Evaluation Warning: The document was created with Spire.Doc for .NET.

Title:

Wanted: 20,000 workers Recruitment crisis on boomer exodus

Word Count:

672

Summary:

Canberra employers scouring the country and overseas for employees are competing with the remainder of the western world which is suffering a skills drought.

Keywords:

jobs,jobs in australia,australia,immigration,career,empoyment,work,work in australia,australia visa,australian visa,australia immigration,australian immigration,visa for australia

Article Body:

The estimated shortage of 10,000 workers across the ACT could double over the next three years when large numbers of baby boomers retire.

Public service job cutbacks in Tuesday week's Federal budget, tipped to cost Canberra up to 3000 positions, is likely to have little impact on the capital's worsening skills drought.

Today, The Canberra Times begins a three-part series on the extent of the ACT skills drought, which is worse here than anywhere else in Australia, and what could be done to fix it.

ACT Chamber of Commerce chief executive Chris Peters said business growth in the territory had been stalled for 18 months due to insufficient workers.

"About two years ago staff shortages were No13 on businesses lists of concerns. It's been No1 for about 18 months, so it is the major impediment to business growth."

The ACT Skills Commission and the chamber's research shows the ACT will continue to be hardest hit of all Australian states and territories from a shortage of skilled and unskilled workers.

Access Economics research shows the ACT's population is biased towards the 45 to 59 age group.

The demographics report compiled for the Skills Commission says the retirement timing of this age group and especially those aged 50 to 54 will have an even greater impact on the ACT workforce than it will nationally.

Access Economics expects increasing labour force participation rates up to 2010, with a reversal of that trend from 2010 to 2015 and a sharp reduction in participation after then because the main part of the baby boom generation will have reached the age of 65.

ACT Skills Commission chairman Derek Volker warns that today's delays will become tomorrow's disaster when too few people are available to look after elderly folk.

"It is not a skills problem, it's more a people problem and if we don't do something about it, it could turn into a crisis not too far down the track."

Home Help Service ACT, a not-for-profit organisation that provides in-home support to the elderly and frail aged, could place 20 people immediately in its stretched ranks of carers.

Canberra employers scouring the country and overseas for employees are competing with the remainder of the western world which is suffering a skills drought.

Mr Peters said three factors contributed to the territory's exceptional worker shortage:

Having both the lowest unemployment (2.4 per cent) and highest participation rates in Australia, which meant there weren't too many stay-at-home mothers, or unemployed, to fill job vacancies;

The ACT and Adelaide had Australia's two fastest aging populations; and

Older public servants in a former superannuation scheme had to retire before 55 to maximise their superannuation benefits.

"Canberra has the highest percentage of public servants than anywhere in Australia and they retire a decade earlier than the rest of Australia." Mr Peters said Federal budget cuts in two weeks were expected to cause a net loss of 1000 people from the Commonwealth Public Service.

At best those leaving would have wide-ranging expertise.

"It depends on what the mix is I expect the mix will be fairly broad, which would be widely welcomed by the business community, but all of those won't solve our problem."

Shortages are in all sectors, from engineering, health, trades, services and construction. Multinational construction company Bovis Lend Lease said employers were competing with unprecedented building in the booming Middle East countries, and project directors could command salaries of up to $300,000.

Hays senior regional director for Canberra Jane Donnelly said financial controllers and managers on salaries of up to $100,000 and $130,000 were in demand following the meltdown of global financial markets last year.

"Within the banking sector they are far more aware of the risk associated with certain products, they are seeking people with extensive risk analyst-type skills."

Mr Peters said the shortage meant people were finding the service in places like restaurants, hairdressing salons and workshops slower. "If you have an accident driving home tonight in your car, typically your car will sit on the panel beaters shop floor for two weeks until they can get to it. That's now. In three years time that [timeframe] will double."