ENGINEERS
AUSTRALIA

Engineering Vacancies Report

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Introduction

This policy report investigates the current state of engineering employment in Australia by analysing the direction of change in engineering vacancy numbers. The Australian Government Department of Employment has released its June 2017 Vacancies Report which covers trends in job vacancies to the end of June 2017, including revisions for previous months. The statistics presented are the Department's revised and preferred trend series. All the vacancy numbers and graphs presented in this report are in trend terms.

Job vacancies can provide a valuable gauge of the state of the labour market as vacancies are a key indicator of unmet demand for labour in the economy[1]. When the demand for labour is strong, the levels of vacancies will also generally rise. Analysing movements in engineering vacancies can provide a broad indication of the direction of the engineering labour market. This report will investigate vacancy trends in Australia as well each state and territory. Further analysis of engineering occupations is also investigated, and this is to Australian and New Zealand Standard Classifications of Occupations (ANSCO) four-digit unit group classifications.

This report will include trends in the engineering occupations of:

- *Engineering managers* (unit group 1332). This includes engineering managers only.
- *Chemical and materials engineers* (unit group 2331). This includes chemical engineers and materials engineers.
- *Civil engineering professionals* (unit group 2332). This includes civil engineers, geotechnical engineers, quantity surveyors, structural engineers and transport engineers.
- *Electrical engineers* (unit group 2333). This includes electrical engineers only.
- *Electronics engineers* (unit group 2334). This includes electronics engineers only.
- *Industrial, mechanical and production engineers* (unit group 2335). This includes industrial engineers, mechanical engineers and production or plant engineers.
- *Mining engineers* (unit group 2336). This includes mining engineers and petroleum engineers.
- *Other engineering professionals* (unit group 2339). This includes aeronautical engineers, agricultural engineers, biomedical engineers, engineering technologists, environmental engineers, naval architects and engineering professionals not elsewhere classified.
- *Telecommunications engineers* (unit group 2633). This includes telecommunications engineers and telecommunications network engineers.

This report will not include the occupations of ICT support and test engineers (unit group 2632). There are high numbers of vacancies recorded for these occupations, much higher than the vacancies recorded for electronics engineers. However, it is difficult to determine how many of the vacancies in these occupations are engineering specific, and for this reason these occupations have been excluded from analysis in this report.

[1] Edwards. K, and Gustafsson. L, 2013. Reserve Bank of Australia, Bulletin, September Quarter, *Indicators of Labour Demand.* www.rba.gov.au

Executive Summary

Engineering vacancies in Australia have been much more variable than general vacancies in Australia over the last decade. The engineering profession saw pronounced engineering job growth periods during the resources boom, and was able to recover after the Global Financial Crisis. However, engineering jobs deteriorated after 2013, and did not show signs of recovery until late 2016. Over the first six months of 2017 engineering vacancies have grown slowly, but steadily.

Engineering job vacancy numbers are being led by New South Wales, which has recorded over 1,300 vacancies for June 2017, and has increased 2.2 per cent over the first six months of 2017. Over the last two years engineering vacancies have increased over 50 per cent in the state. New South Wales is followed in engineering vacancy numbers by Victoria with almost 800 recorded in June 2017, and the state has seen 6.3 per cent growth in engineering vacancies for the first half of the year. In the first six months of 2017 engineering vacancies have also grown in Queensland and in Western Australia, with 8.6 per cent growth in Queensland and 20.9 per cent growth in Western Australia.

South Australia has also seen a rise in engineering job vacancies over the first six months of 2017, with growth of 10.7 per cent. The smaller jurisdictions of Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory usually record much more variable growth rates than the other jurisdictions, but they also all have recorded rises in the first six months of 2017. Tasmania grew 22.1 percent, the Northern Territory grew 20.9 per cent and the Australian Capital Territory grew 5.6 per cent.

The majority of the engineering job vacancies recorded are for civil engineering occupations. Civil engineering vacancies dominate the vacancies for engineers in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. In Queensland and the Northern Territory, civil engineering vacancies are also the predominant engineering occupation vacancy, but there is also a high amount of mining engineering jobs recorded in those jurisdictions. In Western Australia, the most engineering occupation vacancies are for mining engineers which has grown particularly strongly over the last six months.

Other engineering occupations such as industrial and mechanical engineering vacancies have grown in the last six months led by Victoria and Western Australia, with smaller growth for this occupation in New South Wales and South Australia. Electrical engineering occupation vacancies have risen sharply in New South Wales and Victoria over the last six months, with smaller growth recorded in Queensland and South Australia. Other occupations are also recording more vacancies, most likely a flow-on effect of major projects underway in some of the larger states, however they come off a much smaller base than the larger occupations of civil, mining, electrical, and industrial and mechanical.

Australia

Engineering vacancies in Australia have historically shown a higher level of variance compared to job vacancies in Australia overall. Engineering job vacancies were heavily influenced by the construction phase of the resources boom and the Global Financial Crisis (GFC).

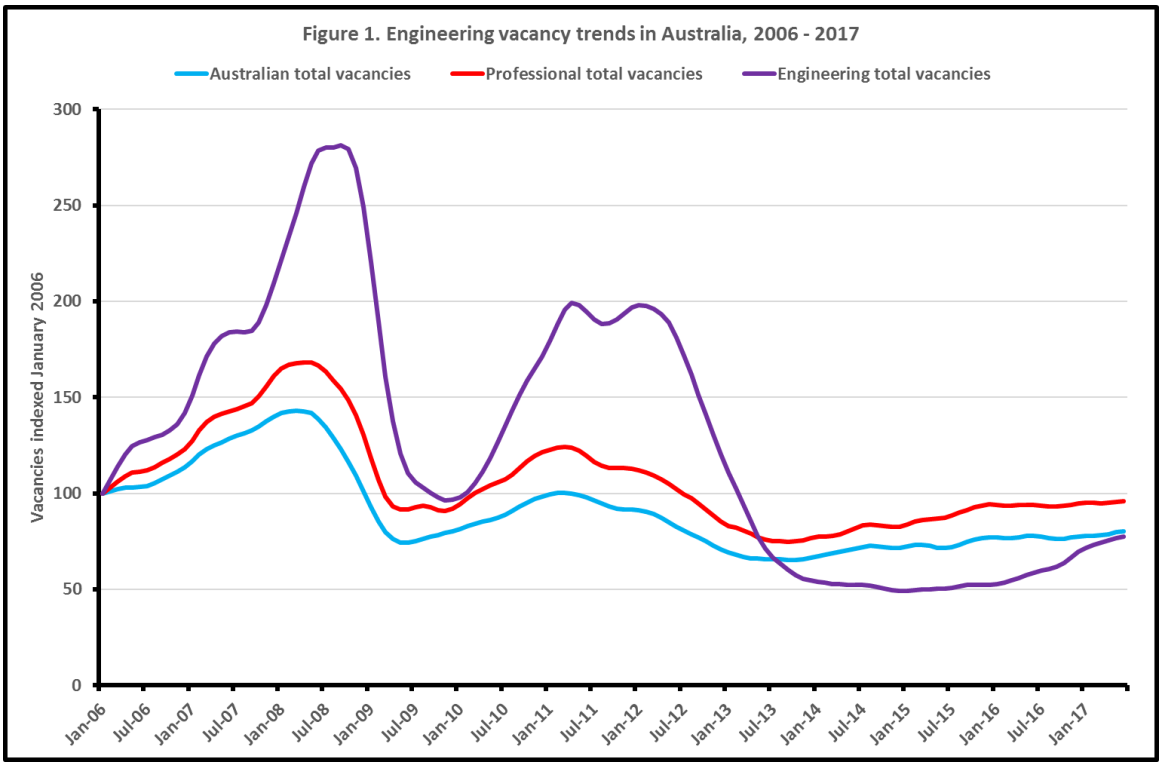


Figure 1 provides background information about the changes to the Australian labour force, the professional occupation labour force, and the engineering labour force over the last decade. As demonstrated above, engineering vacancies have been much more heavily influenced by economic forces. In 2006 Australia's engineering labour force grew significantly to meet the demand for engineers during the construction phase of the resources boom, peaking in 2008. The engineering labour force then weathered the GFC which soon followed, and a second period of strong job growth was seen in 2010 and 2011.

This recovery was short-lived and the engineering labour market began to deteriorate rapidly from December 2012 as engineering vacancies began a 30-month slide. This deterioration continued through to 2014 and engineering vacancies remained at low levels, until new signs of growth appeared again in 2016. The first six months of 2017 has seen a slower and stable growth compared to the growth of the booms in earlier years, as the engineering job market slowly returns closer to the levels seen just before the resources boom.

At its peak in September 2008, there were 13,005 vacancies recorded for engineers, while at its lowest point in January 2015, there were only 2,281 vacancies recorded for engineers.

