

Building Associate	Northern Territory (NT)
ASCO Code: 3121-11	November 2006
Labour market rating	Shortage
Comment: <i>Present for both construction supervisors and building estimators</i>	

Occupational demand

ABS Census data show that there were 187 building associates employed in the Northern Territory (NT) in 2001. Since 2001, ABS Labour Force Survey data indicate that the number of building, architectural and surveying associate professionals declined over 2002 and 2003, before stabilising from 2004 onwards. The value of both residential and non-residential building work done has grown considerably since 2001. The annual average growth rate over the past five years to June 2006 has been 19 per cent and growth has been particularly strong for the past two years. In chain volume measure terms, the value of building work done is at the highest level since the previous construction boom peak in 1998, which suggests increased demand for building associates from the 2001 level.

Occupational supply

Building associates typically tend to come from a construction trade background and may have accumulated relevant experience rather than completed a diploma level course. Charles Darwin University offers Certificate IV in building and construction, however there is also a strong reliance on recruiting people from interstate.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

There were few employers found who had recently attempted to recruit building associates, however of those who had few were successful with 17 per cent of positions successfully filled. There were numerous applicants per vacancy, but few (10 per cent) were considered by employers to be suitable for the advertised positions. Unsuitable applicants were typically tradespeople looking for promotion who did not have necessary supervision skills or ability to interpret detailed requirements from plans. Employers also required good product knowledge skills. Some employers recruited people into trainee building associate roles as a fall back position when they were unsuccessful in finding an experienced person.

Employers reported advertising widely (including interstate papers) and using agencies in an effort to attract applicants, however most struggled to attract suitable candidates.

Employers commented that building associates tend to be more stable and loyal to their company than construction tradespeople and labourers are. Turnover was therefore less of an issue and recruitment not required as frequently. A number of the vacancies were due to increased demand rather than turnover. Employers consistently commented that demand had been strong for their skills and considered the NT to be in the midst of a construction boom.

Labour market outlook

Although demand had dropped off leading into the Christmas period, employers considered that 2007 would be another very busy year with strong demand for work. A shortage of building associates in the NT is therefore expected to remain.