

Metal Fabricator	Western Australia
ASCO Code: 4122-11	September 2007
Labour market rating	Shortage
Comment	

Occupational demand

Labour Force Survey data suggest that the number of employed metal fabricators (boilermakers) has been fairly flat in the 12 months to September 2007 while the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) Skilled Vacancies Index shows that newspaper vacancies for the trade have continued to decrease after falling from 2005 to 2006. The increased activity in the resources sector has led to greater demand for all types of metal fabricators. Oil and gas exploration and general mining activity has generated an increase in demand for tradespeople able to work on large, structural equipment, pipelines, railway rolling stock and heavy mining machinery, including buckets and truck trays. There is also a strong demand for specialised metal fabricators with aluminium welding/shipbuilding experience. Experience is often considered more important by employers than qualifications, especially in heavy mining work.

Occupational supply

Trade qualifications are gained via an apprenticeship now known as Engineering Tradesperson (Fabrication) – Welding which includes TAFE study. During the trade year, 304 persons completed apprenticeships an increase of 25 per cent over the previous year and 13 per cent above the average over the previous four years.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

Large recruitment firms have reported that advertisements achieve about a 50 per cent placement rate in the metropolitan area and about 80 per cent for “fly-in fly-out” (FIFO) jobs. They also report they have ongoing vacancies due to high turnover rates, short term contract work and workers looking around for higher incomes. This tends to lead to variations in response to advertisements which some employers accredit to availability of major mining projects. The ship builders state that they require fabricators with aluminium welding experience to work on boats and comment there is an ongoing shortage of such workers. Reasons suggested for this difficulty include the unpleasant odours of aluminium welding and the higher incomes in mining cause this shortage. Ship builders report that expected naval contracts will increase demand for these workers.

Some employers report “poaching” of good metal fabricators and boilermakers with offers of higher incomes. Many employers report that there are large number of less skilled workers around who are applying for technically advanced or specialised jobs.

Labour market outlook

The shortage of metal fabricators is expected to continue. Very strong demand from the resources and related manufacturing industries combined with limited supply has resulted in a shortage of tradespeople with heavy metal and welding skills. The ongoing trade in mineral resources with overseas markets, particularly China, will continue to have flow on effects to associated and support construction industries and infrastructure projects. This means that metal fabricators will be in high demand for the foreseeable future.