

Submission
No 3

INQUIRY INTO SKILLS SHORTAGES IN RURAL AND REGIONAL NSW

Organisation:

Name: Mr Dominic Vella

Telephone:

Date Received: 22/06/2005

Theme:

Summary

From:
To:
Date:
Subject:

Hi Tony

Can I be so bold as to make a comment on this issue.

I have been in Wagga for the last 2 years, coming out from Penrith Sydney, with Computer Programming and Teaching skills. I was also a key member of the Penrith Valley council "Home Based Business Network" Initiative as an executive committee member. I also ran a growing IT business within Penrith prior to my move.

I have a couple of opinions during my experience in trying to find work in Wagga last year in comparison to Penrith (Sydney). Unfortunately for me, I've opted to do volunteer work whilst still staying on the Pension as a Single Parent/Carer.

PROBLEMS

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- * The council members for many years has tried to steer away from any business orientated ideas. Even though council leaders over the last 5 years have tried to push a more business orientated vision, the members have felt that it would destroy their rural heritage. I do believe though, that there has been a change in Wagga to this attitude as of around early this year.
- * Wagga Businesses appear content with their current systems and management style. There is a heavy resistance to change and they have a philosophy of "if it ain't broke, then don't fix it". Some thoughts that hinder progress in the rural community include "We won't change our contractors", "Keep contracts with city people as they are supposedly better" and "It's cheaper than training local".
- * Wagga Wagga does not have many programs to encourage higher business practices.
- * Wagga Wagga does not feel the same demands from government to employ full time members than the city.
- * Wagga Wagga hire and fire people without the same fear as what capital cities do. Basically rural don't complain and stand up for their right as much as city counterparts do, and therefore are somewhat demoralised.
- * A trademan would be thinking that the city provides which is not true of a rural location:
 - more money (obviously, there are bigger businesses that pay well)
 - more loyalty (committed to some opportunities for training)
 - more opportunities (if one fails another business will be there to give me a fair go)
 - more consistent work (there is work around, it's a matter of looking)

SOLUTIONS

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- * Encourage Training organisations like the Charles Sturt University and TAFE College to develop seminars and spend time to educate businesses within Wagga to adopt new business practices. If properly run, they could even set up executive fund raising dinners with Government speakers to promote

new strategies devised by training intitutions.

* Larger organisations should be encouraged to pay with training (and accomodation) credits, so that contactors have a pool in which they are encouraged to improve their skills at Capital City training centres. This will also help establish confidence in Local businesses if they know they have been trained from larger cities.

* Councils should encourage "Stay Local and Contract Local Businesses". Ultimately tradesmen need to rely on a steady income if they are to stay. Casual/intermittent work will ultimately stifle skilled workers.

* Councils should be encouraged to set up "Business Parks", not just a business spot for plumbers, or a business spot for mechanics, or even a business spot for computer people. They should have a level of pride about them so that they can feel appreciated. Buildings in that area should be gardened, designed by architects, a fountain and set up high tech looking signs, made of steel and/or marble, not sandstone.

* Funding may be needed. Rural Work Income Insurance should be considered to assist trademen during out-of-work situations that are new and trying to become established. An initial startup payment could help for rural areas (\$200 and \$2000 city training credit), and another 12 month payment if business is still operating without achieving a certain amount of turn over.

* Encourage major employers to establish 12 month contracts, particularly in rural areas.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. I hope I've been of some assistance.

Regards

Dominic Vella