



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Bundaberg-Hervey Bay Priority Employment Area

Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences

October 2012





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The document must be attributed as the 'Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences – Bundaberg-Hervey Bay Priority Employment Area – October 2012'.

This report was prepared by the Labour Market Research and Analysis Branch and is based on research conducted by the Branch.

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The Bundaberg-Hervey Bay Priority Employment Area

The Bundaberg-Hervey Bay PEA is located along the coast of Queensland, north of the state capital Brisbane and covers the area bounded by the towns of Bundaberg, Childers, Maryborough and Hervey Bay. It consists of the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Bundaberg and Fraser Coast (excluding Fraser Coast - Woocoo-Tiaro SLA) and the Statistical Local Area (SLA) of Gladstone – Miriam Vale. The PEA sits within the Wide Bay-Burnett Labour Force Region (LFR).¹

Summary of Results

Despite low levels of labour force participation, the Bundaberg-Hervey Bay Priority Employment Area (PEA) has a large pool of unemployed job seekers.

- The working age participation rate (the proportion of people either employed or unemployed and actively looking for work) for the PEA was 66.9 per cent, well below that for Queensland (77.2 per cent)². One of the contributing factors to the low participation rate in the region is likely to be the 11 per cent of the working age population in the region who are in receipt of the disability support pension.
- The unemployment rate for the Bundaberg-Hervey Bay PEA was 7.8 per cent compared with 5.6 per cent in Queensland. Unemployment rates across the region are above the state average and range from 10.4 per cent in the Kolan Statistical Local Area (SLA) to 6.2 per cent in the Miriam Vale SLA³. However, it is encouraging that the unemployment rate has fallen across all SLAs over the last 12 months.

A survey conducted in October 2012 collected responses from 330 employers in the Bundaberg-Hervey Bay PEA about their recruitment experiences. The survey results were consistent with an environment in which there are considerably more job seekers than job vacancies with only 0.6 per cent of vacancies remaining unfilled at the time of the survey.

While very few vacancies remained unfilled, many employers said that recruitment was 'difficult' at some point in the previous 12 months. Employers most commonly said that they had difficulty attracting job applicants who had the technical skills or the general employability skills required to do the job.

The below average level of high school completion in the region (59 per cent of 25-34 year olds compared with 74 per cent in Queensland) suggests that the employment opportunities for many local job seekers may be limited to lower skilled positions.

At the time of the survey there are some signs that labour market conditions might improve in the 12 months following the survey with a larger proportion of employers expecting to recruit in the year following the survey compared with the last time the region was surveyed in September 2011 and one in five local employers expecting to increase staff numbers.

- As this survey was undertaken prior to the recent floods in the area, labour market conditions may now be significantly different.

¹ The Bundaberg and Fraser Coast (excluding Fraser Coast - Woocoo-Tiaro) LGAs and the Gladstone – Miriam Vale SLA account for 65 per cent of the Wide Bay-Burnett LFR.

² ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2011

³ DEEWR, Small Area Labour Market, September 2012

Recruitment Activity

Despite the apparent softness in the labour market, job vacancies in the region continue to occur at a steady rate with employers reporting levels of recruitment activity in line with other regions recently surveyed.

- The proportion of employers who recruited in the 12 months preceding the survey was 63 per cent, which was slightly higher than when the region was last surveyed in September 2011 (60 per cent).
- Annual recruitment levels increased from 16 vacancies per 100 staff in September 2011 to 19 vacancies per 100 staff in the latest survey.

Table 1. Recruitment activity in the 12 months preceding the survey

	Bundaberg-Hervey Bay PEA		All regions surveyed year to September 2012
	October 2012	September 2011	
Proportion of employers who recruited	63%	60%	63%
Annual vacancies per 100 staff	19	16	18

Recruitment Difficulty by Occupation

The vast majority of job vacancies in the most recent recruitment round were filled with just 0.6 per cent remaining unfilled (compared with 7.2 per cent of recent vacancies remaining unfilled for all regions recently surveyed).

- All medium and lower skilled vacancies were filled while 3.8 per cent of vacancies for Professionals and 1.8 per cent for Technicians and Trades Workers remained unfilled. The unfill rates for these two occupation groups were substantially lower than all regions surveyed (6.6 per cent and 14.3 per cent respectively).

Despite the majority of recent vacancies being filled, 44 per cent of employers said that recruitment was 'difficult'.

- Employers most commonly said that they had difficulty attracting job applicants who had the technical or the general employability skills required to do the job.
- Recruitment difficulties were most commonly reported by employers recruiting for Managers and Professionals (63 per cent) and Community and Personal Service Workers (55 per cent).

