

Mine Deputy	New South Wales (NSW)
ASCO Code: 3129-15	March 2007
Labour market rating	Recruitment difficulty
Comment: <i>Recruitment difficulties are prevalent in the Western Coalfield and Gunnedah Basin</i>	

Occupational demand

For the purposes of this report, mine deputies include those holding the statutory positions of mine deputy in underground coal mines, examiner in open-cut mines and those holding equivalent non-statutory positions in metalliferous and other mines. Demand for mine deputies in 2006 benefited from high commodity prices, increased mining production and the opening of a number of new mines in NSW. Employment across all occupations in coal mines increased by 13 per cent in the year. Coal production increased by two per cent in 2006 following growth of four per cent in 2005. The NSW Department of Primary Industries estimates that production of gold and copper also rose.

Occupational supply

The statutory position of mine deputy requires three years of mining experience and the completion of additional certificates and examinations. The statutory position of open-cut examiner requires an appropriate formal qualification (or equivalent experience), an additional one-to-three years of experience depending on the qualification held, and the completion of further certificates and examinations. Some employers seek to develop an internal labour market for this occupation by identifying mine workers who have appropriate experience and leadership skills and encouraging them to complete the necessary certificates and examinations. The number of persons gaining the relevant certificates of competence increased to 111 in 2006, which compares with an average of 34 a year over the previous three years. The increase in persons sitting for the exams in 2006 was due to the introduction of new State laws to improve mine safety, the wider availability of preparatory courses, and the strong growth in mining employment. However, not all persons who gain a certificate of competence work in the relevant statutory position.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently attempted to recruit mine deputies found that 89 per cent of vacancies were filled within six weeks of starting recruitment action. On average there were 2.5 applicants per vacancy and 1.5 suitable applicants per vacancy. Most employers used a combination of recruitment methods including recruitment agencies, the local and metropolitan press, and informal industry networks. Several employers ran internal training programs for interested mine workers and then chose the best performers for the available positions. While a large majority of employers were able to fill their vacancies, several expressed concern over the number and quality of applicants. The consensus of employers was that the main difficulties in filling these positions were finding experienced workers with the necessary communication and leadership skills and then encouraging them to take on the additional responsibility, as many miners perceive that the differential in pay is not adequate compensation. Nevertheless, all the surveyed employers operating in the Hunter and Southern Coalfields filled their vacancies within the survey period. Recruitment difficulties were more evident in the Western Coalfield and Gunnedah Basin which are often perceived as less attractive than mines located close to larger urban centres.

Labour market outlook

With a favourable outlook for key commodity prices and mining production over the short term, demand for mine deputies is likely to remain strong in 2007. Although the supply of persons completing the necessary certificates of competence for statutory positions continues to increase, difficulties in encouraging qualified workers to take up positions in the less popular regions of NSW are likely to persist in the short term.

Mine Deputy		Victoria
ASCO Code: 3129-15	February 2007	
Labour market rating	No Shortage	
Comment:		

Occupational demand

Demand for mine deputies is primarily determined by the level of world demand for commodities, reserves of natural resources and population growth. Victoria lacks many of the resource strengths that are providing the robust growth to Western Australia and Queensland. However, the Latrobe Valley coalfields contain extensive deposits of brown coal and there are numerous goldfields across the state, including areas around Bendigo and Ballarat. There is also developing mineral sand mining activity within the Victorian section of the Murray Basin and at the Douglas mine. According to the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) brown coal production has remained stable and refined gold production has increased by 35t in 2005-2006. There has been strong employment growth nationally in the mining industry, increasing by 9.5 per cent over 2006, and similarly strong in Victoria, expanding by 7.6 per cent during the same period. ABARE predicts that overall mining sector output will rise by 8.7 per cent during 2006-2007.

