

# Chef shortage rated extreme

29 July 2010 | by Rosemary Ryan

The shortage of chefs in Australia has been ranked ‘extreme’, in a new report that gives a snapshot of the supply and demand situation for skilled labour across a group of occupation categories.

The June quarter Clarius Skills Index report released this week said there were approximately 3800 unfilled chefs positions in Australia.

The report, the eighth in the series that analyses and reports on the shortages and over-supply of skilled labour in 20 occupation categories, showed that chefs were at the top of the list of top ten occupations with the highest levels of skills shortages, followed by metal tradespersons, construction tradespersons, automotive tradespersons, and building and engineering associate professionals.

It was up from number two on the list for the March quarter.

The report said the index shows that the labour market for chefs has “consistently been tighter than other skilled occupations over the last few years, indicative of a systematic shortage in the number of chefs in Australia”.

“This is reflected in the fact that chefs are the only occupation to record an extreme skills index reading in the June quarter,” it said.

“A continued shortage for this occupation can be attributed to both demand and supply factors. Over the long run, growth in disposable incomes and an increasing trend of eating out has seen consistent growth in consumer expenditure of cafes and restaurants.

“At the same time, business expenditure on hospitality has been boosted by growing demand from resource companies for onsite catering. This has contributed to strong growth in demand for chefs.

“Labour supply on the other hand has failed to keep pace with demanding work conditions, long hours and low pay contributing to a high drop out rate for apprentice chefs.”

The report acknowledged the effect that the MasterChef series may have on boosting the number of young people wanting to train as chefs, but questioned how many would make it a career.

“Anecdotal evidence suggests the take up of chef apprenticeships has jumped in line with the rising popularity of the MasterChef television series,” the report said. “However, industry experts are pessimistic about how many new apprentices will stay on once they are exposed to the harsh realities of being a professional chef.”

*Source: Hospitality Magazine Australia*