



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional  
Development  
*Australia*

RDA Illawarra

# Skills Shortages in the Illawarra

## 5 Big Questions + Group Actions

Presented & Conducted at Skills Forum  
August 2023

# Five Big Questions - Group Activity

Each Group discussed and decided actions to address.

1) Training/Upskilling is the #1 strategy to address skill shortages.

**What do employers need to turn this from a tactic into concerted action across key industries?**

2) 'Full' employment is causing employers recruitment challenges.

**What actions will help you to expand your recruitment efforts and successfully hire new employees?**

3) The impacts of skill shortages affect both businesses (growth/profitability/delivery) and employees (overworked/fatigue/mental health/retention/absenteeism).

**What can others do (service providers/government/collaborations) to help address these impacts?**

4) The answer may be more than training and higher wages.

**Other than pay and training, what can employers do to make their workplace a 'workplace of choice'?**

5) Participation rates for women and people of retirement age are low.

**What can be done to encourage/support greater workplace participation by these two cohorts?**

# Top 5 Responses to each question

- 1) Policy change to provide financial support for traineeship programs and upskilling
  - 2) Flexibility in training and education such as micro-credentials and modular training (faster/agile)
  - 3) Develop bespoke training to meet regional industry needs
  - 4) Develop a 'Small Business Culture' playbook
- 5a) Flexible working arrangements and access to childcare for female workforce participation
- 5b) Policy change to enable older people to work more hours

Training/Upskilling is the #1 strategy to address skill shortages.

## **1) What do employers need to turn this from a tactic into concerted action across key industries?**

- Staff upskilling and capability building at grass roots level
- Policy change → Financially supported
  - Joint (Business, University/TAFE/Private) traineeship program
- Similar targets for large employers as ISLP – require trainers
- Legacy → large business providing training expertise
- Promoting of training and funding opportunities from training providers and government

'Full' employment is causing employers recruitment challenges.

## **2) What actions will help you to expand your recruitment efforts and successfully hire new employees?**

- Employer investment in training (but takes too long? - use micro-credentials)
- Openness to entry level by employers
- School/parent/employer education
- Flexibility in training and education
- Fee offset for school-aged to 'try' skills (funding model)
- Education pathways
- Attracting population
- Modular training (faster/agile)
- Education
  - Parents, schools, employers, industry
- Overcome traditional recruitment processes

The impacts of skill shortages affect both businesses (growth/profitability/delivery) and employees (overworked/fatigue/mental health/retention/absenteeism).

### **3) What can others do (service providers/government/collaborations) to help address these impacts?**

- Bespoke training
- Alignment of skill with regional work/industry type – “relevant”
- Flexibility in courses (a degree is not always required)
- Funding of university and TAFE (increased amounts)
- Focus on education, not commercial in universities (social responsibility?)
- Large company return to in-house apprenticeships/traineeships
- Trade fairs – information for school leavers
- Training incentives for employers increased

The answer may be more than training and higher wages.

## **4) Other than pay and training, what can employers do to make their workplace a 'workplace of choice'?**

- Develop a 'Small Business Culture' playbook
- Wellbeing/social/economic impact/ contributions to society → part of ecosystem
- What difference am I making?
- Flexibility → family friendly, 4-day work week, WFH
- Next generation employees → not connected with employers
  - Employers rigid thinking
- Resources for small business needs is different
- Job switching → internal vs. external
  - Via collaboration in region
- Pathway for nurturing young people

Participation rates for women and people of retirement age are low.

## 5) What can be done to encourage/support greater workplace participation by these two cohorts?

- Greater access to childcare and variety of childcare and costs
- Adaptable childcare to accommodate school hours
- Networking/female mentors for younger women (particularly)
- Flexibility for how much older people can work → address capping of earnings/variety of compensation
- Mobility between roles as age and raise awareness of transition to new roles
- Employers to recognise value of older workers
- Affordability of upskilling people

# Where to from here?

## What is our future research approach?

1

Three more waves of research:

- October 2023
- April 2024
- October 2024

2

Dashboard published

- November 2023

3

Looking for support from  
Employers for future research

## What do we need from you?

Employers engage in future  
research – have your say!



# Thank You

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**Peter Watts (EMRS)**

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