

**Submission  
No 15**

## **SKILL SHORTAGES IN NSW**

**Organisation:** The Hills Shire Council  
**Name:** Mr Dave Walker  
**Position:** General Manager  
**Date Received:** 20/06/2013

**THE HILLS SHIRE COUNCIL**

129 Showground Road, Castle Hill NSW 2154  
 PO Box 75, Castle Hill NSW 1765

Telephone 02 9843 0555    Email council@thehills.nsw.gov.au  
 Facsimile 02 9843 0409    www.thehills.nsw.gov.au  
 DX 8455 Castle Hill        ABN No. 25 034 494 656

14 June 2013

Mr David Elliott MP  
 Committee Chair  
 Legislative Assembly Committee on Economic Development  
 Parliament of New South Wales  
 Macquarie Street  
 SYDNEY NSW 2000

Your Ref: LAC13/194  
 Our Ref: 118803969

Dear Mr Elliott

**Inquiry into Skill Shortages in NSW**

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Thank you for your letter advising Council of the inquiry into skills shortages in NSW. While the Local Government and Shires Association could provide a detailed response to the enquiry on behalf of the local government industry, I am happy to provide you with some insights from our perspective.

The Hills Shire is acutely aware of the shortage of skills in certain areas of Council's business. As we all know, the ratio between non-working Australians and working Australians has been, and will continue, to decline. The competition for available labour will continue and has only been arrested somewhat by the current economic conditions confronting the global economy. Technical trades and professions in Engineering, Construction and Town Planning are in short supply. The best way to address this looming issue is to concentrate in the following areas:

- A renewed look at the operation and resourcing of training and traineeships to ensure that an adequate supply of skilled people is available for the workforce. The role of secondary and tertiary institutions' needs to be examined to find ways to provide relevant curriculum to bring trained talent into the workforce more productively.
- The NSW State Award should also be examined to ensure its pay and conditions do not act as a deterrent to attracting certain skills and professions. Clearly Council's capacity to pay for certain professions is limited when compared to other industries such as the mining sector, so our Award must be responsive and able to present Local Government as an attractive place of work for these professions in demand.
- An obvious look at migration and work visas to attract skills that are in short supply needs to occur. Related to this, the way in which overseas qualifications are recognised needs to be examined to ensure our standards are not unnecessarily restricting the supply of certain professions. We need to be sure that professional fiefdoms do not exist in Australia that are able to place unreasonable restrictions to overseas qualifications of migrants that, in turn, limit their entry into our workforce.

- Pragmatic ways to encourage as much participation in the workforce is needed. Work arrangements that encourage flexibility and promote work life balance is needed to ensure every Australian that is able to work, can find a way to participate in the workforce even when family or life circumstances prevent full participation. Return to work incentives for Mothers, retirees and students should be examined.
- An industry wide focus on opportunities for automation and technology should be undertaken. Unlike banking and mining industries, I am not aware of any real investigation of how automation could be applied to Local Government to address skill shortages, improve efficiency and workforce safety.

I hope this short "snapshot" is helpful. Should you wish to gain further information about the points raised, please feel free to contact Michael Edgar, Council's Group Manager-Strategic Planning on [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully

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**Dave Walker**  
**GENERAL MANAGER.**