

Sheetmetal Worker (First Class)		Queensland
ASCO Code: 4124-11	September 2007	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment:		

Occupational demand

Sheetmetal workers manufacture, install and repair a range of light metal products in manufacturing firms and construction-related businesses. In particular, the demand for products such as heating, air-conditioning, and ventilation systems for an expanding number of building projects in Queensland has created steady demand for sheetmetal workers. Australian Bureau of Statistics data on the trend volume of construction work done in the State indicate that activity was 14.3 per cent higher over the year to June 2007 than it was the previous year. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Skilled Vacancies Index (SVI) for Queensland shows that over the year to August 2007, the number of newspaper vacancies for sheetmetal workers grew by 11 per cent.

Occupational supply

From 2007, the State Government fully implemented the competency-based training system to allow earlier completion for a selection of apprentices. Consequently, the expected timeframe for gaining qualifications as a sheetmetal worker in Queensland has been reduced from 48 to 42 months. Training is available at ten registered organisations across the State. Department of Employment, Training and the Arts data show that prior to 2004 the average number of students enrolling in training for this trade was 160 each year. Since that time, the numbers have increased by almost 70 per cent to reach an annual average intake of 270. Wastage from training has typically represented around 40 per cent of apprentices, which has resulted in an average number of 100 newly qualified sheetmetal workers entering the labour market each year for the last three years. Overseas migration may have supplemented supply to this trade with data from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship showing a net gain to the State of 17 self-identified sheetmetal workers in 2006-07.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Only 25 per cent of vacancies in this year's study were filled within four weeks of advertising with all contacts reporting increasing difficulties recruiting sheetmetal workers over the last 12 months. Approximately 80 per cent of applicants were considered unsuitable because they did not have the necessary qualifications, skills or experience for the advertised role. Several employers reported that in cases where they could not place a qualified and experienced sheetmetal worker they were accepting applicants who had skills that could be readily developed. Employers from fabrication workshops reported competition from mining and commercial construction businesses as light metal welding skills typically held by sheetmetal workers are in strong demand in these sectors and are remunerated well. Given the lack of success in filling vacancies, a number of employers reported that they had abandoned newspaper advertising and were using 'word of mouth' as their primary recruitment method, in which case the SVI may not fully reflect the increasing demand for this trade. Respondents from this study directly linked their recruitment difficulties to the low number of apprenticeship completions and the high number of sheetmetal workers moving into heavy fabrication positions where remuneration is often higher.

Labour market outlook

As Queensland's population continues to expand, the number of industrial, commercial and residential structures being built is also expected to grow. Preliminary data for building in the pipeline in Queensland show that the value of work to be done in June 2007 was 15.1 per cent higher than it was in June 2006. Demand for sheetmetal workers is therefore likely to remain strong. While there have been increases to student numbers over the last few years, the outlook for this trade is not expected to change until the additional apprentices begin to enter the labour market from the end of 2007.