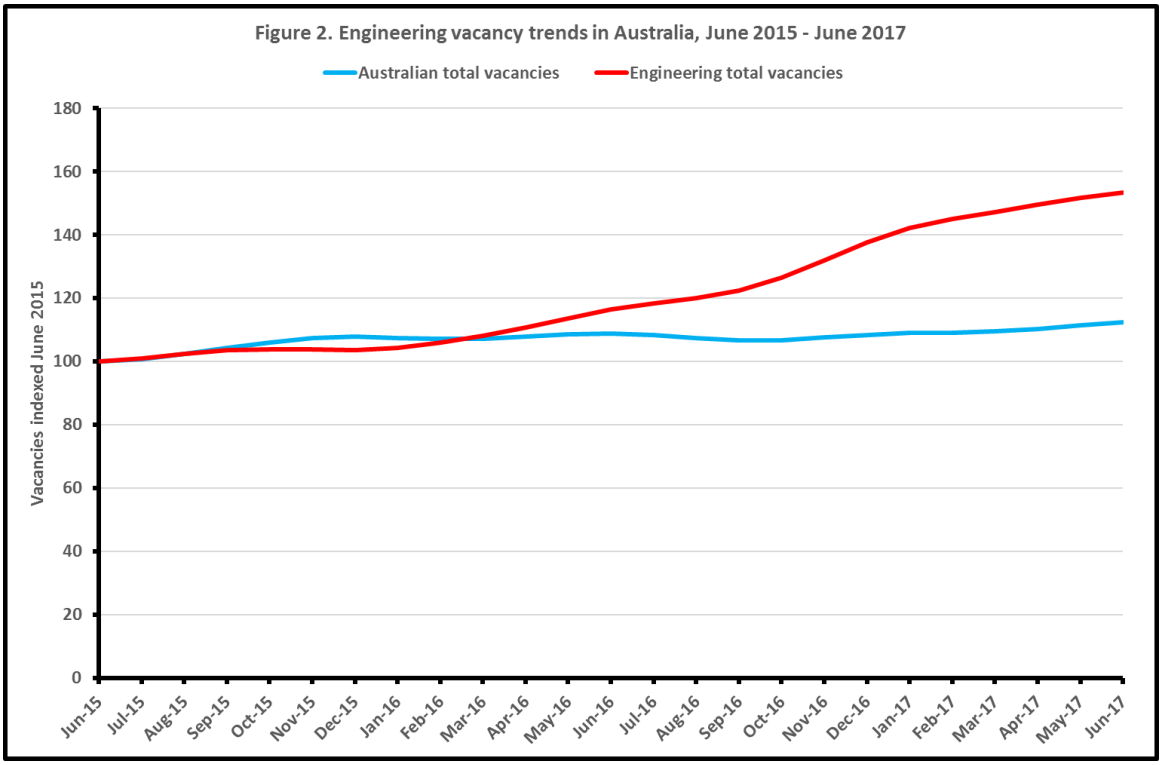
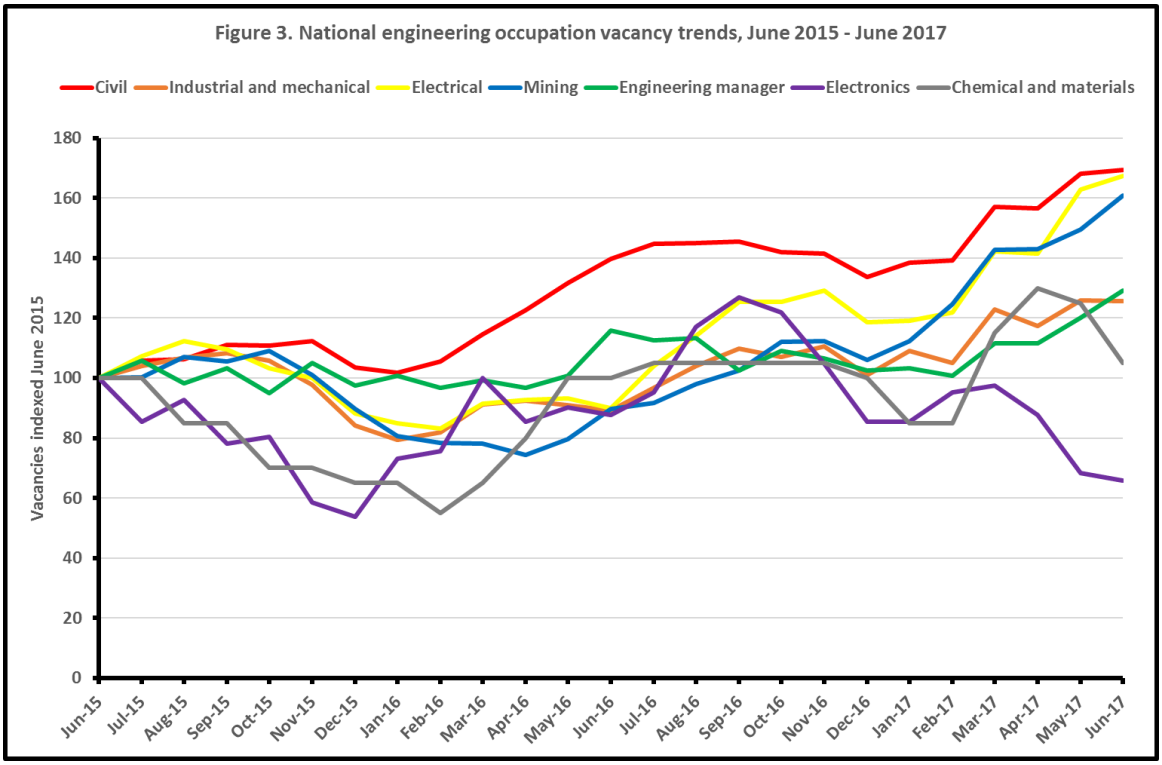


Figure 2 shows the growth of both Australian total vacancies and engineering vacancies in the last two years. Engineering vacancies grew at a higher rate than the total Australian labour force during this period with higher growth throughout 2016, continuing through the beginning of 2017. Engineering vacancies grew from 2,334 in June 2015 to 2,717 in June 2016. This growth continued over the following 12 months with 3,579 engineering vacancies recorded in June 2017, growth of 31.7 per cent over that period. In the first six months of 2017, engineering vacancy numbers continued to climb, recording growth of 7.9 percent.



The recent growth in the number of engineering vacancies is a sign of improvement in the engineering labour force. Figure 3 provides further insight to the growth trends of engineering occupations which fuelled the overall growth in engineering vacancies. Figure 3 shows trends for engineering occupations over the last two years, with many occupations increasing numbers in mid-2016 and early 2017. Looking at figure 3:

- Civil engineering occupations have been driving the majority of growth in overall engineering vacancies over the past 12 months on the back of growth in New South Wales and Victoria. Civil engineering vacancies consistently record the highest number of all engineering vacancies with 2,060 vacancies recorded in June 2017. This is up from 1,685 recorded in January 2017, and much higher than the 1,216 recorded in June 2015.

- Vacancies for industrial and mechanical engineers has grown steadily over the last 12 months with 544 vacancies recorded in June 2017. This is up from 386 vacancies recorded a year ago in June 2016.

- Vacancy numbers for electrical engineers has seen consistent growth over the last 12 months, with vacancies continuing to grow in 2017. In June 2016 there were 160 vacancies recorded, growing to 212 in January 2017, and then jumping to 298 in June 2017.

- Mining engineering occupations have grown over the last 12 months, with numbers continuing to climb rapidly in the first six months of 2017. This comes off the back of strong growth in mining engineering vacancies in Western Australia. In January of this year there was 298 vacancies recorded, which has quickly moved up to 426 recorded in June. This is also an improvement on the 243 vacancies recorded in June 2016.

- Engineering manager occupations have remained fairly consistent over the past two years, with a small spike in the most recent months of the year. In June 2015 there were 120 vacancies recorded, growing to 139 recorded in June 2016, and continuing to 155 recorded in June 2017.

- Telecommunications engineering occupations have been reasonably stable over the last two years. In June 2015 there were 80 vacancies recorded for telecommunications engineers, which grew to 103 in April 2016. Since then vacancies have been variable, and in June 2017 there were 94 vacancies recorded.

- Vacancies for chemical and materials engineers, as well as electronics engineers has been consistent over the past two years, but these occupations remain at lower levels when compared to the other occupations. In June 2017 there were 21 vacancies recorded for chemical and materials engineers, and 27 for electronics engineers.

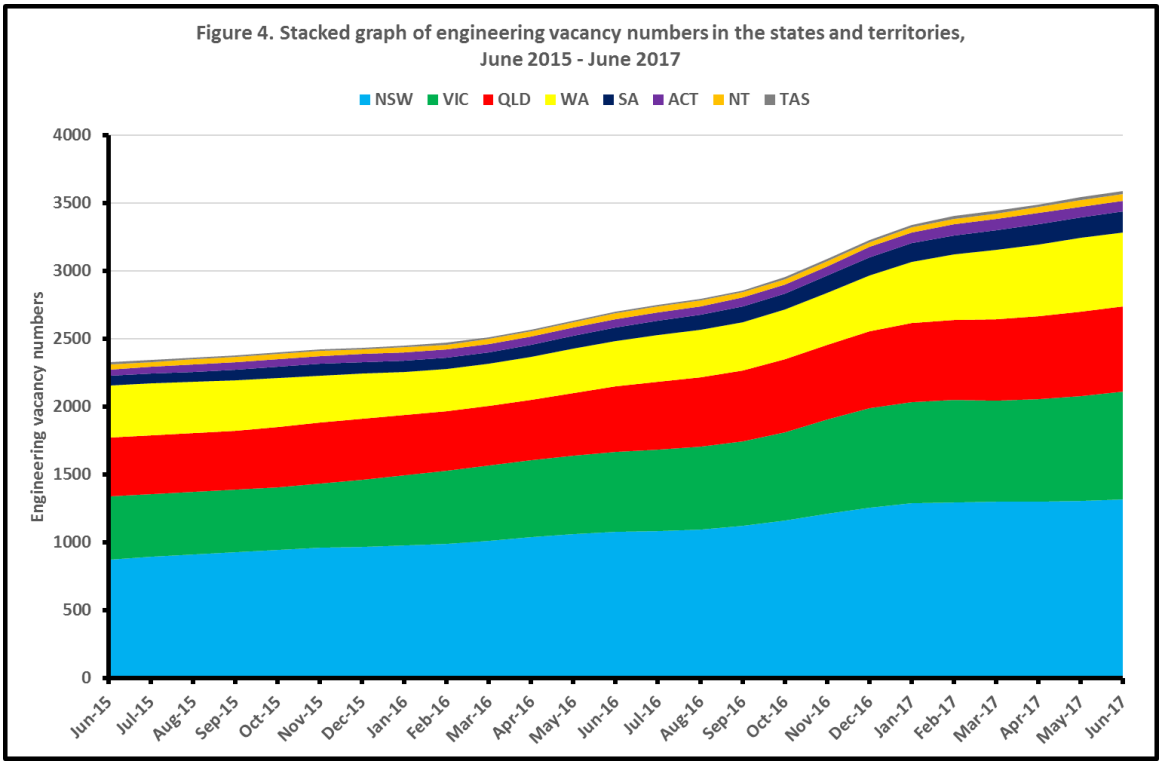


Figure 4 is a stacked graph which shows how engineering vacancies are shared throughout the states and territories. As seen in Figure 4 New South Wales is the state which has consistently recorded the largest amount of engineering vacancies, followed by Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. Most of the growth seen in the Australian engineering labour market can be attributed to increasing vacancy numbers seen in these larger states. Growth during the second half of 2016 was the first real indication that a recovery may be underway in the engineering labour market, and growth has continued throughout the first six months of 2017, but at a slightly lower growth rate. This growth is much more of a slow consistent growth compared to the rapid growth of the booms in 2008 and 2011.

