

Aircraft Maintenance Engineer		Tasmania
ASCO Code: 4114-11, 15	September 2007	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment		
<i>There are shortages of aircraft maintenance engineers across the board, but there are particular problems with avionics in that there is only one specialist to service the whole State.</i>		

Occupational demand

There were a total of six aircraft maintenance engineers (AMEs) counted at the 2001 Census in Tasmania, in the fields of mechanics structures and avionics. However there were another 36 aircraft maintenance engineers “not further defined” by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This means that the ABS did not have sufficient information to decide what type of AME they were, but on the basis of industry comments it appears as though the vast majority of them would have been mechanical and structural engineers. According to industry sources the major airlines do not have any permanent maintenance staff in Tasmania, but fly in staff as required or occasionally use local contractors. It was not possible to confirm this with the major airlines due to the difficulties involved in contacting them. Demand for AMEs in Tasmania is therefore primarily for those experienced in turbo-prop planes and helicopters. Industry sources advise that it is a regulatory requirement that light planes are serviced every 100 hours, which creates additional demand for maintenance services. Some of the small airlines servicing the Bass Strait islands have their planes maintained in Melbourne.

Occupational supply

There have been very few apprentice aircraft maintenance engineers employed in Tasmania in recent years. The industry is very highly regulated and in addition to an apprenticeship, AMEs are also required to complete a range of exams depending on the type of maintenance they are doing and the type of aircraft they are working on. In addition all repair and maintenance work must be certified by a Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (LAME), who have even more licensing and registration requirements placed upon them by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) The process of acquiring the appropriate levels of qualifications and licensing is not only complex but also very expensive, according to industry sources, and can act as a disincentive for people to either enter or remain in the industry.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

No employers had advertised in the lead up to this report but some had attempted to recruit in the last 12 months. Two employers were successful in their recruitment efforts. All of those contacted indicated that they felt there were shortages of both AMEs and LAMEs in Tasmania. A number of contacts made the point that salary levels were not adequate for the level of responsibility that maintenance staff faced, which caused recruitment and retention problems. Employers who ran helicopter services also faced particular problems due to the specific licensing requirements associated with those aircraft. In addition, the area of avionics is particularly difficult with only one contractor servicing the whole State, resulting in many firms having to fly in mainland contractors.

Labour market outlook

The small size of the industry, the limited amount of local training, and the onerous regulatory requirements for this occupation were given as the main reasons for shortages. These factors are likely to remain unchanged for the next 12 months.