Figure 1. Recruitment difficulty in employers' most recent recruitment round

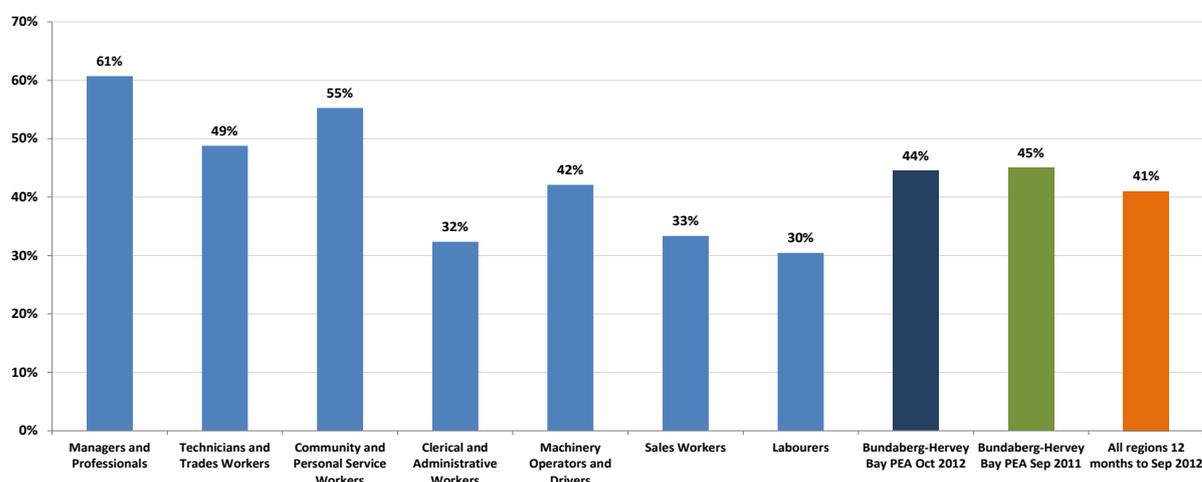


Table 2 provides some examples of occupations that local employers said were difficult to fill.

Table 2. Occupations difficult to fill by skill level

Bachelor's Degree or Higher VET Qualifications	
Chefs*	Metal Fitters and Machinists*
Registered Nurses	Motor Mechanics*
Child Carers	
Other Occupations	
Truck Drivers*	Bar Attendants and Baristas
Aged and Disabled Carers	Dental Assistants
Waiters*	

**Occupations that were also difficult to fill in September 2011*

Apprentices and Trainees

The majority of occupations listed as difficult to fill in Table 2 are available to a job seeker as an apprenticeship or traineeship suggesting that these are likely to be an effective way to build 'in-demand' skills in the region.

- At the time of the survey, 37 per cent of surveyed employers in the Bundaberg-Hervey Bay PEA employed an apprentice or trainee.
 - Employers in the Accommodation and Food Services industry (46 per cent) were most likely to employ an apprentice or trainee, followed by the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (43 per cent) and the Health Care and Social Assistance (40 per cent) industries.
 - One quarter of employers experienced challenges employing an apprentice or trainee with the most common challenges being that they lacked general work readiness (44 per cent), that apprentices/trainees do not complete or stay long enough (26 per cent), and difficulties meeting mandatory training requirements (21 per cent).

Recruitment Methods

Local employers used a wide range of recruitment methods to fill job vacancies (see Figure 2).

- More than two thirds (69 per cent) of recruiting employers used one or more formal recruitment methods in their most recent recruitment round, including advertising on the internet (34 per cent), using a recruitment agency⁴ (24 per cent) and placing a job ad in newspaper (23 per cent)⁵.
- Almost one third of employers only used informal methods⁶, such as word-of-mouth or being approached by job seekers, to fill vacancies in their most recent recruitment

