

Attracting and retaining mobile skilled workers: benefits for rural communities

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by

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Overview

- The rural workforce is changing and becoming more mobile
- Professional workers have been suggested as a potential group who can boost economic activity
- This paper presents findings from a research project on the benefits to rural communities of mobile skilled workers
- The findings suggest there are benefits beyond economic ones that include social and environmental benefits

Background

- Research conceived at Segra 06 in Launceston
- Resulted in a successful Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) grant
- Focus was on mobile skilled workers

The study

- Findings here are based on the first phase of the study - Tasmania, New South Wales and Queensland sites
- Snowball sampling used and 35 mobile skilled workers interviewed
- Continuing research is being conducted in an additional four sites

Economic Benefits

- Injection of money into the community
- Promoted town outside the area
- Employed locals
- Brought choice and diversity

Social/Cultural benefits

- Built capacity
- Used their professional skills
- Provided new perspectives
- Used networks and social capital
- Generated enthusiasm
- Provided education & training
- Filled gaps
- Generated pride

Environmental Benefits

- Beautify towns
- Improved the environment
 - natural
 - built
- Volunteered for projects
- Provided expertise

Overview of QLD location:

- Qld site is located within the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Region with geographic area of 90,000 km²
- Population of almost 170,000. Whole region is experiencing rapid population and economic growth which is expected to last for at least another decade.
- Officially recognised by QLD govt. as a major new economic dev. hub [NET Strategy 2006]

Defining role of MWs in the 'designer regional economy'

- MW essential to drive new economic development following infrastructure initiatives such as National Broadband Network, Missing Link project and mining expansion across the Region
- MW driving new modern municipal infrastructure and quality of services (such as medical) which are currently inadequate
- MW as potential 'net investors'; driving entrepreneurial activities in currently stagnant sectors of local and regional economy
- MW pool can be source of a long term residents/ratepayers who reinvest into local/regional economy

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS' POINT OF VIEW



Role of MW in creating pathways to regional prosperity

- Bringing in new ideas and skills sets
- Proactive in fostering the Green Collar economy
- MW question and challenge local / regional decision making - new 'modern, desirable jobs' [\$70k+p.a.]

Key findings of the MW study are being utilised in a range of strategic planning activities such as:

- Regional investment attraction strategy
- Project management for future regional projects,
- Increased quality of HR and recruitment processes
- The Regional Skills Attraction Project
- Coal to Coast Liveability Prospectus

Conclusions

- Mobile skilled workers do bring benefits beyond economic benefits to rural communities
- Communities need to take advantage of this potential group of workers to take advantage of their skills, new perspectives, social capital, enthusiasm and education.

Thank you,
Questions please