

Petroleum & Gas Plant Operator		Victoria
ASCO Code: 4987-13		October 2006
Labour market rating	No shortage	
Comment		

Occupational demand

The demand for Petroleum and Gas Plant Operators (PGPOs) is determined by the size of the gas production and reticulation infrastructure and the number and size of petroleum production and processing installations. The labour market is split into three broad sectors – offshore gas and petroleum production in Bass Strait, on-shore petroleum processing and refinery operations and gas distribution. Demand is expected to remain stable in the short to medium term.

Occupational supply

Plant operators in all three sectors generally require trade level skills. The most common career path is completion of a trade, commonly electrician, electronic instrument maker, fitter or diesel mechanic. Operators based offshore are required to complete post-trade training in Transport and Distribution Marine Engineering. This training isn't currently available in Victoria, but can be undertaken in NSW and Tasmania.

There are some installations where high levels of automation and less complicated processing see employers use semi-skilled operators. Employers generally accept that they will be lucky to find the exact skill set they require for a vacancy, and generally aim to recruit applicants with trade qualifications and experience in production environments. Employers then provide on-the-job training and contract Registered Training Organisations to deliver onsite training from the Chemicals, Hydrocarbons and Oil Refining Training Package, or the Gas Industry Training Package.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

The degree of specialisation in the workforce appears to depend on the skill differential between the operation and maintenance roles. A number of employers interchanged staff with workers rotating between the two roles. Where the production process was more complex, control room operator positions were seen as a career progression from the maintenance shift. Where the production process was simpler, operators were less likely to be trade qualified and repairs were left to specialist maintenance staff. The consensus amongst employers was that although it was difficult to find the exact skill sets required, it was not a major obstacle. They concentrated on providing on-the-job training to trade qualified staff with experience in a production environment.

Employers reported good responses when they attempted to recruit, even for positions in regional Victoria. Positions were sought after as the industry has a reputation for paying well and providing an opportunity for overseas travel once experienced.

Labour market outlook

The demand determinants and supply characteristics of the occupation are relatively stable compared to other industry sectors. This, combined with the fact that trade qualified applicants actively seek out positions in the industry, should see most employers able to fill vacancies in the short term.