

Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee Inc.

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23 April 1999

RE: Issues specific to workers over 45 years of age seeking employment or establishing a business following unemployment.

The Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee Inc. has commissioned a survey and study (the project) of the skill levels, work experience and general expertise of the over 45 years of age group of the Shoalhaven's labour force who are unemployed, that includes those who are both in receipt of benefits and who are not.

The project will also include conducting focus groups to identify issues and develop strategies that result from the survey.

The project is funded by the Commonwealth under the Regional Assistance Program administered by the Department of Employment Work Place Relations and Small Business and the group conducting the project for our Committee is Australasian Industry Support Services (OZISS).

The project expects to have responses from approximately 300 individuals and 100 businesses in the Shoalhaven and the survey will collect information on the target groups:-

- Work experience
- Skill levels (including education qualifications)
- General expertise
- Geographical spread (within Shoalhaven)
- Intention towards future employment
- Current participation in paid employment
- Length of time in the Shoalhaven
- Period of unemployment
- Breakdown by age, gender, income, ethnic group, etc.
- Interest in/participation in voluntary community work
- Other relevant issues such as their perception of employment barriers.

And gauge employer attitudes to the current and future employment of the over 45's group.

The Job Network of employment providers, local businesses, industry organisations, our Committee members and the libraries throughout the Shoalhaven are all assisting with the distribution of the survey forms. A copy of both survey forms (Jobseeker and employer) is attached.

We expect the project to be finalised in July 1999 and a full report available by August 1999.

The Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee will make a copy of the report available to the Standing Committee on its completion.

Yours sincerely,

Milton Lay
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Attachments:

cc: Joanna Gash MP

Mature Age Employment Survey

For

The Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee Inc.

Funded by the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and
Small Business.

Conducted by

Australasian Industry Support Services (OZISS)

June 1999

Contents

| | Page No. |
|---|----------|
| Executive Summary | 3 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Background Information | 6 |
| Survey Process | |
| Job Seekers | 8 |
| Employer | 9 |
| Focus Groups | 10 |
| Job Seekers Survey | |
| Summary of Results | 11 |
| Summary of Job Seekers Focus Group. | 15 |
| Employers Survey | |
| Summary of Results | 17 |
| Summary of Employers Focus group | 19 |
| Conclusions | 20 |
| Recommendations | 23 |
| Appendix A Job Seeker Survey Results & Tables | |
| Appendix B Employer Survey Results & Tables | |
| Appendix C | |
| Job Seekers Survey Raw Results | |
| Employer Survey Raw Results | |
| Job Seekers Focus Group Raw Results | |
| Employer Focus Group Raw Results | |
| Information on OZISS (Survey Consultants) | |
| Appendix D | |
| Power Point Presentation | |

Term & Abbreviations

| Area Key | Abbreviations | |
|-----------|---|---|
| S/H | =Shoalhaven Heads/Berry/Kangaroo Valley | SEAL = Shoalhaven Earning A Living |
| Nowra | = Nowra/Bomaderry | JNP = Job Network Providers |
| B&B | = Bay & Basin | NG = Not given |
| Ulladulla | = Sussex Inlet/Milton/Ulladulla | SACC = Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee |
| | | Oth. = Other |

Executive Summary

The Mature Age Employment Survey was conducted on behalf of the SACC to identify the skill level, work experience and general expertise of the non-working over 45yr. old population in the Shoalhaven.

This report contains the data, conclusions and recommendations resulting from a survey of over 45 year old job seekers, a survey of employers, employer and job seeker focus groups and individual interviews.

The major findings were:

There is a much greater potential workforce in the over 45yr. group than was originally estimated. i.e. a total of over 2200.

It is estimated that a total number of 2100 jobs will become available in the next 24 months in the Shoalhaven.

The greatest employment opportunities will be in small and medium sized businesses.

96% of the job opportunities will be in the Nowra/Bomaderry and Sussex Inlet/Milton/Ulladulla areas, with little in the rest of the Shoalhaven.

71% of job seekers were convinced that they were being discriminated against due to their age. Employers and JNPs both say that they are not discriminating on the basis of age.

A major finding of the survey is that **only 2%** of the anticipated new jobs will go to people over 55yrs.

Both Employers and Job Seekers indicated that by far the most important barrier to gaining work was 'Lack of available jobs.'

Other significant barriers indicated by the Job Seekers were Location, Computer literacy, Lack of skills and Lack of transport.

A large number of people were willing to do community work and /or participate in community based schemes. 30% were currently doing voluntary work and a further 20% were prepared to. This indicates that another 500 were willing to become involved in community work.