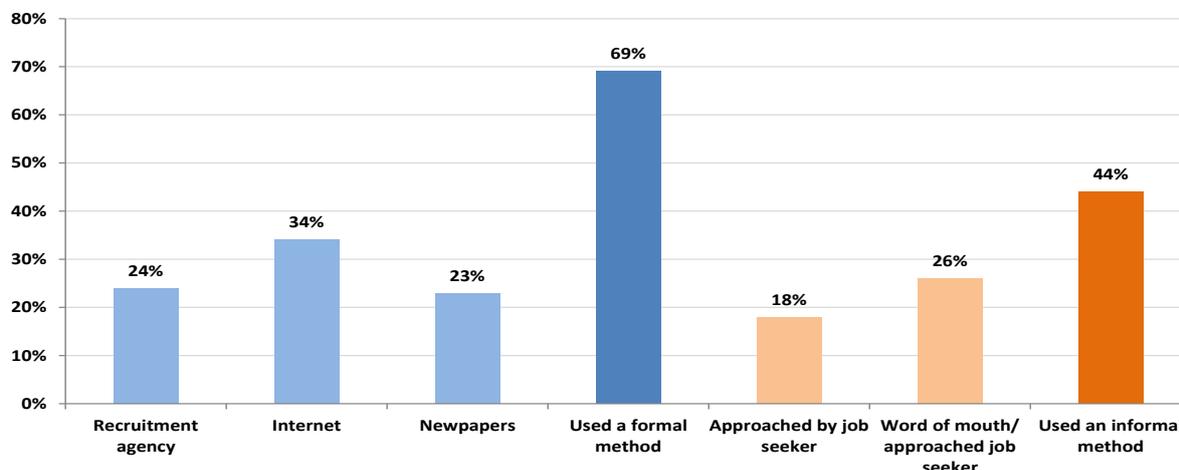
⁴ Recruitment agencies include Job Services Australia providers

⁵ Employers often use more than one method of recruitment

⁶ Informal recruitment methods include: Approached by a job seeker, sign in window/billboard and word of mouth

round. This suggests that job seekers who can tap into personal networks (such as family and friends) to find out about job opportunities or who approach employers directly about possible job vacancies will have access to more local employment opportunities than those who do not.

Figure 2. Recruitment methods in employers' most recent recruitment round



- Over the previous 12 months (as opposed to the most recent recruitment round), 12 per cent of recruiting employers identified using a Job Services Australia (JSA) provider. Of those employers, 87 per cent were satisfied with the service they received.

Indigenous Outcomes

At the time of the 2011 Census, 2 per cent of the working age population identified themselves as being Indigenous. As is the case across Australia, Indigenous labour market outcomes in the Bundaberg-Hervey Bay PEA are less favourable than the non-Indigenous population.

- A lower proportion of the local Indigenous population are actively participating in the labour market (52.3 per cent) compared with the non-Indigenous population (67.5 per cent).
- Of those Indigenous people who are participating, a far higher proportion is unemployed (25.5 per cent compared with 9.5 per cent for the non-Indigenous population).

The survey results show that one quarter of employers who recruited in the 12 months preceding the survey had applicants who identified as Indigenous, of whom 63 per cent filled one or more vacancies with an Indigenous applicant.

Future Recruitment Expectations

Almost half of local employers expected to recruit staff in the next 12 months, 45 per cent of whom expect that recruitment will be 'difficult'.

- The occupations for which employers most commonly expected to recruit included Bar Attendants and Baristas, Sales Assistants, Truck Drivers, Waiters, Generalist Medical Practitioners and Kitchenhands.

Of the 61 per cent of employers who reported that they expected challenges in the next 12 months, reduced business activity (34 per cent), business regulations (23 per cent), and skill shortages or recruitment difficulties (16 per cent) were the most common challenges mentioned.

Table 3. Recruitment expectations for the 12 months following the survey

	Bundaberg-Hervey Bay PEA		All regions surveyed to September 2012
	October 2012	September 2011	
Expects to recruit	48%	42%	47%
Expects to increase staff numbers	21%	24%	25%
Expects to reduce staff numbers	5%	6%	4%
Expects difficulty recruiting	45%	40%	43%
Expects challenges	61%	59%	58%

Opportunities

The vast majority of recent job vacancies in the region were filled and the small number of vacancies that remained unfilled all required post school education or training. Further training and education, including in general employability skills, will greatly improve the employment prospects of local job seekers. In particular, employers often reported difficulty filling occupations requiring certificate level qualifications such as, Chefs, Metal Fitters and Machinists, Motor Mechanics, Child Carers, Truck Drivers, Aged and Disabled Carers.

More Information

- Labour Market Information Portal
<http://deewr.gov.au/labour-market-information-portal-0>
- Skill Shortages
<http://deewr.gov.au/skill-shortages>
- Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences
<http://deewr.gov.au/regional-reports-employers-recruitment-experiences>
- SkillsInfo
www.skillsinfo.gov.au
- Australian Jobs
<http://deewr.gov.au/australian-jobs-publication>
- Aussie Jobs
<http://deewr.gov.au/news/aussie-jobs-publication-highlights-employment-growth>

