

Boat Builder and Repairer		New South Wales (NSW)
ASCO Code: 4981-13	September 2006	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment <i>Shortages in this trade continue in both Sydney and regional NSW.</i>		

Occupational demand

The boat building industry in NSW has expanded in recent years due to increasing demand for yachts, boats, catamarans and other smaller pleasure craft. Industry contacts stated that the slower economic activity in NSW in 2006 has not had a major adverse impact on the industry as demand from overseas and the higher-end of the local market remained solid. Employers reported that tougher environmental regulations had caused some Sydney yards to close in recent years, although other yards in Sydney and elsewhere in the State had increased their output. Employers in the boat maintenance and repair sector also reported steady demand, the long-term trend towards the construction of boats from materials which require less maintenance having been offset by the increasing stock of boats.

Occupational supply

Apprenticeship completions for shipwrights and boat builders have been fairly stable at about 30 persons a year over the last four years. The training rate is 3 per cent, which is close to the average for all trades. Apprentice completions are projected to fall to about 20 in 2006-07 but should rise strongly the following year. Data from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship indicate that net immigration is not a significant source of supply to the trade. The majority of employers contacted for this report stated that turnover of employees in this occupation was low, although a significant minority pointed to increasing wastage from the trade.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Of the surveyed employers who had recently advertised for this occupation, 54 per cent were successful in filling their vacancies. This was similar to the result in 2005 and was consistent with a shortage. Vacancies proved difficult to fill in both Sydney and regional NSW and across most sectors of the industry. Advertised vacancies attracted few responses from boat builders. Most applicants were either labourers or were qualified in other trades such as carpentry, boiler making or cabinet making. Even in cases where advertisements did attract qualified boat builders, employers often found that applicants were asking for remuneration which the employer could not afford or their skills did not match the requirements of the position (for example, their experience was on wooden hulls rather than aluminium or fibreglass). A handful of surveyed vacancies had been unfilled for six months or more. Other employers eventually recruited apprentices, labourers or persons from other trades in the expectation that they would reach a satisfactory standard with further training.

Labour market outlook

It is likely that demand for this trade will continue to increase moderately over the short term in line with the longer-term trend in NSW. Apprenticeship projections do not indicate any major increase in supply from this source until 2007-08, and it will take some time for this to flow through into an increased supply of experienced boat builders. Wastage is likely to become a significant issue over the medium term due to the ageing of the workforce of this trade. Therefore shortages should continue in 2007.

Boat Builder and Repairer	Victoria
ASCO Code: 4981-13	September 2006
Labour market rating	Shortage
Comment: <i>Shortages are particularly for Tradespersons with specialised experience in aluminium and fibreglass boat building.</i>	

Occupational demand

The labour market in Victoria for boat builders is relatively small compared to some other states - there is a significant proportion of self employed boat builders and firms with only a few employees. Most of the demand for boat builders is in the area of construction, fit out and repair of vessels. The demand for qualified and experienced boat builders remains strong; however, a number of employers indicated that recruitment was not often conducted using newspapers or web sites as the response was invariably poor or non-existent. Most employers rely on "word-of-mouth" to fill a vacancy or try to recruit people who have completed pre-apprenticeship training.

Occupational supply

Supply to this trade is via the completion of a four year apprenticeship. However, commencements in recent years have been very low and the demand continues to outstrip supply and employers consistently express concern about the low number of apprentices in training. Employers indicate that they had low interest by young persons in new apprenticeships and therefore there is a lack of new boat builders coming into the industry.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

All employers contacted expressed previous difficulties in recruiting qualified and experienced boat builders and although none were looking to recruit now, the perception among employers is that recruitment of qualified boat builders would still be difficult. Some smaller employers stated there wasn't enough business to justify hiring additional staff or an apprentice. Other employers have recruited fibreglass laminators, cabinetmakers, carpenters and welders then provided on the job training in boat building. Most employers stated that current training methods are inadequate in that apprentices are only being taught to build in timber, rather than being taught how to build using aluminium and fibreglass, as well as timber. Some employers reported that a number of previous applicants had poor attitudes while others lacked basic skills and experience.

A small number of employers commented there are limited opportunities in boat building in Victoria, as they are unable to provide the breadth of training required. They also stated that the shortage of experienced boat builders in Victoria was partly due to skilled tradesperson seeking better conditions, more work and better wages in NSW and Queensland.

Labour market outlook

Employment in the industry is expected to remain relatively stable, and the current shortages should persist in the short term, particularly for boat builders with either aluminium fabricating or fibreglass laminating experience.

