

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 2
Output Group 2.2 – New Apprenticeships

DEST Question No. E298_04

Senator Campbell asked on 5 June 2003, EWRE Hansard page 416

Question:

1. Do you consider the decline in people taking up trade based apprenticeships to be a problem?
2. Can you give us the figures for the increase or the decline for each of the trade groups and indicate where changes are the result of recoding?

Answer:

1. In recent years, there has not been a decline in people taking up trade based apprenticeships. The number of New Apprentices commencing in trade and related occupation groups increased 5.9% from 50,917 in the 12 months to March 2002 to 53,925 in the 12 months to March 2003. Since March 1996 (when there were 39,746 commencements) the number has increased 35.7%.

At 31 March 2003, there were 137,002 New Apprentices in-training in trades and related occupations, a 1.6% increase from the previous year when there were 134,782; and an increase of 9.4% from March 1996 when there were 125,214.

2. The growth in New Apprenticeships in trades and related occupations is not evenly distributed. There have certainly been inconsistencies in the way occupation groups have been coded due to States and Territories independently applying codes in the past. In July 1998 the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) began coding occupation groups in a way that is consistent with National Training Packages, a process which has been undertaken with the Australian National Training Authority and States and Territories. Note that ASCO 4 (in which traditional trade groups fall) has been least affected by changes to codes and that all figures provided below have, wherever possible, been updated to reflect the most recent coding.

Between March 1996 and March 2003, the number of New Apprentices in-training in all major trade occupations (except Mechanical and Fabrication Engineering) has increased:

- Skilled Agricultural and Horticultural New Apprenticeships 83.2% (from 3,397 to 6,222)
- Food New Apprenticeships 23.7% (from 15,994 to 19,781)
- Construction New Apprenticeships 21.5% (from 26,469 to 32,150)
- Electrical and Electronics New Apprenticeships 7.8% (from 16,207 to 17,477), and
- Automotive New Apprenticeships 3.3% (from 22,770 to 23,520).

The numbers of New Apprentices in-training as Mechanical and Fabrication Engineering Tradespersons has decreased 24% since 1996. Within this occupation group, the number of New Apprentices in-training in General Mechanical Engineering and General Fabrication Engineering increased but numbers in many of the specialist trades such as Toolmakers and Precision Metal Casting fell.

In terms of general employment, between February 1996 and February 2003, growth in employment has occurred in:

- Electricals and Electronics 16.5% (from 165,200 to 192,500), and
- Construction 14.7% (from 262,500 to 301,100).

Meanwhile, the number of workers in the following occupations have decreased:

- Automotive Tradespersons -6.5% (from 149,400 to 139,600)
- Agricultural and Horticultural Workers -0.6% (from 75,300 to 74,800)
- Food Tradespersons -4.5% (from 85,800 to 81,900), and
- Mechanical and Fabrication Engineering -5.6% (from 208,700 to 197,000).

In the last 5 years, the growth in New Apprentices in-training has outstripped employment growth in all major trade groups except Mechanical and Fabrication Engineering and Automotives. The growth in New Apprenticeship commencements outstripped total employment growth in each trade group over this same period (as shown in the table below).

Percentage change in growth in Trades 1998-2003

Based on NCVER figures at 31 March 1996 and 2003	Mechanical and Fabrication Engineering Tradesperson s	Automotive Trades- persons	Electrical and Electronic s Trades- persons	Constructio n Trades- persons	Food Trades- persons	Skilled Agricultural and Horticultura l Workers	Other Trades- persons and Related Workers
% change in total number of workers employed in trade #	-4.90%	-0.40%	8.50%	13.60%	-3.40%	6.20%	4.40%
% change in New Apprentices in- training 1996- 2003*	-23.9%	3.3%	7.8%	21.5%	23.7%	83.2%	10.4%
% change in New Apprentices Commenced 1996-2003*	-4.7%	13.5%	25.6%	81.8%	29.2%	191.4%	36.6%

Based on DEWR figures at 1 February 2003

* Based on NCVER figures at 31 March 2003