

<b>Fitter</b>	<b>Northern Territory</b>
ASCO Code: 4112-11	August 2007
Labour market rating	Shortage
<b>Comment</b>	

### Occupational demand

ABS Census data show that there were 686 fitters employed in the Northern Territory (NT) in 2001 and Labour Force Survey data indicate that the number of metal fitters and machinists has been growing since 2003. Over the past couple of years, engineering construction activity (ABS 8762.0) in the NT has been dramatically boosted by major projects. Some of the major projects (such as the Darwin Waterfront) are still to be completed and the potential for new major projects commencing remains high. DEEWR's Skilled Vacancies Index has recorded continued strength in advertised vacancies for fitters, peaking in 2005 and remaining high in 2006 and 2007.

### Occupational supply

The number of apprentices undertaking mechanical engineering trades has been low and apprenticeship completions in 2004 and 2005 numbered less than 10 per year. The local training rate is low and so there is a high reliance on interstate recruitment, recruiting travellers to the NT and sponsoring overseas tradespeople. However, there was a significant increase in the number of apprenticeship commencements in 2005 and some employers noted that there seemed to have been an improvement in the number and quality of people considering taking up apprenticeships in the mechanical and construction trades.

### Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Employers contacted filled 29 per cent of vacancies surveyed, which was a large decline from the previous survey in which 83 per cent of vacancies were filled, but is similar to 2005 where 28 per cent of vacancies were filled.

Employers had great difficulty filling positions with many employers recruiting fitters from interstate and overseas. Due to the shortage of available fitters, some employers provided extensive training to junior fitters so that they could perform more complex work. Mining companies had the least difficulty hiring fitters and contacts believed this was due to the fact that mining companies were able to offer higher salaries than other employers. Non-mining companies in regional and remote communities had the greatest difficulty filling vacancies.

Some employers believed that the shortage of fitters was due to school leavers not being informed about the opportunities in the trade and the limited training options available. The supply of fitters was also adversely affected by wastage with some fitters leaving the trade to work in the mining industry as truck drivers or in other jobs which offered higher salaries. Vacancies advertised by employers were commonly new positions due to increased demand and a number of employers claimed that if additional suitable fitters applied they would have created additional vacancies to accommodate them. Some businesses suggest they have this option available because the amount of engineering work being undertaken in Darwin is constrained by supply of available tradespeople.

### Labour market outlook

The strong NT economic conditions and level of engineering work are expected to continue over the coming year. Demand for fitters is expected to continue to surpass available supply leaving the trade in shortage.