

**Submission  
No 47**

## **SKILL SHORTAGES IN NSW**

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**Position:** Chair  
**Date Received:** 6/08/2013

The Committee Manager  
Committee on Economic Development  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
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6 August 2013

**To Whom It May Concern**

**RE: Regional Development Australia (RDA) – Riverina submission to the ‘Inquiry into skill shortages in NSW’.** [www.rdariverina.org.au](http://www.rdariverina.org.au)

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RDA Riverina is providing advice and comment in regard to;

- A. Identifying gaps and areas of need in particular industries, professions and communities; and
- B. Identifying strategies for government to assist in addressing skill shortages.

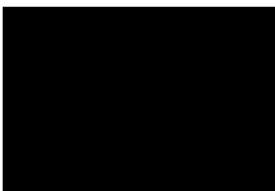
During consultation for the RDA Riverina Regional Plan that has been in place since 2009, a consistent challenge in the Riverina has been workforce development and the ability of attracting & retaining skilled people in the region. Workforce development strategies are identified in the RDA Riverina Regional Plan 2012-2015 (see p20) under goals one and three. The RDA Riverina Regional Plan 2012- 2015 can be accessed from <http://www.rdariverina.org.au/f.ashx/RegPlan20122015c.pdf>

RDA Riverina is a Regional Certifying Body and plays an important role in the Regional Skilled Migration Program therefore assessing the labour market and industry needs is vital for this program as well as education & training programs required for the region. RDA Riverina has collated data from various sources and had conversations with industry to determine where the skills gaps and needs are across the Riverina. The enclosed submission has collated some of the knowledge and evidence that RDA Riverina has used to identify and address the skill shortages for the region.

RDA Riverina believes that consideration and acceptance of the recommended strategies included in the submission would assist in reducing the skills shortages as well as encouraging growth and prosperity in the Riverina region and many other inland regions in NSW.

If you would like further feedback or would like to discuss any of this information in detail please contact our CEO Lani Houston [redacted] or [redacted]

Yours sincerely,



Tom Watson  
Chair



# RDA Riverina submission to the Inquiry into skill shortages in NSW

## Introduction:

Attracting and retaining skilled people in rural and regional communities has been a challenge in many regions for decades and this has also been the case for the Riverina (please refer to Appendix C, p22 of the submission for further details). A number of studies have been conducted into this challenge that would be worthwhile revisiting as a base for this inquiry<sup>1</sup>.

Although considerable research has been conducted, in the last 5 years some significant changes have occurred that have impacted on the regional skilled migration landscape. These include the global financial crisis that reduced job opportunities in metropolitan regions, increased housing prices in the major cities, technology advances that have enabled people to work from anywhere and the breaking of the 10 year drought affected a significant part of NSW (improving the aesthetics of the region, confidence of people and productivity). This combined with the changes being experienced in the global workforce and the way people work have created some opportunities for regional areas.

Since its establishment in 2009 RDA Riverina has embraced essentially four strategies to attract and retain skilled people in the region and overcome the labour shortage challenge. These strategies include:-

- Promotion and participation in the Regional Skilled Migration Program
- Coordination of the Country Change project [www.countrychange.com.au](http://www.countrychange.com.au) and support of Evocities [www.evocities.com.au](http://www.evocities.com.au)
- Promotion of a sustainable and inclusive workforce and the concept of being an employer of choice.
- Support for and strengthening the capacity of education and training institutions to identify skills gaps. This includes encouraging the development of integrated education courses and training that supports industry and business requirements across the region.

For further details on the RDA Riverina strategies please refer to Appendix B.

## **A. Identifying gaps and areas of need in particular industries, professions and communities;**

### **GAPS & AREAS of NEED IN INDUSTRY SECTORS & PROFESSIONS**

The sectors in the RDA Riverina region that have experienced significant shortages have varied but the following have been highlighted consistently through our research, studies and consultations:-

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<sup>1</sup> 'Inquiry into skills shortages in rural and regional NSW', NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Regional Development, May 2006.

'Attracting and Retaining Skilled people in regional Australia: A Practitioners Guide'. Standing Committee on Regional Development for the Regional Development Council, February 2004.

- **Agriculture:** Semi skilled (picking, pruning), livestock farm workers, farm managers, horticulture/nursery people, mixed farmer, machinery operator (tractor, header, earthmoving machinery, truck drivers), production managers,
- **Construction/Trades:** metal fabrication, fitters, electricians, motor mechanics, engineers (electrical & civil), plumbers, environmental engineers (irrigations systems), surveyors
- **Health:** Nurses (enrolled and registered), Doctors (GP's and specialists), allied health (social work/ Counselling/ welfare, aged care workers, personal care workers)
- **Hospitality:** Chef, Baker, Cook
- **Education:** Early Childhood Teachers/Childcare professionals
- **Financial Services:** Accountants
- **Public Administration:** Planners (Urban & Regional), Compliance Officers

The plans and evidence to support the identification of these sectors and professions is detailed in Appendix A p13

### **COMMUNITIES:**

The regions two largest centres Wagga Wagga and Griffith due to their large populations, business base and government services tend to have greater skills shortages and demand more skilled migrants or professionals, however some of the smaller communities have difficulty recruiting regionally due to their isolation. This is particularly prevalent in the agriculture and health sectors or for professional positions with Government organisations such as Local Government (Engineers).

Employers from Wagga Wagga and Griffith dominate the Regional Skilled Migration Program (Employer sponsored visas) but there are still employers from smaller communities such as Hillston, Darlington Point, Temora & Narrandera that use the program due to the reluctance of local labour to travel or move to smaller towns. This is often the case for semi-skilled or labourer positions as well.

### **B. Identifying strategies for government to assist in addressing skill shortages.**

#### **RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES :**

##### **1. Promotion of employment opportunities in inland NSW**

- Promotion of regional areas and the opportunities for employment and business investment. Further Government support for collaborative initiatives such as Evocities (that is currently looking to expand the number of cities included in the initiative) and Country Change (that is currently revising the program and looking at the next stage that will involve more Local Government Areas). Regional cities play a major role in the economic prosperity of regions and provide a large percentage of the employment opportunities.
- Instigate research that investigates what factors will make people relocate now and into the future. What are the key factors and incentives that are likely to encourage people to relocate to regions outside metropolitan areas. Where do people currently live who are considering a move or most likely to make a move. This research will be able to Government & Communities direct target their market.
- Develop a regional marketing fund that can be accessed by regions (using the RDA or other State agency boundaries as a guide) or regional projects that use a place based approach (such as Evocities & Country Change) to promote the employment and business opportunities in their region. Work in collaboration with Trade & Investment

NSW, Destination NSW and the new Visitor Economy strategy promoting NSW as a place to visit, work or do business.

