining and building industry in search of higher salaries and better conditions and those considering entering the trade were discouraged by a perceived lack of job security due to the competition provided by imported furniture. Employers also felt the occupation has a low profile and so is often overlooked as a career option.

Labour market outlook

There are no indications that the labour market for furniture upholsterers will change significantly over the next six months.