

## News Spring 2011

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### Employment News:

#### Data provides concrete proof of skills shortage

New data from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) provides concrete empirical evidence on a national basis of the increasing difficulty employers are having in finding skilled workers.

The study from DEEWR's Skill Shortage Research Program found that the number of suitable applicants per skilled vacancy continued to decline over the past 12 months (down 0.5 to 1.5) and a lower proportion of vacancies were filled (down 4% to 61%).

The most difficult to fill vacancies were in the engineering sector, with only 41% filled. Accountants and school teachers had the highest proportion of vacancies filled of 84% and 83% respectively.

The Northern Territory, WA and the ACT recorded the lowest number of suitable applicants per vacancy and also the lowest number of vacancies filled. SA had the highest proportion of vacancies filled (up 5% to 67%) and Queensland to highest number of suitable applicants (down 0.2 to 2.2). As expected, regional vacancies were much tougher to fill than similar ones in capital cities.

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The data is derived from ongoing DEEWR research and follow up surveys with employers about their progress with advertised vacancies.

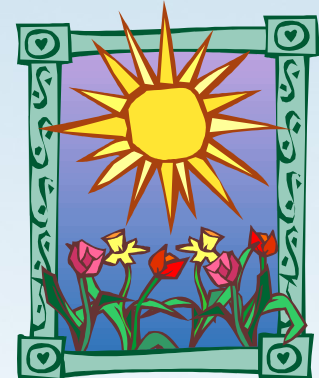
#### Full Time jobs Decline in August

The unemployment rate rose slightly in August, up 0.1 percentage points to 5.3%, according to recent ABS labour force figures. Seasonally adjusted total employment decreased 9,700 to 11,432,600 in August, driven by a 12,600 decrease in full-time jobs to 8,034,900. The drop in full-time jobs was partially offset by a 2,900 increase in part-time jobs to 3,397,600.

The labour force participation rate was steady at 65.6% and aggregate monthly hours worked increased 4.6 million hours to 1,626.8 million. These results followed the July statistics which showed the loss of 22,200 full time jobs almost entirely replaced by a 22,100 rise in part time jobs during the month. Therefore total employment remained steady in July.

General Manager of CareersMultiList, Matt Webster, said that the trend towards flexible, casual and part-time work was significant. "We've now seen from month to month over the last couple of years the relentless push of part-time work."

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This is in part due to candidate and employee requirements, but also a greater willingness from employers to develop a flexible work-force.

"If managed effectively, part-time, casual and flexible arrangements can certainly assist overall participation and productivity rates", Webster said.

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### HR News:

#### Cost of Living rises for Expats workers in Australia

Australian postings for international executives have become far more costly for global companies due to the surge in the Australian dollar, according to the annual Mercer cost of living survey.

The survey, which ranks the cost of living in urban centers worldwide, using New York as a base line, is designed to help multinational companies and governments determine pay rates for expatriate workers. It found that while Australia is still among the most affordable areas to live in the Asia-

Pacific region, all major cities rose at least 10 places in the global index. Sydney was the most expensive Australian city, up 10 places to 14th, followed by Melbourne (up 12 places to 21st), Perth (up 30 places to 30th), Brisbane (up 24 places to 31st), Canberra (up 40 places to 34th) and Adelaide (up 44 places to 46th).

The rise in rankings was due mainly to the Australian currency, which has gained almost 14% against the US dollar in the last 12 months. Looking at other Asia-Pac cities, Tokyo was the second most expensive city in the world, Osaka was sixth, Singapore eighth, Hong Kong ninth and Nagoya 11th.

"Despite a rise in the cost of living, the Australian lifestyle is still very appealing and our relatively strong economy and business growth opportunities mean employers are likely to absorb any short-term increases associated with relocating staff down under," said Georgina Harley, head of Mercer's information product solutions in Australia and NZ.

"Organisations managing an international workforce should not view costs associated with currency fluctuations in isolation but factor it into the longer-term growth plan for the business," she said.



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### Recruitment News:

#### Australian employees on the move

Despite high job satisfaction levels, Australian employees are increasingly looking to change positions, according to new research from Mercer. The survey of more than 1,000 Australian employees found that in spite of increased levels of engagement and commitment to the company, some 40% of respondents were seriously considering leaving their jobs, up from 25% in 2003.

At a panel discussion following the release of the survey results recently Kathy Keel, CEO of the Australian Council for the Arts, said that Australian workers' increasing desire to change positions was "to some extent" a positive thing. Keel said that in her organisation there were certain roles where "we make very clear - we want to have people moving on. [In] others it would be nice if we had a little longevity". It was essential, she said, to accept that people were going to move in and out of positions, and in doing so would gain wider exposure to their sector.

According to the survey, the top five elements motivating employees to stay were;

1. base pay
2. type of work
3. flexible work arrangements
4. company culture
5. incentive pay

#### New trade apprenticeships declining

Despite increasing government investment and incentives, the number of people starting trade apprenticeships has fallen for the third consecutive quarter, according to the latest data from the

National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). The early trend estimates for the June quarter found that, on a seasonally adjusted basis, only 21 800 people began a trade apprenticeship, down from 24 300 in the same quarter last year.

Non-trade apprenticeships also declined in the June quarter to 55, 900, down from peak levels of 56, 900 in the December and March quarters.

### SAFETY NEWS:

#### OHS Harmonisation – Five areas to address now.

The model workplace safety laws commence 1 January, 2012, but employers that wait until then to comply could find themselves at risk of fines, prosecutions, or worse.

According to Kemp Strang lawyers, OHS professionals should be preparing by addressing five key areas:

1. **Documentation** - recycling old policies could land you in hot water.
2. **Related risks** - harmonisation preparedness is challenging, but employers must keep an eye on broader, related topics including discrimination, bullying, psychological injuries and more.
3. **Consultation** - the model Act broadens consultation obligations.
4. **Training** - your organisation most likely has new duty holders when it comes to due diligence. Ensure you know who they are, and equip them with the tools and knowledge they need to meet their obligations.
5. **Incident response** - don't wait until things go wrong to put the right processes in place. Make sure you understand legal professional privilege and comply with the law while reducing your liability.

#### New standard OHS laws will save millions despite "transitional headaches"

Whilst there will be plenty of "transitional headaches" when the new harmonised national OHS laws are introduced next January, they will significantly ease the cost and compliance burden for employers and recruitment companies operating in more than one state, says employment law specialist, Charles Cameron.

Cameron, a director of online safety training company Workpro, has consulted for the RCSA for many years and is an authority on OHS law for on-hire workers.

"The new law removes any discrimination between permanent direct-hire employees or contingent staff. The definition of the employer/employee relationship has been expanded to include anyone conducting a business or undertaking, and anyone involved in the undertaking of work," Cameron said.

"These definition changes are important and increase the onus on businesses engaging workers to communicate, consult with, and respond to the safety concerns of all workers on their sites, whether permanent, on-hired or outsourced" he said. Cameron added that the new definitions would emphasise the shared responsibility and need for consultation between host employers and recruitment companies. This approach will become standard across all states, and save recruitment companies and employers millions of dollars in compliance costs, said Cameron.

*Article Courtesy of CareersMultiList , shortlist.net.au and recruiterdaily.com.au*

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ETX Consultant's work closely with clients to gain a full understanding of their corporate structure, culture and working environment.

We know that every company is unique and we are committed to providing our clients with a realistic and valuable solution to staffing needs.

We hope you enjoy the current edition of our quarterly newsletter, which provides a brief snapshot of topical HR and recruitment issues.

*If you have any staffing or HR requirements, please contact your local, specialist at our head office on 1300 301 813.*

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