

# Engaging disadvantaged job seekers

## Energy Skills Queensland

Energy Skills Queensland (ESQ) developed its Queensland Workforce Skilling Strategy (QWSS) to provide a framework for industry and community to work together to maximise the potential for long-term unemployed, underemployed, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrants, and women to gain employment within Queensland's energy, telecommunications and rail industries. The focus of this strategy is on entry level jobs and enabling access to career path opportunities. Funding to conduct programs is sourced from the Australian and Queensland government, as well as industry partners.

The strategy has resulted in over 1,300 job seekers being trained over the past five years and a 65% success rate in QWSS participants gaining employment in the energy industry. ESQ attributes its successful outcomes to having staff working on the ground to develop working relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (including Traditional Owner Groups), community partners, government agencies and industry to ensure that participants are well supported to gain and retain employment.

### **Accessing Skilling Queenslanders for Work funding to support place-based programs**

ESQ has assisted several of its employers throughout Queensland to secure entry-level local workers with funding support from the Queensland Government's Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) – Community Work Skills stream initiative. SQW aims to improve the skills, employment opportunities and social inclusion of disadvantaged Queenslanders through targeted skills and training programs. As a not-for-profit association, ESQ is eligible to apply for Community Work Skills funds to assist disadvantaged job seekers to undertake nationally accredited training funded under the Queensland Government's Certificate 3 Guarantee initiative. The funds also cover the tailored support that must accompany the delivery of training and the student co-contribution fees.

# Engaging Disadvantaged Job Seekers

## Energy Skills Queensland continued

### Program design

To maximise job outcomes for its SQW programs, ESQ has developed a carefully structured, tried and tested project process that is tailored for each region and community. To help create the capacity required to meet a specific location's needs, ESQ works closely with employers to gain a good understanding of their workforce needs and skill requirements. An extensive scanning exercise is undertaken to identify potential community partners who share a common objective to support disadvantaged job seekers to secure employment. These community partners may include chambers of commerce, councils, jobactives, Regional Development Australia and Aboriginal Elders among others.

Broad community engagement helps ESQ connect with a greater variety of disadvantaged job seekers and improves shared promotion of local job opportunities. Print and social media are also leveraged to boost awareness of the program and to invite job seekers to attend information sessions, which provide information to the community about the availability and eligibility for training and employment. Job candidates are pre-screened by ESQ and a core group of people are put forward to be interviewed by employers. Employers have the option of connecting with potential candidates at the information session and running an application process on the day. ESQ provides successful candidates an induction and soft skills training to develop generalist work skills in areas such as resume building, occupational health and safety and interview techniques. Formal, nationally accredited entry level training that aligns with industry requests is then delivered by an registered training organisation (RTO) and participants are supported to gain work experience with local employers who have committed to being part of the program. A designated ESQ mentor is allocated to provide support and assistance during and post training to support ongoing employment.

ESQ has facilitated several SWQ projects throughout Queensland, recently in the regions of Brisbane, Coolangatta, Logan, Ipswich, Rockhampton, Mackay and Bowen. The success of the model is evident, with between 60 – 85% of the participants having successfully secured employment post training.

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