

AUSTRALIA

March 2009

3231-11, 12 Aircraft Maintenance Engineer, Avionics and Mechanical (review)

Review rating:

Avionics; Shortage

Mechanical; Shortage

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

SERA research and employer comments present a mixed picture of what is a diverse labour market. Overall, there is not enough evidence to conclude that the historical shortage of Aircraft Maintenance Engineer AMEs has come to an end. Almost one third of employers surveyed filled their vacancies within four weeks, with an average of 0.6 suitable applicants per vacancy. These numbers include one employer in Victoria who received three suitable applicants for 25 vacancies. The fill rate and numbers of suitable applicants are very similar to those recorded by Labour Economics Offices when they undertook research between in August and November 2008. Employers experienced problems recruiting both mechanical and avionics AMEs.

The economic crisis has impacted negatively on the General Aviation sector, with several mid-sized companies ceasing operations. This seems to have eased labour shortages for AMEs working on the more common types of small aircraft. However, due to licensing requirements, these personnel are not necessarily able to transfer to work in other industry sectors. Employer comments indicate that there are ongoing shortages of AMEs qualified to work on less common General Aviation aircraft types, and for some types of military aircraft.

The situation regarding large passenger aircraft is also mixed. Qantas and one large maintenance contract company report they are experiencing ongoing shortages of AMEs qualified to work on large aircraft. They have not noticed an easing of labour shortages due to the economic downturn, with continued demand driven by the introduction of new aircraft at Qantas, as well as ongoing heavy maintenance requirements of older aircraft. In contrast, Virgin Blue currently have a freeze on new recruitment due to economic conditions, and report they have had no difficulty recruiting AMEs in the recent past.

Labour Market Outlook

Overall shortages of AMEs may ease if the economic downturn has a more pronounced impact on the larger airlines than has been experienced to date.