

**Submission
No 4**

SKILL SHORTAGES IN NSW

Organisation: Bindaree Beef P/L
Name: Mr Michael Bayes
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From Michael Bayes:

Bindaree Beef is located at Inverell in northern NSW, it is one of the States largest Beef processors and a prominent leader in the Australian meat industry.

We are capable of processing 1,300 cattle per day and employ over 600 people from the surrounding region.

This operation is strategically located to ensure that Bindaree can source cattle 12 months of the year, this is important as many of our customers, such as Aldi supermarkets are guaranteed reliable year round supply.

Bindaree have been ranked in the top 25 meat processors in Australia since 1996. Shortage of skilled labour is one of the most critical issues currently facing the Australian Meat Industry; this problem is compounded by the declining young population in regional areas especially as the unemployment rate consistently remains relatively low.

In addition a job at the abattoirs is often viewed as unappealing, bottom of the barrel, when you can't land a job anywhere else, it is physically demanding and mostly requires a 5am start. There is also a lack of understanding about the available career paths within the meat industry, which can lead to good wages. For example Slaughter man and Boners can gross \$60k with Slicers earning around \$55k these workers mostly only have the skills that we have taught them as we are a Registered Training Organization (RTO) within our own company.

Despite constantly running Job Adds we found that we were unable to attract sufficient applicants and those that we did get, many failed because of reasons such as, not passing the company drug test, or did not have a good reference check, or they did not meet the physical requirements of the position. In late 2007 the company recognized that the only chance that they had, of overcoming the skilled meat worker shortage, was to apply for a Labour Supply Agreement (LSA) with DIAC otherwise they would not be able to continue to meet there production orders and would risk losing long term contracts.

Meat processing companies seeking a LSA must provide a comprehensive submission to the Australian Government it must be supported by a record of compliance in areas of Workplace Relations, Occupational Health & Safety, and Migration compliance.

We currently have over 50 primary 457 visa holders employed in skilled meat worker positions, in additions we provide work for a similar number of there spouse's and children secondary's. These workers have proven to be model residents for the town of Inverell and contribute significantly to towns economy, firstly by buying cars and goods and renting properties, secondly they boost numbers at flagging Schools and child care centre's, thirdly the company have assisted about 15-20 to apply for permanent residency and many of these have settled here and purchased houses in the town.

I can say that the 457 visa holders make a significant contribution to our success they dont mind working overtime or weekends and they turn up every day in fact without them there would be a good chance that Bindaree Beef would not be a viable operation.

I trust that this assist and would be happy to expand upon if requested.