## **2. Employer and Workforce Development Initiatives**

- Relocation of appropriate government offices to regional areas. NSW State Departments & Agencies to be employers of choice in regional areas with flexible working hours, capacity to work from home or smaller community locations. Demonstrate how the use of technology can support a flexible and dynamic workforce, especially when engaging with community.
- NSW Government Agencies demonstrating inclusive workforce development strategies. For example employing people who are disadvantaged or not currently engaged in the workforce but still have many skills to bring to the workforce. This would include Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island people, people with disabilities, refugees, older people & younger people living in regional areas.
- Further funds & resources allocated to NSW Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs)<sup>2</sup> particularly those industry sectors that have skilled shortages in regional areas. For example Agrifood Skills Australia, Service Skills Australia & Community Services & Health. Currently there is 1 industry ITAB representative to cover the state. Also base some of the regional industry sector ITAB's representatives in the regions. A number of employers in the agricultural and retail sector (including hospitality and accommodation) are owner operated and embracing the new workforce will require a significant cultural shift that will take time and training. Employers need additional support to make these adjustments in their business and workforce strategies.
- Commonwealth and State Agencies to work collaboratively to develop some long term workforce development initiatives for employers. Build on the work of the Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators, State Training Services and Partnership Brokers. Embracing the new and emerging way that individuals are approaching work (especially generation Y) is challenging for many small regional businesses and organisations, further training and a long term strategy to create cultural change in the workplace is required.

## **3. Education**

- Government to support and encourage integrated and flexible delivery of education and training for students through schools, TAFE and Universities.
- Provide incentives for schools and vocational education training providers such as TAFE NSW to work together and adjust the funding framework so schools and training providers aren't competing for students to ensure they maintain teaching numbers or funding levels. This is particularly important in communities with small populations (under 10,000).
- Support the redevelopment of the Murrumbidgee Rural Studies Centre at Yanco to offer integrated agricultural education programs linking with schools, TAFE NSW Riverina Institute, CSU and industry.
- Government to support the Charles Sturt University and La Trobe joint bid for a Murray Darling region based medical school. Key features of the proposed school are;

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<sup>2</sup> ITAB's provide independent industry advice on the training and skill needs of industry which will facilitate workforce development.

[http://www.training.nsw.gov.au/programs\\_services/funded\\_other/itab/#Industry\\_sector\\_coverage\\_in\\_NSW](http://www.training.nsw.gov.au/programs_services/funded_other/itab/#Industry_sector_coverage_in_NSW)

- The school will have locations at Bendigo, Orange and Wagga Wagga.
- Wagga will have 60 places per year across the six year program.
- 80% of enrolments will be from rural or indigenous backgrounds.
- By establishing a medical school at their Bendigo, Orange and Wagga Wagga campuses, the two universities would expand their regional health training offerings of dental, nursing, pharmacy and allied health programs, to also train medical students in the region, for the region.
  - As well as the main campuses, the extensive reach of the program will include their other regional campuses and new purpose-built health clinics in Albury, Bathurst and Bendigo.
  - In addition, the medical school will support an initial 16 smaller rural and remote communities to provide medical training and experience for students. The location of these centres will be subject to negotiations with regional communities and health providers.
  - Training medical students together with dental, pharmacy, nursing and allied health students so health and medical graduates are equipped for rural, team based care;
  - A rural specific curriculum with emphasis on generalism including procedural training and skills required by rural and remote medical practitioners.
- Government to support Charles Sturt University Murray Darling Basin Engineering Program bid for teaching infrastructure.

**Project Objective:** To build teaching facilities to support the introduction of innovative new work integrated civil engineering programs to address current and future skills needs for Murray Darling Basin communities and industries. During 2012, Charles Sturt University (CSU) undertook an extensive feasibility study and consultation with regional industry, community and government. This work confirmed the regional need for, and viability of new engineering program.

With financial support for teaching infrastructure, the University proposes to introduce:

- A Masters of Engineering, with a major in Civil Engineering Systems and minors in minors in Agricultural and Environmental Engineering.
- Bachelor of Engineering Technology & Graduate Certificate in Engineering Practice exit points.
- Short courses and professional development programs relevant to rural and regional Australia to support continuous professional development and ongoing innovation in the sector.
- Engineering aspiration and outreach programs (linked to existing programs and new regional initiatives).

The program focuses on systems integration, innovation and advanced project management from a rural and regional perspective, and aims to create graduates who are not only highly skilled and work ready engineers, but also change agents for their regions and industries. The program will be headquartered in Bathurst, with the first 18 months delivered on-campus at both Bathurst (RDA Central West) and Wagga Wagga (RDA Riverina), and the remainder via online distance education while students are in a paid cadetship employment with an engineering industry partner including residential schools and/or intensives. CSU will develop an engineering aspiration and outreach programs that will be delivered from its Dubbo campus (RDA Orana) and use CSU's existing linkages with schools, TAFEs and

Indigenous communities across the region to build interest and preparation for engineering among students in western and south-western NSW.

In the medium-long term, it is expected that a similar multi-campus work-integrated program in mechanical and electrical engineering could be introduced with the first 18 months on campus at CSU's Bathurst (RDA Central West) and Albury-Wodonga (RDA Murray & RDA Hume) Campuses.

#### **4. Skilled Migration Program**

- Further Government support for the Regional Skilled Migration Program and the Regional Certifying Body (RCB) role that ensures local or regional input into determining the labour requirements of regions. Government support or funding to support the settlement component of the RCB. Currently this is not an official component of the RCB role but in reality skilled workers still need support with finding accommodation, schools, health services and transport so most RCB's assist where they can or this role is often transferred to Councils or agencies who are already overloaded. The current financial model for RCB's is that they rely totally on the applicant visa processing fee to sustain the Skilled Migration Officer role. This can result in RCB's processing visa applications, particularly in the SRS category for occupations that may have reached a ceiling in their region, just to sustain the Skilled Migration Officer position.
  - Skilled Migrants are not Australian residents so are unable to satisfy the residency criteria set by Commonwealth and State Government departments, narrowing their employment opportunities. Investigate opportunities for making exceptions to this in regional communities with a high demand for professionals.
  - Further integration between the Commonwealth and the State in the regional migration visa program in conjunction with support and training for RCB's. Emphasise the importance of the Regional Outreach Officer positions with Department of Immigration for the regions. These positions need to spend time in the regions so they understand the regions and some of the challenges that are faced by employers and also the Regional Certifying Bodies in fulfilling their role.
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## APPENDIX A: DATA & STATISTICS

### 1. Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan- Riverina 2012-2014, DEEWR<sup>3</sup>

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) deployed 34 Regional Education, Skills and Jobs (RESJ) Coordinators to work with local stakeholders to develop Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plans for 46 RDA's areas that cover non-metropolitan Australia. The plans present locally identified opportunities and challenges and outline local strategies to improve education, skills and job outcomes in regional Australia.

In the Riverina the RESJ Coordinator worked closely with RDA Riverina and State Training Services to develop the plan and implement some of the strategies. Page 16 of the plan identifies these occupations as experiencing skills shortages within the Riverina; accounting, childcare professionals, engineering, health workers (allied health, nursing & social work), hospitality trades (chefs) and trades (electrical & plumbing).

