

Architectural Associate	New South Wales (NSW)
ASCO Code: 3121-13	December 2006
Labour market rating	Shortage.
Comment: <i>Shortages are evident in Sydney and a number of regional areas of NSW.</i>	

Occupational demand

Demand for architectural associates in 2006 was adversely affected by subdued residential building activity. However, employer and industry contacts stated that some residential development work was continuing and solid non-residential activity was helping to support demand for the occupation. The value of building work done fell in 2005-06, with a significant drop in the residential sector partly offset by solid growth in non-residential building. Building activity was weak in Sydney but grew moderately in regional NSW. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) Skilled Vacancies Index shows that newspaper vacancies for the profession have declined significantly from a peak in 2003 and were particularly low in the second half of 2006. Employer and industry contacts stated that the limited success of newspaper advertising had induced most employers to turn to other methods of recruiting architectural associates.

Occupational supply

The number of persons commencing certificate and diploma courses in architectural technology increased substantially in 2002 and has remained stable since then. Completions from these courses have been steady at about 350 persons a year since 2003. However, the consensus of employers contacted for this report was that a significant proportion of drafting graduates go on to university studies or enter related drafting occupations. No separate immigration data are available for architectural associates. However, net overseas immigration to NSW of building, architectural and surveying associates as a whole has been 10 to 15 persons a year for the last five years, indicating that net immigration is not a significant source of supply to the occupation.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for architectural associates found that 47 per cent of vacancies were filled within the survey period. Most surveyed employers were seeking associates with experience in particular sectors of the industry and competent in specific software and, as a result, there was often a mismatch between the skills required for a position and those possessed by qualified applicants. Several employers stated that the demands of current projects precluded them from providing additional training to semi-suitable applicants and that they would re-arrange work loads, turn down new projects, or engage design-firms on contract until they were able to locate an employee who exactly matched their requirements. Even when applicants did have the necessary technical skills and experience, employers often were unable to meet their salary expectations. (One employer offered a position to five suitable applicants who all rejected the offer.)

In many cases, however, employers weren't able to attract a single suitable applicant to vacancies. Employers stated that most applicants were either yet to complete the relevant course or had no experience working with Australian building codes. One employer who required a senior draftsman trialled several qualified and experienced applicants but found that their drafting and technical skills were not of a sufficient standard for the position.

Labour market outlook

The Construction Forecasting Council expects building activity to remain fairly flat in 2006-07 but to recover strongly in 2007-08. In view of this, demand for architectural associates should increase from the second half of 2007. No significant increase in supply from local training or net immigration is expected over the short term and shortages are likely to persist in 2007.