Boat Builder and Repairer		Queensland
ASCO Code: 4981-13	September 2006	
Labour market rating	Shortage	
Comment:		

Occupational demand

Demand for boat builders and repairers in Queensland remains high, based on the continuing growth of the State's marine construction industry. According to industry data from November 2005, Queensland companies accounted for around 40 per cent of Australia's turnover of recreational boats and 67 per cent of national exports. Expansion in the industry is being driven in large part by the rapid growth in both commercial and recreational boating across Australia, especially in Queensland. Industry contacts attribute this to changing lifestyles and strong growth in the State's population, supported by heavy interstate migration to coastal areas. In addition, the local industry has been able to capture and develop other lucrative markets, such as the servicing and construction of large cruising yachts from around Australia and the world.

Occupational supply

Specific apprenticeship training for this trade has been largely confined to South East Queensland due to the small number of institutions that have offered the Certificate III in Marine Craft Construction. According to Queensland Department of Employment and Training figures, there were 143 new commencements and 41 completions of marine craft construction apprenticeships in 2005. In practice, much of the work of qualified boat builders may be undertaken by workers with formal trade or trades assistant level skills in other areas – such as sheet metal work, cabinetmaking or fibreglass laminating – coupled with specific experience in the industry.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Industry representatives and employers contacted for this year's survey confirmed that demand for boats has grown enormously in Queensland over recent years. They indicated that larger employers have secured rapidly growing volumes of work and have drawn in most of the skilled labour available, which has resulted in loss of skilled staff and increasingly serious recruitment difficulties for smaller companies. Contacts also reported that the booming resources sector in the State has contributed to the shortage of skilled tradespersons in their industry, since some trade skills needed in boatbuilding (eg welding aluminium-hulled vessels) are in demand in this sector and the rates of pay on offer cannot be matched. Employers said that interest can be high for vacancies in boat building but that there has been a persistent shortfall of appropriately skilled workers to fill the available positions. Overall, only six per cent of the advertised vacancies included in this year's survey were filled within four weeks of advertising. Employers also pointed out that shortages are typically more acute at this time of year due to a large increase in work as they stock up to meet the summer demand.

Labour market outlook

The view given by employers and industry contacts is that the growing customer demand for boats will continue unabated, ranging from small dinghies to the luxury end of the market. The Queensland State Government reports an ongoing increase in the number of registrations and larger boat building companies have reportedly secured major construction contracts. Demand for boat building skills is therefore expected to continue to grow at close to present levels. At the same time, supply from specific apprenticeship training is likely to continue to fall short of demand, while other trade skill streams that contribute to the supply of boat builders are suffering from their own shortages and will continue to be subject to fierce competition from other industries. In view of this, the present shortages are expected to persist for at least the next few years.

Boat Builder and Repairer		South Australia (SA)
ASCO Code: 4981-13	September 2006	
Labour market rating	No Shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

Boat builder and repairer is a specialised occupation, with around 140 employed persons at the time of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2001 Census. There are only a small number of boat manufacturers operating in South Australia and there are mixed reports of activity levels across the industry. Demand for larger fishing boats has declined due to a reduction in fish stocks in traditional fishing zones, while increased competition from boat builders outside of SA has also impacted on the local market. Higher fuel costs also appear to have dampened demand for new boats. However, some contacts report increased demand for services due to the development of new marinas around the state and associated higher levels of spending on pleasure craft. Demand for boat builders and repairers is difficult to measure as vacancies are rarely advertised in the newspaper, although anecdotal evidence suggests it is low.

Occupational supply

In the past decade, the number of persons commencing a contract of training in boat building and repairing has averaged around three per annum, with completions averaging around one per annum. Industry and training contacts suggest that most persons enter the occupation via informal means, with on-the-job training being the most common method of obtaining the necessary skills to work as a boat builder/repairer. Most of the training done through TAFE consists of short courses (approximately six months duration) aimed at the hobbyist, although a small number of people progress into apprenticeships for the declared vocation of shipwright.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A small number of recently advertised vacancies for a boat builders and repairers were identified for this report and not all employers was not seeking trade level qualifications. This is typical of the industry, as there is almost no trade training for boat builders conducted in South Australia, nor does it appear to be a prerequisite for entering the occupation. Moreover, ABS Census data show that over 40 per cent of boat builders and repairers did not have trade level qualifications, as at 2001. It appears that the majority of employers utilise semi-skilled assemblers (usually from a metal manufacturing background) or persons with fibreglass lamination experience. Contacts in the industry report that it is not always easy to recruit suitably skilled persons, even at this level, and it is anticipated that a new TAFE course will be in operation shortly to address current recruitment difficulties. Some employers indicated that, whilst they would like to employ more boat builders, the weakness in current order books precluded them from doing so. No unfilled vacancies for trade qualified boat builders/repairers were identified and therefore the occupation is rated as 'no shortage'.

Labour market outlook

Supply and demand conditions for this occupation are expected to remain subdued over the short-term and therefore the labour market should remain static.

