

<b>Furniture Finisher</b>		<b>Australia</b>
<b>ASCO Code:</b> 4929-13	September 2006	
<b>Labour market rating</b>	Shortage	
<b>Comment</b>		

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

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for furniture finishers was undertaken for this report. As no advertised vacancies were found in Tasmania and the Northern Territory in the survey period, employers of furniture finishers in those locations were cold canvassed. More than half of the surveyed vacancies were advertised with the title French Polisher.

A third of the advertised vacancies were filled within four weeks of advertising, down from slightly less than half when this occupation was last assessed in detail in late 2005. About half the surveyed vacancies had been advertised more than once over a period of weeks before they were filled.

A quarter of advertised vacancies were unfilled despite employers receiving interest from suitable applicants because the applicant: did not turn up for an interview or to start work; left with little explanation soon after starting work; failed to contact the employer after being offered the job or withdrew because of the location or the hours of work.

The vacancy fill rate was fairly consistent across Australia with the exception of Western Australia, where employers filled almost three quarters of their vacancies. The experience of employers who had advertised for furniture finishers did not vary significantly between regional and metropolitan areas.

An average of about four applications were received for each vacancy, but overall, the number of suitable applicants matched the number of vacancies, with employers considering only one applicant to be suitable per vacancy. Applicants were considered unsuitable by employers for a range of reasons, but most unsuitable candidates were unqualified or lacked relevant skills and experience. In addition, some did not turn up for interview or trial or they had poor references suggesting a poor attitude to work or low quality workmanship. Employers commented on the number of applications from people who did not have any knowledge of furniture finishing.

While most employers interviewed employ or are planning to employ apprentices, many noted they have difficulty recruiting young people to the trade because they feel it has a low public profile.

Employers contacted for this report commented french polishing is less common in general furniture manufacturing and is most used in antique furniture restoration, quality timber furniture manufacturing, coffin and casket manufacturing and marine cabin fit outs.

While many employers mentioned the poor quality of applicants overall, they also noted their businesses have a relatively low turnover of tradespeople, with many employees having been with the same business for several years.

### **Labour market outlook**

There is no evidence to suggest there will be a significant change in the level of demand or supply to this trade over the next six months, consequently the shortage of furniture finishers is expected to persist.