### 2. Surveys of employers recruitment experiences by the Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations (DEEWR) in 2011 and 2012,

Occupations most difficult to fill from the survey in 2011 are identified in the table below:-

Table 2.1

Bachelor Degree or Higher VET Qualifications	
Structural Steel and Welding Trades Workers	Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers
Motor Mechanics	Metal Fitters and Machinists
Registered Nurses	Retail Managers
Cooks	
Other Occupations	
Sales Assistants	Livestock Farm Workers
Child Carers	Commercial Cleaners
General Clerks	Truck Drivers

Source: DEEWR, Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences in the Sturt<sup>4</sup> and South Eastern Employment Service Areas in 2011<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> The RESJ Plan can be accessed from

[http://foi.deewr.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/regional\\_education\\_skills\\_and\\_jobs\\_plan\\_new\\_south\\_wales\\_riverina\\_2012\\_2014.pdf](http://foi.deewr.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/regional_education_skills_and_jobs_plan_new_south_wales_riverina_2012_2014.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> DEEWR Sturt Region includes the Local Government Areas of Carrathool, Hay, Griffith, Murrumbidgee, Leeton, Jerilderie, Berrigan, Conargo, Deniliquin & Wakool

<sup>5</sup> DEEWR South Eastern Region includes the Local Government Areas of Narrandera, Cootamundra, Coolamon, Temora, Junee, Wagga Wagga, Gundagai, Tumut, Tumbarumba, Greater Hume, Corowa, Lockhart & Urana.



Occupations most difficult to fill from the survey in 2012 are identified in the table below:-

Table 2.2

<b>Bachelor Degree or Higher VET Qualifications</b>	
Motor Mechanics	Panel Beaters
Registered Nurse	Chefs
Electronic Trades Workers	Early Childhood Teachers
Child Carers	Accountants
Structural Steel & Welding Trades Workers	
<b>Other Occupations</b>	
Sales Assistant (General)	Housekeepers
Bar Attendants and Baristas	Truck Drivers
Storepersons	Waiters
Automobile Drivers	

Source: DEEWR, Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences in the Sturt and South Eastern Employment Service Areas in 2012

Occupations with largest employment growth in **South Eastern** Employment Services Area over last 5 years listed below:-

Table 2.3

<b>Bachelor Degree or Higher VET Qualifications</b>	
Registered Nurses	Electricians
Crop Farmers	Officer Managers
<b>Other Occupations</b>	
Aged and Disabled Carers	Checkout Operators and Office Cashiers
General Clerks	Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers

Source: DEEWR, Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences in the South Eastern Employment Services Area in 2012.

In the South Eastern survey<sup>6</sup> employers were also asked about their future recruitment expectations in the next 12 month period following the survey. In the Southern Eastern region employers anticipated strong recruitment in Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Service industries.

Occupations with largest employment growth in **Sturt** Employment Services Area over last 5 years listed below:-

Table 2.4

<b>Bachelor Degree or Higher VET Qualifications</b>	
Child Carers	Electricians
Gardeners	Welfare Support Workers
<b>Other Occupations</b>	
Aged and Disabled Carers	Sales Assistants (General
Checkout Operators and Office Cashiers	Other Sales Assistants and Salespersons
Education Aides	Bookkeepers
Café Workers	Forklift Drivers

Source: DEEWR, Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences in the Sturt Employment Services Area in 2012.

<sup>6</sup> DEEWR, Survey of Employers Recruitment Experiences in the South Eastern Employment Services Areas, 2012

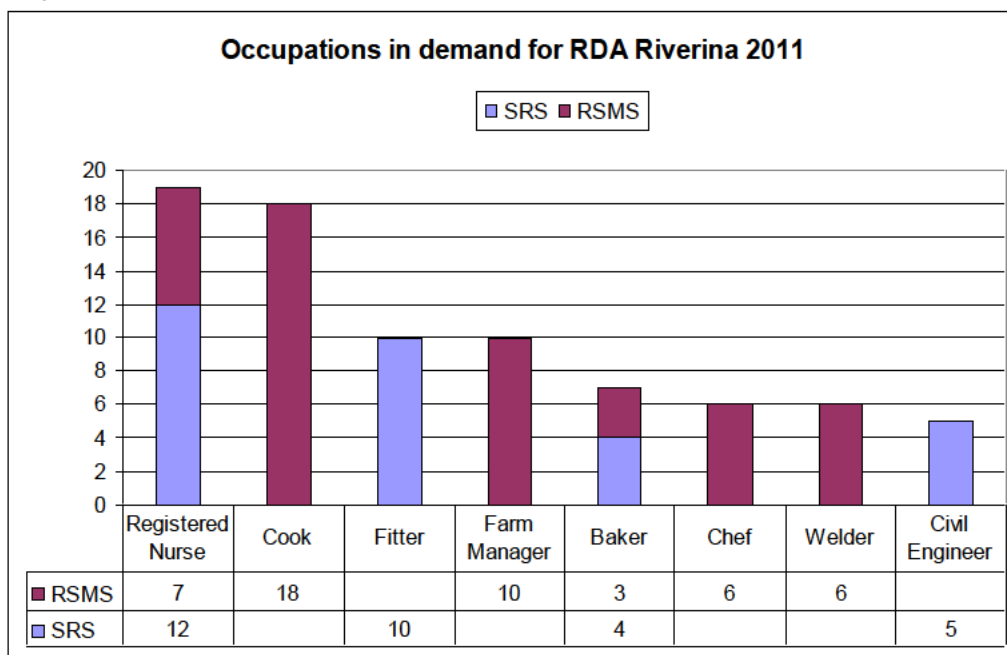
In the Sturt region employers expected strong recruitment activity in Health Care and Social Assistance.

### 3. RDA Riverina Skilled Migration Program Statistics

Since 2010 RDA Riverina has processed 571 visa applications for a variety of occupations through the Regional Skilled Migration Program. It is also worth noting that there are a number of visa's that RCB's plays no role in so the number of actual skilled migrants that have relocated to the region would be much greater than the figure stated.

Occupations processed most frequently by RDA Riverina for the Individual (SRS)<sup>7</sup> and Employer Sponsored (RSMS)<sup>8</sup> in 2011 see Graph 3.1 below:-

