

Architect	Australia
ANZSCO Code: 2321-11	February 2009
Labour market rating	No shortage
Comment	

Occupational demand

Demand for architects appears to be subdued and, in line with industry activity, declined substantially in late 2008 and early 2009. According to the ABS Labour Force Survey, employment of architects and landscape architects grew by less than one per cent between 2007 and 2008, with employment of 19 900 in November 2008. Demand for architects is linked to activity in the construction industry, of which building approvals are a useful indicator. The value of total building approvals fell sharply towards the end of 2008, declining by 29 per cent in the four months to January 2009.

Comments from employers indicate that because of this decline in building activity, a number of large architectural and construction firms have either reduced the number of architects they employ, or have placed a freeze on further recruitment. The number of advertised vacancies for Building and Engineering Professionals, which includes architects, has also decreased. The number of advertised vacancies for architects and landscape architects has also decreased, with the DEEWR Skilled Vacancies Index averaging 38 per cent lower over the twelve months to January 2009 than previously observed over the twelve months to January 2008.

Occupational supply

Entry to this occupation is through a bachelor degree or higher qualification and registration with a state or territory architects board. The requirements for registration vary by state or territory, but all include an approved qualification, two years supervised practical experience, and a pass in the Architects Accreditation of Australia Architectural Practice Examination. University courses in architecture are available in all states and territories. DEEWR higher education data indicate completions of bachelor degrees in architecture decreased by 13 per cent in the period 2003 to 2007, with an average of just under 900 per year. However, the number of student commencements has increased in recent years, suggesting graduate numbers may rise in the near future.

Net migration makes a minor contribution to occupational supply, declining by over 50 per cent from 2003-04 to 2007-08. There was a net gain of architects and landscape architects from migration of 167 in 2007-08, equivalent to slightly less than one per cent of total employment for this group.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market.

A survey of employers who had recently advertised was conducted for this report, finding that around three quarters of vacancies were filled within six weeks of advertising. This is substantially higher than the fill rate of around one third recorded in January 2008.

On average, there were more than 25 applicants per vacancy, and four of these were considered by employers to be suitable. These figures suggest a marked increase in response to advertisement compared with 2008 results when there were slightly more than four applicants per vacancy, with 0.7 suitable applicants. The small number of unfilled vacancies identified in the 2009 survey required specific experience, for example working on health facilities, or were very senior roles.

It is also notable that many of the vacancies identified for the 2009 survey had been cancelled or put on hold after they were advertised. This was attributed by employers to a downturn in the construction industry, with many large commercial projects in particular being cancelled or delayed due to difficulty obtaining finance and general uncertainty surrounding current economic conditions.

Employers frequently commented that the labour market for architects has changed dramatically over the past six months. They indicated that previous difficulties recruiting qualified and experienced staff had substantially eased, with large numbers of architects now actively seeking positions.

Labour market outlook

The labour market for architects is likely to remain subdued in the immediate future, until the current downturn in the construction industry improves.