

<b>Metal Fabricator</b>	<b>Queensland</b>
ASCO Code: 4122-11	September 2007
Labour market rating	Shortage
<b>Comment:</b>	

### Occupational demand

Metal fabricators or boilermakers are generally employed in the manufacturing industry where they manufacture, maintain or repair metal products and structures by using detailed drawings and specifications to cut, shape, join and finish metal. The Australian Industry Group-PricewaterhouseCoopers *Survey of Australian Manufacturing* shows that manufacturing production in Queensland increased in all four quarters over the year to June 2007. The overall increase in orders and exports within this sector has created strong and steady demand for this trade. In addition, Queensland's mineral resources are in global demand and the population increases by almost 1800 persons a week. Employers from the State's mining and non-residential building sectors are therefore seeking the skills of metal fabricators to support a growing number of mining and infrastructure developments.

### Occupational supply

Entry to this trade is via the completion of an apprenticeship in Engineering Fabrication. Data from the Department of Education, Training and the Arts indicate that new commencements in fabrication courses have been on an increasing trend for several years with the intake in 2006 (1140) reported to be more than 30 per cent higher than the number recorded in 2004 (780). Taking into account wastage during training, it is anticipated that approximately 550 apprentices will enter the labour market at the end of 2007. Overseas migration may play a significant role in supply to this trade with data from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship showing a net gain to the State of 541 self-identified structural steel and welding tradespersons to the workforce in 2006-07. Queensland Labour Force Survey figures suggest a stronger role for interstate migration with an increase of 3500 persons to the workforce over the year to August 2007.

### Employer and industry comments/current labour market

In this year's study, 18 per cent of vacancies for metal fabricators were filled within four weeks of advertising. Almost 90 per cent of the applicants were considered to be unsuitable because they did not have qualifications or experience. Some employers reported however, that qualifications were not essential if appropriate skills could be demonstrated. A number of contacts remarked that increased business specialisation has gradually eroded the pool of applicants for generalised fabrication positions. In contrast to other trades examined this year, there were few overseas applicants for these vacancies. Employers noted however that a standard recruitment practice within this trade is to trial an applicant's skills prior to offering employment, in which case, they did not consider overseas recruitment as a viable option. Respondents reported high levels of turnover in this trade as fabricators take advantage of the many employment opportunities available. Employers who had successfully recruited and retained workers attributed their success to higher remuneration, building links with schools to secure apprentices, developing a positive company profile and promoting a workplace that offers a range of employee incentives.

### Labour market outlook

Reflecting the flow-on effects of the resources boom on manufacturing in Queensland, the Australian Industry Group has forecast a strong 5.6 per cent growth in manufacturing sales in 2007. When combined with the State's advancing population and associated infrastructure development, it is expected that demand for metal fabricators will strengthen. Metal fabricators in Queensland are currently in shortage and while apprenticeship numbers have been on an increasing trend since 2004, so has demand for this trade. Without significant improvements to supply through either training or migration, the outlook for this trade over the next twelve months is not expected to change.