41 % of respondents said that they would be prepared to work for the dole and/or SEAL.

Generally the literacy and mathematical skills of the Job Seekers appeared to satisfy the requirements of employers.

The major recommendations were:

In order to maximize job growth government incentives should be directed towards small and medium businesses.

It is recommended that more funding be provided for the NEIS scheme in the Shoalhaven.

Local and State governments should facilitate employment growth through the provision of a more efficient development approval process.

Affirmative action is required to promote the benefits of employing people over 45yrs. This could be achieved via a marketing programme aimed at employers and JNPs.

Work for the Dole must be made available to over 45s. Work for the Dole should take the form of one person in one position rather than working in groups or teams of unemployed.

A system should be developed to target training to meet specific current and future requirements of the Shoalhaven. The training should allow mature, experienced workers to become accredited via Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) without undergoing a complete course.

The wage for over 45s on apprenticeships and traineeships needs to recognise that over 45s are bringing existing skills to the traineeship.

All levels of government must, with urgency address the issue of public transport.

The SACC should make the information in this report available to the Regional Assistance Program, Integrated Transport Study for the Shoalhaven.

The Federal Government should review it's benefit payment schedule in order to ensure that people receive a positive reinforcement rather than a disincentive for engaging in work.

The Federal Government should pay JNP's for placing all unemployed people over 45yrs in jobs not just those on Newstart.

A Work Training Allowance should be available for over 45 year olds for 2 to 4 weeks.

The JNPs should develop a transparent system to enable job seekers to see that they are receiving equitable service.

Job seekers should:

- Be in some form of employment; Paid or voluntary
- Not have too high expectations of the job or opinions about their ability
- Have a clean and tidy appearance
- Join a group to network/ market themselves
- Have good reading, writing skills
- Have good computer and Internet skills
- Not put age on resume
- Convince employers that they are prepared and able to do the work
- Develop current workplace self-marketing skills

The SACC should facilitate the establishment of voluntary groups (Us Helping Us - UHU) to assist job seekers in their area to gain employment.

Introduction

The Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee (Shoalhaven ACC) is one of 58 Federal Government funded committees nationally that have primary roles of employment generation and promotion of regional development.

There is mounting evidence that the over 45yr. old age group in Australia generally and in the Shoalhaven in particular, is disadvantaged in terms of employment opportunities; they form a high unemployment population, many job opportunities are not open to them and there are few government or private schemes to specifically assist them in gaining employment.

The Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee has developed the following strategy in the SACC Strategic Regional Plan: "With 1149 Shoalhaven unemployed over the age of 45year, our strategy is to identify their skills and utilise their expertise to the benefit of the Shoalhaven."

As part of that strategy, this project was developed to identify the skill level, work experience and general expertise of the non working over 45 yr. old population in the Shoalhaven and to also survey employer attitudes to mature age workers and job seekers. The project included surveys of both "job seekers" and employers, and focus meetings with both groups.

It was anticipated that the outcomes of the survey would enable SACC to develop strategies by which;

- 1) existing skills could best be used to help the local community and
- 2) efficient and effective employment schemes could be developed which would meet the current and future needs of the Shoalhaven.

The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business funded the survey.

It was undertaken on behalf of SACC by Australian Industry Support Services (OZISS). The OZISS consultants used were John Ashworth, Bevis Pyle and Alan Mulley.

Background Information

Based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996 Census of Housing and Population) in the Shoalhaven there is

A total population of approximately 77000 people.

A population in the over 45yr. age group of approx. 30,600 people split up as follows;

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| 45-54yr. | 8800 |
| 55-64yr. | 8200 |
| 65 & over | 13600 |

A total work force¹ in the over 45yr age group of approx. between 9100 people;

| | |
|-----------|------|
| 45-54yr. | 6100 |
| 55-64yr. | 2500 |
| 65 & over | 500 |

This group contains some 1200 listed as unemployed i.e.;

1149 (as per the ABS 1996 Census)

1214 in receipt of the Newstart Allowance (Mar 1998 Survey)

Of the 1200 approximately 1000 are seeking full time work and 200 are seeking part time employment.

