

# MID WEST LATENT WORKFORCE ROUND TABLE

10 June 2021

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Attendees

**i** [redacted] (Mid West Development Commission); [redacted] (SMYL Community Services); [redacted] (TAFE); [redacted] (Apprenticeship Support Australia); [redacted] (ATC Work Smart Mid West); [redacted] (MWCCI); [redacted] (MEEDAC); [redacted] (Jobs & Skills Centre); [redacted] (Skill Hire via Zoom),

Apologies – [redacted] (Services Australia)

### 2. Context

**i**

*The Mid West has a persistent shortage of service workers (unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled) across multiple sectors. Service workers make communities sustainable and drive economic growth. Shortages are most pronounced in the primary industries, hospitality, tourism, transport, construction and aged care.*

*Access to labour markets to address the shortage has been disrupted by COVID-19 interstate and international border closures, particularly those sectors that rely on seasonal workers (i.e. primary industries and tourism). Campaigns to engage with the local workforce have had limited impact, particularly on retention of workers.*

*The housing shortage and lack of suitable accommodation options is exacerbating the shortage of service workers. Without access to suitable and/or affordable housing, people cannot move to the region. In addition to hampering growth, this puts delivery of core services, for example childcare, aged care and other allied health services, at risk.*

*Labour shortages are hampering growth at a time when WA industry is performing strongly. For example, hospitality businesses are operating on reduced hours, at a time when domestic tourism is booming, and Rio Tinto in their recent results announcement indicated that difficulty in accessing skilled labour impacts their performance.*

*Skilled labour shortages are putting pressure on wages and availability, which is having flow on impacts to the cost of services, for example, in the residential building sector.*

*Feedback from producers is that there is a steadily increasing preference for seasonal workers sourced through the Seasonal Worker and/or Pacific Islander Programs, as these workers are deemed to be significantly (at least twice) more productive. The backpacker labour supply is insecure, with the remaining pool of backpackers increasingly fatigued and keen to return home and new arrivals postponed indefinitely. The seasonal worker program has strict accommodation requirements that many small to medium sized producers are not equipped to provide.*

# DATA

## 3. Where are the jobs?

**i** Agriculture, hospitality, mining

500 jobs on Seek

**ACTION – MWDC to follow up with the Regional Data Group to find out where the jobs are**

## 4. What are the skill sets in demand?

**i** \* TAFE reports that there are high enrolments in Cert III Civil Construction; aged care and disability services; health and allied health; nursing; automotive pre-apprentice; and small business management

**\* It is important to note that there is a disconnect between the skills set training that is being done at TAFE and where the demand is from industry**

\* The State (DTWD) is holding a skills summit in Perth. This is an opportunity for industry to advise where the skills shortages are. This Perth summit will be followed by a series of regional skills summits. [REDACTED] (TAFE) will lead the regional skills summit in Geraldton.

**ACTION – MWDC to follow up with local labour hire companies to determine the skills that are in demand**

\* The hospitality and agriculture sectors don't want to have to train staff – they just want to employ people. This highlights that **different strategies are needed for different industries.**

\* Need to understand the businesses and what motivates them

## 5. What is the region's latent workforce? Who are they? How many are there?

**i** \* The Mid West's latent workforce was defined as:

- school leavers
- mothers
- underemployed
- retirees
- disengaged youth
- disabled

\* MWDC reported that there are currently approximately 3,500 job seekers in the Mid West, representing 5.8% unemployment

**ACTION – MWDC to follow up with the Dept Education to determine the numbers of school leavers**

**ACTION – Services Australia to provide non-identifying data on the numbers of other welfare recipients**

**ACTION – TAFE to look for data on the numbers of underemployed**

\* **There are a number of issues preventing some people in the region from being work ready.** These issues include drug and alcohol use and mental health issues. These are issues that will require longer term intervention before these people could be work ready.

## BARRIERS

### 6. How could we reach them?

- i** \* School leavers – industry to engage with schools

**ACTION – MWCCI to lead industry engagement with schools in the region to increase young people's/mother's awareness of career opportunities**

- \* Mothers – child care centres and schools
- \* Retirees – senior's newspapers and FB pages

### 7. What are the barriers preventing the latent workforce from being part of the workforce?

- i** \* **Cost/availability of childcare**

- \* Drug and alcohol use
- \* Mental health issues
- \* Lack of work readiness
- \* **Travel to and from work**
- \* **Full time work**
- \* No driver's licence
- \* Year 10 school leavers are too young to get a licence
- \* **Lack of employer flexibility**
- \* **Employer presentation of job opportunity**
- \* **Lack of awareness of job opportunities**
- \* **Employers holding out for backpackers**
- \* High wage expectations
- \* Not having a structured workplace program
- \* Government telling people that they don't have to turn up to Work for the Dole

## MID WEST LATENT WORKFORCE ACTION PLAN

### 8. What could be done to address these barriers?

<b>i</b>	<i>Barrier</i>	<i>Responsible Entity</i>	<i>Action</i>
	Cost/availability of childcare	State/DESE/MWDC	Covers childcare subsidies; consider full subsidization for high demand occupations (MWDC to advocate)

	State/Federal Government/MWDC	Enable businesses to have onsite crèches (MWDC to advocate)
Travel to and from work	Industry/MWCCI	Organise a bus, taxi or car-pooling to support
Full time work	Industry/MWCCI	Businesses to consider offering job sharing
Lack of employer flexibility	Industry/MWCCI	MWCCI's Working Together Program
	Industry/MWCCI	Employers to be educated about where the barriers might be
	Industry/MWCCI	Ask if industry would be willing to employ retirees/mothers
Employer presentation of job opportunity	Industry/MWCCI	Businesses to reword job ads so that they only ask for the minimum
Lack of awareness of job opportunities	Industry/MWCCI/Jobs & Skills Centre	Engage with schools to raise awareness of career opportunities
	TAFE	Run a Mid West skills summit
	Government & Industry	Job matching
Employers holding out for backpackers	Industry/MWCCI	Employ retirees instead of backpackers
Not having a structured workplace program	Industry/MWCCI	Coaching/mentoring
Drug & alcohol use	Federal/State/MWDC/MWCCI	Make drug testing compulsory
Government telling people that they don't have to turn up to Work for the Dole	Federal/MWDC	Compulsory attendance at Work for the Dole