Occupational supply

There is limited specific information regarding the occupational supply of mine deputies in Victoria. From data available, figures suggest over 30 per cent of employed metallurgical technicians and mine deputies have Certificate III and IV qualifications. DEWR estimates the percentage of persons in Victoria who have completed a traineeship relating to extractive industries, metalliferous mining or coal operations increased by approximately 100 per cent from 2004-2005 to 2005-2006. However, completions in 2005-2006 have returned to similar levels as previous years. There are no legal requirements for licensing or registration for mine deputies in Victoria.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

The Survey of Employers who Recently Advertised (SERA) found approximately 71 per cent of vacancies were filled by employers. The average number of suitable applicants per vacancy was 2.6 and the average number of unsuitable applicants per vacancy was seven. A majority of applicants were considered unsuitable by employers due to a lack of specific Australian mining industry experience. Employers surveyed commented that Australian experience is important to ensure the mine deputy is up to date with legislation, such as the *Occupational Health and Safety (Mines) Regulations 2002*. Employers stated that despite the current boom in mining activity in other states and overseas creating competition with Victoria for suitable applicants within the mining industry, this has not had as significant impact in the ability to fill mining deputy positions as has been the case with other mining professions. Some employers attributed this to the lower qualifications (or in some instances no qualifications) required for the occupation, as opposed to those necessary for other professions, such as mining engineers who require a bachelor degree. Employers surveyed considered the occupational turnover amongst existing mine deputies to be low. This was generally attributed to the impact upon family in relation to relocation, and wanting to stay with the company to work up the corporate ladder.

Labour market outlook

The relatively balanced labour market for mine deputies in Victoria is expected to continue over the next six months.

Mine Deputy	Queensland
ASCO Code: 3129-15	February 2007
Labour market rating	Shortage
Comment:	

Occupational demand

Mine deputies oversee the safety of mining operations and work practices. The role includes monitoring compliance with occupational health and safety regulations and the direct supervision of working miners, and may include providing input into associated mining functions such as planning and project management. Data from the Queensland Department of Mines and Energy indicate that there are approximately two hundred and seventy active mines in Queensland that are likely to employ mine deputies, and larger mines typically have several deputies who work in shifts. Overall employment in the mining industry has increased rapidly in Queensland over the last two years, with Labour Force Survey data showing growth of almost 14 per cent in annual average terms between the year to November 2005 and the year to November 2006.

Occupational supply

In the past, workers have entered this occupation by completing a diploma or higher qualification coupled with relevant on the job experience, or by gaining substantial operational and supervisory experience in the industry from a trade or technical background. Two examples of relevant training courses available in Queensland are the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE's Diploma and Advanced Diploma courses in Underground Coal Mining Management, which presently have 7 and 32 enrolments respectively. These courses are intended to develop personnel who already have some relevant experience since they are restricted to workers currently employed at mine sites.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Only six per cent of the vacancies included in this year's survey were filled within six weeks of advertising and less than one third of applicants were regarded as suitable by employers. Applicants were mainly deemed unsuitable because they did not have enough experience in Australia or enough experience overall, or did not have the specific skills required for the position. Generally, employers were cautious about employing overseas applicants since they can lack knowledge of Australian standards and requirements and can have difficulty in adjusting to life and work in remote areas. Several employers advised that it was more difficult to recruit mine deputies than it was twelve months previously. Some employers and recruitment agencies reported approaching employees of other companies directly when normal advertising fails, although candidates with the qualifications and experience needed to fill more senior roles are usually retained by their employers with attractive remuneration. Contacts commonly advised that they would consider employing people without specific qualifications if they have relevant experience and advanced team management skills or other occupational health and safety qualifications. The potential supply pool can therefore be variable, depending on the flexibility of the employer. Generally, an applicant's experience was regarded as more important than formal qualifications, which are usually gained on the job. Some contacts said that they would like to see greater use of school-based and other apprenticeship models in developing future supply for this occupation.

Labour market outlook

Mining activity in Queensland is currently at high levels and is expected to expand further throughout 2007 and 2008, creating additional demand for mine deputies. The occupation is typically seen by Queensland employers as a job role undertaken by highly specialised and experienced workers. Demand is very difficult to meet because of the nature of the role and the very limited supply of suitable candidates available. The present shortage of mine deputies is therefore expected to continue for at least the next few years.