

Welder	Queensland
ASCO Code: 4122-15	September 2007
Labour market rating	Shortage
Comment:	

Occupational demand

Welders construct or repair metal products by joining parts either manually, or by machine using electric arc, gas metal arc (MIG), gas tungsten arc (TIG) or oxy-acetylene welding methods. Welders can work on ships, bridges, pipelines, storage tanks, vehicles and domestic appliances and are skilled to weld a variety of metal materials. Employment opportunities can be found mostly in the manufacturing industry, but there is growing demand coming from the construction and mining industries. Growth across all of these industries in Queensland is indicated by Australian Bureau of Statistics data on Counts of Australian Businesses, which shows significant growth in number of manufacturing, construction and mining businesses over the year to June 2006.

Occupational supply

Entry into this trade is via the completion of an Engineering (Fabrication) apprenticeship. 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 in this trade has been reduced from 48 to 42 months. Data from the Department of Education, Training and the Arts indicate that new commencements in engineering fabrication courses have been increasing for several years with the intake in 2006 (1140) reported to be 30 per cent more than the number recorded in 2004 (780). Taking into account any wastage during training, it is anticipated that approximately 550 apprentices will enter the labour market at the end of 2007. Overseas migration may have aided supply to the workforce with Department of Immigration and Citizenship data showing a net gain to the State of 541 self-identified structural steel and welding tradespersons in 2006-07. Queensland Labour Force Survey figures show 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, 58 per cent of vacancies for welders were filled within four weeks of initial advertising. This fill rate was strongly influenced by a recruitment exercise in regional Queensland with one employer receiving a large number of applications following the closure of a neighbouring fabrication workshop. Overall, more than 50 per cent of the applicants were considered unsuitable because they did not have the qualifications or experience required for the advertised role. Almost all of the respondents reported increasing difficulties recruiting welders over the past 12 months and employers from general engineering fabrication workshops stated that much of their difficulty stemmed from an inability to compete with the higher remuneration on offer in the engineering construction and mineral resources sectors. To assist with supply, employers were recruiting welders from overseas, indenturing more apprentices and offering additional training to existing staff. Those employers reporting minimal recruitment difficulties claimed it was because they had a positive company profile, offered high remuneration and interesting work; or in the regional areas, had access to welders that preferred local work to on site mining positions.

Labour market outlook

There are currently high levels of activity in the manufacturing, construction and mining industries in Queensland. When combined with a growing population and associated infrastructure development, it is expected that demand for welders will remain strong. There is a shortage of welders in Queensland and while apprenticeship numbers have been increasing since 2004, so has demand for this trade. Without significant improvements to supply through either training or migration, the outlook for first class welders over the next twelve months is not expected to change.