

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.