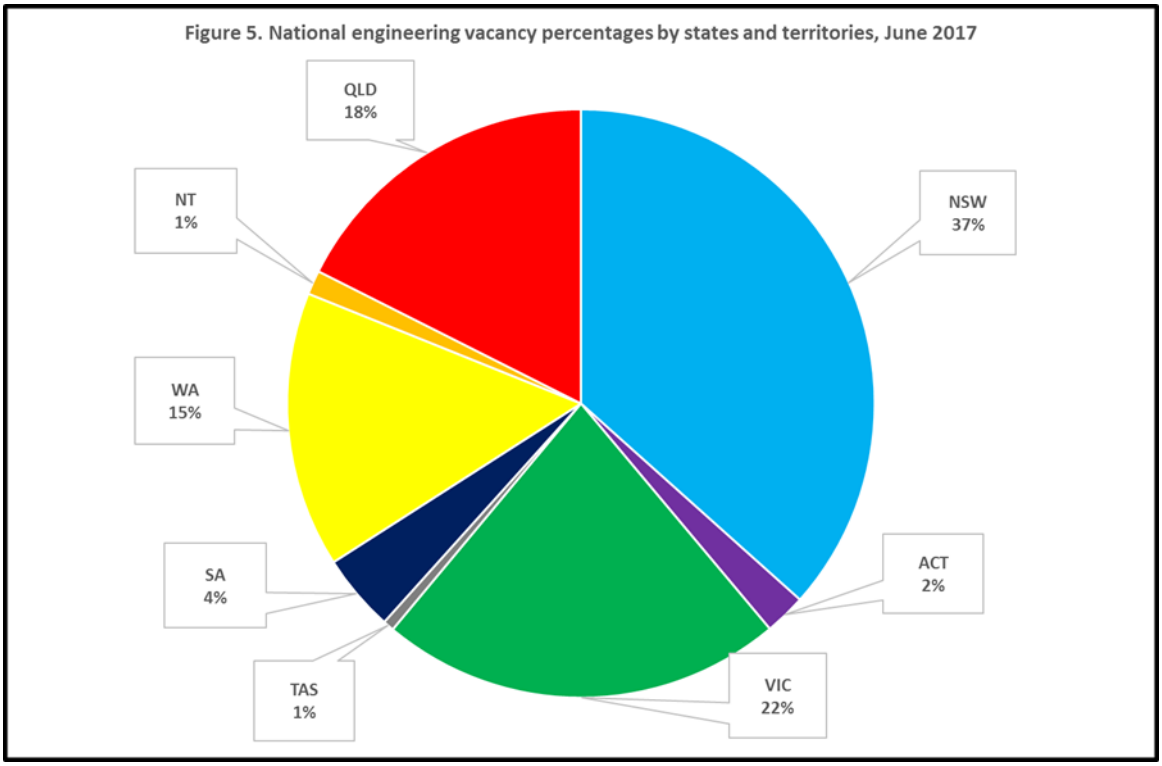
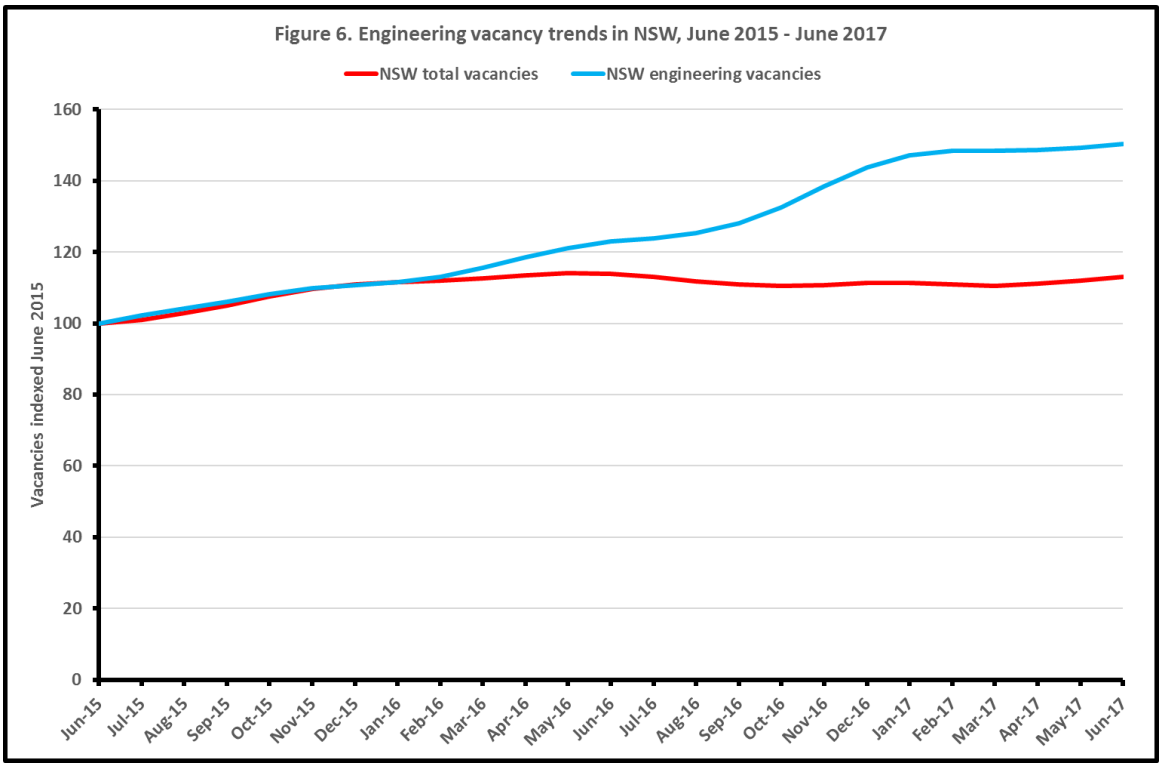


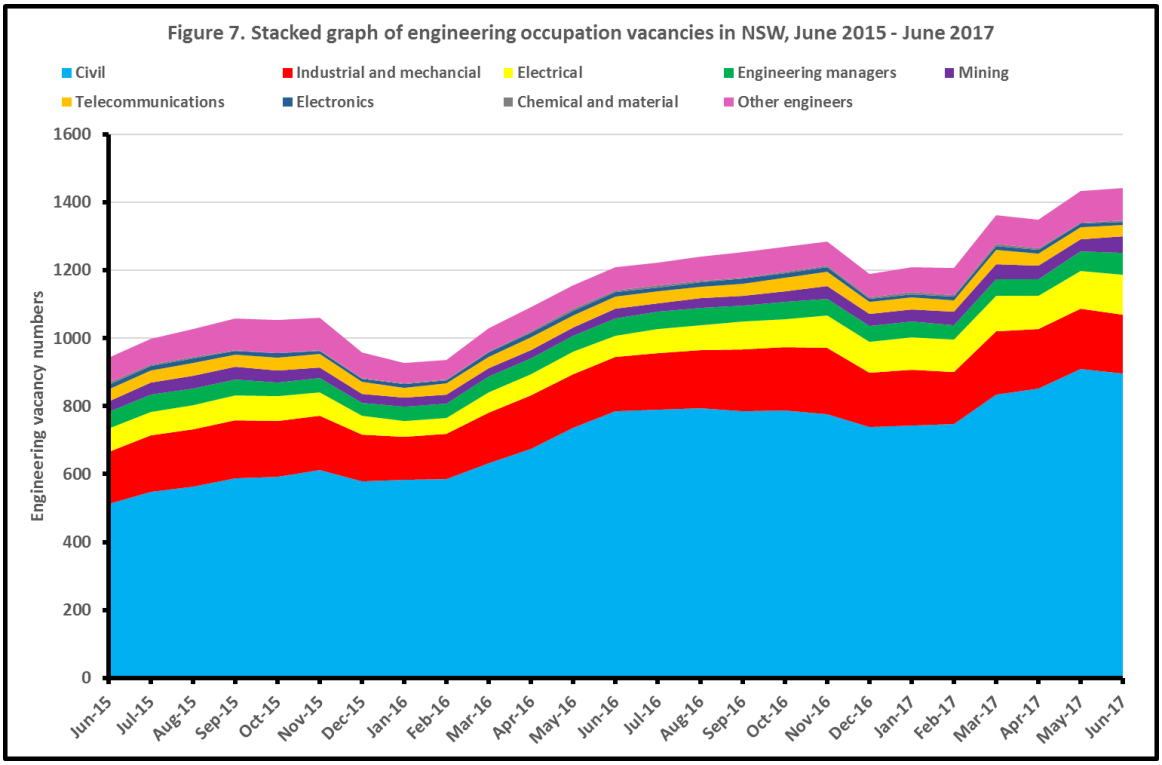
Figure 5 shows a snapshot of June 2017, with the percentage of engineering vacancies recorded by each state and territory. New South Wales dominated the engineering jobs available, followed by Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. In New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia engineering vacancies are predominately moved by growth or contraction in civil engineering vacancies which make up the majority of vacancies recorded. In Queensland and in Western Australia in particular, there is also a big influence from mining engineering vacancies which have fluctuated over the decade. In the smaller jurisdictions such as Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory vacancy numbers are smaller than the other jurisdictions, which can make the occupation numbers difficult to analyse due to increased variability.

