



ENGINEERS
AUSTRALIA
Northern Division

Ms Tracy Clark

Director, Strategic Policy and Research
Strategic Services Division
Department of Trade Business and Innovation
PO Box 3200
DARWIN NT 0801

6 March 2017

Dear Ms Clark,

RE: Engineers Australia response to the draft 2017 Northern Territory Skilled Occupation Priority List

Engineers Australia would like to thank the Northern Territory Government for the opportunity to contribute to the review of the Skilled Occupation Priority List (SOPL).

Engineers Australia is the representative body for the engineering profession in Australia. With over 100,000 members across Australia, we represent all disciplines and branches of engineering. Engineers Australia is constituted by Royal Charter to advance the science and practice of engineering for the benefit of the community.

Our interests cover the engineering team which comprises professional engineers (at least a four-year full time degree), engineering technologists (at least a three-year full time degree) and associate engineers (at least a two-year full time associate degree or advanced diploma).

Building Australia's engineering capability is about much more than the number of people with engineering qualifications. It is about entry level engineering education, acquiring the skills and competence for engineering practice, retaining experienced and competent engineers in the engineering profession and the development of diversity in the profession through skilled migration and increasing the number of women recruited to the profession.

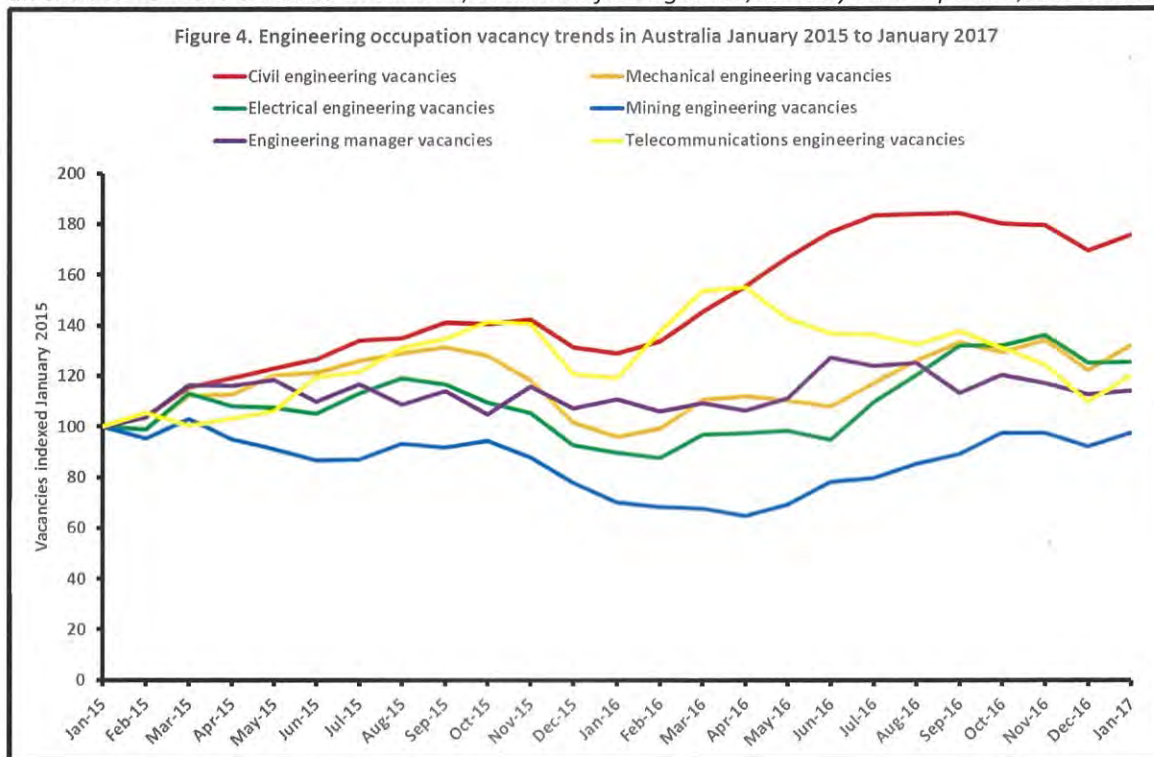
Like other professions, engineering requires a period of professional formation following the completion of formal educational qualifications. It is during this period of professional formation that engineers determine their area of specialist engineering practice. Inclusion of engineering occupations on the NT SOPL enables the NT government to supplement its workforce with engineers who have attained suitable professional formation and can therefore add to the local economy in emerging areas of practice and in sectors that are traditionally experience recurrent skills shortages.

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The market for engineers in the Northern Territory

The following figure illustrates a national increase in demand for most engineering occupations. (Figure 4, is an extract from the enclosed document, *Vacancies for Engineers, January 2017 Updates*, see Enclosure 1.)



In the context of the NT SOPL, it is noteworthy that engineering vacancy numbers in each of the states and territories increased from January 2015 – 2017, with the exception of the Northern Territory, which retreated during this period.

It was inevitable that the end of the resources boom would affect the demand for engineers, leading to a period of adjustment, even though demand for engineers in resources only made up around 10 per cent of demand the transition from extraction to production did have an effect on the number of vacancies.

However, it is equally noteworthy that the Northern Territory 2016-2017 budget notes expenditure in areas where engineering and engineers will play a critical role, such as link roads, water treatment, sports



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infrastructure and flood mitigation. Beyond these traditional roles for engineers, the establishment of the Knowledge Territory initiative, and the establishment of a Chief Scientist will rely on the skills and expertise of engineers and will require greater use of STEM skills in the wider NT economy.

It was earlier noted that there is a national increase in demand for engineers. While the Northern Territory does produce some of its own engineers, the numbers are extremely low, in the order of eight to 23 each year between 2013 and 2015 (see Enclosure 2). The NT is therefore particularly reliant on domestic migration from the eastern states that produce the bulk of engineering graduates. The NT is therefore excessively reliant on domestic migration to meet demand for engineers and, unfortunately for the NT, it is in the eastern states where the bulk of recent demand has been generated.

Recommendation

In the context of a national increase in demand for engineers, a forecast increase in engineering-intensive programs of work in the Northern Territory, and reliance on supply from the eastern states, Engineers Australia recommends that the NT SOPL include all engineering occupations. This will ensure that the government has the benefit of a stable pipeline of skilled engineers to supplement domestic supply through universities in the NT and other states.

Engineers Australia would welcome the opportunity to discuss with the Territory Government the role of engineers and engineering in helping to facilitate and develop skilled and qualified engineers.

Should you have any questions please contact me on (08) 8914 1701 or via email at MMonaghan@engineersaustralia.org.au.

Yours sincerely

Mark Monaghan
General Manager, Northern Division

Enclosure:

1. Vacancies for Engineers, January 2017 Update
2. Engineering Education Update 2016, Tasmania, Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory

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