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Making experience work

Generic skills through the eyes of displaced workers – Volume 2



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Publisher's note:

This report has been published in two volumes. Volume 1 contains the detailed report of this project. This volume contains the appendices, including the case studies which were documented by the study.

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Appendix A:

Case studies

Stories of six participants

Robert: School drop-out, pilot, boiler-maker, union leader, businessman

Robert is now a successful, self-employed businessman, aged between 36–40 years, who left school at 15. He got a job on a construction site as a cleaner on 12-hour night shift and saved a lot of money, which helped when he later shifted to Melbourne to take up an apprenticeship.

In his spare time he undertook training for his restricted pilot's licence which he attained at age 16. He saw this activity/training as being very important to the development of his generic skills. He recognised that the system checks that he had to run through before flying were crucial for safety reasons.

... with the pilot's licence I think you understand like they teach you a lot about the systems when you are flying an aeroplane—this is how it works, this is the system, this is the way to cross-reference problems—but also what it taught me was that when you sat in the seat of the aeroplane and you're about to start the engine everything becomes so serious. It's serious business, it's not something you can play with—although I did when I got off the ground and got up in the air. That was my turn then, I could play. But when you are on the ground and you have a system to go through, that's what they taught me that things can be very serious and you must respect them. If you don't you know somebody else will get hurt.

It was the attainment of his pilot's licence that helped him to gain an apprenticeship as a boilermaker with the railways. 'At the interview they only talked about my flying. They didn't ask me anything else.'

As an apprentice boilermaker in the railways he was based in Melbourne, away from his home. It was the money he saved from his work on construction that made it possible for him to survive. He maintained that his apprenticeship was very important to the development of his generic skills.

Well, the skills that you learned outside your trade is the ability to ... deal with other people at different levels. I mean when you're a young apprentice, you look up at people and you've got to learn ... so you develop a learning skill from then. When you get older and you get into the apprenticeship and you get say your third or fourth year you're already acknowledged to yourself as a competent tradesman. You actually recognise that yourself and also you recognise that you've got to send your skills the other way to younger apprentices and you learn, you have to deal with people on those jobs.

... [your organisational skills are] ... just beginning at the apprenticeship stage. Once you leave school and you become responsible for other people, whereas at [secondary] school you're not responsible for other people.

I remember the day when someone gave me a younger apprentice and the foreman said 'Well I'll be ... It's either the blind leading the blind or it's you've come good' [laughter] and I said 'I know, I know'. I remember that day.

... but I think the important thing in doing my apprenticeship is that you learn the skill to learn from others and then, as I said, as you get on you learn to hand those skills back. And you learn to deal with people who are less skilled than you and you progressively develop this ability to allocate jobs very slowly and ... to be able to get jobs done.

He saw the development of his generic skills as being a progressive development throughout his career—learning about systems, society, how things work, what makes people tick. While he had had a number of different jobs, they represented basically three areas of work—being a cleaner on a construction site (initial job), becoming and then working as a boilermaker (railways, electricity generation, construction, mining industry, food industry) and twice being self-employed, including his current occupation. While he saw self-employment as the culmination of his generic skills development where all his knowledge and skills had been brought together, honed and extended, he said that his time at a large public corporation was the real eye-opener.

[When I got a job at Company X] I thought I had a secure job then. I thought great, I can live for the rest of my life comfortably now. But when they restructured ... I quickly realised that things weren't all that safe and that you could never rely on anything and what really opened my eyes was when I got involved in the union and I realised that the union could in actual fact participate not to help people and it opened my eyes as to what was really going on and what people really wanted and how different people could manipulate things to suit themselves.

He then led a group of workers out of one union and into another that worked for a better deal for their members. He became a prominent spokesman and union representative within that union. Before this time he had seen himself as a quiet retiring sort of a person.

I was very quiet. I was a classic example of someone who didn't want to be disturbed and was quite prepared to do his job but when you realised that's just not enough, then you've got to do something about it. So yeah, it was a massive eye opener for me I certainly have a different view of the world now after [that job]. That's for sure.

He saw this time as an important learning experience that made it possible for him to become a successful businessman.

... had I just left [that job] without being involved in any form of ... union activity ... I don't think that I would have wanted to start a business. I think, it might have scared me a bit more. I think that really being involved in the union and hitting things head-on showed me that I not only can do these things but for other people [in that company] that were just frightened. I think ... [that when they left the job] ... cos they never had the skills that I had, they may be just frightened to start a business or get involved in anything. But certainly yeah, the union business was probably the most ... [important] seeing it up-front, seeing what people were prepared to do and then translating those into the current business that I have. I think this is where it's been a success, knowing that people have different motives for different things. What I saw [in that job] was to some degree frightening, but that's the way it goes.

He considered that the skills he developed throughout his career were very important.

I think every skill I've ever developed really was needed for the business, certainly understanding that different people want different things you know and everything—from sales reps ... that want to sell you stuff that just isn't going to work—a lot of this sort of ability to handle these types of people certainly came from [Company X] and certainly came from my work skills but mainly from [that job] ... the skills I developed there were absolutely necessary. The ability to be able to speak to people straight up, tell them exactly what I wanted without fear of offending them, the ability to go off and get things organised and also understanding that these people, whoever they are—and in the business we are dealing with councillors sometimes, we're dealing with different companies, we're dealing with all sorts of people and understanding their motives and what they want to do—those skills were certainly

developed [in that company] and I don't think, I would have been able to survive in the business without those skills.