Graph 3.1



**Note:** Farm Manager includes Fruit Grower and Nursery occupations

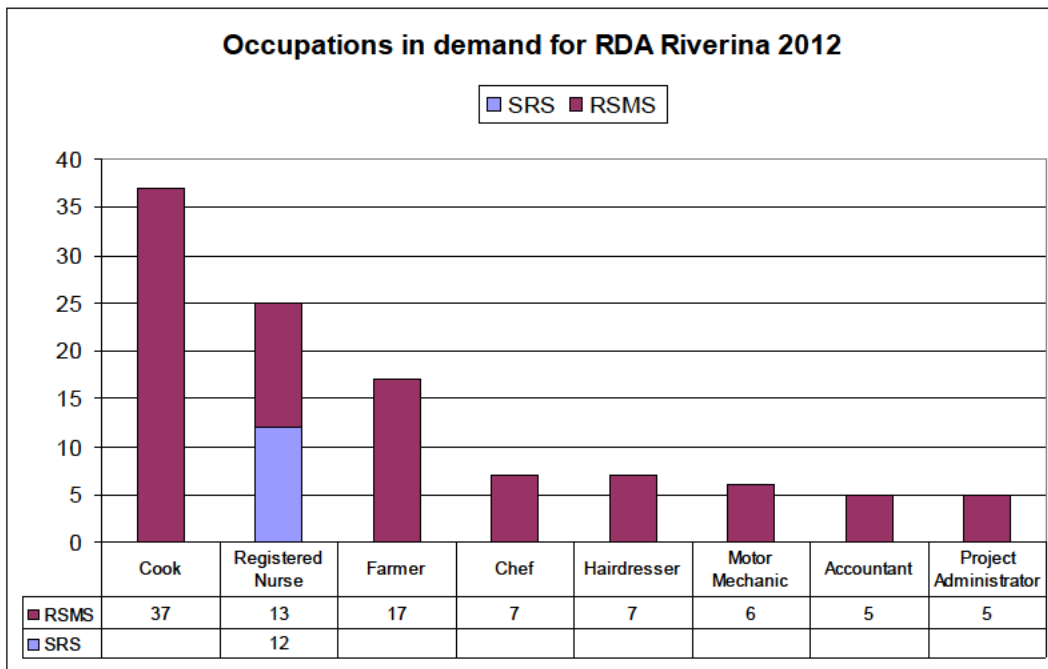
Source: RDA Riverina Regional Profile, August 2013

<sup>7</sup> Individual Skilled - Regional (Provisional) Sponsored Visas

<sup>8</sup> Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) Visa

Occupations processed most frequently by RDA Riverina for the Individual (SRS) and Employer Sponsored (RSMS) in 2012 see Graph 3.2 below:-

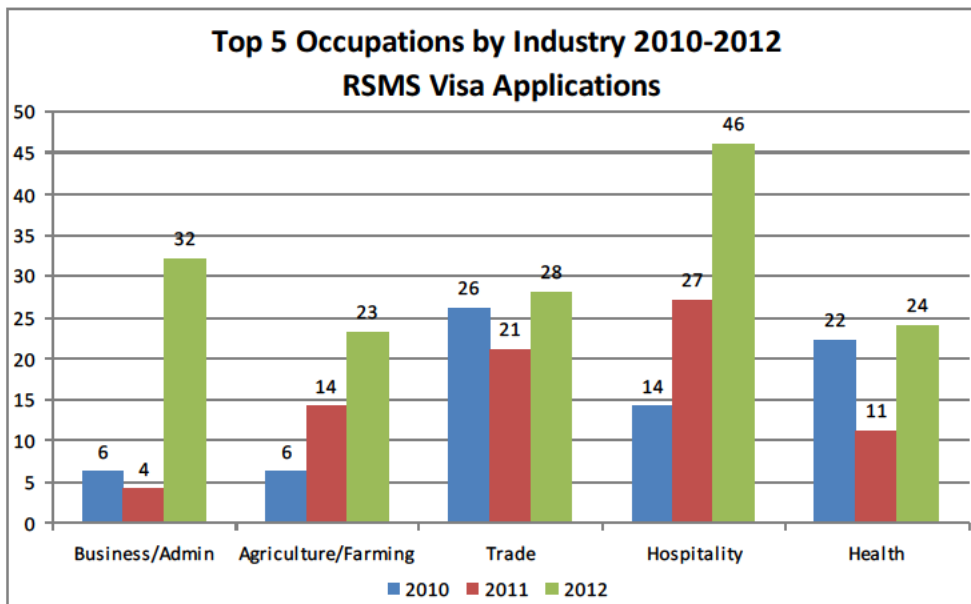
Graph 3.2



Source: RDA Riverina Regional Profile, August 2013

The most prevalent industry sector employers that used the RSMS visa program from 2010-2012 are shown in Graph 3.3 below:-

