

INQUIRY INTO SKILLS SHORTAGES IN RURAL AND REGIONAL NSW

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Theme:

Summary

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The Hon. Tony Catanzariti, MLC
Standing Committee on State Development
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Tony,

Re: Inquiry into Skills Shortages in Rural & Regional NSW

Bartter Enterprises is one of the largest poultry producers in Australia with sites in most mainland states. Our Riverina operation is the largest employer in the region with over 1000 employees at all levels of operation.

Due to the isolation of this area and the wide variety of alternative work available, suitable labour is in constant demand. Each week we have approximately 50 positions vacant for immediate start, including process work and farm work. Despite the unskilled nature of these positions, we find it extremely difficult to attract and retain quality labour. The Company invests a significant amount of time and money in the recruitment process and in efforts to retain their services (e.g. free bus service, on-site training, and language assistance).

With significant growth for our Riverina operations planned for the next 18 months, the demand for labour is not expected to decrease in the near future. However, due to the difficulties created by the local shortage of suitable workers, the organization will need to seriously consider if the Riverina is the most attractive location for the planned expansion. Skill shortages could leave the company with no other choice than to make the required upgrades and expansion at other Bartter sites

The company has previously recruited large numbers of refugees who have been on Temporary Protection Visa's. These refugees have proven to be valuable Bartter employees who are reliable, punctual, hard-working and loyal. They have integrated extremely well into our multicultural workforce and the Griffith community. They have filled numerous positions which would have been impossible to fill from the local labour pool and have allowed us to continue our development in this rural area.

Business involvement with local training organizations such as TAFE to access skill needs in rural and regional NSW have had limited results. Whilst the training organizations have been very willing to involve local business in this process, quantifiable results have yet to be seen. This maybe due to a number of factors including a lack of motivation in the local community to undertake this training if it is only going to lead to an entry level pay rate position.

As has been suggested on numerous occasions by Bartter Enterprises, a real issue in the Griffith area is the unavailability of 'affordable housing'. As a result, prospective employees including young families and migrants look to more affordable regional centers to settle in.

Yours sincerely,

John Davis
Human Resources Manager
Bartter Enterprises