This infers a group of approximately 8,400 people being the balance between the total number of people (17,000) and the total work force (8600) in the 45 to 64 yr. age group;

| | |
|----------|------|
| 45-54yr. | 2700 |
| 55-64yr. | 5700 |

The people in this latter group are generally not eligible for the Newstart Allowance e.g.:

- a) They are in receipt of an allowance or pension other than the Newstart Allowance.
- b) They are partners to an employed person earning in excess of permitted minimum for Newstart
- c) They have retired from the work force and at this stage are not receiving Newstart Allowance. This group includes both;

Those who have retired for reasons of personal choice i.e. health, family, life style reasons etc. and;

Those who have accepted retirement following a job loss through retrenchment etc because of the difficulties in finding appropriate employment

- d) They are self employed or self supporting, e.g. Primary Producers

¹ The "workforce" comprises people in work and those registered as seeking work
Mature Age Employment Survey Conducted by OZISS for the Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee

From the above it was apparent that to reach a cross section of the non working population in the Shoalhaven a number of separate groups needed to be surveyed:

- 1) People on Newstart Allowance. Approx. 1200
- 2) People not on Newstart Allowance, but actively seeking employment through Job Network Providers. After consultation with various groups this number was estimated as approx. 10% of JNP total registration say; Approx. 120
- 3) People not registered with Job Network providers, but willing and able to work given the opportunity. This number was estimated as being 'similar in size to group 2 i.e.; Approx. 120

Survey Process

Job Seeker Survey Process

A questionnaire was prepared to be completed by unemployed people over 45 years who were seeking employment. Over 2000 were distributed.

The questions were designed to provide the information required by the Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee. A copy of the Job Seekers Survey is included in Appendix C.

Participants in the survey were given the option of remaining anonymous or of providing their identity to participate in the subsequent forums.

Neither the names nor addresses of people receiving Newstart Allowance, nor of those on the Job Network Providers' register could be accessed for confidentiality reasons. Confidentiality was maintained by JNP providing the questionnaire directly to people on their registers i.e. both those in receipt of Newstart Allowance and those who were not.

- 1) Questionnaires were sent out by a mail drop by Shoalhaven Employment & Training.
- 2) Questionnaires were also made available by mail drop out or during interviews to clients of:

Campbell Page Employment Services
Labour Co-op
Essential Personnel
Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services
YWCA Mature Workers Programme.
Australasian Industry Support Services (OZISS)

Also to members of the:

Berry Rotary Club and
Lions Clubs of the Shoalhaven (6 clubs)

- 3) Questionnaires were displayed and made available with reply paid envelopes in places considered likely to reach a large number of over 45yr. olds, i.e.

Libraries

Nowra Central
Berry
Book Mobile
Milton
Sanctuary Point
Ulladulla

Community Centres

Sanctuary Point Youth & Community Centre
Milton, Ulladulla Community Resources Centre
South Coast Aboriginal Cultural Centre
Shoalhaven Neighbourhood Centre

Other

Office of the State Member for the South Coast (Wayne Smith)

Employer Survey

A questionnaire was prepared to be completed by employers in the Shoalhaven region.

The questions were designed to provide the information required by the Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee. A copy of the Employers Survey is included in Appendix C.

Participants in the survey were given the option of remaining anonymous or of providing their identity to participate in the subsequent forums.

Approximately 600 questionnaires were mailed out to;

- Employers on the SACC mailing list
- Members of the Chamber of Manufacturers
- Chambers Of Commerce:
 - Nowra
 - Shoalhaven Heads
 - Berry
 - Bomaderry
 - Sussex Inlet
 - Vincentia

A number of employers were also interviewed face to face to ascertain their feeling related to the employment of the over 45year group. In particular this group included employers known to have employed over 45yr olds previously.

Promotion

Promotion of the scheme was made by:

- Television Interview

- WIN 4 Local News

- Radio presentation on 2STRadio, Wave FIVI, ABC Radio

- 5 presentation/interviews

- Newspaper reports in

- Shoalhaven Independent (2 Articles)

- South Coast Register (2 Articles)

- Ulladulia Times

- Report in the Shoalhaven Employment Bulletin.

- Presentation to:

- Shoalhaven Job Provider Network

- Shoalhaven Human Resource Managers Group

- A member of the Job Seeker Focus Group was interviewed on WIN 4.,
6 O'clock News

Focus Groups

Focus groups were held for both Job Seekers and Employers. Questions for each group were derived from the results of the respective questionnaires.

The Job Seeker group was held in the Bay & Basin area. Of the 89 respondents who indicated their willingness to attend a focus group, a limited number from the Bay & Basin were invited. 14 attended.

The Employer group was held in Bomaderry. Of the 9 employers who indicated willingness to attend, there were 5 participants.

Summary of Job Seeker Survey Results

The following is a summary of the results of the job seeker survey. A total of 271 valid replies were used for the analysis. The results have been broken into four areas;

- Profile of the over 45yr old Job Seekers in the Shoalhaven
- Type of Work Sought
- Preparedness to Work
- Barriers to Gaining Employment

The raw results are included in appendix B and more detailed and extended Results and Tables are in appendix A.

