



Bricklayer

ANZSCO 3311-11

New South Wales

September 2018

Current labour market rating: Shortage

Previous labour market rating (September 2017): No shortage

Comments

There is a shortage of bricklayers in metropolitan and regional NSW. Generally, employers were unable to fill vacancies in metropolitan and regional NSW, with employers considering less than one applicant to be suitable per vacancy.

Survey results¹

- The Department of Jobs and Small Business surveyed employers who had recently advertised for bricklayers in the following areas: residential and commercial including remedial, restoration and construction bricklaying.

Employer Requirements

- In general, employers sought the following in applicants:
 - In regional areas, vacancies surveyed all required qualified bricklayers, however only a third of metropolitan vacancies surveyed required qualified applicants.
 - Experience in bricklaying with at least two years of industry experience.
 - Some employers sought technical skills by conducting a trial to determine if applicants were suitable.
 - Specific experience in residential or commercial bricklaying.

Vacancies filled

- Across NSW, 53 per cent of vacancies were filled within the survey period compared with 84 per cent in September 2017.
- Some employers who were unable to fill their vacancies through advertisements reported filling vacancies through word-of-mouth.
- Some employers plan to fill unfilled vacancies through re-advertising, sponsoring applicants from overseas or compromising and hiring labourers rather than skilled workers.

Applicants per vacancy

- Across NSW, there was an average of 5.2 applicants per vacancy of whom an average of 0.6 applicants were considered suitable by employers.
- By comparison, in 2017 there was an average of 2.3 applicants per vacancy of whom an average of 0.9 applicants were considered suitable by employers.
- The higher average number of applicants this year is due to three metropolitan employers who received a high number of applicants.

¹ The methodology for this research is outlined at [Skill Shortage Research Methodology | Department of Jobs and Small Business](#).

- The metropolitan employers, who attracted a large pool of candidates, did not require qualified applicants.

Metropolitan and regional results

- In metropolitan regions, there was an average of 5.8 applicants per vacancy and 10 per cent were considered suitable by employers.
 - Employers in metropolitan areas were able to fill 57 per cent of vacancies.
- In regional areas, there was an average of 2.7 applicants per vacancy and 11 per cent were considered suitable by employers.
 - Employers in regional areas were able to fill 33 per cent of vacancies.
- On average, metropolitan vacancies attracted one applicant with qualifications compared to 0.3 applicants with qualifications per vacancy in regional areas.

Unsuitable applicants

- The reasons given by employers on why an applicant was considered unsuitable include:
 - A lack of experience in bricklaying.
 - Poor technical skills or applicants who failed a skills test.
 - Locality of applicant and their proximity to work.
 - Not possessing the communication skills sought by employer.
 - A lack of employability for instance, a lack of understanding of the occupation.

Demand and supply trends

- Demand for bricklayers is generally influenced by the level of activity in the construction industry.
 - The total, inflation adjusted, value of building work done in NSW grew by 6.8 per cent in the year to September 2018, with growth stronger than the Australian average of 4.5 per cent. This was the sixth consecutive year where growth in NSW has been above the national average.²
 - The value of residential work increased by 6.1 per cent over the year to September 2018, which followed five years of annual growth in excess of 10 per cent. The growth in the value of work done for the construction of new houses (8.1 per cent) was higher than for new other residential work (6.6 per cent). For the previous five years, the growth in the latter had been higher.³
 - The value of non-residential building work increased by 8.3 per cent in the year to September 2018. This followed a fall of 5.7 per cent in the previous year.⁴
 - The value of engineering construction increased by 20.4 per cent in the year to September 2018. This followed a rise of 17.9 per cent in the previous year.⁵
- The Australian PCI (state data are not available) had a modest expansion in September 2018 with a 12 month average of 53.7. Within all sub-sectors of the Australian PCI, the 12-month average, had readings above 50 apart from apartments recording a contraction at 46.2. This indicates a slowing down and cooling of apartment building activity. An Australian Performance of Construction Index (PCI) reading above 50

² ABS, *Construction Work Done, Preliminary*, September 2018 (8755.0), chain volume measures, original.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

indicates that construction activity is generally expanding and below 50, declining. The distance from 50 indicates the strength of increase or decline.⁶

- Engineering construction and Commercial construction had the strongest average annual activity growth at 57 and 55.1 respectively, driving industry growth with a strong expansion of major infrastructure projects.⁷
- Over the year to September 2018, the number of vacancies advertised on the internet for bricklayers and stonemasons (individual data not available) in NSW have declined by 15 per cent and is currently at the lowest level since the series began in 2006.⁸
 - This may reflect a decreased demand for bricklayers and stonemasons, however it could be indicative of employers choosing to recruit through classifieds and community websites, social media and by word of mouth (which are not collected as part of the Internet Vacancy Index).
- Entry into these trades is commonly through the completion of a Certificate III in Bricklaying/Blocklaying.⁹
 - National Centre for Vocational Education Research data shows completions (limited to the certificate III level) for the three years to March 2018 averaged around 95 per annum. This was lower than the average for the previous three years of around 120.¹⁰
 - In contrast, the average number of commencements in the three years to March 2018 was around 365 per year. This was much higher than the average for the three years to March 2015 of around 245.¹¹
- The number of temporary resident (skilled) visas granted for bricklayers (individual data is not available) averaged around 70 per annum over the five years ending 2017-18.¹²
 - Please note, on 18 April 2017, the Government announced that the Temporary Work (Skilled) visa (subclass 457 visa) was abolished and replaced with the completely new Temporary Skill Shortage visa in March 2018 to address the genuine skill shortages.¹³

Other indicators and issues

- The HIA Trades Availability Index reviews the availability of skilled trades. The finding shows critical trade shortages in Sydney, followed by Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane. Looking at individual trades, bricklaying posted the most severe shortage in the September 2018 quarter.¹⁴
- The Turner & Townsend International Construction Market Survey 2018 reported there has been a 37 per cent increase in the cost of 1000 standard bricks in Sydney, from \$590 in 2015 to \$810 in 2018. This compares to an increase of around 10 per cent in Melbourne and Brisbane over the same period.¹⁵

⁶ Ai Group, *Performance of Construction Index September 2018*, 5 October 2018, <https://www.aigroup.com.au/policy-and-research/mediacentre/releases/PCI-September-2018/> (accessed 4 December 2018).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Department of Jobs and Small Business, *Internet Vacancy Index*, October 2018, 12-month moving average.

⁹ NCVER, *Apprentices and Trainees*, March 2018, estimates (limited to certificate III qualifications).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Department of Home Affairs, *Temporary Work (Skilled) visa programme*, <https://data.gov.au/dataset/visa-temporary-work-skilled> (accessed 4 December 2018).

¹³ More information can be found here <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/trav/work/457-abolition-replacement>.

¹⁴ HIA Trades Report, September 2018 Quarter.

<https://hia.com.au/-/media/HIA-Website/Files/IndustryBusiness/Economic/publications/trades-report-extract.ashx?la=en&hash=EAED511E98F85890F1677A657D14C4A861C57A28> (accessed 04 December 2018).

¹⁵ Turner & Townsend, *International construction market survey*, various issues.