In the following chapters this report discusses each state and territory in more detail including the engineering occupations which are pushing up the number of vacancies in each state.

New South Wales

New South Wales has consistently recorded the highest number of engineering vacancies in Australia. Figure 6 below shows engineering vacancy tends in NSW in comparison to overall vacancy trends in the state, while Figure 7 is a stacked graph of the engineering occupations in the state.





Engineering vacancy growth trends in NSW have consistently been higher than overall NSW vacancies for the last two years. Over the last two years total NSW vacancy numbers have grown by 13 per cent, compared to 50.3 per cent for NSW engineering vacancies over the same time period. In June 2015 there was 874 vacancies recorded for engineers, which has grown to 1,313 vacancies recorded in June 2017.

Engineering vacancy numbers in NSW are dominated by vacancies recorded in Civil engineering occupations, which make up roughly two-thirds of all engineering vacancies in the state. Some points of note in NSW are:

- Civil engineering occupations continue to drive the increasing numbers in NSW engineering vacancies. In June 2015 there was 513 vacancies recorded, which has grown to 896 vacancies recorded in June 2017. This increase is most likely on the back of a number of major infrastructure projects continuing in the state such as the Sydney Rapid Transit Project, the WestConnex Project and the Regional Road Freight Corridor Project. Other construction projects, such a number of large scale solar projects are also contributing to this growth.

- Industrial and mechanical engineering occupations have grown slightly over the last two years, with the biggest growth occurring during mid-2016, before falling back in the first six months of 2017. In January 2016 there was 126 vacancies recorded which grew to 194 vacancies in November 2016, falling back to 173 in June 2017.

- Electrical engineering occupations have also seen growth in vacancy numbers recorded during 2016, and the first six months of 2017. In January 2016 there were 48 vacancies recorded for electrical engineers in NSW, growing to 95 in January 2017 and continuing to grow to 118 recorded in June 2017.

- Engineering manager occupation vacancies have remained reasonably steady in NSW. In June 2015 there were 48 vacancies recorded which has gradually climbed to 64 vacancies recorded in June 2017.

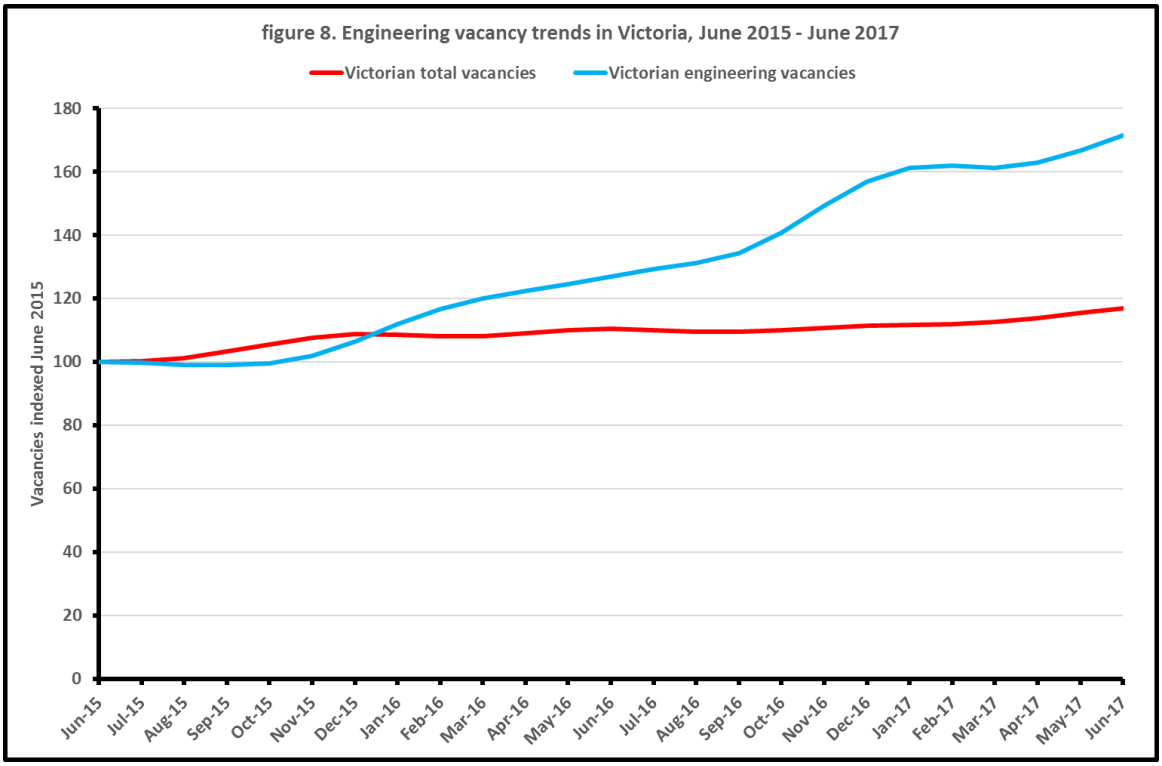
- Vacancies for mining engineers in NSW have grown slightly over the two-year period. In June 2015 there were 31 vacancies for mining engineers, growing to 48 vacancies in June 2017.

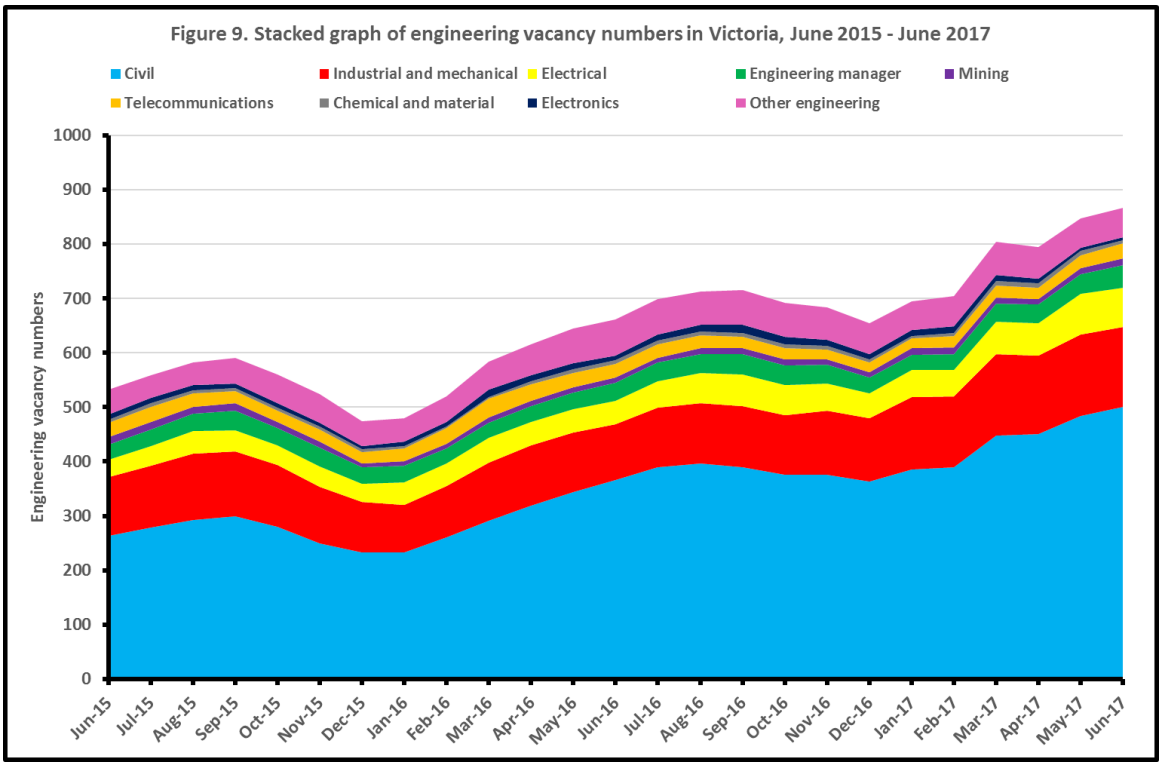
- Vacancies for telecommunications engineers have remained steady over the past 12 months. In June 2015 there were 37 vacancies recorded, which has moved much over the last 24 months, with 35 vacancies recorded in June 2017.

- Electronics and chemical and materials have consistently remained the two occupations with the lowest vacancy number in the state. Electronics engineering vacancies have remained stable with nine vacancies recorded in June 2017, three less than recorded a year ago. Chemical and materials vacancies have slightly fallen to four vacancies in June 2017, from five vacancies a year earlier.

