



University of South Australia
School of Management

Ms. Jan McMahon
General Secretary
Public Service Association of South Australia Incorporated
122 Pirie Street
ADELAIDE. SA 5000

19th May, 2006

Dear Ms. McMahon,

Please find below a summary of the findings of the research project undertaken to ascertain the extent of skills shortages in the South Australian Public Sector (SAPS).

There is a shortage of personnel holding specific skills across the SAPS. The research findings of this report and as previously identified indicates that there is a shortage of people performing the following occupations:

- Correctional Officers
- Social Workers
- Speech Therapists/Pathologists
- Occupational Therapists
- Psychologists
- Community Service and Youth Workers
- Magistrates Clerks
- Court Reporters
- Payroll Clerks
- Administrative staff (across the SAPS generally, primarily in the ASO1 - ASO6 classification ranges)
- Engineering Project Officers, and
- certain specialised scientific positions (e.g. Research Scientists).

Some of the consequences of these skills shortages reported across SAPS agencies included increased workplace injuries due to higher pressure and increased work loads. Stress levels have reportedly increased and staff morale has declined. A majority of respondents and interviewees in the study believed that their agency experienced difficulty in filling positions because of the location of the positions and the sub-standard condition of accommodation provided in non-metropolitan areas. It was also felt that the level of complexity, responsibility and expertise assigned to, and inherent in, many positions did not reflect the classification levels assigned to those positions thereby adding to the difficulty experienced in filling vacant positions and retaining existing staff within them.

The literature is quite abundant in the examination of the negative consequences of job dissatisfaction. It has been contended that it can lead to lower productivity through staff absenteeism (through increased use of sick leave), higher labour turnover and, though often unmeasurable in economic terms, a drop-off of work output. In addition, job dissatisfaction has been linked to increases in various social ills including drug abuse, domestic violence, obesity and alcoholism.

One of the objectives stated in the South Australian Government Strategic Plan is to ensure this State has enough skilled workers to satisfy projected future demands. The findings of the study commissioned by the PSA suggests that the Strategic Plan is not being achieved, or at least being regarded as not being achieved by those interviewed and surveyed, within SAPS. Currently the State has a lower proportion of the workforce holding formal qualifications than the national average and as skills become increasingly important within a global economy, there is a need to invest in the attainment of high order skills and formal qualifications. One respondent specifically stated that there will probably be a shortfall in meeting targets specified in the Strategic Plan.

In summary, the study identified staff shortages in a number of key areas within Government employment. The consequences of these shortfalls have reportedly resulted in lower staff morale, increased workplace accidents and an increase in reported cases of stress-related illnesses. This situation can lead to a number of repercussions: all of them negative. These may include a decline in the working efficiency and effectiveness of staff, which will incur a financial cost to the Government, as well as an increase in a number of social problems.

We trust that this report sufficiently summarizes the findings of the study commissioned by the PSA and we thank you for the opportunity to undertake this project.

I remain,

Your's Sincerely,

Luke Faulkner

Luke Faulkner

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