

**Submission
No 19**

SKILL SHORTAGES IN NSW

Organisation: Central Coast Regional Organisation of Councils
Name: Mr Paul Anderson
Position: Honorary Secretary
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Central Coast Regional Organisation of Councils

incorporating Wyong Shire Council and Gosford City Council

21 June 2013

The Chair
Committee on Economic Development
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Elliott,

Inquiry into skills shortage

I refer to your letter of 8 May 2013 regarding the inquiry into skill shortages in NSW being conducted by the Legislative Assembly Committee on Economic Development. As Honorary Secretary for the Central Coast Regional Organisation of Councils, it is my pleasure to provide a submission to the inquiry.

By way of background, the Central Coast Regional Organisation of Councils (CCROC), comprising Gosford and Wyong Councils covers a large geographical area of over 1800 square kilometres. We have a combined total of 133000 ratepayers, and provide a full range of services to our community. Our community is composed of both young families who are moving to the Central Coast for more affordable housing and on the other end of the spectrum, ageing residents require retirement housing, aged care facilities and increased medical services.

Many of our residents commute to Sydney or Newcastle for work, and encouraging large businesses to relocate to the Central Coast in order to reduce the stress and congestion on our road and rail networks is but one aim of the CCROC. Whilst recognised as a large geographical area, with picturesque waterways and natural green spaces for recreation, the Central Coast does not have the same political and financial recognition as a region as Sydney or the Hunter.

Therefore a key issue facing both Councils is attracting and retaining skilled specialist staff in areas such as flooding and drainage engineering, building surveying, town planning, senior IT positions, infrastructure and planning design. Local Government rates of pay simply don't match up with what private enterprise can offer and Councils regularly and consistently poach staff from each other in these specialist positions. Whilst we can provide attractive Local Government benefits such as vehicle packaging, sick leave, rostered days, flexible working hours and generous paid parental leave Councils struggle to retain these staff. Professionals can tend to gather valuable experience working in a local government environment and then move on to other private sector organisations where they receive better financial incentives.

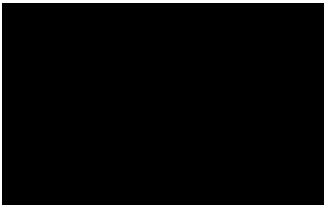
In 2005, Gosford and Wyong Councils joined with Hunter Region of Councils in an attempt to attract Town Planners from England to come and live and work in the Hunter Valley. This was met with limited success despite the best efforts of staff in promoting the Hunter Region as an enjoyable place to live and work.

In terms of supporting Central Coast workers, both Gosford and Wyong Councils provide employment for trainees, apprentices, student engineers and give school students a taste of working life through work experience programs. Our attendance at various local careers expos results in a significant number of applications for each traineeship or apprenticeship that is offered.

Gosford Council is also actively engaged in the retention of our corporate knowledge through our Ageing Workforce strategy and managers are encouraged to succession plan.

The CCROC welcomes any insights that the inquiry into skill shortages that the Committee on Economic Development determines, particularly with respect to keeping skilled staff and attracting staff in particular professions.

Yours sincerely



Paul Anderson
Honorary Secretary CCROC