Profile of the over 45yr old Job Seekers in the Shoalhaven.

This survey indicates a much greater potential workforce in the over 45yr. group than was originally estimated. In addition to the 1200 people on Newstart, it is estimated that there are a further 350 on other Government benefits and 700 not receiving Government Benefits seeking employment, i.e. a total of over 2200.

| Table 28 Total Job Seekers- Extrapolation | | |
|---|----------------|---------------|
| | Survey Results | Extrapolation |
| Receiving Govt Benefits | 184 | |
| On Newstart | No. 141 | 1200 |
| | % 52.2 | |
| On Other | No. 43 | 366 |
| | % 15.9 | |
| Not receiving Govt Benefits | 86 | 732 |
| | % 31.9 | |
| Total Job Seekers | 270 | 2298 |

Extrapolation is based on the total of 1200 people over 45yr. being on Newstart. (ABS 1996 Survey/Shoalhaven survey 1999).

Of the approx. 700 people not receiving Govt. benefits, it is estimated that approx. 450 would be registered with JNPs, a further 250 would not be.

| Table 29 No Govt. Benefits- Extrapolation | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| | Survey Results | Extrapolation |
| Not receiving Govt Be | 86 | 732 (say 700) |
| Registered with JNP | 54 | 460 (say 4500) |
| Not Registered | 32 | 272 (say 250) |

Those seeking employment were split on a Male: Female ratio of 56:44.

The age profile of respondents was:

45 to 50yr. 37%
50 to 55yr. 28%
55 to 60yr. 24%
60 to 65yr. 6%

There was a continuous decline with increasing age. Participation over the age of 60 years was limited.

70% of all respondents were born in Australia. Of the 30% born outside of Australia, only 9% are not now Australian citizens.

50% of those not born in Australia were born in the United Kingdom.

4 respondents out of the total of 267 were of ATSI origin.

Those seeking work have a high level of literacy; good spoken and written English skills, (83% and 77%, respectively) and a moderate level of mathematical skills (59%).

There is a low incidence of second language skills. (6%)

8% of the group had Degree or higher qualifications, 8% Diplomas, 20% Certificates, 7% Higher School Certificates and 39% School Certificates.

In descending order job seekers gave their occupation/experience as:

| | | | | | |
|----------|-----|--------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| Clerical | 26% | Tradesperson | 22% | Sales | 19% |
| Labourer | 18% | Manager | 16% | Professional | 16% |

There were higher numbers of Managers, professional people and para professional in the S/H and Nowra areas than in the B&B and Ulladulla areas.

Job seekers indicated their Industry Experience listed in descending order as;

| | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|--------------|-----|---------------|------|
| Retail | 28% | Accom. etc | 23% | Manufacturing | 21 % |
| Comm | 18% | Construction | 18% | Health | 17% |
| Transport | 17% | Education | 15% | Govt. | 12% |

Many people indicated that they were feeling serious financial and emotional strain as a result of being unemployed. Many people are using up their assets.

68% of job seekers were in receipt of Govt. benefits:

77% of these receiving Newstart allowance.

32% were not receiving Govt. benefits. Of the 32%

20% were registered with JNP and 12% not registered;

17% were in paid employment and 16% not in paid employment.

Of the total job seekers, 80% indicated that they were registered with a Job Network Provider, 20% indicated that they were not.

Type of Work Sought

64% of job seekers were seeking full time work. Of these:

24% were seeking **any work** i.e. Full time, Part time or Casual.

7% were seeking either Full time or Part time work.

33% were seeking Full time work only.

28% wanted only Part time and/or Casual work

7% of respondents did not want any work.

32% of the job seekers were in paid employment:

20% Casual, 9% Part time, 4% Full time.

There was a lower percentage in paid employment in the B&B area:

24% versus overall figure of 32%.

There was general awareness of the Job Network Providers and a more limited awareness of specific Govt. programmes. 41 out of 185 said they were not aware of any government or other assistance, or at least any that "did any good."

Preparedness to work

A large number of people were willing to do community work and /or participate in community based schemes like Work for the Dole/SEAL:

30% indicated that they were doing voluntary work.

31 % of those not yet involved said they were prepared to do voluntary work. i.e. a total either participating or willing of approx. 50%.

Extrapolation of the survey results indicates that in the over 45yr. job seekers group in the Shoalhaven, approx. 650 people are engaged in voluntary work and another 500 are willing to become involved.

95% of job seekers said they knew about Working for the Dole. Only 26% had heard of SEAL. The percentage was higher in Nowra (34%).

