The latest DEWR *Skilled Vacancy Survey* shows that the number of skilled vacancies in Queensland fell a further 3.0% in March 2003, with the index having now fallen for seven consecutive months in trend terms. This reflects the national trend in skilled vacancies, with the number of vacancies across Australia falling 1.6% in March, marking the eighth consecutive monthly decline.

The number of skilled vacancies in Queensland in March remained 3.4% higher than that recorded 12 months earlier. However, annual growth in skilled vacancies in Queensland has eased substantially in recent months, from a recent peak of 40.6% in June 2002. A similar trend has emerged nationally, with annual growth having reached a recent peak of 10% in July 2002, easing to 1.1% in March 2003.

Nationally, skilled vacancies decreased for all major occupational groups in March, with vacancies falling for professionals (-1.9%), associate professionals (-4.9%) and trades (-0.5%). The decline in the number of vacancies for professionals reflected reductions in vacancies across all the occupation categories, with the exception of accountants and auditors (0.3%). The fall in associate professional vacancies resulted from a lower number of vacancies for both medical/science technical officers (-9.0%) and building/engineering associates (-5.0%). The marginal decline in skilled vacancies in trades reflected falls in vacancies in the automotive (-4.1%), food (-1.7%) and construction (-0.9%) trades, as well as a decline in the number of vacancies for chefs (-2.5%). In contrast, increases in vacancies were recorded in each of the other major trade categories over the month, including printing (7.4%), metal (2.9%), electrical and electronics (2.4%), wood and textile (1.3%) and hairdressers (0.8%).

In annual terms, skilled vacancies in trades increased by 23.5% nationally, while the number of vacancies for professionals and associate professionals fell by 16.3% and 14.9% respectively.

A comparison of the States shows that Tasmania (-5.7%) recorded the largest fall in the skilled vacancies index in March 2003, followed by Queensland (-3.0%), New South Wales (-1.2%), Victoria (-1.1%) and South Australia (-0.4%). Western Australia (1.6%) was the only State to record an increase in vacancies over the month. In annual terms, New South Wales (-15.2%) and Victoria (-6.8%) both recorded a decline in skilled vacancies, while Western Australia (42.6%), Tasmania (17.3%), South Australia (9.3%) and Queensland (3.4%) recorded an increase in vacancies.

The trend number of skilled vacancies in Queensland was 842 in March, which represented 20% of total skilled vacancies in Australia during the month.

* The DEWR (Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations) *Skilled Vacancy Survey* is based on the count of skilled vacancies in the major metropolitan newspaper of each State and the Northern Territory, usually on the first Saturday of each month. It should be noted that this index is not necessarily a reliable leading indicator of employment growth in Queensland. The DEWR *Skilled Vacancy Survey* does not release data in seasonally adjusted terms.

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**ECONOMIC POLICY**

**BRIEFING NOTE**

**DEWR SKILLED VACANCY SURVEY: MARCH 2003**

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- The number of skilled vacancies in Queensland in March remained 3.4% higher than that recorded 12 months earlier. However, annual growth in skilled vacancies in Queensland has eased substantially in recent months, from a recent peak of 40.6% in June 2002. A similar trend has emerged nationally, with annual growth having reached a recent peak of 10% in July 2002, easing to 1.1% in March 2003.

- Nationally, skilled vacancies decreased for all major occupational groups in March, with vacancies falling for professionals (-1.9%), associate professionals (-4.9%) and trades (-0.5%). The decline in the number of vacancies for professionals reflected reductions in vacancies across all the occupation categories, with the exception of accountants and auditors (0.3%). The fall in associate professional vacancies resulted from a lower number of vacancies for both medical/science technical officers (-9.0%) and building/engineering associates (-5.0%). The marginal decline in skilled vacancies in trades reflected falls in vacancies in the automotive (-4.1%), food (-1.7%) and construction (-0.9%) trades, as well as a decline in the number of vacancies for chefs (-2.5%). In contrast, increases in vacancies were recorded in each of the other major trade categories over the month, including printing (7.4%), metal (2.9%), electrical and electronics (2.4%), wood and textile (1.3%) and hairdressers (0.8%).

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