

Web Page – September 2008.

In July and again in early September 2008 the Chamber took part in the Skilled Worker Campaign conducted in concert with the Northern Territory Government and the Territory Construction Association. Ably led by Officers from the Department of the Chief Minister a small but dedicated team comprising Officers from Chief Minister's and Business Departments of the Territory, representatives from the TCA and Chamber of Commerce have travelled to Newcastle, Adelaide and Melbourne to promote the Territory as a viable place to work and live.

The numbers attending at each venue have more than justified the costs associated and the effort expended to promote and conduct such events and the early indications are that the success of the exercise has been established with a number of employers recruiting candidates. In conducting the Job Shows this year a slightly different approach was used and, in partnership with a number of the industry associations, efforts were made to identify and collect real job advertisements to take to the shows. For Newcastle and Adelaide over 200 employers provided some 470 job advertisements which were put on display to the people that attended. For Melbourne there were some 380 jobs from just over 200 employers due to the slightly shorter lead time. This approach proved to be extremely popular with attendees encouraged to collect advertisements, which included details for contacting the employers, in whatever categories they wished.

In addition to collecting job descriptions, attendees were encouraged to complete a contact details and qualifications/interests form which provided information for prospective employers. That data has been loaded on to the Territory Government website sorted into categories and is available to any prospective employer who wishes to access it. The success of such programs is one of a number of ways in which the Government and Industry Associations are working together, assisting the business community across the Territory. It needs to be stressed that jobs displayed at the shows came from all over the Territory, not just Darwin and a number of vacancies have been filled in regional areas as a result.

If there is a down side to the exercise, one of the most often asked questions by attendees at the job shows related to the cost of housing and the rental market, not only in Darwin but in other locations as well? While not wishing to discourage prospective employees we cannot lie to them either so there is a tendency to brush over a very salient fact. The running of any skilled worker campaign can be seriously undermined if the cost of housing or the rental market is beyond the means of the very people you are trying to attract. The current situation, not only in Darwin but in almost all of the regions as well is that there is a lack of affordable housing for working families. The blame for this shortage lies squarely in the Government court and the delays and obfuscation in releasing affordable land is having and will continue to have an impact on the strength, wellbeing and growth prospects for the Territory economy into the foreseeable future. The time for the Government to act and act quickly is now.

The return is yours Minister!