

- All diesel mechanic vacancies surveyed were unable to be filled (across both Sydney and regional NSW).
 - There was an average of 1.6 applicants per vacancy and one qualified applicant per vacancy.
 - Most suitable applicants were required to have both general experience (typically diagnosing and repairing trucks, trailers, four-wheel drive) and specialist expertise (semi-trailers, hydraulics, forklifts and buses).
- While there was only a small number of surveyed motorcycle mechanic vacancies, shortages were evident, with two thirds of vacancies remaining unfilled.
- Employers who were unable to fill their vacancies commented this has led to them decreasing the amount of work they process, while also requiring existing staff to work longer hours.
 - Several employers indicated they will attempt to hire an apprentice.
- Of those employers who responded to questions about apprentices, around 60 per cent stated they are either looking to recruit, or currently employ, apprentices.

Unsuitable applicants

- Just over half of the applicants did not have the appropriate trade qualifications. The majority of these had no trade qualifications and, while some had experience in the automotive sector, employers were reluctant to compromise.
- The reason most frequently cited by employers for the unsuitability of qualified applicants was they lacked the level of specialist experience required (such as with European cars or car air-conditioning).
- Other reasons qualified applicants were considered not suitable included failing to attend an interview, failing a work trial or not having sufficient experience (as they were in the early stages of their careers).

Demand and supply trends

- While the number of registered vehicles in NSW has increased in recent years (particularly for diesel vehicles and motorcycles), demand for this trade has been adversely affected by the improved reliability of vehicles and industry rationalisation leading to the closure of some smaller workshops.
- New motor vehicle sales decreased by 0.1 per cent in 2017, following growth of 4.4 per cent over the previous 12 months.² This is the first year new motor vehicle sales have decreased since 2011.
- In 2017, the number of motor vehicles on register in NSW increased by 2.5 per cent (compared with 2.1 per cent at the national level). The strongest percentage growth was for campervans (8.3 per cent), articulated trucks (4.8 per cent) and heavy rigid trucks (4.0 per cent) but together they only comprised two per cent of registrations in 2017.³
 - The number of diesel motor vehicles on register in NSW increased by 10.1 per cent over the year ending 2017 (compared with 8.1 per cent for Australia).

² ABS *Sales of New Motor Vehicles, Australia* (Catalogue 9314.0), December 2017, original data.

³ ABS *Motor Vehicle Census Australia*, (Catalogue 9309.0), January 2017.

- Over the two years to December 2017, the Internet Vacancy Index for motor mechanics in NSW increased by around 40 per cent.⁴ In the previous two years the number of internet advertisements for motor mechanics was relatively flat.
- Apprentice completions for motor mechanics in NSW averaged around 1500 per annum over the three years to June 2017, which was around 6 per cent lower than in the previous three years.⁵
 - Commencements, however, averaged 2200 in the same period and were 15 per cent lower than in the previous three years.
- The number of primary applicant 457 temporary skill migration visas granted in NSW for motor mechanics increased by 169 per cent over the two years to 2016-17, averaging around 190 per annum.⁶
 - Please note, on 18 April 2017 the Government announced that the Temporary Work (Skilled) visa (subclass 457 visa) will be abolished and replaced with the completely new Temporary Skill Shortage visa in March 2018.⁷

Other indicators and issues

- A number of reasons for the difficulty recruiting motor mechanics were suggested by employers including:
 - The perception that the automotive trades are not well paid. Therefore, people leave the occupation to earn more money elsewhere (such as driving trucks).
 - People are becoming less prepared to engage in hard, physical work.

Outlook

- With the number of apprentice commencements and completions changing only moderately in recent years it is likely that there will be little change to this labour market in the near future.

⁴ Department of Jobs and Small Business, *Internet Vacancy Index*, December 2017, 12 month moving average. Please note, this data is based on a count of online job advertisements newly lodged on SEEK, CareerOne and Australian JobSearch during the month. As such, it does not reflect the total number of job advertisements in the labour market as it does not include jobs advertised through other online job boards, employer websites, word of mouth, in newspapers, and advertisements in shop windows.

⁵ NCVET, *Apprentices and Trainees, June 2017 estimates* (limited to certificate III qualifications).

⁶ Department of Home Affairs, *Temporary Work (Skilled) visa (subclass 457) Programme*, <https://data.gov.au/dataset/visa-temporary-work-skilled> (accessed 25 January 2018).

⁷ More information can be found here <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/trav/work/457-abolition-replacement>.