

<b>Metal Machinist (First Class)</b>	<b>Queensland</b>
ASCO Code: 4112-13	September 2007
Labour market rating	Shortage
<b>Comment:</b> <i>Low apprenticeship numbers are contributing to the ongoing shortages. The shortage of machinists is more evident in regional Queensland.</i>	

### **Occupational demand**

Metal machinists set up and operate manual, automated and computer-controlled machines to cut, shape and form metal stock and castings using drawings, specifications and CAD systems. The manufacturing, mining, marine and aeronautical industries are major employers of machinists and each of these sectors has expanded over the last year. In particular, Queensland's manufacturing firms are experiencing strong activity from the flow-on demand coming from the mineral resources sector. The Australian Industry Group-PricewaterhouseCoopers *Survey of Australian Manufacturing* shows that manufacturing production in Queensland increased in all four quarters over the year to June 2007.

### **Occupational supply**

Data from the Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts show the average number of students entering metal machining courses since 2000 has been eleven per year, with an average annual number of five completions over the same time. In a bid to attract more students, the State Government and industry bodies have launched several promotional campaigns. As of September 2006, machining apprentices moved to an apprenticeship program designed for a general trade outcome with specific training streams in machining. In January 2007, an accelerated program was introduced, shortening the expected duration of training for this trade from 48 to 42 months. Although the exact number of machinists is not identified, supply may have been supported by overseas migration with data from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship showing a net gain to the State of 274 self-identified metal fitters and machinists in 2006-07. Labour Force Survey figures suggest a corresponding role for interstate migration with an increase of more than 500 persons to the metal fitter and machinist workforce over the year to May 2007.

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

Overall, 50 per cent of the advertised vacancies for machinists in this year's survey were filled within four weeks of advertising. The fill rate in regional Queensland was reported to be significantly lower with only 25 per cent of employers filling their vacancies. Almost half of the applicants were considered unsuitable because they did not have qualifications, experience or adequate communication skills. Several employers in this study also noted that there has been an increase in business specialisation, which has reduced the number of applicants with generalised machining abilities. Regional employers attributed their employment difficulties to a shortage of apprentices and an inability to compete with the high remuneration offered in the mining industry. Most employers reported a willingness to indenture apprentices to assist with supply, but noted that attracting apprentices was difficult. Employers expressed concern that the number of tradespeople retiring will soon exceed the number of apprentices entering the trade.

### **Labour market outlook**

The Queensland Government has recently announced a \$10 billion capital works and infrastructure program and the Queensland Resource Council is forecasting a lift in base metal exports and continuing growth in coal exports. These developments, along with the expansion of the marine and aeronautical industries in this State indicate that demand for machinists will continue. Without significant increases to apprenticeship or immigration numbers to this trade, the present State-wide shortage of metal machinists is expected to continue.