

Submission to Inquiry into Regional Skills Relocation

The Shire of Tumbarumba is situated on the South Western slopes of the Snowy Mountains. The current population of the Shire is 3,800 with the township of Tumbarumba having 2,800 residents.

The Shires Major economic provider is the Softwood Timber Plantation and Manufacturing Industries, and their related support businesses e.g. Transport, Harvesting and Contracting. Other major employers are Council, Medical; Education based Organisations and Tourism Industry. Each of the above Industries has specialist skills requirements.

Being a small country town, Tumbarumba lacks some of the infrastructure and amenities that other larger country towns possess, such as, quality purchase and rental housing, heated pools, gymnasiums, sporting and recreational facilities.

The lack of these facilities does not assist when skilled trades people and management staff apply for positions in the Shires Industry.

Local industries have also experienced that skilled employees sourced to the regional have not settled due to the limited social activities available to their non working partners, which they have been used to while living in major city areas.

The obtaining of skilled staff through skilled migration programs has also been used by the local timber mill, with a limited amount of success, mainly due to lengthy delays in securing the employees and also the difficulties in authenticating qualifications detailed in resumes.

Offsetting these shortfalls is the chance to enjoy a country lifestyle, with the opportunity to purchase property at a far more economical price than in the larger country and city areas.

Industry Requirement:

Hyne & Son Pty Ltd:- Largest softwood timber mill in the southern hemisphere which employs 280 staff. Skills shortages include electrical and mechanical trades staff, saw doctors, wood machinists and administration staff. Hyne employ a number of apprentices in all of the above trade areas, however on reaching qualification these members of staff are attracted to higher salaried positions in alternative fields, in particular electrical and mechanical engineers to the Mining Industry. Other opportunities exist with Hyne for hydraulic & pneumatic engineers.

Tumbarumba Shire Council:-

Employs 105 staff and has difficulty in sourcing qualified plant operators, eg. Grader, backhoe and truck drivers. With a large number of major highway construction projects currently being carried out in the area these skilled staff are drawn to these short term (2-3 years) highly paid positions.

Timber Plantation, Harvesting and Freight Industry:-

These businesses all form a portion of the substantial Timber Industry within Tumbarumba Shire, all have need for additional skilled operators. The timber plantation and harvest relies on dozer, excavator and log harvester operators and the timber haulage companies are in constant search of qualified B-Double drivers, to carry out log haulage duties on forest and country roads, rather than the normal long haul highway style of heavy vehicle driving.

Medical & Health Provision Industries:-

As with many other country areas there is a shortage in Tumbarumba Shire of Doctors and Nurses. The town has its own hospital and nursing home, and these facilities are always seeking additional qualified medical practitioners and staff.

Private Business Opportunities:-

There are a number of opportunities for qualified tradespeople to commence their own business in the Shire. There are particular shortages of plumbers, builders and electricians, and this presents city tradespeople with an opportunity to start their own business in a growing rural area.

Unskilled workers also have the opportunity for a career in the Shire, with Hyne & Son in particular offering the opportunity for on the job training and trade apprenticeships.

The local High School is currently seeking to develop a trades training centre with the emphasis at this centre being on mechanical and electrical engineering trade. If successful this centre would enable local apprentices to complete their year 1 & 2 technical training at a local site. It would also permit "school based" skills training to be carried out.

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