

<b>Petroleum &amp; Gas Plant Operator</b>		<b>South Australia</b>
<b>ASCO Code:</b> 4987-13	September 2006	
<b>Labour market rating</b>	No Shortage	
<b>Comment</b>		

### **Occupational demand**

Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data show that there were around 300 petroleum and gas plant operators employed in South Australia in 2001. Many of these were employed at the Port Stanvac oil refinery, which closed in mid-2003. Consequently, both employment opportunities and demand for petroleum and gas plant operators have declined. Nonetheless, South Australia has significant reserves of oil and gas in the Cooper Basin, and petroleum and gas plant operators are employed at production facilities in remote areas of the state. The extent of recent demand for such workers is unknown, although DEWR's count of skilled vacancies indicates that overall demand conditions for petroleum and gas plant operators within South Australia appear weak.

### **Occupational supply**

Apart from a one-off spike in 2003, annual training completions for petroleum and gas plant operators were minimal during the period between 1995 and 2005. It is therefore assumed that employment growth and/or replacement demand has been satisfied largely via informal training arrangements (eg on-the-job) or skilled migration, or a combination of the two.

### **Employer and industry comments/current labour market**

Only four recently advertised vacancies for petroleum and gas plant operators were identified for this report, and there were no reported recruitment difficulties for any of these positions. Suitability for employment was dependent on applicants possessing electrical or mechanical qualifications and/or previous plant operator experience – around 40 per cent of applicants were able to meet these criteria. Unsuccessful applicants were rejected due to lack of recent/suitable work experience or an inability to work the required hours (ie shift work). Vacancies arose due to a mixture of new and replacement demand. While the above results suggest that there is currently no shortage of petroleum and gas plant operators in South Australia, it should be noted that one of the state's major employers could not be contacted for this report.

### **Labour market outlook**

Expenditure on petroleum exploration within South Australia grew 65 per cent over the four quarters to June 2006, reaching its highest level in almost two decades. Increased exploration activity could potentially lead to higher petroleum production output and an associated rise in demand for petroleum plant operators. However, it may be several years before the latter occurs, assuming that new commercially viable oil deposits are actually discovered. In the short-term, demand conditions are expected to remain stable and therefore a shortage of petroleum and gas plant operators is unlikely to emerge.