41 % of respondents said that they would be prepared to work for the dole and/or SEAL. This figure was higher in the Nowra & B&B areas, 49% & 47% respectively.

14% were undertaking further education/training

Note: 89 or 33% of respondents supplied their name and contact details indicating that they were prepared to take part in focus groups.

Barriers to Gaining Employment

77% of respondents said that there was a discrimination barrier to them gaining work.

71 % believed they were discriminated against because of their age.

Only 5% believed they were discriminated against for reasons of Race or Nationality

By far the most important barrier to gaining work was given as 'Lack of available jobs' (74%). Other barriers in descending order were:

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Location (34%) | Computer literacy (30%) |
| Lack of skills (20%) | Lack of transport (15%) |

Location was less of an issue in Nowra, (15%) but correspondingly more so in the other areas.

Poor English skills, Health, Being a carer, Nationality, and Disability were indicated as lesser barriers.

22% of respondents indicated that the most important help that could be given to the over 45yr. unemployed group was the establishment of more jobs in the area, both for general employment and aimed specifically at their age group.

19% indicated the need for the provision of, and assistance with, further training

12% suggested that changes/improvements to the JNP system were needed e.g.;

- The difficulty of ever getting to interview was raised, the feeling that JNPs were not "rooting" for them, the lack of communication re their job opportunities.

9% considered that employers were not seeing the true potential of the over 45 yr. group.

Job Seeker Focus Group Results

Questions for the focus group were derived from the most significant issues raised in the Job Seeker Survey. A summary of the outcomes is given below, complete results are given in Appendix C.

Question 1. What do you think could be done to bring new/more employment opportunities to the Shoalhaven and the Bay & Basin area?

1. Encourage new industries to the area

Develop the process for and ensure regular lobbying of Govt. at Local, State and Federal levels for:

Decentralisation

Increased funding for Government Services

Increased educational facilities

Increased Defence spending

Promote the area to prospective employers/ businesses

Council, State and Federal Govt. to positively encourage businesses to the area.

A database of the facilities, capabilities and skills available in the area for prospective new employers and businesses to be prepared

Develop a "fast track" process to facilitate new development.

Set up special task forces to;

Bring new industries to the area.

Survey the use of an extended air service

Survey the use of a sea transportation service for passengers (tourism)

Promote tourism

2. Ensure the future Human Resource needs of employers can be sourced from the local area

Liaise with employers to determine their future needs

Provide appropriate training to meet above needs

Question 2. How could the transport / location problems be reduced?

Participants made the following appraisal:

The poor public transport facilities within the Bay and Basin area and the inadequate service linking Bay and Basin to Nowra, Wollongong and Sydney are major factors in preventing people from the area gaining employment

Strategies and Actions

A substantial expansion/upgrade of the local and linking public transport system (both rail and bus) is required

Lobby for reduction in car running costs

Establish and co-ordinate a local car pool

Question 3. What is stopping you getting a job?

Participants made the following appraisal..

There are insufficient jobs available

There is an "age discrimination" by prospective employers

The Job Provider Network is poorly serving them

Job seekers lack required skills and qualifications

Strategies and Actions

Govt. incentives for employers to employ older people

The removal of all disincentives for JNP and employers

A promotion to encourage employers to employ over 45 yr. olds

A similar promotion for the Job Network providers

The introduction of agency placement fees paid by the Government to JNP's for placing people not in receipt of benefits

Provision of training and retraining especially for computing

Question 4. What would be required to assist you in acquiring the computer and other skills required by the over 45s to assist in gaining employment?

Participants made the following appraisal..

It was recognised that basic computer and internet skills are essential for the majority of jobs and that regular practice and upskilling is required There is a poor general understanding of what services are on offer There are insufficient courses locally Unemployed people cannot afford the cost of courses nor the cost of travelling to Wollongong or even Nowra

Strategies and Actions

Increase the availability of free/subsidised short courses in the Bay & Basin.

Make available information on what free/subsidised courses are available

Shape courses to meet employers requirements Investigate the possibilities for the funding for a "Us Helping UW project. Provision of Govt. accredited RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) for skilled/trained people.

Summary of Employer Survey Results

The following is a summary of the results of the employer survey. A total of 87 valid replies were used for the analysis. The results have been broken into two areas:

Profile of Employers in the Shoalhaven

Summary of Job Opportunities

The raw results are included in Appendix C and more detailed and extended Results and Tables are in Appendix A.

Profile of Employers in the Shoalhaven

Eighty-seven employers responded to the survey. Collectively they employed 3164 people. 9 employers accounted for 60% of these. The areas of industry covered by the nine were:

- Electricity, Gas & Water Services
- Education
- Health & Community Services
- Manufacturing
- Retail Trade

The remaining 78 employers accounted for 40% (1253) staff.