Victoria

Victoria has seen a rise in engineering vacancies over the last two years with strong growth throughout 2016. Figure 8 below shows the vacancy trends for engineering vacancies in Victoria in comparison to trends for all Victorian vacancies. Figure 9 is a stacked graph of the engineering occupations in the state.





Engineering vacancy trends in Victoria have been higher than overall Victorian vacancies since June 2016 with growth in a number of engineering occupations in this time. Over the past two years total Victorian vacancies have grown by 16.9 per cent, compared to 71.4 per cent for engineers. Over the first half of 2017, engineering vacancies have grown 6.3 per cent. In June 2015 there was 464 vacancies recorded for engineers, which grew to 796 vacancies in June 2017. Engineering vacancies in Victoria are dominated by vacancies recorded in Civil engineering occupations in the state as seen in figure 8. Some points of note are:

- Civil engineering occupations have been the main driver in the growth of Victorian engineering vacancy numbers, pushing overall engineering vacancies for the state. In June 2015 there was 263 vacancies recorded for civil engineering professionals, which grew to 500 vacancies recorded in June 2017. In 2017 alone civil engineering vacancies increased by 114 vacancies recorded in just six months. Some major construction projects are underway in Victoria which may be pushing these numbers, including the Metro Trains Project which has begun its design phase, the Metro Tunnel Project which is underway, and the upgrade to crossings and train stations which were recently completed.

- Industrial and mechanical engineering occupations have grown slightly over the last two years, with the biggest increase in vacancies for these occupations occurring during the first six months of 2017. In December 2016 there was 117 vacancies recorded for industrial and mechanical engineers, growing to 147 recorded in June 2017.

- Electrical engineering occupations have risen steadily over the two-year period, with a quick jump in vacancies recorded over the most recent months of 2017. In June 2015 there was 32 vacancies recorded, rising to 49 recorded in January and February 2017. However, by June 2017 this has risen further to 72 vacancies recorded.

- Engineering manager occupation vacancies have remained steady in Victoria. In June 2015 there were 27 vacancies recorded, climbing slowly to 42 vacancies recorded in June 2017.

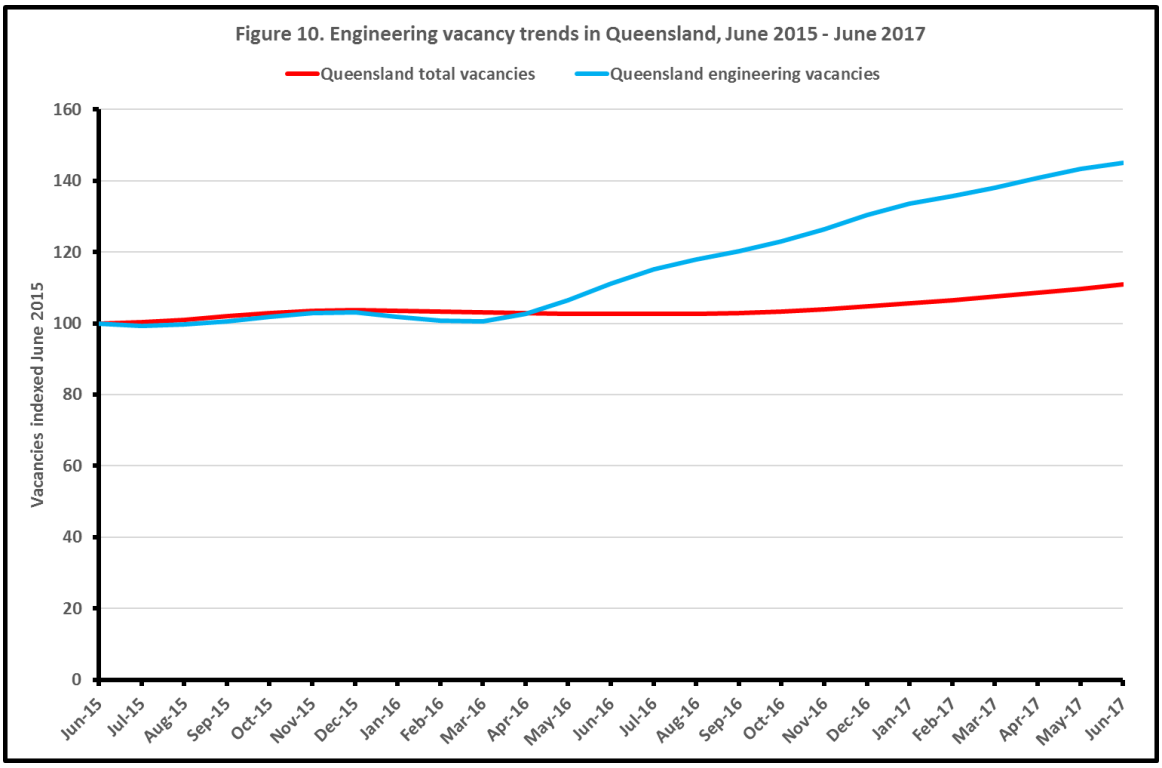
- Vacancies for mining engineers in Victoria could be considered at low levels, especially when compared to Queensland and Western Australia, but even compared to NSW. Over the last two-year period vacancies recorded has hovered around 10 vacancies a month with no real growth over that period. In June 2017 there were 13 vacancies recorded.

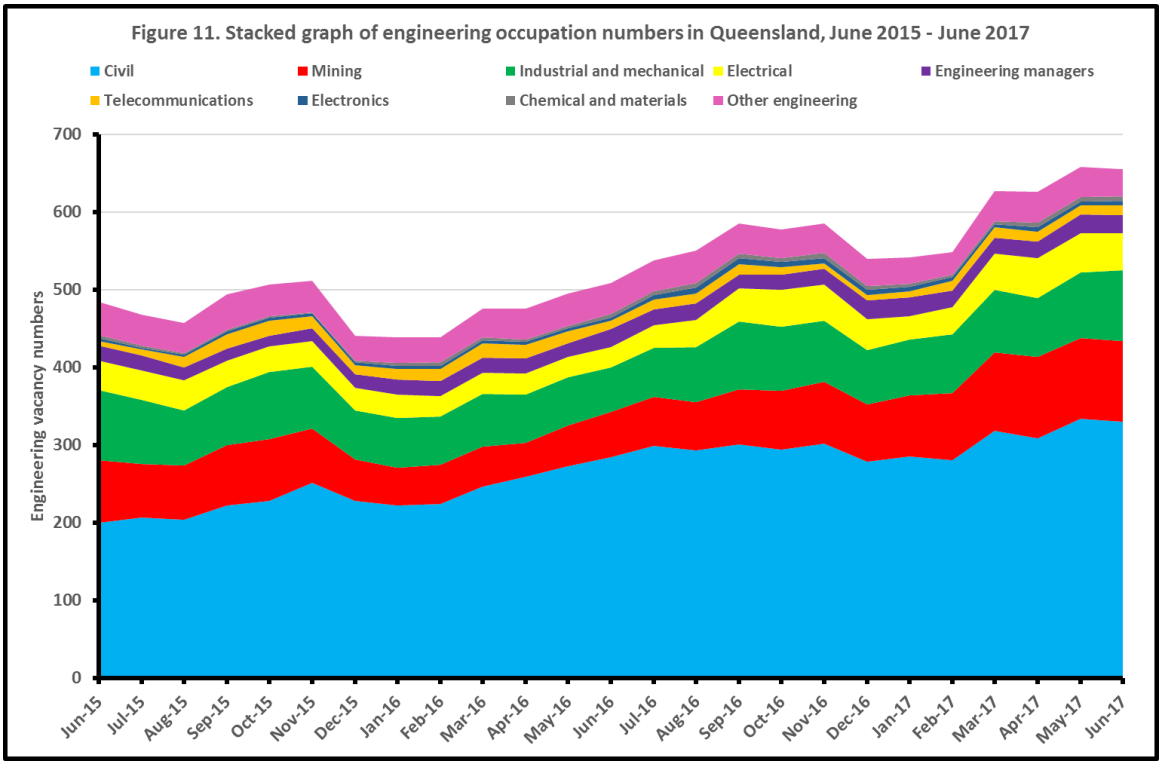
- Vacancies for telecommunications engineers can remained stable over the past two years. In June 2015 there were 26 vacancies recorded, which has not moved much at all with 27 vacancies recorded in June 2017.

- Electronics and chemical and materials have consistently remained the two occupations with the lowest vacancies. Electronics engineering vacancies have remained stable with five vacancies recorded in June 2017, less than the nine recorded a year earlier. Chemical and materials vacancies have remained steady with six vacancies recorded in June 2017, the same as two years earlier.

Queensland

Queensland engineering vacancies increased during the second half of 2016 after a long period of low numbers. Figure 10 below shows engineering vacancy trends in Queensland over the past two years, in comparison to Queensland total vacancies. Figure 11 is a stacked graph of the engineering occupation vacancies in the state.





Engineering vacancy trends in Queensland remained low until mid-2016, when vacancy numbers grew at a higher rate than the Queensland total vacancies. From June 2016 to June 2017 engineering vacancies have grown 30.5 per cent, compared to 7.9 percent for total Queensland vacancies. Over the first six months of 2017, engineering vacancies have grown 8.6 per cent. In June 2015 there was 435 vacancies for engineers, which has grown to 631 vacancies in June 2017. Engineering vacancies in Queensland comprise a large portion of civil engineering occupations, which is followed by mining engineering occupations, and industrial and mechanical occupations as seen in figure 8. Some points of note in Queensland are:

- Civil engineering occupations have recorded the highest number of engineering vacancies in Queensland. In June 2015 there was 200 vacancies recorded, which grew to 284 in June 2016, continuing to climb to 330 vacancies recorded in June 2017. There are some major projects underway in Queensland which may have contributed to this improvement. This includes infrastructure construction on the Bruce Highway Upgrade Program and the Inland Rail Project, as well as other construction projects like the Queens Warf Precinct Project, preparation works for the Commonwealth Games and a number of solar farm projects in the state.

