



City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder

577 HANNAN STREET, KALGOORLIE

OUR REF: OUT03/IRF:GG: 00023
YOUR REF:
ENQUIRIES TO:

6 August 2003

Ms De-Anne Kelly, MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT
AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

12 AUG 2003

RECEIVED

Dear Ms Kelly

RE: INQUIRY INTO EMPLOYMENT

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations inquiry into increasing the participation in paid employment.

The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder is the largest outback City in Australia and our major industry is mining. It also serves as the regional centre for approximately one third of Western Australia. As such, there is a need for highly skilled personnel across a wide range of professions.

Primarily, the City is concerned about the inability to attract and retain professionals. Apart from significant problems that we experience in retaining and attracting Professionals to Local Government, there are two major industries, our mining industry and health services, that have a real challenge. Both these areas within our City and region require highly skilled practitioners to achieve required outcomes and provide adequate services for the Kalgoorlie-Boulder community.

There is a chronic shortage of a wide range of professions including:

- Environmental Health Officers;
- Town Planners;
- Building Inspectors;
- Engineers;
- Doctors, including all specialist practitioners;
- Nurses, both general and specialist practitioners;
- Allied Health Professionals from the full range of professions;
- Tradespeople, especially those required by the mining industry; and
- IT professionals.

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The situation in Kalgoorlie-Boulder is further exacerbated by our location in regional Australia. There is a well-documented tendency for Australians to live by the coast and incentives to live and work in remote regions are practically non-existent. The cost of living is markedly higher and withdrawal of services, both government and private is on the rise.

Taking into consideration all these factors, the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder offers the following brief comments concerning the current inquiry regarding employment issues in rural/regional areas.

Australia must increase participation in work if we are to maintain our economic growth rate in the context of the impact of the ageing of the population. In June 2002, the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder had 765 unemployed persons, or a rate of 4.4%. This is a favourable result when compared with 6.1% unemployment for the State.

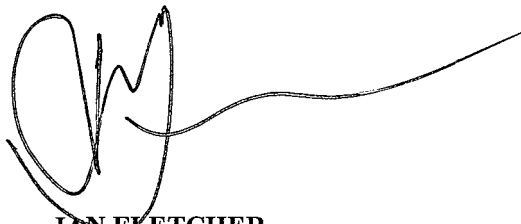
The vagaries of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder workforce have most often pointed not to the lack of employment on offer, but rather the long-term retention of employee's and fly-in fly-out. The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder is trying to address the issue of fly-in fly-out, and make Kalgoorlie-Boulder a hub from which mine workers can fly into to return home, as opposed to flying in just for work, and then flying out again once their shifts are over.

It is essential that there are greater incentives provided for people to remain in remote regional areas to both live and work. One such initiative is the reinstatement of Taxation Zone Rebates to their real value, as our Council has recently supported.

Currently, Australian Taxation Zone Rebates no longer offer an incentive for people to live, work and contribute to the development of regional, rural and remote Australia. It is important to support any initiatives and programs that offer people who work in non-metropolitan areas a lifestyle at a similar cost to those who choose to live in large cities. One way to achieve this would be to offer better taxation incentives via an expanded Taxation Zone Rebate system.

Incentives to attract and retain professionals to rural and regional Australia need to be strengthened and made available in the shortest possible timeframe. This will assist not only in retaining the current population base in the regions, but also improve the quality of services that are on offer in rural areas. It is necessary for greater funding and emphasis to also be placed on developing the Australian training sector to cater for the short and long term needs of our nation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'IAN FLETCHER', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

IAN FLETCHER
Chief Executive Officer