Employers generally did not feel that they were discriminating against people who were over the age of 45. 61% of employers indicated that there was no barrier to employing people over 45.

Of those who did indicate that there were barriers the three most significant issues were; physical ability (47%), learning ability (18%) and cost (15%).

Employers indicated that they would be hiring in a range of ages. It should be noted that that there was a significant drop in the age group over 55yrs., (only 2% of total jobs) see below.

Age range for future employees is not reproduced

70% of employers required people with good English reading and writing skills. 60% required good mathematical skills. Only a small percentage (14%) felt that a second language would be of benefit.

21% indicated that there could be additional help from Government sources; 39% of these indicated that more help should be given for training and 28% indicated that there could be additional subsidies i.e. wage, training, superannuation etc.

Summary of Job Opportunities

The employers expect to offer 218 jobs within the next 24 month. Most of these will be within 12 months.

The top 9 employers (representing for 60% of employees) accounted for only 37% (80) of the anticipated new jobs in the next 18 months

Job opportunities will be clustered around two areas; Nowra/Bomaderry 63% and Sussex Inlet/Milton/Ulladulla 33%. This leaves only 4% for the rest of the Shoalhaven.

4 industries accounted for 64% of the job opportunities.

| Employers Industry | Number | % |
|------------------------------------|--------|-----|
| Manufacturing | 55 | 25% |
| Retail Trade | 37 | 17% |
| Accommodation, Cafes & Hospitality | 27 | 12% |
| Construction | 19 | 9% |

6 occupation accounted for 75% of the available jobs.

| Occupation | Number | % of Total |
|----------------|--------|------------|
| Sales | 38 | 18% |
| Tradesperson | 34 | 16% |
| Labourer | 29 | 13% |
| Factory Worker | 25 | 12% |
| Professional | 19 | 9% |
| Hospitality | 17 | 8% |

Based on the employers responses to what age groups they would expect to be employing, only 18% of jobs will go to people over 45yrs with 16% of these going to 45 to 55 year olds and only 2% to people 55 and over.

| Age | % of 218 | No of jobs |
|----------|----------|------------|
| 45 to 54 | 16% | 35 |
| 55 to 64 | 2% | 4 |

Employer Focus Group Results

Questions for the focus group were derived from the most significant issues raised in the Employer Survey. A summary of the outcomes is given below, complete results are given in Appendix C.

Question 1. What can people over the age of 45 do to increase their chances of being taken on?

Job seekers should:

- Join a group to network/ market themselves
- Not have too high expectations of the job or opinions about their ability
- Have a clean and tidy appearance
- Be in some form of employment. Paid or voluntary
- Have good reading, writing and computer skills
- Not put age on resume
- Convince employers that they are prepared and able to do the work
- Develop current workplace self-marketing skills

Question 2. What do you think the Government can do to encourage employers to take on people who are over the age of 45?

Work for the Dole (or a better named scheme) must be made available to over 45s

Registered training courses which are targeted at the over 45s and the needs of the area should be made available

There is a need for local NEIS schemes to be made available to non-recipients of Govt. benefits

There is need for the NEIS scheme to support/prepare new businesses in the "Incubation period" period prior to NEIS acceptance

Subsidised training courses are required for people not in receipt of benefits.

The State Government must "fast track" development

There is a need to get rid of the "disincentives" to get off benefits

The wage for over 45s on apprenticeships and traineeships needs to be in excess of \$400/week

Conclusions

This survey indicates a much greater potential workforce in the over 45yr. group than was originally estimated. In addition to the 1200 people on Newstart, it is estimated that there are a further 350 on other Government benefits and 700 not receiving Government Benefits all of whom are seeking employment, i.e. a total of over 2200.

The employers surveyed expect to offer 218 jobs within the next 24 months. Most of these will be within 12 months. Based on this and the total labour force it is estimated that a total number of 2100 jobs will become available in the next 24 months in the Shoalhaven.

The top 9 employers (employing 60% of employees in the survey) accounted for only 37% of the anticipated new jobs in the next 24 months. This indicates that the greatest employment opportunity will be in small and medium sized businesses.

