

Building Associate	Queensland
ASCO Code: 3121-11	December 2006
Labour market rating	Shortage
Comment: <i>Building associates with both work experience and a qualification are in particular shortage.</i>	

Occupational demand

Building Associates can be employed by government or in the private sector building industry. Queensland is currently experiencing high levels of building activity around the State, supported by the housing needs of a growing population and recent strong growth in the non-residential building sector. The continuing strength of building in Queensland and a solid immediate outlook for the industry are indicated by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on building activity and approvals, the Westpac Building Research Index and the near-record volume of approved work waiting to be done. Demand for building associates is directly linked to the level of building activity in the State, since their services in estimation, site supervision and contract management are essential to the industry.

Occupational supply

People working as building associates come from a range of backgrounds and many do not hold formal qualifications. A Diploma of Building is offered at over six TAFE colleges across Queensland, but many students undertaking studies do so while already working within the building industry, effectively in the role of a building associate. Most established workers have experience in the industry and often hold a trade level qualification. Supply has also been supported through overseas migration, with a net gain to Queensland from permanent and long term temporary migration of 31 persons seen in 2005-06 in the building and cartographic associate professionals group.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Employer and industry contacts in this year's survey reported that vacancies for building associates were filled by people who have relevant skills or skills which are transferable to the occupation. While there is a formal qualification, employers are often happy to take employees with a good work ethic and a suitable employment background who can be trained into the role. Despite this, less than ten per cent of the surveyed vacancies were filled within four weeks of advertising. Employers offered career development and on-the-job training, along with substantial salaries, to attract experienced persons. Some employers said that qualified quantity surveyors have taken roles as building estimators, given that the pay levels on offer can be quite high. Employers more commonly reported that they had taken on trade-qualified persons with some estimating skills and/or experience as a builder to meet their needs. Employer preference for local knowledge of the building industry and regulations can make the option of looking overseas for possible candidates less attractive to employers. With no apprenticeship available, some employers reported recruiting cadet estimators, although it takes at least six months for them to do basic work competently.

Labour market outlook

Indications from industry and employer contacts are that high levels of building activity will continue in Queensland into next year. With levels of residential construction holding up well in Queensland, supported by population growth, and continuing strength in the non-residential building sector, demand for building associates will remain high and could grow further. Employers have responded by developing more skilled building associates on the job, given the shortage of experienced workers, but their supply is likely to remain limited for at least a few more years. The present shortages are therefore expected to continue in Queensland through 2007.