- Vacancies for mining engineers in Queensland fell in the early months of 2016, recording only 44 vacancies in April 2016. Since then mining engineering vacancies have been climbing, up to 79 recorded in January 2017, and up to 104 recorded in June 2017. This growth could be on the back of investment in mining projects such as the bauxite mine near Weipa.

- Industrial and mechanical engineering have remained fairly constant over the last two years. In June 2015 there were 91 vacancies recorded, dropping to 57 recorded in June 2016, jumping back up to 91 recorded in June 2017.

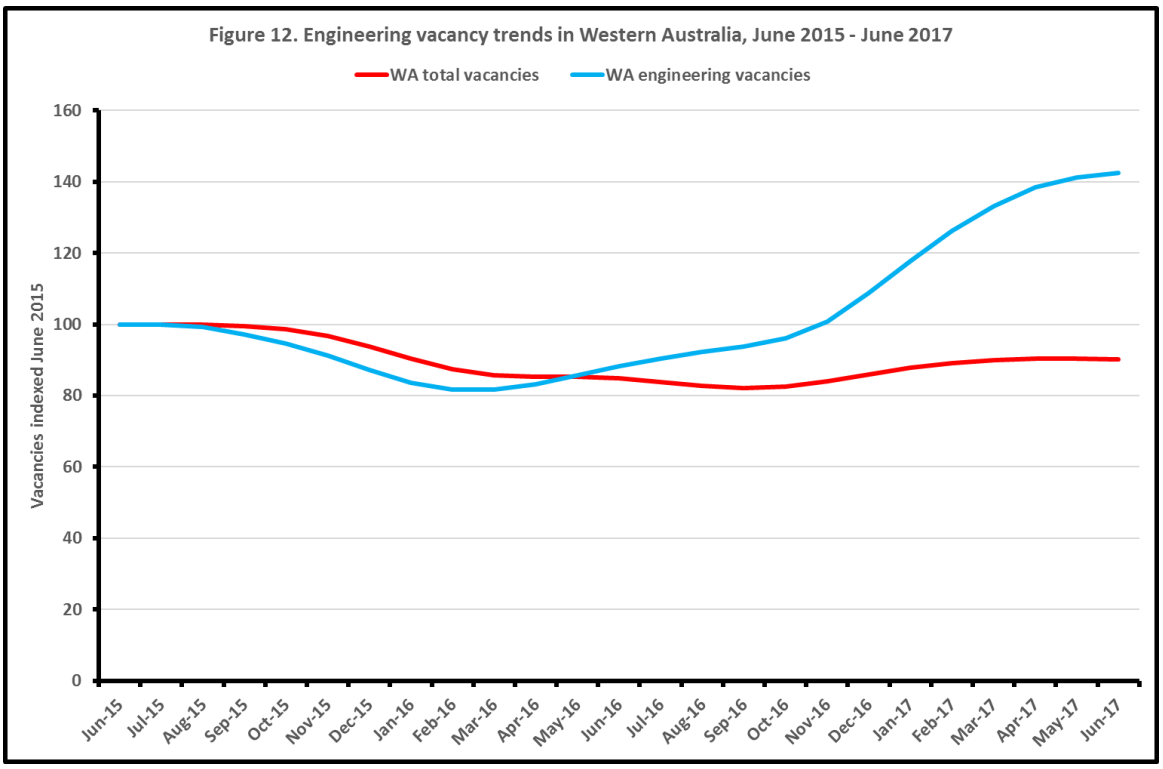
- Electrical engineering vacancy numbers have been variable over the last two years, moving anywhere from 26 to 50 vacancies. In the last six months vacancies for electrical engineers have grown from 30 recorded in January to 48 recorded in June.

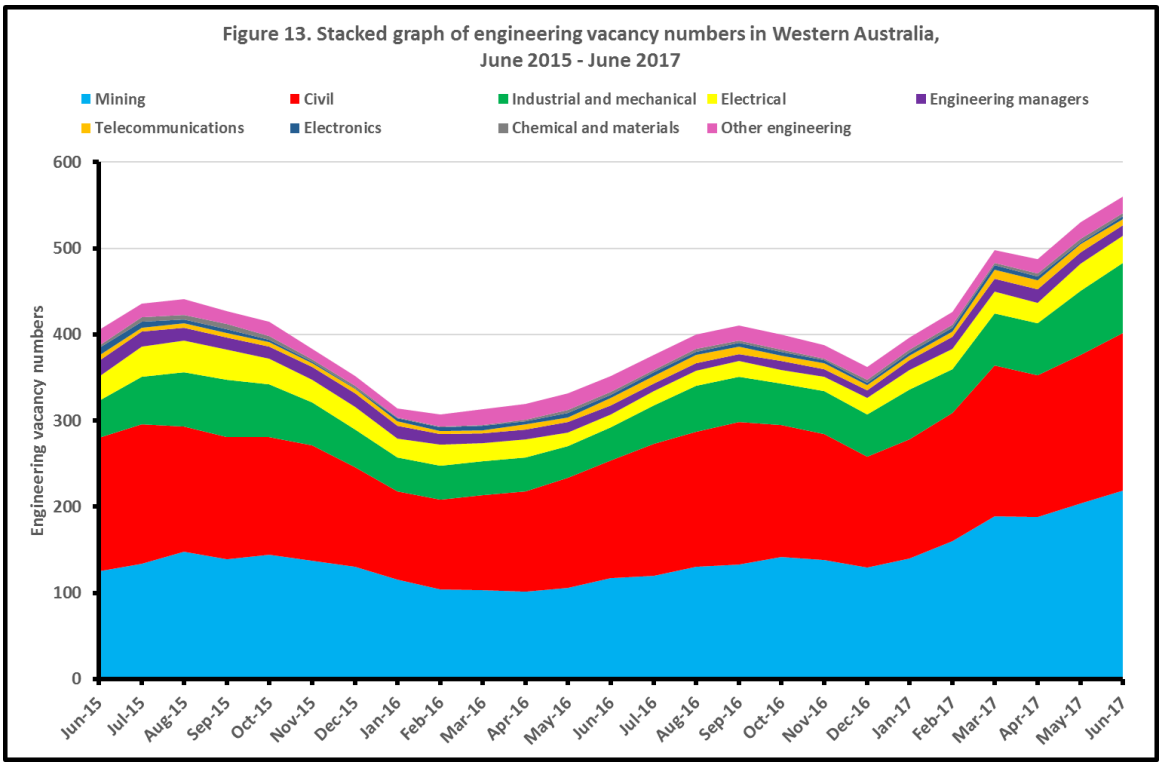
- Engineering manager occupation vacancies have remained steady in Queensland. Over the two-year period there has really only been slight movements above and below the 20 vacancy per month mark. In June 2017, 23 vacancies were recorded.

- Telecommunications, electronics and chemical and materials have consistently remained the three occupations with the lowest vacancies. In June 2017 there were 13 vacancies recorded for telecommunications engineers, six vacancies for chemical and materials engineers, and five vacancies for electronics engineers.

Western Australia

Western Australia engineering vacancies increased during the second half of 2016 after a period of falling numbers in late 2015. Figure 12 below shows engineering vacancy trends in WA over the past two years, in comparison to WA total vacancies. Figure 13 is a stacked graph of the engineering occupation vacancies in the state.





Engineering vacancy trends in WA fell in the later months of 2015, before a recovering in 2016, and growing in the early months of 2017. From June 2015 to June 2016 engineering vacancies in the state fell from 382 to 337, a fall of 11.8 per cent. However, over the next 12 months engineering vacancy numbers grew to 544, a rise of 61.5 per cent. Total WA vacancies over the same 12-month period only grew at 6.2 per cent. As seen in figure 12 Engineering vacancies in WA are predominately made up of mining and civil engineering occupations, followed by much smaller numbers in industrial and mechanical occupations, as well as electrical occupations. Some points of note in WA are:

- In June 2017 there were more vacancies recorded for mining engineers than any other engineering occupation in WA. Vacancies fell from 125 in June 2015 to 117 in June 2016. Growth in these vacancies was seen in late 2016, but it was the first few months of 2017, where mining engineering occupations lifted, and become the largest in the state. In December 2016 there was 129 vacancies, growing to 219 vacancies recorded in December 2017. Mining engineering vacancies now make up around 40 per cent of all engineering vacancies in Western Australia. Mining engineering jobs continue to grow strongly in Western Australia, and this is likely on the back of BHP and RIO announcing new projects.

- Civil engineering occupations also fell in late 2015, before rising variably in 2016. In June 2015 there was 155 vacancies recorded, falling to 137 in June 2016. By December 2016 this had fallen further to just 129 vacancies recorded. However, over the first six months of 2017 vacancies began to rise again and in June 2017 vacancies had risen to 183. Some of this growth could be attributed to preparation for some infrastructure construction projects beginning in the state such as the two-year tunnelling operation for the Forrestfield-Airport train line.

- Industrial and mechanical engineering have remained fairly constant over the last two years, with a small rise seen in the last few months. In June 2015 there were 43 vacancies recorded, falling to 38 vacancies in June 2016. Vacancy numbers grew to 49 in December 2016, but in the last six months have increased to 81 vacancies recorded in June 2017.