Job opportunities will be clustered around two areas; Nowra/Bomaderry 63% and Sussex Inlet/Milton/Ulladulla 33%. This leaves only 4% for **the rest of the Shoalhaven.**

Four industries will account for 64% of the job opportunities.

| Employers Industry | Number | % |
|------------------------------------|--------|-----|
| Manufacturing | 55 | 25% |
| Retail Trade | 37 | 17% |
| Accommodation, Cafes & Hospitality | 27 | 12% |
| Construction | 19 | 9% |

Six occupations will account for 75% of the available jobs. Available experience broadly covers the future needs of employers for these jobs. However it should be noted that a large number of people have clerical (26%) and managerial (16%) experience for which there is apparently little need.

| Occupation | Profile of Job Opportunities | Profile of Available Experience |
|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Sales | 18% | 19% |
| Tradesperson | 16% | 22% |
| Labourer | 13% | 18% |
| Factory Worker | 12% | 12% |
| Professional | 9% | 16% |
| Hospitality | 8% | 23% |

71 % of job seekers are convinced that they are being discriminated against due to their age. Employers and JNPs both say that they are not discriminating on the basis of age. While it is evident from employers' comments that they do not see themselves as discriminating against people over 45 years old, it can be clearly seen from tables below that they are.

From the response of employers who did raise issues about older workers, physical ability, ability to learn, a perceived higher cost and poor literacy, were stated as the main barriers. These employers while not stating age as a barrier clearly associated age with these issues.

Based on employer hiring projections the over 45 age group is not being given an equitable distribution of the available jobs. Based on either total population or labour force figures it would be equitable if employers anticipated giving about 30% to 35% to the 45 to 64 age groups. But currently only 18% of jobs will go to people over 45yrs. Of the 18%, 16% will go to 45 to 55 year olds and **only 2%** to people 55 and over.

"Over the next decade the two fastest growing sectors of the working age population are expected to be 45-54 and 55-65 years old"² this will further exacerbate the disparity between the number of over 45s seeking employment and the number of jobs available to that group.

30% of the people who replied to the job seeker survey were 55 or over. The above suggests that these people have very little chance of gaining employment.

| Age | Population | Labour Force | % of Labour force | % of Population | Employees Hiring Projections |
|----------|------------|--------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 15 to 44 | 27530 | 21745 | 70% | 61% | 82% |
| 45 to 64 | 17383 | 9100 | 30% | 39% | 18% |
| Total | 44913 | 30845 | <i>Based on ABS Census 1996</i> | | |

| Age f Respondents | % of 218 | No of Jobs |
|-------------------|----------|------------|
| 45 to 54 | 16% | 35 |
| 55 to 64 | 2% | 4 |

| Age Profile of Respondents | % |
|----------------------------|----|
| 45 to 50 | 37 |
| 50 to 55 | 28 |
| 55 to 60 | 24 |

Both Employers and Job Seekers indicated that by far the most important barrier to gaining work was given as 'Lack of available jobs.'

Other significant barriers indicated by the Job Seekers were Location, Computer literacy Lack of skills and Lack of transport.

All the above barriers relate generally to the whole labour force and are not specific to the over 45yr. group. They are important issues for the over 45s, but generally of no greater importance than for other age groups. However the over 45s face the additional disadvantage by the inherent discrimination in the system as evidenced by the employers hiring projections.

² **NSW Workers aged 45-64 Jan 1997 – Dept of Employment, Education, Training & Youth Affairs.**

The majority of Job Seekers are looking for full time work (64%). However of these 31% would be prepared to accept less than full time employment. The percentage who are looking for part time or casual work is 28%.

The survey has shown that a large number of people were willing to do community work and/or participate in community based schemes. 30% were currently doing voluntary work and a further 20% were prepared to.

Extrapolation of the results indicated that in the over 45yr. job seekers group approx. 650 people were engaged in voluntary work and another 500 were willing to become involved.

95% of job seekers said they knew about Working for the Dole. Only 26% had heard of SEAL.

41% of respondents said that they would be prepared to work for the dole and/or SEAL.

The survey showed that only 14% were undertaking further education/training. This is an extremely low figure compared with the findings of the ABS Education Training Experience Survey: 44% (45 to 54yr.) and 29% (55 to 64yr.) Job Seekers indicated that the reasons for this low participation rate were, lack of local courses, lack of transport (public & private), cost (attendance & travel). It should be noted that Job Seekers recognised and accepted the importance of further education and skill development.

Generally the literacy and mathematical skills of the Job Seekers appeared to satisfy the requirements of employers.

While there is a low incidence of second language skills, employers did not indicate a significant requirement in this area.

The incidence of long term unemployment in the Shoalhaven is high i.e. 56% out of work for 12 months or more. This compares poorly with an already bad NSW statewide figure of 45%³ for people aged 45 to 64.

³ Advice on a NSW Govt. Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Education and Workplace Relations on Older Workers. May 1999.

Recommendations

One of the most significant issues in increasing job opportunities for the over 45 age group is to increase the total number of jobs. This requires that governments at all levels must stimulate business growth. This survey has shown that employment growth will be in the small and medium business sectors.