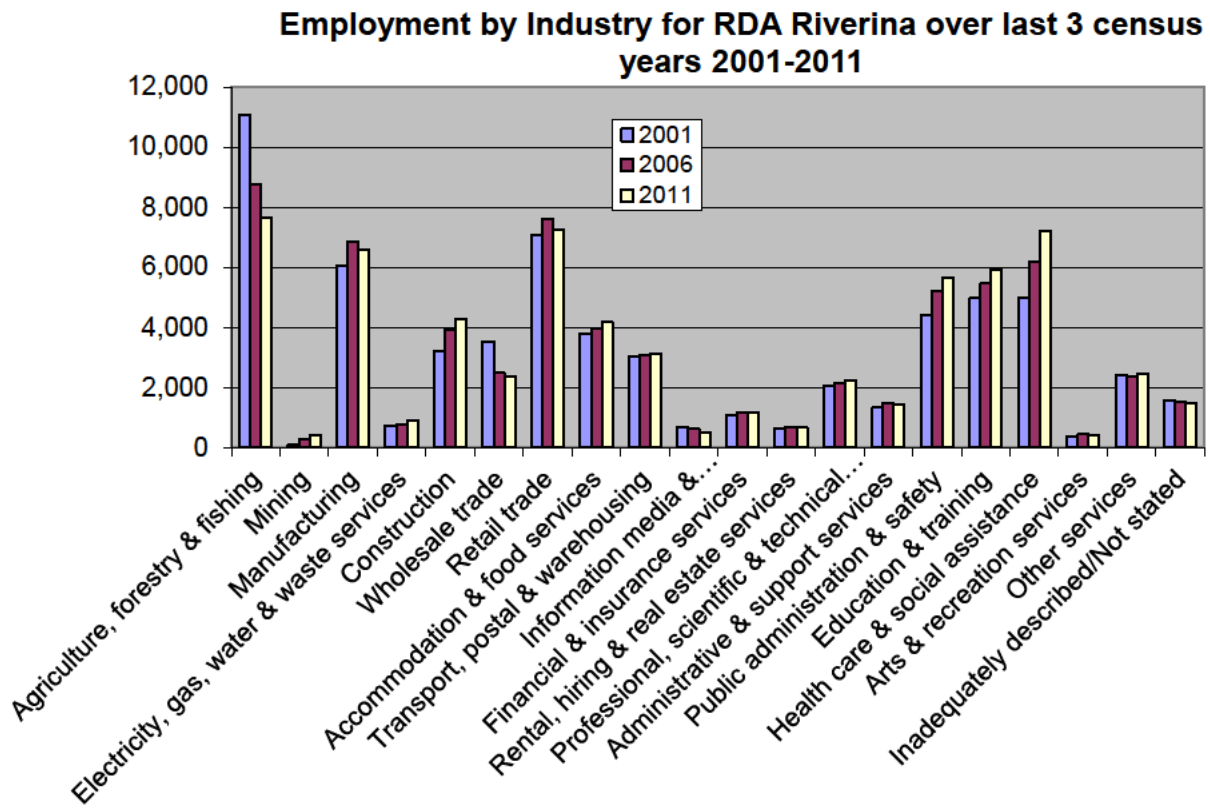
Graph 3.3



Source: RDA Riverina Skilled Migration Program Statistics 2010-2012

#### 4. 2011 Census ABS Data for the Riverina region

Graph 4.1



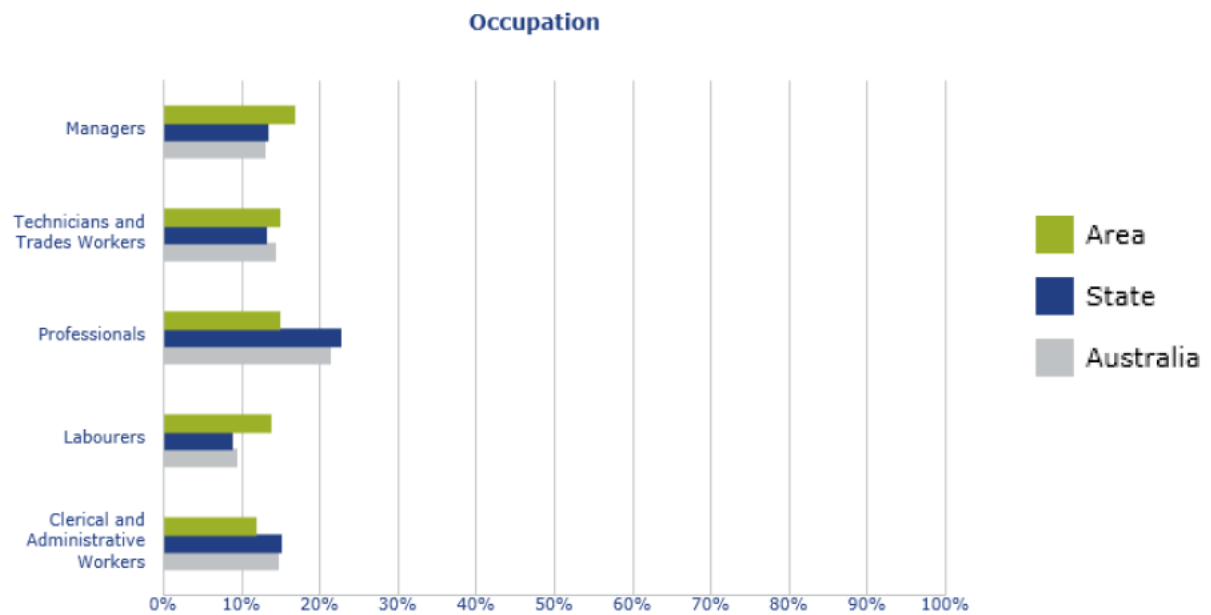
Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing (Basic Community Profile)

As indicated in graph 4.1 Agriculture, forestry & fishing is the major industry employer for the Riverina region closely followed by Retail Trade, Manufacturing and Health Care & Social Assistance. The major change in industry employment from 2001 to the 2011 census data for the region is the significant rise of employment in the health care & social assistance sector and decline in agriculture. Although employment in agriculture has declined since 2001 it is anticipated this will increase again but not to previous numbers due to new technology advancements and the changing practices involved in agriculture. The value adding or processing of agricultural product (mainly food) is identified in the industry classified as 'manufacturing' and this sector is also expected to increase with more value adding or processing of produce occurring in the region. The relatively high number of people employed in manufacturing for the region is a result of the processing of local produce such as wine, meat, rice, cotton, fruit & nuts. This is contrary to other manufacturing sectors such as vehicles that have experienced a significant decline.

The increase in employment in the Health care & social assistance sector reflects the increase in our aging population and their demand for further support services. The increase in employment in this industry sector is also replicated on a national scale as well.<sup>9</sup> DEEWR national predictions for employment in the agricultural, forestry and fishing sector are also predicted to decline.

<sup>9</sup> DEEWR Industry Employment Projections 2013 Report

Graph 4.2



Source: 2011 Census Quickstats

Graph 4.2 depicts the most common types of occupations within the Riverina (listed as Area), which shows that the Riverina has a higher proportion of Managers (16.8%), compared to the NSW and Australian average, followed by Technicians and Workers (14.9%), Professionals (14.9%), Labourers (13.9%) and Clerical and Administrative Workers (11.8%). The Riverina also has a significantly larger number of Labourers within the region, compared to the NSW and Australian average of 8.7% and 9.4% respectively. Consultations with employers has also revealed the problem of obtaining people with middle management skills or experience. The agricultural sector accounts for a relatively large number of labourers who are required for semi-skilled work.

## 5. NSW Business Chamber –Murray Riverina region Business Survey<sup>10</sup>

NSW Business Chamber-Murray Riverina Business Survey June 2013 Quarter

### Skilled Migrants

- 16.1% of Murray-Riverina businesses reported hiring a skilled migrant. This is an increase from 6.1% in March 2013, and surpasses the NSW average of 15.3% of businesses hiring skilled migrants this quarter.
- 33.3% of Murray-Riverina respondents that hire skilled migrants reported that they sponsor these workers, whereas 67% hired workers independently. This remains unchanged from March 2013 and is slightly below the 37.3% sponsored migrants result for the NSW state average.

### Skills Shortages

- 30.4% of Murray-Riverina businesses reported a skills shortage this quarter. This is a significant decrease from the 37.4% of businesses reporting a skills shortage in March 2013 and is lower than the 33% average for NSW businesses reporting a skills shortage this quarter.

<sup>10</sup> NSW Business Chamber-Murray Riverina Business Survey June 2013 Quarter

- Particular skills shortages reported by Murray-Riverina respondents for the June 2013 quarter included:
  - Chefs
  - General Practitioners
  - Labourers
  - Mechanics
  - Sales and Marketing
  - Nurses and community carers
  - Para-planners
  - Agronomists
  - Truck drivers

## APPENDIX B: RDA RIVERINA STRATEGIES ADOPTED TO ADDRESS SKILL SHORTAGES.

### Skilled Migration Program

RDA Riverina acknowledges the significant contribution that the skilled migration program has played for employers in the region and fully supports the program.

RDA Riverina became a Regional Certifying Body (RCB) in November 2009, a role that was transferred to RDA Riverina from the Riverina Regional Development Board. The Department of Immigration & Citizenship (DIAC) rely on RCBs currently to provide assessments and sponsorships to 2 visa categories; the Individual Skilled - Regional (Provisional) Sponsored Visa subclass 489 (SRS) and the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) subclass 189. The objectives of these visas are to encourage migration to areas outside the major metropolitan centres and to address the skill shortages experienced by employers in the region. RCB's previously processed other Individual Skilled - Regional (Provisional) Sponsored Visa subclass (SRS) visa's and the 457 visa, but no longer plays a role in the 457 visa category. In the Riverina region the 457 visa assisted many employers and in the majority of cases was used appropriately.

RDA Riverina prioritises the RSMS applications as an employer has identified a gap and endeavoured to fill it by exploring the local labour market without success. The employer has then located an individual from overseas who has the appropriate skills, experience & expertise for their business or organisation. The employer will often support the new migrant (and their family) with settling into their organisation, community and the region. Calvary Hospital is a great example, this employer has a dedicated staff member who works with potential applicants ensuring they are the best fit for their organisation and the region, assisting their family with accommodation options and information about schools, transport etc. The settlement support for new skilled migrants is very important.

The skilled migration program has been vital for many businesses and organisations trying to attract professional and skilled workers to ensure the sustainable operation of their business or service ( in the case of health and local government). Many skilled applicants have dependents with skills and qualifications that they bring to the region as well.

