

Fibrous Plasterer	Victoria
ANZSCO Code: 3332-11	September 2009
Labour market rating:	Shortage
Comment: <i>Shortage of suitably skilled applicants – particularly in residential sector.</i>	

Occupational demand

ABS Labour Force Survey data for Victoria for May quarter 2009 estimates there were 8000 people employed as plasterers (solid and fibrous) compared with 9000 for May quarter 2008. Demand for fibrous plasterers in Victoria is largely determined by the level of activity in the construction industry. Activity in the construction industry is reliant upon the state of the economy, interest rates and demand generated by population growth. ABS building activity trend estimate data for the March quarter 2009 indicates the total value of building work done in Victoria (residential and non-residential) rose by 1.7 per cent, and has risen for 12 quarters. Construction Forecast Council data indicates residential building activity in 2009-10 is expected to increase by approximately five per cent from 2008-09. In contrast, non-residential building activity is forecast to decline by about 18 per cent over the same period.

Occupational supply

The 2006 ABS Census data for Victoria indicates more than 45 per cent of employed fibrous plasterers hold Certificate III or above post-school qualifications, suggesting most training for this trade is done on-the-job rather than through formal apprenticeships. DEEWR estimates a total of 129 apprentices completed their training in 2008-09, up from 116 people in 2007-08. Supply to the trade from net migration to Victoria in 2007-08 was negligible.

Employer and industry comments/current labour market

A DEEWR survey of employers who had recently advertised for fibrous plasterers found that on average three quarters of surveyed vacancies in Victoria were filled, higher than the success rate of 57 per cent in 2008. On average, there was less than one suitable applicant per vacancy with metropolitan advertisements attracting more suitable candidates than their regional counterparts. In a small number of cases, employers had resorted to head hunting plasterers after failing to recruit through advertising. Most respondents worked primarily in the residential sector and indicated that because residential work required a high skill level, they would not usually consider applicants with a commercial sector background. Most contacts did not require applicants to have qualifications necessarily, but were seeking people who were experienced, skilled to trade level and had a professional attitude. Many employers stated they placed a lot of importance on applicants' personal qualities, as they are required to have contact with clients on site. The majority of employers believed there was a shortage of fibrous plasterers and indicated that applicants were deemed unsuitable if they did not have the appropriate skills or experience and/or a good work ethic. Most employers were in favour of licensing the trade as it would provide a 'level playing field'. They expressed the view that many people set up business as plasterers without the appropriate skills and/or qualifications, with the result that often these businesses are offered contracts because they provide the lowest quote, but their work is frequently sub-standard, giving the trade a bad reputation. Most respondents stated that contrary to expectations, demand for their services had remained steady or even increased over the past six months, and they did not expect it to change in the short term. Some contacts suggested the plastering apprenticeship should be of shorter duration and be completed solely on site, rather than having a school-based component.

Labour market outlook

There was no evidence that the current shortage in this occupation is likely to ease over the next six months.