

Boat Builder and Repairer	Queensland
ASCO Code: 4981-13	September 2006
Labour market rating	Shortage
Comment:	

Occupational demand

Demand for boat builders and repairers in Queensland remains high, based on the continuing growth of the State's marine construction industry. According to industry data from November 2005, Queensland companies accounted for around 40 per cent of Australia's turnover of recreational boats and 67 per cent of national exports. Expansion in the industry is being driven in large part by the rapid growth in both commercial and recreational boating across Australia, especially in Queensland. Industry contacts attribute this to changing lifestyles and strong growth in the State's population, supported by heavy interstate migration to coastal areas. In addition, the local industry has been able to capture and develop other lucrative markets, such as the servicing and construction of large cruising yachts from around Australia and the world.

Occupational supply

Specific apprenticeship training for this trade has been largely confined to South East Queensland due to the small number of institutions that have offered the Certificate III in Marine Craft Construction. According to Queensland Department of Employment and Training figures, there were 143 new commencements and 41 completions of marine craft construction apprenticeships in 2005. In practice, much of the work of qualified boat builders may be undertaken by workers with formal trade or trades assistant level skills in other areas – such as sheet metal work, cabinetmaking or fibreglass laminating – coupled with specific experience in the industry.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Industry representatives and employers contacted for this year's survey confirmed that demand for boats has grown enormously in Queensland over recent years. They indicated that larger employers have secured rapidly growing volumes of work and have drawn in most of the skilled labour available, which has resulted in loss of skilled staff and increasingly serious recruitment difficulties for smaller companies. Contacts also reported that the booming resources sector in the State has contributed to the shortage of skilled tradespersons in their industry, since some trade skills needed in boatbuilding (eg welding aluminium-hulled vessels) are in demand in this sector and the rates of pay on offer cannot be matched. Employers said that interest can be high for vacancies in boat building but that there has been a persistent shortfall of appropriately skilled workers to fill the available positions. Overall, only six per cent of the advertised vacancies included in this year's survey were filled within four weeks of advertising. Employers also pointed out that shortages are typically more acute at this time of year due to a large increase in work as they stock up to meet the summer demand.

Labour market outlook

The view given by employers and industry contacts is that the growing customer demand for boats will continue unabated, ranging from small dinghies to the luxury end of the market. The Queensland State Government reports an ongoing increase in the number of registrations and larger boat building companies have reportedly secured major construction contracts. Demand for boat building skills is therefore expected to continue to grow at close to present levels. At the same time, supply from specific apprenticeship training is likely to continue to fall short of demand, while other trade skill streams that contribute to the supply of boat builders are suffering from their own shortages and will continue to be subject to fierce competition from other industries. In view of this, the present shortages are expected to persist for at least the next few years.