

<b>Sheetmetal Worker</b>		<b>Tasmania</b>
<b>ASCO Code:</b> 4124-11	September 2007	
<b>Labour market rating</b>	Shortage	
<b>Comment</b>		

### **Occupational demand**

The number of sheetmetal workers in Tasmania is small, with 161 counted at the 2001 Census, which is virtually unchanged from the 167 counted in 1996. The numbers in the occupation are too small for the ABS monthly labour force survey to be reliable, however, total employment in Tasmania increased by 14.6 per cent between 2002 and 2007, so it is highly likely that demand for sheetmetal workers increased during this period also. According to 2001 Census data 84 per cent of sheetmetal workers were employed in the manufacturing industry, primarily in the production of ducting, and various stainless steel fittings. These are used mainly in air conditioning systems, and other commercial construction such as stainless steel bench tops and range hoods for restaurants, stainless steel tanks for manufacturing production processes, and urinals in hotels or restaurants, for example. Demand for sheetmetal services is therefore linked to levels of commercial and industrial construction. According to ABS data, the value of non-residential construction in Tasmania in 2007 is more than double the level of five years earlier.

### **Occupational supply**

Since 2003 apprentice training for sheetmetal workers has been absorbed into the general metal fabrication trade training in Tasmania. Prior to 2003 there was an average of 47 sheetmetal work apprentices in training each year, with an average of 14 apprentices completing their training annually. It is not possible to separate sheetmetal work apprentices from metal fabricators, but overall numbers in this training stream have increased, with completions rising from 56 in 2002 to 89 in 2006. Census data indicate that very few sheetmetal workers came to the State from interstate or overseas between 1996 and 2001.

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

Although no employers advertised in the lead up to this report, all of the employers contacted indicated that they thought there were difficulties recruiting sheetmetal workers. Some employers who had advertised over the last six to 12 months advised that they had received no replies to their advertisements. The main reason given for difficulties was that other metal trades such as metal fabricators and welders are offered higher wages and offer ready transferability of skills. Smaller employers advised they were unable to compete with the higher salaries paid by larger firms, and some also indicated there had been a leakage of skills to mainland States for similar reasons. Many employers of sheetmetal workers are relatively small fabrication workshops which supply both industry and the general public with a variety of custom made metal artefacts. Their capacity to increase wages is therefore limited by the imperative for their products to remain price competitive.

### **Labour market outlook**

Shortages of sheetmetal workers are likely to continue for at least the next 12 months, due to a leakage of skills to other occupations, other States, and an inability of smaller employers to compete with larger employers on wages.