

Metal Machinist (First Class)		Northern Territory
ASCO Code: 4112-13	August 2007	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment:		

Occupational demand

ABS Census data show that there were 33 metal machinists employed in the NT in 2001, just two more than recorded in 1996. ABS labour force data indicates growth in the number of metal fitters and machinists from 2004 to 2007. However, metal fitters account for the bulk of employment so any change in metal machinists may be masked by them. Although engineering construction activity in the NT has been dramatically boosted by major projects over the past few years, the metal machinist's trade remains small and specialised with demand for this occupation not as high as other metal trades, such as fitters. DEEWR's Skilled Vacancies Index shows that advertisements have declined slightly in 2006 and 2007 after reaching a peak in 2005.

Occupational supply

The number of apprentices undertaking mechanical engineering trades training is low with commencements consistently 20 or below each year, with few (if any) of these training as metal machinists. There is a reliance on interstate recruitment, recruiting travellers to the NT and sponsoring overseas tradespeople. Some employers have overseas metal machinists working for them on skilled migration visas.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

There were very few employers who had recently advertised for metal machinists and there was very little recruitment activity for this trade over the survey period. However employers who did have vacancies had difficulty filling them and a filling rate of less than 50 per cent was achieved. Employers had difficulty attracting local applicants, and some employers advertised vacancies in interstate newspapers. Most applicants were from interstate, and some companies hired metal machinists from overseas. However, employers noted that hiring staff from overseas was not preferred as they tended to be less skilled than local workers. Some employers noted that some qualified metal machinists preferred to work as fitters based on the belief that working conditions were better for that trade. Other employers commented that there was high turnover in smaller companies as many machinists worked for a short period of time and then moved into companies offering higher salaries such as mining companies.

Labour market outlook

The strong NT economic conditions are expected to continue over the coming year. Although total demand for machinists is expected to remain low, when vacancies do arise they are expected to be very hard to fill leaving the trade in shortage.