

## **PARRAMATTA BUSINESS SCENE WEATHERING LABOUR SHORTAGE**

Parramatta is weathering the worst Australian labour shortage in more than 30 years, according to a recent labour survey.

Advance Recruitments Parramatta Labour Survey, conducted in December 2006, is an annual survey that investigates staff and retention issues for Parramatta businesses. It was completed by 55 Parramatta-based businesses that employ a total of 1694 staff in 86 occupational categories. More than 60% of businesses surveyed had operated in the Parramatta for five years or longer. The survey was endorsed by Parramatta City Council and the Parramatta Chamber of Commerce.

Business owners indicated staff were primarily attracted to working in Parramatta for the following reasons:

- (a) Proximity to worker's homes in western Sydney
- (b) A well-developed public transport system
- (c) A strong and growing CBD, and
- (d) Access to a range of services

These quality of life factors were influential in finding and keeping staff. Although almost 60% of respondents reported it was difficult or very difficult to get the right staff, 70% of respondents said they had no problem attracting staff to working in Parramatta. 76% of businesses reported not having to increase wages or offer special incentives to draw workers.

While not immune to the well-publicised skills shortage, the survey indicated that businesses within the city were coping with labour shortages as they had the good access to available labour. According to Sascha Charlton, Managing Director at Advance Recruitments, this is due in no small part to the relative affordability of housing in the Western Sydney region.

“You’ll see in businesses in the lower North Shore, for example, where housing prices have sky-rocketed, there is less available labour because essential workers – such as childcare or hospital workers – can no longer afford to live there,” says Ms. Charlton. “Parramatta is ideally located because it remains in close proximity to relatively affordable housing.”

The survey responses also contained the following key findings:

- 27% of respondent businesses have relocated staff to Parramatta in the last three years, and of the businesses who tracked employee outcomes, staff retention climbed 66%
- Businesses surveyed replaced 120 staff in the previous 12 months and employed an additional 145 staff due to business growth
- 92% of businesses reported that staff turnover in their Parramatta office was either similar to, or lower than, turnover rates in the organisation's other locations

Parramatta Chamber of Commerce President, Ms. Stephanie Dale says the findings confirm the confidence the organisation has always had in Parramatta as an outstanding business environment.

“The Chamber has always held an unshakable belief that Parramatta is a thriving city offering key incentives to businesses. It is now gratifying to read the results of this latest survey which conclusively supports this position. With key findings such as reduced staff turnover and increased business volumes this report is a wonderful demonstration to all businesses of the value and financial returns associated with location in Parramatta,” she says.

For more information on the Advance Recruitments Parramatta Labour Survey, contact

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