

SKILL SHORTAGES IN NSW

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Mr David Elliott, MP
Chair
Legislative Assembly Committee on Economic Development
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
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Br Email: economicdevelopment@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Elliott,

RE: INQUIRY INTO SKILLS SHORTAGES IN NSW

In making this brief submission, we also note that Tourism Accommodation Association (NSW) intends to lodge a separate submission in relation to the star-rated accommodation sector.

Areas of Need in particular industries and communities

As you are aware from your involvement in our industry, a long term problem for the hotel industry has been and continues to be the lack of suitably qualified chefs and cooks.

This is particularly evident in regional areas where hoteliers resorted to hiring chefs through the 457 Visa program.

Our experience is that notwithstanding the interest in cooking which has been generated by a number of high profile chefs being associated with television programmes, the profession seems not to attract sufficient people to fill existing needs. But, that appears to be only one aspect which contributes to the shortages.

One other factor is that qualified persons are less attracted to regional areas and, if they are, are coerced by the considerably higher salaries being offered by mining companies and less inclined to seek positions in the hotel sector.

Some hoteliers in regional areas, after trying to obtain staff with expertise, have resorted to training new employees in the hope that they will be able to retain them for a period of time which repays the effort and considerable investment. However, again it is often found that staff are

drawn from far-flung locations to either the cities or to overseas postings and the cycle of recruitment and training starts all over again.

Having discussed the issue with several experienced hoteliers from regional areas, it appears that, other than generating a greater interest in the chef profession and offering inordinately high monetary incentives, little more can be done which will lessen the tyranny of distance and thus ensure that current demands are met.

Additionally, in major tourism centres, such as Dubbo, Coffs Harbour and the Hunter Valley, which are not as remote, our members still report difficulties in obtaining and retaining experienced staff.

It would be worthwhile for the Inquiry to explore that issue in conjunction with industry representatives from those areas.

Skills deficiencies generally

Employers in this industry, and I am sure that it applies equally elsewhere, constantly claim that youngsters are not properly-equipped these days when they leave school ... that many of them do not write legibly, that their written expression leaves much to be desired and that attention to detail and accuracy seems to be treated as an unwanted personal imposition.

While those observations may well be a damning reflection on the education system, it is one faced on a daily basis, even with those in less skilled tasks such as bar attendants and it leads to additional training in even the most basic skills which are required before recruits become a useful addition in the workforce.

It may be that your Inquiry could address the lack of basic work-ready skills as part of your brief.

I trust that this contribution will be useful to your Committee during the Inquiry's deliberations.

Yours faithfully,


PAUL NICOLAOU
Chief Executive Officer