The 571 figure would be the minimum number of people that have moved to the region. RDA Riverina has a number of examples of families that have relocated to the region on a skilled visa and their partner who is also highly qualified has gained work in the region as well.

RDA Riverina can also provide details about the country of origin for the various visa's they process if required.

## Country Change Project

Country Change is a collaborative project that was initiated in 2004 to address the increasing skills shortages in the region and the need for some sort of collective strategy to market the region to those people with skills who may be interested in relocating to the country. The project was initiated by the Riverina Development Board in partnership with the Riverina Area Consultative Committee. Initially 30 Councils within the Riverina Murray region were given the opportunity to participate and 18 committed to the Country Change Bureau project in 2006. Originally the project received funding from both the State & Commonwealth Governments as well as a membership fee paid by participating Councils.

The Country Change project has evolved and changed over time to reach the identified target market as more information was collected and collated about the market. The focus of the project also evolved as new personnel entered the coordinating position for the project and personnel changed within participating Local Government Areas. The project also had to respond to new initiatives and changing environments such as:-

- Evocities [www.evocities.com.au](http://www.evocities.com.au)
- Establishment of Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committees in 2009 and the Department of Regional Australia in 2010
- Changes to the Regional Skilled Migration program
- Government programs such as the New Life NSW campaign <http://newlifensw.com.au/> & \$7000 Relocation Grant
- New Marketing Strategies ie the advancement of social media ie facebook and interactive websites.
- Innovative technologies – iphone, ipad, broadband technology (wireless)
- Workforce – greater extent for a mobile & flexible working environment

The aim of the project has been to address the skills issue by promoting the benefits of living and working in the Riverina to residents of Sydney and Melbourne and also highlight the advantages to people migrating from overseas as well.

### Country Change objectives are:-

- To capitalise on the focus on Regional Australia in 2009 with the establishment of the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government.
- To address the existing and future skills shortages in the participating council areas by attracting skilled professionals and workers.
- To promote the lifestyle that regional communities in NSW offer and promote the NSW Government's \$7,000 relocation grant.
- To promote the features of individual LGA's and the Riverina region to potential business proprietors, investors and tourists (visitors)



- To leverage the marketing and promotion opportunities of the Evocities project that promotes the 7 major inland cities of Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Dubbo, Orange, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga.

#### Outcomes:

The capacity to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of the project activities has been a challenge since the inception of the project, however has improved over time. The difficulty is obtaining feedback from individuals once they move as often they do not recontact the Local Government or RDA Riverina to identify that they moved or if they do they may not mention it was as a result of Country Change initiatives.

#### Country Change website statistics from 1 July 2011 – 3 August 2013

Total Visitors	Pages Views	Pages per visit	Conversions
39,041	86,385	2.2	455

#### People that have contacted the Local Government directly to state they have relocated

LGA	No. People	Year
Griffith	1 individual	2012
	2 families (work pending)	2013
	1 individual from NZ	2013
Leeton	1 family	2012
	1 couple	2011
Lockhart	3 families	2012
	1 individual	2012
Narrandera	1 family (from Italy-pending)	2013
	1 Couple	
Temora	6 Couples	2012

#### NSW Government \$7000 relocation grant Statistics

Relocation Statistics regarding the uptake of the NSW Government \$7000 relocation grant from 1 July 2011- 31 January 2013 (figures beyond this date are not known at this stage). Although this program hasn't resulted in a significant number of people relocating to the region it has provided a tangible method for recording statistics of those who do relocate to the region.

Local Government Area / Council	Number People
Cootamundra	10
Temora	3
Griffith	2
Leeton	2
Bland	1
Wagga Wagga	16
Junee	3

Coolamon	2
Gundagai	1
Murrumbidgee	1
Total to Riverina	41

Source: NSW Office of State Revenue

Note: Those LGAs shaded are not involved in the Country Change project

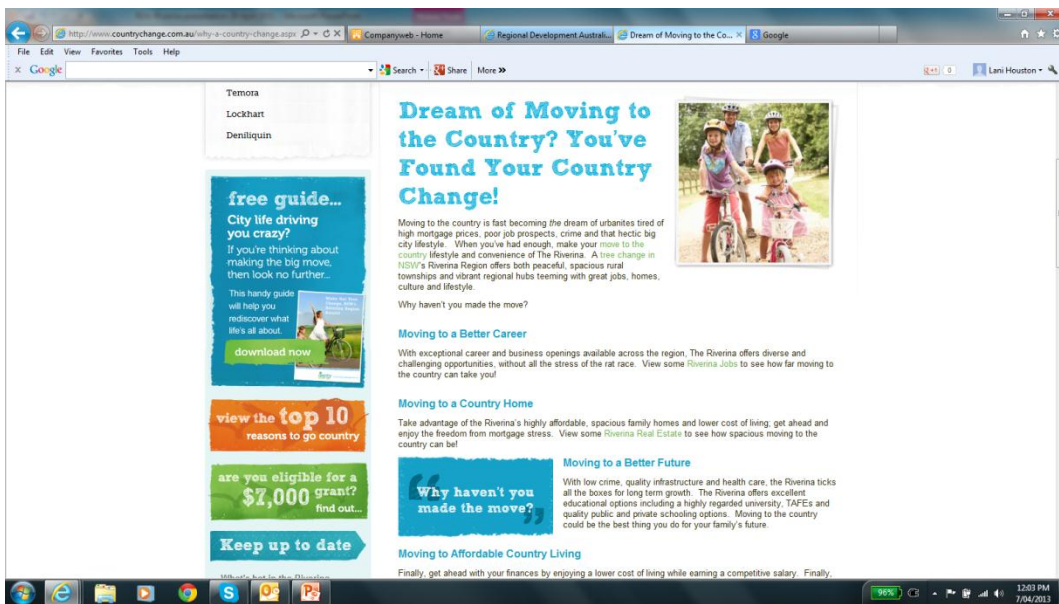
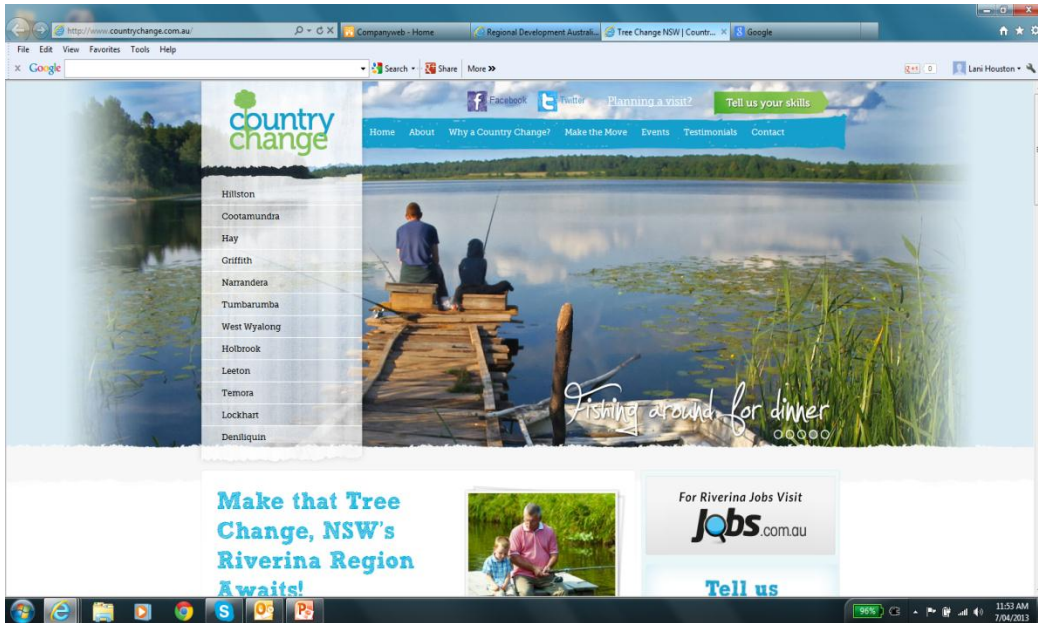
#### 2012/2013 Membership & Contribution