Recommendation:

In order to maximize job growth government incentives should be directed towards small and medium businesses.

It is recommended that more funding be provided for the NEIS scheme in the Shoalhaven. A possible way of extending funding would be to introduce a HEX style repayment scheme.

It is recommended that the NEIS scheme be extended to better support/prepare new businesses in the "Incubation period" period prior to acceptance onto a NEIS scheme.

Local and State governments should facilitate employment growth through the provision of a more efficient development approval process. This will require that a system is established to involve all stakeholders (i.e. developers, employers, community etc.) so that all issues can be pre-addressed and resolved in a co-operative fashion.

Council should further streamline the development approval process.

This survey has established that age discrimination exists in the Shoalhaven; only 2% of jobs will go to people over the age of 55.

Recommendation:

Affirmative action is required to promote the benefits of employing people over 45yrs. This could be achieved via a marketing programme aimed at employers and JNPs.

The Federal Government should pay JNP's for placing all unemployed people over 45yrs; in jobs not just those on Newstart.

A Work Training Allowance should be available for over 45 year olds for 2 to 4 weeks.

This survey has shown that it is essential that job seekers are in some form of employment, paid or voluntary, when applying for positions

Recommendations:

Work for the Dole must be made available to over 45s. Work for the Dole should take the form of one person in one position rather than working in groups or teams of unemployed. This will provide a proper working experience and enable the development of a network of employed people and employers, thus increasing the likelihood of their attaining a job.

It is recommended that a name more conducive to a positive involvement than Work For The Dole be found.

It was evident that vocation specific training is required.

Recommendation:

A system should be developed to target training to meet specific current and future requirements of the Shoalhaven. The training should allow mature, experienced workers to become accredited via Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) without undergoing a complete course.

For example it was indicated that there is currently a shortage of Welders and Boilermakers.

Registered training courses targeted at the over 45s should be made available. Funding should be made available to address the following three issues; 1. Travel may need to be provided or subsidised, 2. Courses should be provided free or subsidised. 3. Subsidies should be extended to over 45yr. job seekers who are not in receipt of government benefits but are never the less of limited means.

The wage for over 45s on apprenticeships and traineeships needs to recognise that over 45s are bringing existing skills to the traineeship. The wage needs to be in excess of \$400/week. (The current \$320 is not enough) This could be achieved by government subsidy to bring the cost of the over 45yr. in line with that of a younger person.

Evening courses should be made available to allow day time job seeking or work.

Both Job Seekers and employers noted that difficulty travelling within the Shoalhaven is a significant barrier to employment and training.

Recommendation:

All levels of government must, with urgency address the issue of public transport. The SACC should make the information in this report available to the Regional Assistance Program, Integrated Transport Study for the Shoalhaven.

It was indicated by both employers and Job Seekers groups that there was a disincentive inherent within the system for people on Newstart or other government benefits to take up employment, particularly when the employment was casual, or full time which could turn out to be medium to short term.

Recommendation:

The Federal Government should review it's benefit payment schedule in order to ensure that people receive a positive reinforcement rather than a disincentive for engaging in work.

Job Seekers expressed a concern that their resumes' were not being put forward by the JNPs for the available positions because of to their age. The JNPs indicate that this is not so.

Recommendations:

The JNPs should develop a transparent system to enable job seekers to see that they are receiving equitable service.

The JNPs indicated that the unemployed over 45yr. group do not always present themselves to employers in a manner suitable for today's workplace.

Recommendation:

Job seekers should:

- Be in some form of employment. Paid or voluntary
- Not have too high expectations of the job or opinions about their ability
- Have a clean and tidy appearance
- Join a group to network/market themselves
- Have good reading, writing skills
- Have good computer and Internet skills
- Not put age on resume
- Convince employers that they are prepared and able to do the work
- Develop current workplace self-marketing skills

The Job Seeker Survey has established that there are a large number of people who are seeking work who are prepared to do voluntary work. This potential could be harnessed to provide support to other job seekers in gaining work.

Recommendation:

The SACC should facilitate the establishment of voluntary groups (Us Helping Us -UHU) to assist job seekers in their area to gain employment.

- Local Transport Schemes
- Computer Training Schemes
- Interview Skills
- Networking

Future Research

The researchers suggest that further study is required to establish what factors are influencing employers low "Hiring Projections" for the over 45yr. age group i.e. Attitude, Cost, Physical Ability etc.

State or/and national "Hiring Projections" should be established on a 5 year incremental basis to establish more accurately the fall off in employment prospects with age.