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26 March 2010

The Hon. Barry Haase, MP
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Submission No: 3
Date Received: 9/4/2010
Secretary: 10

Dear Sir

**SUBJECT: REGIONAL SKILLS RELOCATION
TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT
AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

Regional Skills Relocation – and the applicability of Government employment policies to address the skills shortages in regional Australia, focussing on opportunities to support the relocation of unemployed workers from areas of high unemployment to areas experiencing skills shortages.

In order to address this issue, I believe that we need to consider and understand the following elements –

The type of skills available from the “high unemployment areas”, there needs to be a **skills matrix** drawn up to determine and classify the skills that are available. Also, there needs to be a mechanism to verify the competencies of those skilled persons being considered for relocation. Having a piece of paper that says that you are a qualified tradesperson is not enough. There is a requirement to assess that the tradesperson actually does have the ability and capability to do the job, and consideration needs to be taken in respect to the person working in a regional location, as this may be a totally different application.

Example – a welder in Newcastle, NSW that has previously worked in a fabrication facility, may be classified as a tradesman welder. In that environment that is all he would do – he would just weld. However, a person who is a tradesman welder and working in a regional centre in WA or Qld would be required to - cut and prep his own job; tack weld the job and check dimensions; and then weld the job up. After he had finished welding, he would be required to clean up his welding (grinding); he might also be required to give the paintwork a bit of touch up and, if trained, drive a forklift to load his job on a truck.

Most people who work in regional areas are “can do” people. They get the job done, so there has to be a transition programme where potential persons being relocated get to understand the requirements of their new working environment.

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Conversely, there also needs to be an assessment of the types of skills that are required in those regional areas that are having such a skills shortage – once again data needs to be collected in a **skills matrix** to establish and match with the “skills available” matrix.

The actual skills requirement will need to be clearly detailed and spelt out, so that there are no wrong impressions or surprises on the first day of the new job.

There needs to be an assessment of the **accommodation** facilities that are available in those regional areas that are having such a skills shortage. Does the accommodation currently exist? What are the combinations of accommodation available? And what condition are they in? Each regional area needs to be assessed to determine the type of accommodation available and then grouped into number of bedrooms, bathrooms and other facilities.

Consideration of the **infrastructure** to support an influx of families that is currently available in the regional areas that are having such a skills shortage. The addition of a large number of persons into any of the regional centres/areas might be a strain on the town’s facilities – power; water; roads; hospitals; refuse disposal; recycling; schools; supermarkets; hardware stores; petrol stations and sewage disposal etc... as well as the government support agencies that may be required to support these persons during their time of integration.

Please consider the **environmental conditions** that exist in those regional areas that are having such a skills shortage, such as – heat; fatigue; dust; flies; isolation; cultural understanding and integration. Usually, workers in regional locations work different hours to those worked in high unemployment areas.

Integration – you will not be able to just dump people into a regional centre and let them fend for themselves. The current locals need to be informed that there are some changes (for the better) and that it has been recognised that there are some serious skills shortages in the area, and that people are being offered relocation so as to ease the burden of skilled labour shortages.

This integration phase is the most important part of the exercise and it needs to be structured and planned, so that the existing locals welcome the new people and the new people feel welcome, it has to be two ways. All parties need to understand that this is an opportunity for both the existing town’s folk and the new persons arriving in the town to benefit from this relocation. It needs to be sold correctly or it will back-fire. One group will feel that they have been hard done by if the integration planning is not done as a win - win for both parties.

Logistics – Where are these locations and how do you get there? Road, rail or fly? Is there a public transport system or a company bus? How do people get around? Consideration will need to be given to the various religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds that these relocated persons may belong to, as they might have an expectation that assistance will be given to establish a place of worship.

Rest and relaxation – what do the people do after a day’s work? Where can they go – restaurants, café’s, coffee lounges, video stores, fast foods and then what are the opening times of the shops to support the working families?

These are just a few of the considerations that need to be taken into account. If the processes are followed and the selection criteria are adhered to, I believe that this can be a successful programme.

I trust that you find this information useful, however, I am sure that there are other considerations that need to be taken into account.

If you require additional information, or if I can be of assistance in any way going forward, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Thackray
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RCR Resources