Council Size	Amount (excl. GST)
Large Councils (12,000-30,000 population)	\$6,000
Medium Size Council (5,000-12,000 population)	\$5,000
Small Council (Under 5,000 population)	\$3,000

**2012/2013 Membership:** 11 LGA's including: Carrathool, Cootamundra, Hay, Narrandera, Griffith, Leeton, Temora, Lockhart, Great Hume, Tumbarumba & Deniliquin

#### 2012-2013 Activities:

- Tells Us Your Skills Project- a software program that has been purchased that sits on the website and matches potential businesses with employees
- Update and refresh content on the website particularly events (TASTE Riverina) and testimonials. [www.countrychange.com.au](http://www.countrychange.com.au)
- A communications strategy including e-newsletters, media releases, YouTube Chanel and videos for each LGA with relocators telling their stories. <http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgkskFs0wJkQQdL4fGKOUug>
- Attendance at Country & Regional Living Expo, Sydney 3-4 August 2013
- Provision of member councils with tools & resources to promote the program at a local level.



Example of pages from the Country Change website

## Evocities ([www.evocities.com.au](http://www.evocities.com.au))

Evocities has been working cooperatively to encourage frustrated urban dwellers to consider a 'city change' since 2010, offering viable alternatives to Sydney that have both the capacity and desire for population growth. The proven approach of the Evocities resident attraction model led to new residents injecting an estimated \$88 million annually to the cities' economies.

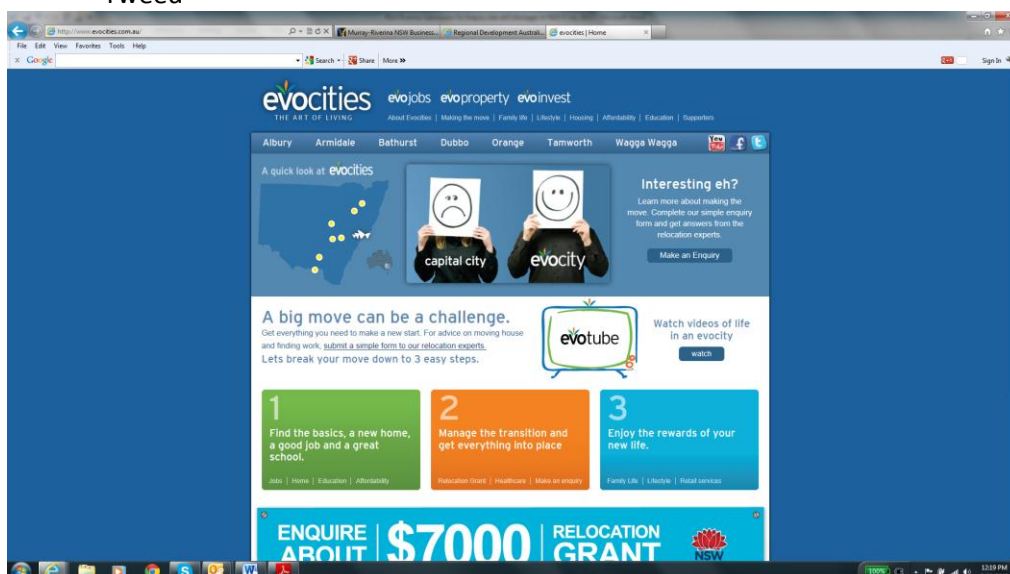
Evocities is currently a highly successful campaign to attract Sydneysiders to live, work and invest in one of seven regional NSW cities. Evocities is a collaboration between Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Dubbo, Orange, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga. The Evocities project offers a viable alternative to Sydney from centres with both the desire and capacity for growth.

There is strong capacity to expand Evocities to include other cities pursuing growth. As each of the existing and potential Evocities are regional hubs for their larger areas, there will be strong flow-on benefits to surrounding communities as the cities continue to grow.

As more people and investment comes in to these larger regional cities, their facilities and infrastructure must improve to keep pace with community needs and expectations. This benefits nearby smaller communities and contributes to their sustainability by providing employment opportunities and access to skilled labour.

There is currently a proposal in development to expand the Evocities program to regions such as:

- Griffith
- Goulburn
- Queanbeyan
- Maitland
- Cessnock
- Port Macquarie
- Coffs Harbour
- Lismore
- Tweed



Snapshot of the Evocities website home page

**Evocities relocation statistics from September 2010 to end June 2013:**

- Number of Relocators (Households / Families) that the Evocities have been able to track – 1,277 households / families.
- Evocities Research 2012 has shown that each new household generates an additional \$95,000 per annum to the economy of the Evocity –  $1,277 \times \$95,000 = \$121.315$  million pa for the Evocities' economy.

**Evocities Website Visits from July 2012 to end June 2013**

- Visits to Evocities Website ([www.evocities.com.au](http://www.evocities.com.au)) - 199,647 visits
- Visits to Evojobs Websites (Evojobs Website x 7 Evocities) - 597,618 visits

**Evojobs Statistics from September 2010 to end June 2013**

- 11,624 jobs loaded
- 1,788 employers registered
- 206 job agencies registered
- 4,184 job applications submitted through Evojobs

## **Promotion of a sustainable and inclusive workforce**

RDA Riverina works closely with the DEEWR Regional Education, Skills and Jobs (RESJ) and the NSW Industry Training & Advisory Bodies to promote further education, training and skilling for business and industry. RDA Riverina has promoted various workforce development training and a range of programs and funding that is offered by NSW State Training Services and DEEWR (through the Workforce Development Fund) to support business.

RDA Riverina circulates information about programs and funding that promote an inclusive workforce by offering employment incentives to businesses when they employ someone who is not currently engaged in the workforce. This includes Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island people, people with disabilities or barriers to employment and migrants/refugees.

RDA Riverina has also promoted the 'Positive Employment Projects' model to the private and public sector in regard to employing Aboriginal people. RDA Riverina has supported careers events for Indigenous people in the Riverina and partnered with the DEEWR Regional Education, Skills and Jobs (RESJ) to host a "Labour Market Analysis and Support for Clients with Complex Needs" workshop on 16 May 2013.