Shipwright, Boat Builder and Repairer		Western Australia (WA)
ASCO Code: 4981-11, 13	September 2006	
Labour market rating:	Shortage	
Comment		
<i>Research identified that vacancies are difficult to fill and attract low numbers of suitable applicants.</i>		

Occupational demand

Demand for marine construction tradespersons has been very strong over the last few years as a result of WA's buoyant economy, international demand for medium to large, high speed aluminium hulled vessels and the awarding of a number of very large defence contracts to local shipbuilders. The Australian Marine Complex at Henderson accounts for at least 55 per cent of national production with much of the output being for the export market.

The occupation is too small for quarterly Australian Bureau of Statistics' Labour Force Survey figures to be reliable, however, the shipwright/boat builder and repairer workforce recorded in WA increased by an annual average increase of five per cent to 736 over the five years to the 2001. Industry data and industry and employer contacts suggest that the labour force has since increased significantly. Other tradespersons are also employed in the building and repair of marine craft. In the construction of large ships, shipwrights tend to specialise in marine fit out.

Occupational supply

Supply from relevant apprenticeships fell by 19 per cent in 2005 to 42 persons, well below the decade high of 62 persons completing in 2000. However, increased numbers of commencements over the last few years (including a 145 per cent jump in 2005 to 120 persons) suggest that supply through training completions should increase in future years.

The annual training rate of 5.2 per cent is above the wastage rate of 3.5 per cent per annum, indicating that supply from local training should eventually be sufficient to replace those leaving the trade. Some employers employ experienced steel welders and retrain them to do marine aluminium welding. Whilst overseas migration has traditionally not been a major source of supply, there was a net migration of 50 marine construction tradespersons to WA in 2005-06.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Just under half (47 per cent) of the surveyed vacancies were filled, with less than one (0.8) suitable applicant per vacancy. As these figures are even lower than last year (52 per cent and 1.0 per cent respectively), this would suggest that shortages have become more pronounced this year. There was an average of just under two applicants per vacancy, however only 47 per cent were considered suitable. The main reasons that applicants were considered unsuitable for shipwright/boat builder and repairer vacancies were a lack of a broad range of relevant practical hand skills, the ability to measure and work from plans, and enough experience to work unsupervised in small boatyards.

Most of the vacancies (85 per cent) were in the metropolitan area, with nearly half in the Henderson site precinct. Only one-third of the non-metropolitan vacancies were filled compared with half of the metropolitan vacancies.

Smaller boatyards usually require shipwrights/boat builders with the full range of skills to construct and fit out a vessel from start to finish and to work on repairs. A number of employers at Henderson share a pool of tradespersons to even out the work between their major marine vessel projects.

Labour market outlook

Although supply from apprenticeship completions is projected to almost double over the next three years, strong demand for the construction of new vessels and repair work will ensure the shortage continues for at least the next six months.

Boat Builder and Repairer		Tasmania
ASCO Code: 4881-13	October 2006	
Labour market rating	No shortage	
Comment <i>Boat building in Tasmania ranges between small one-person operations to large firms building sea-going vessels and employing a wide variety of tradesmen. In this context the term “boat-builder” really only has meaning for the very small operations, and will often refer to people who are actually metal fabricators by trade.</i>		

Occupational demand

There were 122 people classified as boat builders and repairers at the 2001 Census, and unfortunately the occupation is too small for it to be picked up in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' monthly labour force survey, so there are no more recent figures available. In addition, larger boat building companies employ metal fabricators, mechanics, electricians, carpenters, cabinetmakers, and fitters and turners, who are likely to have been classified under those trades, rather than as “boat builders and repairers”. Demand is linked to orders for boats of various sizes, which tend to increase in a more buoyant economy.

Occupational supply

People who work for boat building and repair companies come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Information gathered at the 2001 Census shows that just over 30 per cent of people classified as boat builders and repairers were qualified in the metal/engineering trades, just over 20 per cent were not qualified, 14 per cent were qualified in maritime engineering, while around 17 per cent were qualified in the building and automotive trades.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

No employers advertised for boat builders in the lead up to this report, although a large ship building company did advertise for electricians, aluminium welders, and other trades. Some small to medium sized companies indicated that they recruited people from different trades backgrounds and trained on-the-job, with a couple expressing a preference for carpenters who they would then train in cutting, welding and other required skills. Medium sized firms tended to have a core work force, most of whom were involved in metal fabrication, with other skills such as electricians, marine mechanics, cabinet makers and floor covering trades hired on a sub-contract basis as required. Most employers indicated they did not have too many problems recruiting staff, and indicated they expected to provide extensive training to new staff, irrespective of their particular qualifications or backgrounds. The market does tend to be influenced by large employers in that when they are recruiting it can be difficult for smaller employers to find suitable staff.

Labour market outlook

The market for boat builders is expected to remain in balance for at least the next 12 months.