

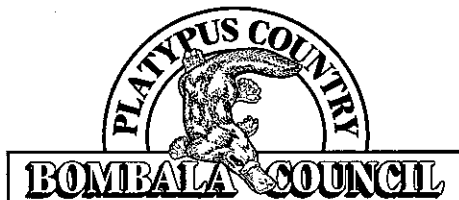
INQUIRY INTO SKILLS SHORTAGES IN RURAL AND REGIONAL NSW

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Date Received: 10/08/2005

Theme:

Summary

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3 August, 2005

Mr. Tony Catanzariti,
Chair Standing Committee on State Development,
Legislative Council,
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Tony,

RE: Inquiry Into Skills Shortages in Rural and Regional NSW

I refer to your letter dated 23 June, 2005 and now supply the following information in relation to the terms of reference:

- a. The Bombala LGA after many years of stagnant growth is now posed to commence some major developments. These developments include construction of a new soft wood mill, updating of existing mill, construction of new premises for one of our timber companies, redevelopment of our Hospital and expansion of our aged facility. In addition to these major developments we have processed a record number of private Development Applications/Building Approvals. This expansion will create large increases in the demand for labour, both skilled and unskilled, within our LGA both in the short and long term.
- b. The economic and social impact of the skills shortage is felt most strongly within the health sector – our LGA like many other rural LGA's is experiencing severe skills shortages in the nursing sector in addition to the difficulty we are facing attempting to secure the services of an additional Doctor. Tradesmen are also in extreme shortage. We also experience real difficulties in attracting those with middle management skills. These shortages often result in industry/business/private developers engaging the services of those that live outside our LGA and hence some economic benefit is denied to the local area. Private development is also hindered and competition is almost nonexistent.
- c. Bombala Council works with all known Agencies to attract and retain skilled workers within our LGA. We are attending Country Week 2005 in an effort to attract additional skilled workers and professionals to our area.

- d. The regional migration policy is not suited to our LGA. Our skills shortages occur in sectors that generally could be filled by Australian workers residing outside of our LGA and or region. However our difficulty is in attracting these workers to relocate to our isolated, rural area. If the guidelines for the regional migration policy were to be freed up then perhaps our local industries/businesses would meet the guidelines and be more interested in applying.
- e. Council believes strongly in a coordinated approach to this issue and would welcome suitable programs to assist us.
- f. The regional migration policy has not proved for any worth to our LGA, local businesses/industry have not been able to fulfil the requirements.
- g. We are currently updating our recording measures and would welcome any suggestions on improving these measures.
- h. While we have access to TAFE via the Cooma Campus and have the facilities to hold TAFE courses at the Bombala TAFE facility, those within the LGA are still disadvantaged. Students experience severe difficulties in attending the Cooma Campus due to the lack of suitable public transport and time and distance constraints. In addition TAFE courses cannot be held at the Bombala facility unless the required class sizes are met, in many instances classes have not be held due to participation rates falling only 1 or 2 pupils short. Council feels that some allowance to class sizes should be made for isolated rural areas with low population bases. It is Councils firm belief that TAFE should be pro-actively exploring the opportunities our Community Technology Centres offer in flexible delivery of courses. Flexible course delivery would overcome some of the problems associated with class size and would give real benefits to prospective students in terms of financial savings on transport and easing the pressure on time resources. These issues are particularly important when coupled with the expected upturn in economic development and associated skills shortages that this development will generate. We have students wishing to enrol in higher education however they are being hampered by lack of easy access and in many cases have to relocate to further their education. This relocation has obvious impacts both socially and economically.

Yours Faithfully,



David L. Rawlings
General Manager