RDA Riverina as an organisation has also employed a person with a disability, utilising the Commonwealth programs that support businesses or organisations who employ people with a disability. The employee currently works 8 hours per week but has contributed significantly to the organisation and has also given the RDA Riverina Committee and staff some insight into the challenges and obstacles that people with barriers (physical or mental) face when seeking employment.

## **Support & strengthen the capacity of education and training institutions**

RDA Riverina worked closely with the DEEWR<sup>11</sup> Regional Education, Skills and Jobs (RESJ) to promote further collaboration between industry, schools and education providers. Two main collaborative projects included the Riverina Agricultural Education Alliance and the Early Childhood Leadership Group and the coordination of the Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) Roundtable. Detailed reports from both these activities can be provided by RDA Riverina if required but an overview of both is outlined below.

### **Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Roundtable 29 June 2013:**

The aims of the roundtable were to:

- Share knowledge and develop mutual understandings of the current ECECC workforce issues and opportunities in the Riverina;
- Raise awareness of the Australian and NSW Government assistance available for ECECC employers;
- Develop innovative ideas and strategies to tackle ECECC workforce challenges within the Riverina.
- Networking and opportunity to share examples of best practice.

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<sup>11</sup> Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations

Outcomes from the Roundtable to date have been:-

- A video production promoting the childcare industry
- Early Childhood Leadership - Future Directions Course BSB40807 Certificate IV in Frontline Management to develop management skills in the sector.

### **Riverina Agricultural Education Alliance**

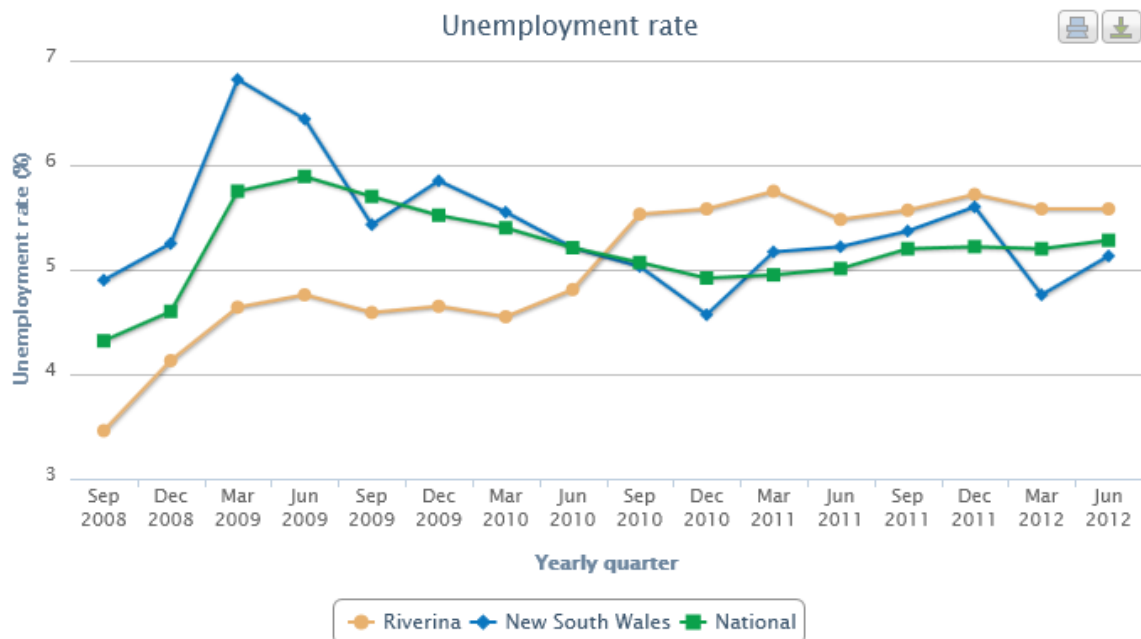
The Riverina Agricultural Education Alliance brings together schools, TAFE, tertiary providers, peak industry bodies, Industry representatives, community organisations and government representatives to work in partnership to promote the Food and Fibre sector as a viable and professional career pathway and to potentially establish a Riverina Ag CAP and Enrichment program for commencement in 2014.

The development of the Riverina Agricultural Education Alliance is the outcome from a series of events held during 2012. These include the NSW 2012-2013 Review of Agriculture Education and Training, RDA Riverina Think Tank, DEEWR School and Beyond – Ag Career pathway forum, Junee Ag Vision Day, Griffith Workforce Development Strategy, 100 Mile Challenge, Taste of the Riverina and the conclusion of the CSU Primary Industry Centre for Science Education (PICSE) Program. These events highlighted the need to address the emerging national skills shortage in Agriculture, support stakeholders in the promotion of the Agricultural sector as an innovative and diverse industry, promote the range of career pathway opportunities across the sector and support a more collaborative and integrated approach between schools and industry in the delivery of agricultural programs.

## APPENDIX C: Unemployment and Labour Force in the Riverina

Until 2010 the average unemployment rate across the region was below 5% which was significantly lower than the state and national average. From 2010 the unemployment rate rose for the Riverina and it remained higher than the state and national average (ie average unemployment rate for the Riverina in 2012 was 5.58% compared to 5.28% for the National average). This was not necessarily an impact of the global financial crisis but a reaction to the 10 years of drought and subsequent low water allocations that affected the agriculture sector, the largest industry employer for the region.

Average unemployment rate for the RDA-Riverina region 2008 - 2012



Source: <http://myregion.gov.au/profile/riverina>

In 2013 however the average unemployment rate across the region has dropped to 4.2%<sup>12</sup>, again reinforcing the labour shortage challenge, especially compared to other coastal or more urbanised regions within NSW. Please see the table below (C1.1) that compares the RDA regions of Riverina, Murray and the South Coast using labour market efficiency data giving an overall ranking out of the 55 RDA's in Australia. Murray & Riverina are inland rural regions with similar challenges and the South Coast is more urbanised and has a high unemployment rate. Therefore the demand for professional workers and skilled people has always been relatively strong in the Riverina region but challenges such as isolation, perceived lack of facilities (health and education particularly), drought (resulting in negative media coverage) and perceived low employment prospects has deterred large numbers of people from moving inland to date. The fact that many communities in the Riverina region are also more than a 3-4 hour drive from Sydney or Melbourne means the decision to relocate is further compounded by the fact that they are further than an easy weekend trip from family and friends.

<sup>12</sup> DEEWR March 2013 Small Area Labour Market Report



Table C1.1

NSW Comparisons National Ranking is out of 55		Murray		Riverina		South Coast	
		Value	National ranking	Value	National ranking	Value	National ranking
Labour Market Efficiency		Theme ranking	16	Theme ranking	20	Theme ranking	51
Unemployment rate		5.10%	23	4.70%	13	7.20%	50
Young unemployment		10.80%	14	10.50%	13	14.40%	46
Participation rate		76.50%	10	76.00%	13	67.50%	52
Skilled labour		31.20%	15	30.60%	20	26.80%	40
Welfare dependence		20.10%	29	21.30%	44	20.20%	31

Region Australia Institute Insight data  
<http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au>

Source:

Accessed: 30/07/2013