



SUBMISSION TO:

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES INQUIRY
INTO WORKFORCE CHALLENGES IN THE
AUSTRALIAN TOURISM SECTOR

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1.0 OVERVIEW

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia Ltd (CMCA) has over 46 000 members nationwide and is the largest representative body for the Motorhome and Self Contained Vehicle (MSV) niche tourism market.

The MSV market consists primarily of middle to lower income empty nesters and retirees over 65 years of age, travelling in twos and spending an average of 157 days per year on the road (significantly more time than other domestic visitors)¹. They travel in a range of self contained vehicles from converted light trucks to luxury purpose built vehicles and stay in caravan parks, rest areas and parks.

The MSV segment continues to grow and is becoming increasingly apparent as a niche market in its own right. In the year ending December 2004, domestic MSV visitors numbered 122 000 and spent 1.643 million visitor nights in Australia (CMCA 2005:6).

Repeat visitation to areas is high with around one third of travellers having been to their destinations before². The self sufficiency of this segment, together with modern communications and technology is also increasing their ability to travel to remote areas (e.g. GPS, internet and solar energy) and they are responsible for significant visitation and spending in regional areas, particularly in off peak periods.

In this submission, the CMCA draws to the committee's attention that the MSV market also comprises a valuable pool of professional and trade skills and a long work experience history in many areas, making them a valuable asset to industries and employers suffering ongoing labour and skills shortages.

¹ CMCA 2005 Issues Paper p6

² Ibid

2.0 THE UNTAPPED SKILLS OF THE GREY NOMADS

There are 4 key reasons why the opportunities provided by this segment should be considered in the development of strategies to meet labour and skills shortages in the tourism sector:

- complimentary trends in the broader labour and tourism markets;
- the labour market and industry needs are in alignment;
- there are benefits to domestic tourism growth and development as well as for regional community capacity building and employment; and
- there is already significant stakeholder support for the development of these linkages.

2.1 COMPLEMENTARY TRENDS IN THE LABOUR AND TOURISM MARKETS

Australia's **ageing population**, in fifty years time, could see one quarter of the population (or 6.6 million people) aged 65 years and over³. In conjunction with this we are seeing **an ageing workforce and early retirement**, which is having a significant impact on the number of workers available to fill labour market vacancies⁴.

As a partial response Government is aiming to **increase the level of participation in the workforce by mature aged Australians**⁵ and in particular the Federal Government is committed to facilitating:

- *Access to appropriate employment training and learning and recreational opportunities appropriate to diverse needs;*
- *Opportunities to make a life long contribution to society and the economy;*
- *A secure and sustainable retirement income; and*
- *the recognition of the skills, knowledge and capacity that older Australians can bring to the aid employment and volunteer sectors*⁶.

The labour market in general is also experiencing a significant **growth in non-standard forms of employment** such as part-time, casual, contract and seasonal

³ Federal Government 2005 The National Strategy for and Ageing Australia
www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/Publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-foa-agepolicy-nsaa-nsaabk4.htm

⁴ QLD Skills Plan 2006 p7

⁵ see for example Federal Government Mature Age Employment and Workplace Strategy 2005
www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/Publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-foa-agepolicy-nsaa-nsaabk1.htm

⁶ Federal Government 2005 The National Strategy for and Ageing Australia
www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/Publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-foa-agepolicy-nsaa-nsaabk4.htm

work, self-employed consultants and labour hire agreements. **Tourism**, as a service sector, continues to grow⁷ and as a seasonal industry is characteristically experienced and suited to offering these types of **alternative employment opportunities**.

Tourism statistics further indicate that an increasing number of retirees are taking to the roads with the majority of the **growing MSV market** comprising middle to lower income empty nesters and retirees over 65 years of age. This segment is hence obviously part of the targeted group for increased workforce participation and for financial and lifestyle reasons, and a desire for an ongoing community contribution, have a complimentary **interest in accessing these non standard employment arrangements**.

In addition, this group tend to travel for long periods of time, to remote and regional areas and in both peak and off peak periods, making them an important contributor to **regional development and tourism revenue**.

2.2 LABOUR MARKET AND INDUSTRY NEEDS ALIGNMENT

The unique travelling profile and the nature of work sought by the MSV market are well aligned with the current needs of the tourism industry and the type of work opportunities the sector may be able to provide. For example:

- being mostly retired and in essence on 'holiday' while travelling, they are specifically interested in opportunities for casual, seasonal and/or part time employment opportunities (rather than full time) and these are the kind of employment opportunities most readily available in the tourism industry;
- they have a demonstrated interest in spending time in rural and remote areas of the country which are the areas in which the industry suffers most from a skills and labour shortage;
- they are open to employment opportunities offering lifestyle benefits more than high pay and career opportunities;
- they are interested in contributing to community development and open to engaging in voluntary work, which opens up opportunities for the industry to utilise them:

⁷ Ibid

- in mentoring or training roles to help develop the local workforce; and/or
- to fill in supervisory roles to allow tourism operators to further develop their skills through participating in training programs they would otherwise be unable to attend because of work commitments and costs.

