



17 July, 2003

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA, ACT, 2600

Employment – Increasing Participation in Paid Work

It is a strange reality that we should be considering how to increase participation in the workforce in this country when we have skills shortages in so many areas. Virtually in every skill area from A – Z we have (or soon will have) to begin importing labour.

Currently identified shortages are in the ranks of accountants, auditors, archivists ...just to start with the a's. But I presume the Committee knows what and where the shortages are. It is our inability to see the looming skill shortages which has placed Australia in the position it now finds itself. And obviously had we seen these shortages coming, we could have begun training and educating Australians to do these jobs.

It might seem simplistic, but the only answer to increasing participation in the workforce, is to provide the unemployed and the underemployed with education and training. It is a fundamental waste of our most valuable resource not to provide all Australians with the knowledge and skills required by Australian business and industry. As it is, our education and training infrastructure is so run-down that it cannot hope to meet the demands of life-long learning.

Business and industry is increasingly losing talent – this Institute's latest national salary survey indicates that approximately 14% of the Australian workforce changed jobs (or lost them) last year. This is up by almost 2% over the previous year, and we are clearly in for even more destabilization in the years ahead

Projections prepared by the Boston Consulting Group indicate that even with our present levels of skilled migration, Australia will have 500,000 jobs with no-one to do them by the year 2020. Already we see back office jobs leaving Australia for countries like India, and the Indian Government is keen to soak up more jobs from the first world, as well as export more of its citizens to do jobs in the west.

The attachments provide more information on this, and I would be happy to discuss these issues with the Committee if it wishes.

Yours faithfully *

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bernard T. Cronin', is written over the typed name.

Bernard T. Cronin
Executive Director