

working DOWN UNDER

Jobs, training and skills in the Antipodean workplace

Queensland's resources boom

The incredible resources boom taking place in Australia's Sunshine State is set to deliver plenty of job opportunities for skilled immigrants, writes **Leanne Stevens**

The Australian resources boom is truly a national phenomenon with opportunities for prospective migrants in every state and territory. Two states, however, command centre stage of this modern day 'gold rush' - accounting for 76 per cent of Australian mining production between them.

These states produce the bulk of raw materials required to fuel the rapid growth of global economic power houses led by China and India. For these economies to maintain their huge rates of growth, they require massive quantities of iron ore and coking coal to manufacture steel; and

thermal coal to provide fuel for power stations. Western Australia boasts massive reserves of iron ore worth £43 billion per annum, while Queensland is the biggest contributor to Australian coal production, with exports worth £28 billion per annum. These figures are predicted to soar over the next decade.

Another major driver of growth in Western Australia and Queensland is liquefied natural gas (LNG). Massive quantities of gas are being tapped and converted to liquid at processing plants, before they are shipped to the export end destination.

In Queensland alone, construction of three to four LNG

projects is currently, or will soon be, underway, with a collective capital value of £29 billion.

While Western Australia has grabbed much attention, when it comes to resource-related opportunities, Queensland is rapidly gaining in popularity with UK migrants as an attractive destination to live and work.

UK migrants settling in Queensland are impressed with the healthy outdoor lifestyle, the weather, and proximity to sandy islands and beautiful surf beaches.

Brisbane is a superb location to put down roots. Conveniently located on the east coast, the major cities of Sydney and Melbourne are a short flight away. >>

Above Mining job opportunities in Queensland are on the rise

Recently, the election of a new State Government in Queensland has lifted business confidence.

Construction received a boost through the announcement that the Gold Coast will host the 2018 Commonwealth Games; and a new 700-bed hospital planned for the Sunshine Coast, collectively worth £2.5 billion in capital spend. Tourism and agriculture are also major components of the Queensland economy.

Industry reports predict that the combined coal and LNG sectors will add 40,000 direct jobs within the next one to three years. Based on the spin-off effect, Queensland could be looking at adding upwards of 120,000 additional skilled or semi-skilled workers in direct and indirect positions within three years.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

A recent survey, conducted on behalf of the Queensland Resources Sector, has revealed where the direct opportunities for UK migrants lie.

Of the predicted workforce shortage of 40,000 through to 2015, the main skilled occupations in demand which are currently available for sponsorship through Temporary Long Stay Business (Subclass 457) Visas include 4,000 metal fitters and machinists; 2,000 mechanical engineer draftspersons and technicians;

‘Providing goods and services is a safer and more rewarding prospect’

3,000 construction trades; and 12,000 drillers, miners and shot firers. In addition, it is predicted that an additional 15,000 machinery operators and drivers will be required.

However, many of the semi-skilled occupations will not be available to potential migrants unless they can find an employer with a Labour Agreement, in which the employer has demonstrated that they cannot fill the shortages through Australian

QUICK FACTS

Here are some statistics about Queensland's thriving resources sector...

■ The industry spends £52 billion a year on wages, services, infrastructure and transport. This accounts for one in every five dollars spent in the Queensland economy.

■ The resources sector employs 60,000 people, or three per cent of the total state workforce, however a total of 295,000 or approximately one in eight jobs are supported by the sector.

■ £92 billion of capital spend is planned for resource projects being built in Queensland.

■ Queensland is the world's largest exporter of seaborne coal.

■ Overseas migration has now overtaken interstate migration as the primary source of population growth in Queensland.

recruitment efforts. In the same survey, Queensland resource companies revealed that they would source 75 per cent of their anticipated labour needs from non locals, a significant portion of which would come from overseas.

There's a famous saying in the Aussie resources sector: "The best way to make a quid in a mining boom is not to dig the stuff out of the ground, but to sell the kit and the services needed by the miners to do their job."

While there is much hype around working in the mines, providing goods and services, both directly and indirectly, to this rapidly growing sector of the economy is potentially a safer and more rewarding prospect.

For every new job created in the mining sector, up to three jobs are created in the wider community, covering a much broader range of skills. Many of these opportunities will be located in more family friendly locations than the remote mining towns.

Many companies in the 'direct' space are not high profile multinationals, but instead range from boutique operations to larger diversified companies who, when activity levels slow in the mining

sector, can quickly adapt and refocus to service other sectors.

Prospective migrant job seekers might benefit from casting a wider net to consider jobs created by the resources boom in 'direct' mining services, or the broader 'indirect' population sector, which would include more general roles such as mechanics, nurses, doctors, and hairdressers, as demand for all of these increases as the general population grows.

COMPANY SUCCESS

One niche and innovative company provides specialist

mining services to the blue chip global mining corporations.

The company's services include building underground roadways and the installation of specialist mining equipment. Staff numbers

Below Experienced miners from the UK are highly sought after for projects

LIVING THE DREAM

Dean Creighton from Hereford is one lucky man. Earlier this year, he decided to follow his partner to Australia on a Working Holiday visa.

As a qualified mechanic, Dean quickly secured employment with Stewart Reid, a Brisbane based mechanic and competition rally driver. A migrant from Glasgow himself, Reid jumped at the chance to employ a skilled mechanic with City and Guilds qualifications.



have grown sharply from 400 to over 1,000 in a little over two years. Central to this company's success has been an international recruitment programme sourcing experienced miners from the UK, North America and Poland.

Another has been the introduction of an underground mine training facility, where both inexperienced and experienced coal miners and electricians wanting to get into the underground mining industry undertake an intensive specialised four-week course set up to replicate underground working conditions, before they are able to head into the coal mine for real.

The overwhelming majority of graduates become full-time employees. Greatest success has been seen with mining industry entrants who have a background in the construction or agricultural

farmers, landscapers, teachers, mechanics, welders, painters, chefs, plasterers, electricians, roofers and tillers.

Many potential employers are small to medium in size and have long lists of vacancies. Often they do not advertise on websites, instead advertising in local papers.

Many companies do not know how to tap into the international talent pool and have given up looking, believing it is too hard and expensive. One Brisbane-based vehicle rental company indicated it would employ up to 20 motor mechanics with the right experience if they could be found.

Another manufacturer of mine dump trucks, which cost £4 million each and can carry 290 tonnes of dirt at a time, has just announced it will open a manufacturing plant in Brisbane, employing 150 skilled workers.

‘Many companies do not know how to tap into the international talent pool’

sectors. The project, the first of its kind in Australia, has been so successful that it featured on national television and has received several industry awards.

A second training facility, set to open this year, is being constructed a stone's throw from Brisbane International Airport, with up to 700 recruits expected to graduate annually.

CITY-BASED JOBS

The lure of attractive pay from the mining companies has resulted in the exodus of many skilled workers from cities and towns in Australia, leaving a void. Some examples of the skill gaps include

While some job vacancies are in remote locations which take a bit of getting used to, many others are in large regional towns, capital cities such as Brisbane and nearby coastal areas, such as the Sunshine and Gold Coasts.

The incredible Australian resources boom is set to deliver opportunities for many prospective UK immigrants and the benefits will flow way beyond jobs in the mines themselves. The route to securing your piece of the pie can appear complex, but there are many Australian employers just crying out for workers with the right qualifications, skills, experience and attitude. 



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