

<b>Fitter</b>	<b>Queensland</b>
ASCO Code: 4112-11	September 2007
Labour market rating	Shortage
<b>Comment:</b> <i>Fitters with hydraulic and pneumatic experience were especially difficult to recruit.</i>	

### Occupational demand

Fitters are engineering tradespeople who assemble, install, maintain and repair sub-assemblies, machinery and equipment for a number of industries, including manufacturing, aeronautical, maritime, mining, food processing and medical services. According to the Australian Industry Group-PricewaterhouseCoopers *Survey of Australian Manufacturing*, manufacturing production in Queensland expanded in all four quarters over the year to June 2007, reflecting an overall increase in orders and stronger exports. There has also been a strong commitment by the Queensland Government to major public infrastructure developments which, along with ongoing demand from mining activity, has led to strong and steady demand for qualified fitters.

### Occupational supply

From 2007, the State Government fully implemented the competency-based training system to allow earlier completion for a selection of apprentices. Consequently, the expected timeframe for gaining qualifications as a fitter in Queensland has been reduced from 48 to 42 months. Data from the Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts show that prior to 2004, the annual average intake of fitter apprentices was approximately 400. Commencements increased to 600 in 2004 and to 670 in 2005, but moderated to 430 in 2006. Notwithstanding an average wastage rate of approximately one in three apprentices, the increases in commencements are expected to boost supply to this trade in 2007 and 2008. International migration may be a significant source of supply, with data from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship indicating that Queensland had a net gain of 274 self-identified metal fitters and machinists to the workforce during 2006-07.

### Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Just over 50 per cent of the advertised vacancies for fitters included in this year's survey were filled within four weeks of initial advertising, which is considerably lower than the 70 per cent fill rate recorded in last year's survey. Of the applicants, 44 per cent were regarded as unsuitable by employers because they did not have adequate qualifications or experience. This includes employers seeking fitters with experience in specialist areas such as hydraulics or pneumatics, and employers requiring fitters to have mining industry experience. Several employers reported that in cases where they could not place a qualified and experienced fitter they were accepting tradespersons with transferable skills. Respondents in South East Queensland and in the mineral resources sector reported minimal difficulties recruiting trade qualified fitters. However, the majority of vacancies in this year's survey came from manufacturing firms servicing the mining industry in regional locations. A significant number of North Queensland manufacturers reported that fitters are often attracted to the lucrative remuneration offered in the mineral resources sector and general fabrication workshops are unable to compete financially.

### Labour market outlook

As global demand for the State's low cost coal and other minerals continues, so will the flow-on effects to the manufacturing sector. At the same time, the more encompassing engineering firms are seeking fitters to cope with increasing orders for structural and fabricated metal products and machinery. Demand for fitters is therefore expected to remain strong over the next few years. While there should be an increase in apprenticeship completions from 2007, the scale of this may not be enough to meet the high levels of demand coming from multiple industries. The present State-wide shortage of fitters in Queensland is therefore expected to continue for the short to medium-term.