



The demand has never been greater for skilled and experienced workers in Australia's resources sector, writes **Leanne Short**

Australia is renowned for the quality and quantity of its natural reserves yet the oil and natural gas industry has recently been affected by international pressures on prices. Happily it is now recovering strongly. As a result there is renewed confidence in the oil and gas recruitment market with demand for permanent and contractual staff increasing by upwards of 40 per cent.

The latest quarterly employment review and salary guide from employment experts Hays Australia says that the outlook for Australia's oil and gas sector over the next year remains

promising. "The stagnant hiring levels of the last six months should give way to the creation of new opportunities as projects transition from construction to operations and maintenance."

### RESOURCES BOOM

Business information analysts at IBISWorld expect the new financial year to be characterised by the transforming resources boom, continued technological advancement and changing levels of government support for some sectors. Its latest report has forecast revenues of A\$40.271 billion for this financial year, and >>



Australia boasts a thriving gas industry



expects a growth rate of 12.8 per cent year on year. This is a huge increase from the average compound 5.8 per cent growth rate recorded between 2010 and 2015.

Analysts believe that production growth will be driven by natural gas projects off the coast of Western Australia, including the Gorgon, Wheatstone and Prelude projects and the Gladstone Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project on Queensland's Curtis Island, which can convert coal seam gas into LNG and began exporting in early 2015.

Over 30 per cent of the eastern Australian gas network is fed by coal seam gas (CSG). CSG is used to generate electricity in gas-fired power stations as a low emission alternative to electricity produced from coal and is becoming increasingly important in the nation's energy market as Australia moves to a lower carbon economy.

**SPECIALIST SKILLS DEMAND**

Parts of Australia's oil and gas industry are now changing from a 'construction' phase to an 'operational' phase. In simple terms this means that less people are needed, but there is a huge demand for specialist skills.

Jacqui Ure, Vice President of the Migration Institute of Australia for WA and Registered Migration Agent, specialises in the oil and gas field. "The change to the operational phase means there are a lot of opportunities for UK specialists to consider joining us in Australia, either on a working holiday or those with permanent residency.

"Areas such as well maintenance and specialist intervention are but two specialisms where we would love to have the UK's knowledge bank to draw on".

These roles usually fall under the ANZSCO occupation of Engineering Technician for migration purposes, however this can depend on the qualifications held.

Ure continues: "The UK has developed services that Australia could benefit from. Its health and safety standards are renowned and the standards of training for individuals are highly regarded."

**INDUSTRY DIFFERENCES**

If you're wondering how the industry may differ to that of the UK, drilling is drilling when it comes to a rig, whether on land or at sea. Transportation of the product is the main issue due to Australia's extensive

land mass and immature support infrastructure. So if the deposits are economical, then skilled British workers with oil field experience are very employable.

For those who are accustomed to working at sea, whilst you would most likely be working on land, the sites will similarly be at remote locations.

In addition, UK engineering qualifications are highly regarded and sought after. University degrees, college diplomas and trade qualifications are all well respected, meaning that younger engineers can also experience the legendary Aussie way of life on a working holiday and this can often lead to an extended stay through sponsorship or transitioning into a permanent move.

As there are extensive new drilling programmes under way and new projects in the commissioning stage, employers have a need for Project Engineers/Managers. For design and manufacturing organisations within niche areas there is an increased need for solid project staff with strong technical experience as a result of increasing workloads in a tight market.

Technical Salespeople are needed too and there is a focus on specialist industry experts. In addition, Cost Engineers/Quantity Surveyors are in relative demand following a renewed focus on cost across the industry as a whole.

With all things considered future employment prospects seem excellent for the right people.

**SHALE GAS GROWTH**

Shale gas and fracking are very much in the UK news at the moment and that seems to be the same Down Under.

According to a study by Deloitte Access Economics (DAE) the development of a shale gas industry in the Northern Territory (NT) has the potential to significantly bolster the state's economic growth; creating jobs and generating about A\$1 billion of government revenue.

The study revealed that under the higher growth scenario, the cumulative increase in Gross State Product could reach A\$22.4 billion in net present value (NPV) terms.

This same scenario would increase long-term employment by 6,300 full time positions in the NT as well as a cumulative increase in NT government

revenues of A\$961 million NPV. It's clear that demand for skilled individuals is there already and will be increasing over the coming years, so how do you secure the best possible contract while living on the other side of the world? What other factors do you need to take into account?

**ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?**

As with any area where there is a strong demand, specialist agencies exist. A good starting point would be to speak with a reputable and registered migration agent, for a free visa assessment to first and foremost establish your eligibility and the visa options available to you.

Talk to specialist employment agencies who can advise you on the variety of job vacancies and how they might differ to your current role if applicable. Some agencies even offer an integrated mix of both services. In the current employment market a permanent move, or obtaining an independent permanent residency visa, seems to give you the added advantage of hooking the ideal job where competition is high for roles.

If you plan to live and work in Australia with your family there are also considerable benefits to holding a permanent residency visa; stability, flexibility with employment, healthcare entitlements and no school fees to pay. A

**'Specialist employment agencies can advise you on the variety of job vacancies'**

registered migration agent will be able to talk through your visa options. Moving to Australia can be an emotional rollercoaster with much to think about, so ensure you select carefully and make good use of the agents and the support services they offer.

If you're fortunate enough to still be under 30, a working holiday is a great way to test the waters if you're not yet ready to make a permanent move. Your visa allows you to live and work in Australia for 12 months and in some cases this can be extended up to 24 months.

You can work for any one employer for a maximum period of six months with a view to extending your employment if they are willing to sponsor you. This could be either through the 457 visa (a four-year temporary skilled visa) where you can transition to permanent residency after two years service, or directly to



Skilled workers with oil field experience are very employable

permanent residency through the Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS).

**FINANCIAL INCENTIVES**

The oil and gas industry is renowned for paying well and in any area where specialist skills and expertise are scarce or sought, you can expect good financial

plan, car, transport or petrol, home leave allowance and paid overtime. It also revealed that 64 per cent were permanent employees, while 36 per cent were on contracts (13 per cent direct and 23 per cent through an agency).

Companies with interests in Australia are actively recruiting and there is a very good chance that your skills are needed. If your current business or employers are interested in operating in Australia there are agencies that can assist with this too.

Nick Deligiannis, managing director of Hays Australia and New Zealand believes Australia is on the verge of a significant shift in its recruitment landscape. "We're seeing rising permanent vacancy activity, increased candidate movement and new skills shortages."

If you're thinking of making the move then perhaps now is the time to act!



**Leanne Short is the UK Manager of the ISA Group – Australian emigration and employment experts**

**delivering advice, visas and vacancies to help you live and work Down Under. For further information visit isagroupuk.co.uk or call 0333 577 0082.**