



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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