

Wall and Floor Tiler		New South Wales
ANZSCO Code: 3334-11	September 2009	
Labour market rating:	Metropolitan shortage	
Comment: <i>Shortages of Wall and Floor Tilers are evident in Sydney.</i>		

Occupational demand

Census data indicates employment of wall and floor tilers grew by 1.9 per cent a year between 2001 and 2006. Since then, demand for this trade has been adversely affected by weak building activity, with the real value of building work done in NSW falling by eight per cent in 2008-09 after growing by only one per cent the previous year. The consensus of employers and tiling suppliers contacted for this report was demand for the trade was currently patchy, although some reported a recent increase in activity flowing from Australian government infrastructure spending.

Occupational supply

Supply to the trade from apprenticeship completions averaged 83 persons a year in the two years to 2008-09, which compares with an average of 54 per annum over the previous five years. Despite this increase, the annual training rate (apprenticeship completions as a percentage of employed wall and floor tilers) is only 1.7 per cent, which is well below the figure of 3.0 per cent for the trades as a whole. However, Census data suggests the wastage rate for the trade is also low and the current training rate is sufficient to offset wastage and allow for modest employment growth. Official immigration data show a small net loss of tilers and stonemasons from NSW overseas in four of the five years to 2007-08. (Separate data for wall and floor tilers are not available.) This indicates immigration is not a major net contributor to supply for the trade.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for wall and floor tilers found 30 per cent of vacancies were filled within four weeks of the surveyed advertisements. This was a substantial deterioration on the success rate of 83 per cent in 2008. While most advertisements for positions based in Sydney attracted applications from at least one qualified tiler, employers reported the majority of these either failed to present themselves for a trial, or were unable to demonstrate adequate skills when trialled or did not wish to work the hours required by the employer (for example, full-time hours). Even when positions were filled, in some cases this was only through the employer's contacts after advertising had failed to bring forward a single suitable applicant. Shortages were evident across various industry sectors including residential, commercial and specialist fields such as bathrooms. Although unfilled vacancies were distributed across a number of suburbs of Sydney, positions based in the northern beaches proved particularly difficult to fill as most applicants lived in the western suburbs which would have made commuting difficult. Positions in the Hunter and Illawarra generally proved easier to fill, with advertised vacancies generally attracting a number of qualified and experienced applicants. Several employers reported an increase in tilers approaching them for work and some were able to recruit additional workers from unsolicited approaches. The evidence from other regional centres was insufficient to demonstrate a general shortage in regional NSW.

Labour market outlook

The Construction Forecasting Council expects a modest recovery in building activity in 2009-10 and, as a result, demand for wall and floor tilers is likely to grow moderately over the short term. On the supply side, DEEWR projections show a decline in apprenticeship completions in the next two years indicating the training rate will remain below the average for all trades. As a result, shortages of experienced wall and floor tilers with broad trade skills are likely to persist in Sydney over the short term. Regional recruitment difficulties may also develop as regional building activity moves into a sustained recovery.