2.3 BENEFITS FOR TOURISM, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

CMCA views the potential benefits for the MSV market of being able to access temporary voluntary and/or paid work including the ability to:

- supplement incomes while travelling, particularly in light of rising fuel prices,
- make longer trips away from home more feasible, and
- contribute to community development in remote or other areas lacking unskilled and skilled workers, trainers and/or volunteers.

Preliminary consultations with Tourism Queensland and the Queensland Tourism Industry Council also suggest a level of support from the tourism industry for identifying opportunities to utilize the skills base of the Grey Nomad travellers.

Benefits for the tourism industry are seen to include:

- developing the capacity of the tourism industry;
- adding value to a variety of tourism products;
- developing community participation and creating additional social benefits from tourism on local and regional communities; and
- supporting the development and growth of this niche market sector.

2.4 CMCA EFFORTS TO EXPLORE GREY NOMAD MOBILE WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES

CMCA is interested in:

- identifying employment opportunities for the mobile and mature aged population of Grey Nomads that are flexible and appropriate for supporting this group's financial independence and chosen lifestyle;

- investigating the extent to which the domestic Grey Nomad population can assist in addressing industry skills and labour shortages, particularly in regional areas; and
- identifying opportunities, constraints and strategies for linking this workforce with appropriate employers for the mutual benefit of both.

To this end, the CMCA has invested significant resources towards initiating a scoping project to profile their national membership of 46 000 to identify key skill sets, work preferences and issues in the development of and participation in a workforce and industry linking program targeted at the Grey Nomad population. The first phase of this project aimed to investigate both the level of interest and current skills base of its national membership through a national member survey. As this membership provides a sizeable sample of the broader Grey Nomad market the results of the survey will provide insight into the level and nature of demand for employment opportunities by the MSV segment in Australia and the range of skills possessed by this segment that may be available to meet current skills shortages in the tourism industry.

This project has been undertaken collaboratively with the **Queensland Department of Employment and Training** and **Tourism Queensland**. CMCA Ltd is seeking further support to complete phase 2 of the project. This would be a consultative process with peak industry bodies assessing the opportunities for job creation. This proposal is currently under review by the **Federal Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations**.

The response to the survey to date has been overwhelming with over 2000 surveys returned (which is approaching 10% of the membership sampled). This indicates a significant level of interest and support for the potential of developing strategies and programs to utilise this workforce.

3.0 STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING INDUSTRY AND GREY NOMAD WORKFORCE LINKAGES

The CMCA suggests the following strategies to assist in the development of linkages between the mobile Grey Nomad Workforce and the Tourism Industry:

1. Investigate the types of employment opportunities and or barriers for mobile travellers in the workforce from both the MSV and industry perspective.
2. Profile the skills base of this mobile workforce.
3. Consult and engage with industry, community, government and employment agencies and in particular liaise and support organisations initiating research, projects and partnerships in this area.
4. Identify and engage with tourism associations, agencies and operators in regions with high seasonal activity and opportunities for casual and part time work.
5. Engage with community and government organisations to explore volunteering opportunities (eg Visitor Information Centres; national parks)
6. Match key types of skills shortages in the tourism sector, key skill shortage regions and locations attractive to the MSV segment to identify hot spot locations for priority action or pilot workforce and industry linking programs.
7. Identify and link together currently funded programs across the country that focus on providing access to work for mobile travellers.
8. Develop a framework for a mobile workforce and industry linking program that provides information and access to employment opportunities and facilitates links between industry demand and labour market supply - pilot this program in one or more states, with the objective of creating a uniform national program.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The MSV market comprises a valuable pool of professional and trade skills. They are an experienced workforce segment willing to engage in a range of flexible employment arrangements both paid and voluntary and suited to the type of employment typically offered in the tourism sector. In addition they are a key contributor to regional tourism income and are motivated to travel and stay in these areas, which are often those with the biggest labour and skills shortages and in need of assistance with community capacity building and skills development.

CMCA consequently urges the committee to recognise the potential opportunities for Grey Nomads to fill emerging skills shortages, assist in skills development and training (particularly in regional and remote areas) and support tourism business growth. In particular, it is important that strategies be developed to facilitate and support programs that provide innovative links between this labour market and the tourism industry.