

Fibrous Plasterer		South Australia
ASCO Code: 3332-11	August 2009	
Labour market rating:	No shortage	
Comment:		

Occupational demand

ABS Census data shows that employment of fibrous plasterers increased 23 per cent over the five years to 2006. Almost 98 per cent of the occupation are employed in the construction industry and therefore demand is responsive to building investment levels. Apart from a modest downturn in late 2006 and early 2007, South Australian building activity has been expanding strongly since 2001. The total value of building work done (in trend terms) increased for eight consecutive quarters to the March quarter 2009 (the latest available). Anecdotal evidence suggests that building activity in the housing sector remained robust in the period since the most recent ABS data, but there has been a decline in the commercial sector. DEEWR's count of skilled vacancies revealed that the number of newspaper advertisements for fibrous plasterers remained steady over the four financial years to 2008-09. ABS Labour Force Survey data (averaged over four quarters) recorded a similar trend with no change in employment in the year to May 2009.

Occupational supply

Many fibrous plasterers enter the occupation via on-the-job training rather than undertaking a formal apprenticeship. ABS 2006 Census data shows that only 39 per cent of fibrous plasterers possessed Certificate III level qualifications or higher. Training commencements have improved in recent years, although there is a high drop-out rate and annual apprenticeship completions are low compared to most other building trades. In the five years to 2008, completions averaged around 12 per annum compared to an average of 29 commencements per annum for the corresponding period four years earlier. DEEWR projections suggest that supply from apprenticeship training will remain at around current levels. Skilled migration is not a significant source of supply.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A survey of employers who had recently advertised for fibrous plasterers showed that 62 per cent of vacancies were filled within four weeks, compared to a fill rate of 72 per cent a year ago. The average response rate to vacancies was relatively high, with over 12 applicants per vacant position. Several contacts attributed the large response rate to a slowdown in commercial construction activity. In some cases, vacancies were filled by means other than through newspaper advertising, such as via industry contacts or direct poaching. Despite the high number of job applicants, most were considered unsuitable for employment due to lack of suitable skills and experience. Employers generally did not require trade qualifications but accepted applicants who could demonstrate suitable levels of skill in areas such as ceiling and wall fixing and flushing, and cornice fixing. Most employers advised that labour turnover for this occupation is very high. A majority of firms reported having sufficient work to keep them busy for several months. Apart from one contact who required tradespeople to work outside the metropolitan area, all other employers were able to find the skilled labour they needed and had no unfilled positions when contacted. Consequently, there does not appear to be a shortage of fibrous plasterers in South Australia.

Labour market outlook

With regards to labour demand, the value of total building approvals remains below the level reached a year earlier. Furthermore, overall economic activity across the State has been impacted by the global economic downturn and consequently construction activity will likely continue to be more subdued in 2009 than in previous years. Annual training completions are projected to remain around current levels over the next two years. Therefore shortages of fibrous plasterers are not anticipated to emerge over the next 12 months.