

Transcript

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Compere: **PAUL TURTON** Summary ID: **200018886708**

Item: **PAUL TALKS ABOUT THE GLOBAL RECRUITMENT DRIVE TO ATTRACT 20,000 SKILLED WORKERS TO AUSTRALIA. HE SPEAKS TO MARK GOODSALL, AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY GROUP, ABOUT THE SKILLS SHORTAGE IN AUSTRALIA.**

INTERVIEWEE: MARK GOODSALL, AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY GROUP

Demographics:	Male 16+	Female 16+	All people	ABs	GBs
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

PAUL TURTON: Well Australia will launch a global recruitment drive to attract 20,000 skilled migrant workers. What do you reckon, have we got enough skilled workers in this country? 1800 025 555 is the number if you've got a view on it.

There'll be advertisements in overseas newspapers and a number of expos held in cities such as London, Berlin and Chennai. It's believed that tradespeople, engineers and doctors are amongst the most desperately needed.

We thought we'd check in with the Australian Industry Group. Mark Goodsall is an executive with that organisation. We just want to find out how bad the skills shortage is.

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Mark, how serious is our skills shortage in the trades?

MARK GOODSALL: Good afternoon Paul. It is very serious, and it's been building this way for some time. I think our evidence shows that something like about 170,000 people are going to leave manufacturing and technical careers in the next 10 years but there's only about 40,000 projected to replace them. So it's a big problem.

TURTON: Is this the issue of the ageing of the population? Is that basically what it's all about?

GOODSALL: That's one of the major drivers. There are other issues. There have been, there've been changes in the way industry operates, a lot of work has left the government sector who used to be a big trainer of apprentices – the railways, the utilities, the local government – a lot of that work has been gone to the private sector under commercial conditions where they're not as able to put the money into training.

Private sector itself has moved a lot to more flexible arrangements using labour hire, and that also has challenged our traditional approach to training traditional trades.

TURTON: Yeah. It seems that we go through this all the time though Mark, you know, we encourage our young girls – you know, let's go back to the 1960s and



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70s, we tell them the only things they're allowed to do is become nurses and teachers. And then we get a surplus of nurses and teachers so we devalue them, nobody goes into it and then we're confronted with a shortage. Why is it do you reckon that we have this trouble getting the balance right?

GOODSALL:

Well forecasting the labour market is always difficult, and you're right, we do go through certain fads. I think you need to take a medium to long-term view and government and industry need to work on a medium to long-term view and really understand where industry is going and where companies are going and the types of skills they need.

And people's information about that is not very good, particularly school leavers, their teachers, their careers advisors we found are not really terribly well informed about the options for careers. And kids are making some poor choices. They're going into very trendy careers that they might see on television shows for which there just actually aren't any jobs.

TURTON:

Okay.

GOODSALL:

And they're walking away from terrific careers and very good money in other areas. So I think information about careers is something that needs to be built up.

TURTON:

Are we pushing them to university too much?

GOODSALL:

I think everyone agrees now that we've gone through – we went through a cycle over the last 10 to 15 years where through people's perceptions, the education system incentives and school KPIs if you like did drive a lot of people to think that the only worthwhile education was a university degree, and I think most people now realise that that's not necessarily the right approach to take.

Particularly when you first leave school – university can be a second or third level qualification during a career, but it doesn't have to be something that you strive towards in that period between when you're 17 and 23 and there's no other options. I think you're right there.

TURTON:

Mark, how is the system treating young people? And I'll tell you an anecdote, I've got a mate who runs a business and he says - he always says he loves to get the kids when they're 15 years old because they haven't been buggered, they're not interested in iPods and laptops and girls and cars and stuff. They can actually be moulded to have a good work ethic.

But the trouble is we keep them at school too often, we give them a few years extra education and then a lot of employers don't want them for the trades.



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GOODSALL: I think – yeah, that’s the other side of the problem I just outlined about the last few years of schooling are not serving everybody as well as they could.

What employers want interestingly, when we survey our members, as much as they’d like kids who have got some technical knowledge of maths and science and have say a qualification or heading towards a technical qualification, they’re also strongly interested in kids’ employability skills, which is their communication skills – written and oral – their ability to work in a team, how well aware they are of safety in the workplace, their ability to solve problems.

TURTON: Yeah you don’t want a little smart Alec who knows everything, do you?

GOODSALL: What’s that?

TURTON: You don’t want a little smart Alec coming onto the worksite that knows everything.

GOODSALL: Or thinks he knows everything. But you need kids who are willing – the ability to learn and willingness to learn, and those fundamental – their called soft skills, but actually industry thinks they’re very, very important.

And they’re the foundations for being a good employee and going on to be a good manager, or indeed working for yourself. The other thing about



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the traditional trades is it's not necessarily something that you're going to go into when you're 18 and be exactly the same job when you're 65.

The traditional trade's increasingly a good stepping stone to a university degree in engineering and related areas in which there are very strong shortages now, or to working for yourself, you know, running your own plumbing company or running your own electrical contracting company. Those options are all open to people who do traditional trades.

TURTON:

Alright, our switchboard has lit up and we'll take some calls in just a moment Mark, but are we doing enough for young people to get them into trades? Are we creating the right environment for them?

GOODSALL:

I think - we've just released a policy in the last two days for the Federal Government to consider that looks at a multi-step strategy to make it easier for kids and their parents and their advisors - their careers advisors - to make the kind of decisions they need to make.

I don't think we've got it quite right, we need to look at the incentives that apprentices get. We need to look at the flexibility - the differences between the states comes up in a lot of areas, and again it comes up in the training area, the fact that the state systems are slightly different and don't recognise all the qualifications.



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So yeah, I think we've got a lot to do. The good thing is it's now the major public policy issue for the country I suspect, and has been for a good six to nine months. And it needs to stay at that level until we get some solutions in place.

TURTON:

Mark, are there any reservations we should have about international recruitment? Are there any pits and – traps and pitfalls that we should look out for?

GOODSALL:

I think the trap is to think that it's a permanent solution. It's a short-term solution because we've got an immediate problem, but nobody in industry thinks that it's part of – it's the only fix or it's the major fix. It's at the margins to get over the problem that we've got ourselves into now.

The long-term solution is to make sure that people understand what their career options are and they're given as much flexibility and as much choice when they're at school to make the right decision and change their decisions throughout their career. We've got a lot of institutional barriers at the moment that lock people into perhaps the wrong direction or one direction.

So it's an issue, it's a moveable beast at the moment, but the immigration thing, and the 20,000 extra places is on top of about 70,000 existing places. So there's going to be a lot of skilled immigration because we've got a big problem now, but it's not anywhere near the whole answer.



TURTON: And it's not taking jobs that could go to our kids?

GOODSALL: It's taking jobs that employers can't find anyone for now. I mean companies are knocking back work in engineering, in manufacturing, because they can't get people to do those jobs.

TURTON: Alright. Mark, great insight mate, thanks for that.

GOODSALL: Thank you.

TURTON: Mark Goodsall, the Australian Industry Group, which is a peak body of course that looks after industry in this country.

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