Skills for women tradies in regional Australia: A global future!

Project Team –

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Problem: skills shortage in the manual trades – very few women employees in the industry

In Australia nationally less than two per cent of automotive, engineering, construction and electro-technology trade workers are women and girls (Women NSW, 2017).

The skills shortage, is an issue particularly pertinent in regional NSW where regionality exacerbates problems with retention in training and employment (Strachan et al 2002).

Alston (2004) and Argent and Walmsley (2008) have identified that young women have a significantly higher rate of outmigration than young men.
Why women in trades?

Less Australian students are studying science and math at school (Simon & Clarke 2016). “Falling apprenticeship numbers in Australian in both take-ups and completions (NCVER, 2015).

“attracting and retaining underutilised sources of talent, including women, is essential to economic growth and prosperity (Daley et al, 2012 cited in Simon & Clarke, 2016, 582)."
Research question – What are the barriers and success factors for women in traditionally male-dominant occupations and industries?

- Recruitment
- Retention
Methodology

2 stakeholder consultation meetings to date in regional NSW

35 participants – brainstorming sessions

Stakeholders included: employers, trades women, job network agencies, education providers, government, council, unions

Descriptive themes were constructed / analysis was thematic
Findings

1. Social barriers and traditional gender roles
2. Family
3. Barriers to Recruitment
4. Schools
5. Class
## Findings

### Barriers to Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace cultures</th>
<th>Spotlighting</th>
<th>The need to fit in to dysfunctional cultures</th>
<th>Lack of career pathways</th>
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Members of the Solomon Islands Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) march in support of female rights during International Women's Day in Honiara. By DFAT photo library (2011) [https://www.flickr.com/photos/16853342@N04/2614837789](https://www.flickr.com/photos/16853342@N04/2614837789)
Findings

Achieving success and longevity
- Programmes and support
- Community interventions
- Advertising initiatives
- Government and industry intervention
The future of sustainable, globally connected regions will depend upon a skilled and diverse workforce, one that includes more women than it currently supports.
Recruitment recommendations:

• Stakeholders must work together to promote VET
• More trade training in schools (with qualified competent teachers)
• Improve careers counselling
Discussion

Retention strategies:

• Build in skills training
  • Soft skills – emotional intelligence
  • Knowledge training – IR legislation
• Ensure sound career advice
• Workplace cultures - formalising relationships
  • Mentoring programmes / Buddy systems / Contact officers / Networks of support / All women teams
• Informal networks
  • Social networks & Social media

Concluding comments & Questions

- Limitations
- Future research
- Thankyou
- Questions
References


- **Simon Linda, Kira Clarke**, (2016) "Apprenticeships should work for women too!", *Education + Training*, Vol. 58 Issue: 6, pp.578-596, [https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-02-2016-0022](https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-02-2016-0022)

- **Strachan**, Glenda, **Sullivan**, Anne and **Burgess**, John (2002)‘Women’s work in regional labour markets: Spatial versus industry differences’ *Labour and Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work* 13(2), 91-116