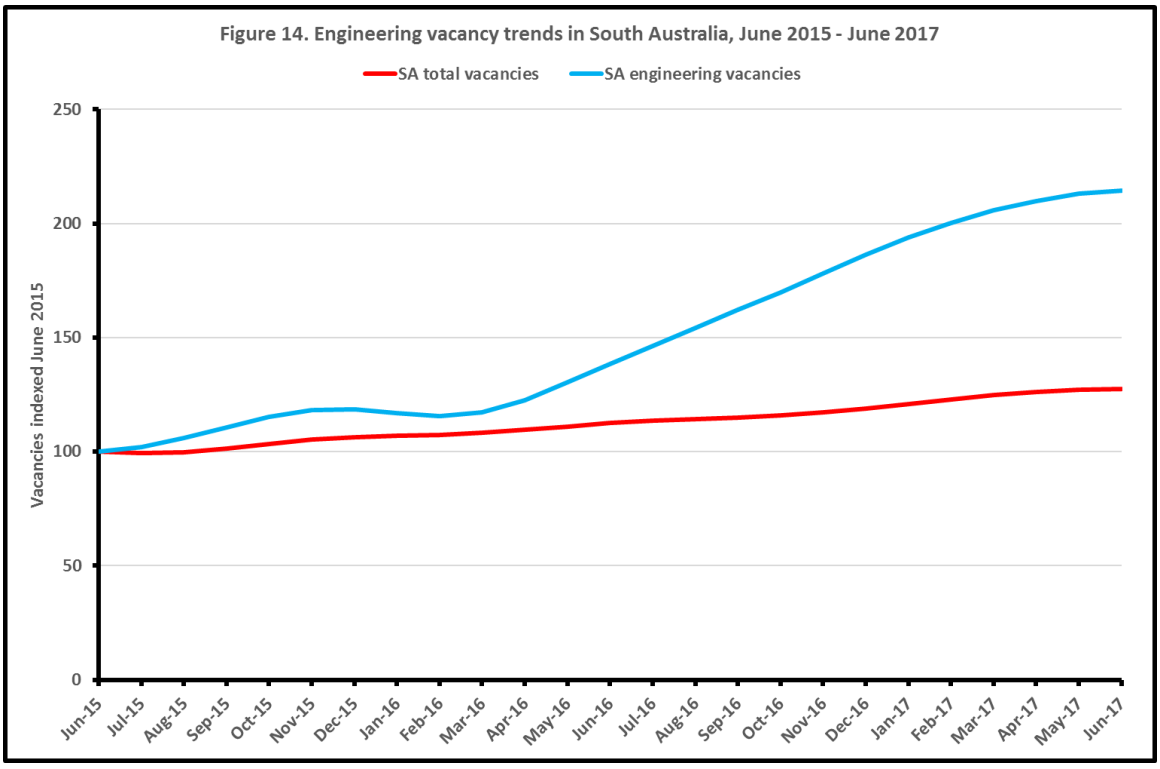
- Electrical engineering vacancy numbers have followed the same trends as other engineering occupations over the last two years, falling over 2015, and rising again in the most recent few months. However electrical engineering vacancy numbers have only just started to recover to the same levels as two years ago, with 28 vacancies recorded in June 2015, compared to 32 recorded in June 2017.

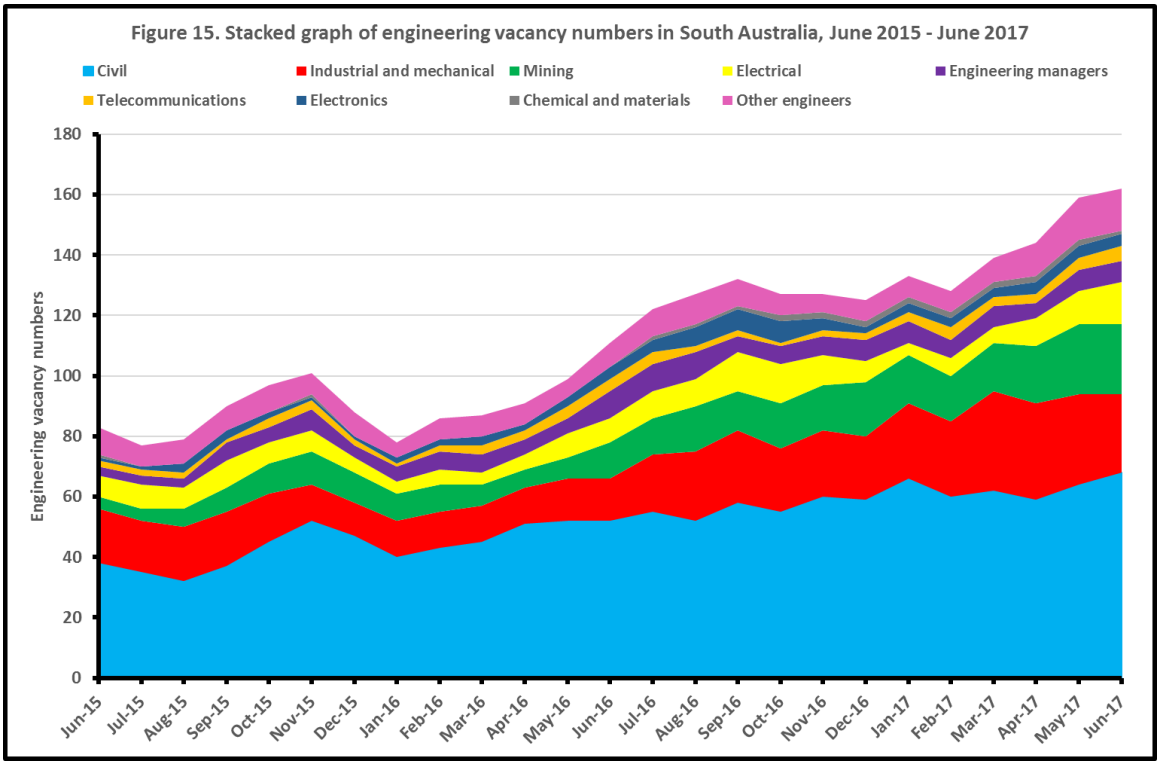
- Engineering manager occupation vacancies have fallen in WA, with numbers in June 2017 still lower than two years ago. In June 2015 there were 18 vacancies recorded, falling to on nine recorded in December 2016. As of June 2017 there were 12 vacancies for engineering managers recorded.

- Telecommunications, electronics and chemical and materials have consistently remained the three occupations with the lowest vacancies. In June 2017 there were seven vacancies recorded for telecommunications engineers, four vacancies for chemical and materials engineers, and three vacancies for electronics engineers.

South Australia

South Australia engineering vacancies have more than doubled over the past two years. Figure 14 shows the trend of engineering vacancies in SA in comparison to the trend of overall vacancies in the state. Figure 15 is a stacked graph of all of the engineering occupation vacancies in the state over the same time period.





Engineering vacancy trends in SA have risen over the last two years, growing from 71 vacancies recorded in June 2015, up to 153 vacancies recorded in June 2017. In the last 12 months engineering vacancies in the state have risen 54.9 per cent, compared to 13.3 per cent in total SA vacancies.

Engineering vacancies rises in SA have been on the back of rises in Civil, industrial and mechanical, and mining occupations. Some points of note in SA are:

- Civil engineering occupations have consistently recorded the highest number of engineering vacancies in SA. There has been the most growth in Civil engineering occupations over the last two years. In June 2015 there was 38 vacancies recorded, which grew to 68 vacancies recorded in June 2017. A number of civil engineering projects are currently underway in South Australia which could be influencing this growth. They include the Darlington Upgrade Project, the O-Bahn City Access Project and the Torrens Road to River Torrens Project.

- Vacancies for Industrial and mechanical engineering occupations have grown from 18 recorded in June 2015, up to 33 vacancies recorded in March 2017. In the last three months this has fallen back to 26 vacancies recorded in June 2017.

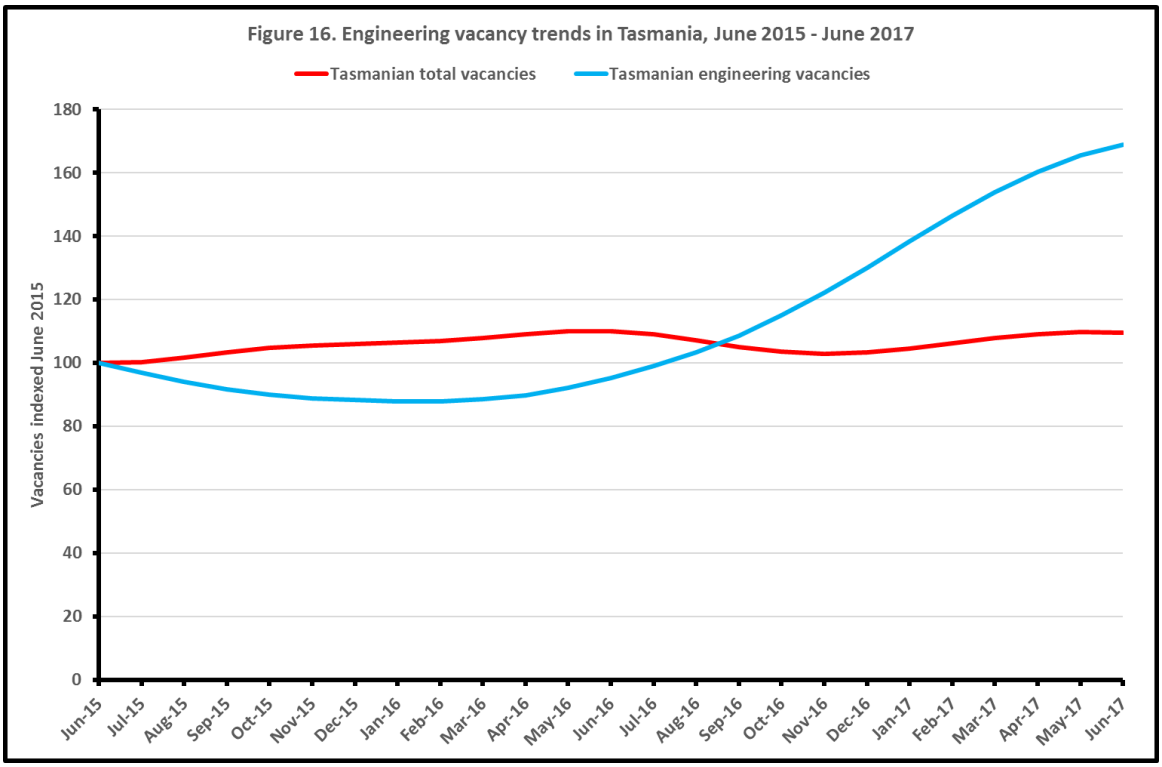
- Mining engineering vacancy numbers have also grown significantly over the two-year period. In June 2015 there was four vacancies for mining engineers in SA, which has since grown to 23 vacancies recorded in June 2017.

