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WEEKEND PROFESSIONAL



JUNE 12-13, 2010

WORKOUT

Local labour market strong

THE Australian job market is emerging strongly from the downturn, a Manpower employment outlook survey shows. Hiring intentions will improve steadily, the survey of 2200 Australian employers concludes.

Australia is ahead of many nations in job prospects but behind India, Brazil, Taiwan, China and Peru.

"The recovery has definitely hit the job market, with the employment outlook at its strongest point in two years," says Lincoln Crawley, managing director of Manpower Australia and New Zealand.

Hiring optimism is strong in transport, utilities, mining, construction, finance and real estate sectors. Western Australia is, predictably, where the candidates are most in need.

"The strength of the labour market is always going to be varied across the country, with West Australian employers currently buoyed by mining and construction activities in the area," Crawley says. "However, we are noticing some evidence of a two-speed economy, with some states returning to pre-crisis levels faster than others."

"The recovery pace is looking steady, but jobseekers and employers alike need to be patient. It's not going to be a quick return to boom times."

... but in the US caution prevails

EMPLOYERS will recruit fewer people and focus on retaining staff, US talent management expert Kevin Wheeler says. Wheeler told the Australasian Talent Conference in Sydney last week that organisations might shrink in the next two years. This trend may result in job functions being outsourced. "The worst attitude to have is to dig in your heels," he says. "You have to be open to the changes because they are coming, no matter what."

He says recruiters will have to use technology to interact closely with candidates.

"There is no such thing as recruiting anonymously any more. Candidates and employees will expect to receive a personalised recruitment and working experience."

Sustaining a growth industry

Environmental professionals are in demand across a range of industries

MARGOT SHAVE

ENVIRONMENTAL professionals have the enviable ability to ship their resume to myriad industries as their skills are called on across almost all sectors of the economy.

From architects to air-quality control officers, finance gurus to sustainable forest management specialists, white-collar workers with qualifications and experience in environmental management are being hired in healthy numbers in a still relatively new field.

Jason Downes, managing director of Melbourne-based firm Eco Recruitment, says there are traditional, technical roles such as those based around water, infrastructure, land contamination and environmental approvals. Then there are the corporate roles such as sustainability officers at group superannuation companies who work on investment advice for clients.

"The corporate roles are very new. We have companies [that] say, 'We don't even know what we need, we've just been told we need someone.' There are jobs that haven't been invented yet, which are going to be the next jobs for these guys," Downes says.

He is seeing a great demand for jobs from people with backgrounds in science or chemical engineering, wanting to make a move across to a dedicated environmental role. These candidates struggle to compete with those professionals with the relevant experience or tailored qualifications. "The advice I give people who are considering studying something like a masters [degree] in sustainability to make the shift to an environmental position is to look at your current organisation and start to take on some of the environmental opportunities within your company while you're studying so you have commercial experience as well," Downes says.

Lisa Tarry, managing director of Turning Green Consultants in Sydney, agrees with this and says her ideal candidate for a white-collar job in the environmental sector would have an engineering background such as aeronautical, mechanical or chemical engineering and would have gone on to complete a graduate degree in environmental science or engineering and had a few years' commercial experience.

Tarry runs her business with a sustainability mind-set, which includes planting a tree for each candidate she

places, reducing the company's operational footprint and doing pro-bono work. She spends many hours a week as a volunteer career counsellor for the Environmental Jobs Network, which involves counselling recent graduates seeking work in the sector.

Both she and Downes see fluctuations in the market, with available jobs depending on policy changes, such as the federal government's recent decision to delay the emissions trading scheme.

"I was predicting if the ETS had gone ahead that there would have been an enormous need for people with carbon management skills," says Downes. "But with this being shelved there's a complete stop on that side of the business."

Tarry is seeing a big demand for jobs in the built environment, thanks to the focus on energy efficiency in the construction industry as well as in environmental consultancy work.

"Because of the delay of the ETS and the subsequent hesitation in business, companies aren't confident to put on a salaried sustainability manager and are therefore outsourcing this work to consultants," she says.

While growth in the white-collar sector is steady, peak industry groups such as the Australian Conservation Foundation and the ACTU see the possibility of another 770,000 new "green collar" jobs by 2030.

"We predict a huge transformation, a greening-up of the sectors across the economy as all the trades — plumbers, construction workers and electricians — up-skill and become part of the clean energy industry," says Simon O'Connor, economic adviser to the ACF.

The ACF and the ACTU recently released a report, *Creating Jobs, Cutting Pollution*, which shows every industry across Australia, including those dependent on coal, electricity generation or heavy industry, stands to benefit from an increased number of green jobs if strong action is taken on pollution.

"The report looked at two scenarios: with strong action on climate change and pollution we see the possibility of 3.7 million people working in clean energy technology by 2030. With weak action this number drops to 2.9 million," O'Connor says.

Serena Yu and Mike Rafferty from the University of Sydney's Workplace Research Centre recently published a



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SIMON O'CONNOR

report titled *Skills for Green Jobs in Australia*, with a focus on mitigating lost jobs in industries likely to become obsolete as Australia moves away from a carbon-constrained economy, supporting the emergence of new, green jobs and the greening of established jobs.

"It has been a disappointing decade for environmental policy on the national level and policy hasn't been very well co-ordinated or streamlined, particularly with initiatives around supporting green skills. These have been mainly dealt with on the state level and by industry skills councils," Yu says.

The report acknowledges that NSW and Queensland have proactive poli-

cies in place to deal with greening their workforce.

The NSW government has the \$340 million Climate Change Fund, which includes \$20m for energy efficiency training for trades and professionals, while Queensland has the Cleantech Industry Development Strategy, launched this year and aiming to support the increasing demand for clean technology, products and services.

"The work done by the states in this area, in particular the NSW example of meeting green skills needs, is recognised as being quite an advanced example of what is being done around the world," Yu says.

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