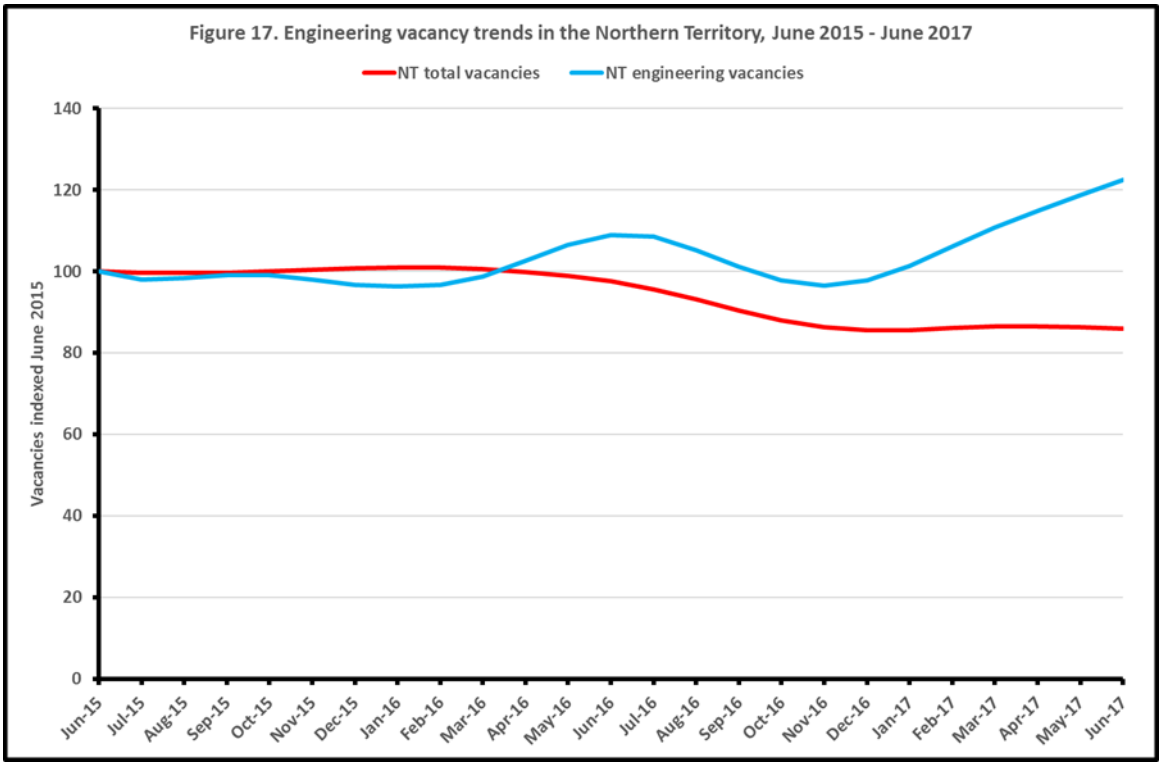
- Electrical engineering vacancies have seen a small spike in the last six months, growing from only four vacancies recorded in January 2017, to 14 recorded in June 2017.

- Engineering manager, telecommunications engineers, electronics engineers and chemical and materials engineering occupations have remained low in SA over the last two years. In June 2017 there were seven vacancies for engineering managers, five vacancies for telecommunications engineers, four vacancies for electronics engineers, and one vacancy for chemical and materials engineers.

Tasmania and the territories

Vacancy numbers for Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory are smaller than the other states, which means the variability in the vacancy trends can be much greater than in the larger states. As occupation data in these jurisdictions is so small, only the two-year trend analyses is presented.





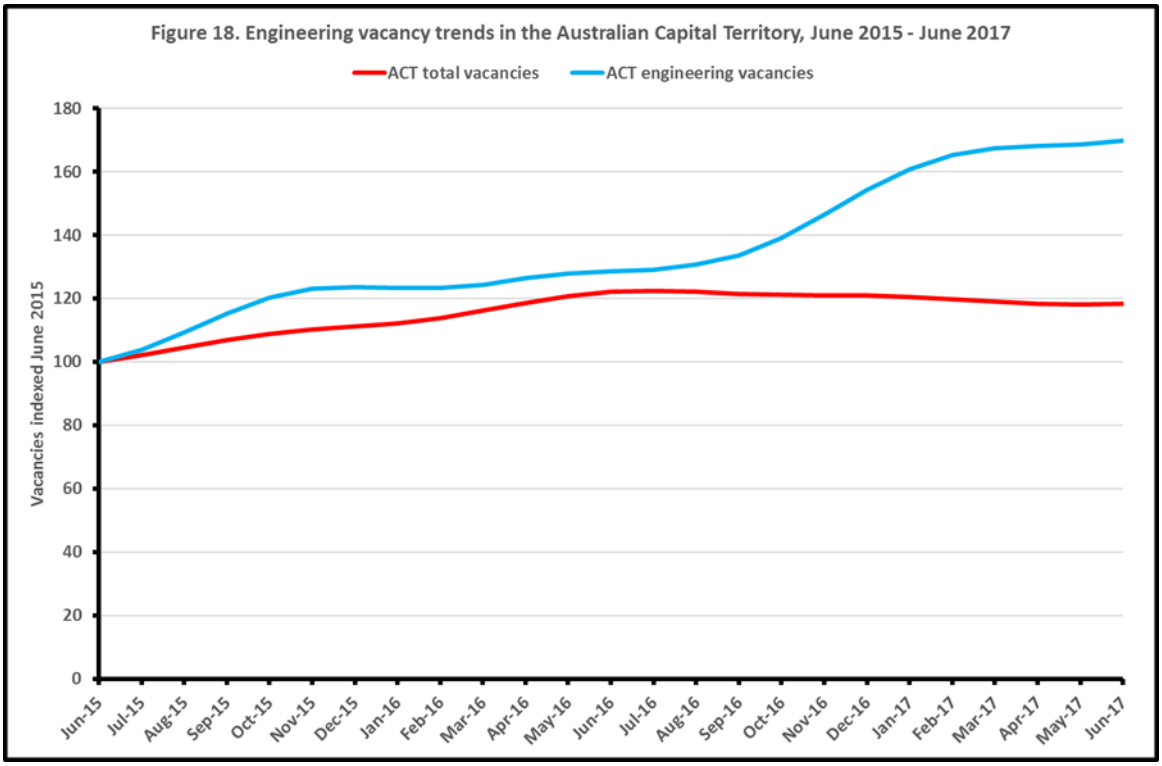


Figure 16 shows the two-year trend for engineering occupations in Tasmania in comparison to total Tasmanian vacancies. As seen in figure 16, engineering vacancies in Tasmania have been variable, but seem to be doing better in the last six months. However, it must be remembered that this has been off a small base number, so growth trends will be much more variable. In June 2015 there were 13 vacancies recorded for engineers in Tasmania, and this fell to 12 vacancies in June 2016. However, there was some growth in engineering vacancies over the early months of 2017, and in June 2017, 22 vacancies were recorded. The majority of these engineering vacancies were civil engineering occupations, making up almost half of all engineering vacancies. This increase could be attributed to a number of construction projects currently happening in Tasmania including the UTas building construction, the Midlands Highway Upgrade Project and a large water and sewerage capital works program.

Figure 17 shows the two-year trend for engineering occupations in the NT in comparison to total NT vacancies. Engineering vacancies in the NT have been more variable than overall NT vacancies, but this is off a much smaller base. In June 2015 there was 39 vacancies recorded for engineers, which increased slightly to 42 vacancies in June 2017. There was a small spike in growth in the first few months of 2017, which has resulted in 47 vacancies being recorded in June 2017. Civil engineering occupations are the engineering occupation with the most vacancies recorded, followed by mining engineering occupations. A number of projects are underway in the NT which may be contributing to these numbers, including some Defence infrastructure development projects, public infrastructure developments and LNG plant projects.

Figure 18 shows the two-year trend for engineering occupations in the ACT in comparison to total ACT vacancies. Engineering vacancies in the ACT have risen over the last two years, with consistent growth over that period. In June 2015 there was 48 vacancies recorded for engineers, growing to 62 vacancies in June 2016. This continued to rise to 82 vacancies recorded in June 2017. In the ACT more than half of engineering vacancies in June 2017 were civil engineering occupations, with the next largest occupations being industrial and mechanical. The ACT has some infrastructure projects underway which may be contributing to some of the increase in vacancies seen. This includes the Stage 1 of the Canberra Light Rail Project, a number of road duplications, and the upgrade of the ACT Law Courts Facilities.

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