As an employer himself he had certain views about getting loyalty from staff:

Well now that I'm an employer, I certainly look at things differently ... I don't like to lie to people, if they come in here and I require their employment, I require them on the job, I don't lie to them. I tell them straight up, 'nothing is sacred, I can't guarantee anything, you may have a job for a week, you may have a job for two months, you may have a job for life' ... I've seen employers offer all sorts of wonderful things in there and that's just bull-shit, that's just absolutely crap. I think the employers are the ones that need to be honest and stop offering things that they think they can do ... If they [employees] know they've only got a job for six months they'll hand that loyalty out with no worries for six months and ... because they'll know that [they'll say] 'Oh OK! I've got six months but I've got to go and look for something else' but a lot of employers are prepared to lie and cheat ... So employers need to be more a lot more honest and I think that you know because employees, they rely on their wages from literally week to week. Now that I'm in business I see that, especially in the business I'm in, and I would never tell anyone they've got a job for life now, not the way things are going now.

I've seen both sides of it now because I've been employed, I've been, in a sense, part of the surplus gang and been told lies ... in all sorts of forms and I've been in the construction gang with small contractors and big contractors and I've seen the lies they hand out and the bull-shit they carry on with and if they want fair dinkum loyalty from their employees, they have to get fair dinkum first because the employee will look up to the employer ... and unless they hand over the truth, the employees will just be upset all the time and they would just say 'Oh, I don't give a stuff, the boss doesn't give a stuff, they lie to us all the time' ... The problem is a lot of jobs that the employers provide now are so short term that no one is interested in them. Nobody wants the short-term work, they want security of income for long term ... the employer knows that if he says—'Look I can only offer you a job for four months ...' or whatever, the employee would probably be looking for another job, and the employers says 'Well I may not get this guy for four months, he might leave in a month cos he knows that it's not [permanent]' so he's got to lie to try and keep him.

He admitted that gaining permanent employment is getting much tougher and he considered himself lucky to have had a good bit of his career in steady work. As he commented, in his time:

Employees could rely on the fact that they could go and borrow money from the bank and buy a decent car or buy a house but now they can't. I don't know how some people survive. I supposed I got out of that. My work career was just at the tail end of that and it's just at the beginning you know the real sort of casualisation/part-time sort of attitude ... I don't know how people are going to buy houses and that sort of stuff, I can't see it because they're just not going to be able to do it.

At interview he was highly articulate, able to communicate abstract ideas readily and analytical in his reasoning. He put a high value on his generic skills which he regarded as having progressively developed throughout his career and life. He rated himself very highly in all areas of generic skills except in the area of information technology, which he says he only learns and uses when it is unavoidable. He said that his work (particularly his union activities), hobbies and interests, insatiable curiosity about how things work (experience/self-taught), and friends who shared his interests, were his main source of skill. In terms of working with others and in teams, he maintained that this was a natural skill, not a learned one. He found it important to recognise and develop these traits and found that he was also good at leading others in a team situation. In talking about his ability to adapt to change, he said that he is good at it now, but never used to be. 'I go with the flow a bit more now'. Starting his current business required all his generic skills, including creative and innovative skills. 'I am good at understanding new ideas' he said.

Ben: Roving manual worker, truck driver and occupational health and safety trainer

Ben dropped out of an apprenticeship as a young man and moved around Australia for 20 years, working in factories, farms, mines, and shops, on fishing trawlers and in the trucking industry. In 1999 he had an industrial accident resulting in 8 months in hospital, the loss of a leg and a lasting disability. No longer able to do manual work, he is training as an occupational health and safety officer. He has found that the generic skills he has developed over the years of moving from job to job, and the new skills he developed through the experience of his injury and hospitalisation are transferable to his new occupation of student and trainee trainer.

Changing jobs frequently meant that he constantly developed new skills and became adaptable to change:

... the actual changing of jobs, going from one industry to another industry and using skills from one industry to another. I think I adapted new skills, which helped me no end.

... I've done a big transition from working physically into an office, where I feel a little bit uncomfortable. Because of that [discomfort] I guess I've got to adapt that to be comfortable and I think that can only come through the time of working there, being aware of the problem.

He said that the transition from manual to mental worker has been helped by his 'mental ease' in working, and this in turn 'comes from being able to apply my hands, my physical parts of my body to the actual job'. This facility had been further developed by opportunities he had been given to moving around the one workplace and working with different machines and in different roles:

Some places where I've worked actually utilised my adaptability on the machines by rotating me. But I found they didn't rotate everybody. They wouldn't give that opportunity to sometimes foreign workers who they thought might not be able to develop the skills because they're lacking in English capability, or the enthusiasm.

Working in mines has helped him to develop a lot of trust in other workers and also the confidence of being able to work in isolation:

You become your own supervisor, and that sort of helps you in being able to ... if you can control your work relationship you may be able to assist people in similar work or possibly explain how to do jobs to them.

Ben has good verbal communication skills, which he says he has developed largely in talking to non-English speaking people in the workplace:

I found that I had to be tedious in my instructions, be precise, and talking with my hands, which I developed in talking with ... working with [people] not understanding another language helped me to communicate.

Working in shops also taught him 'a different skill in communicating with people, being put in a different role ... sometimes an obnoxious customer helped me to develop skills in being patient, same as being in hospital for a long time'.

From a young musician in a band he learned a deep appreciation of teamwork and the pleasure of working with a team which is working well:

... if musicians that actually play one instrument and they play solo, but it sounds better when there's other accompaniment. The same as in the workplace, when you get, it's like running well, or like a machine as we call it.

Ben's accident has been an occasion for a big change in the direction of his working life and the development of new skills: 'patience to focus on keeping my mind active' and the skills of reading, research and internet research. In particular the accident gave him a 'passion' for teaching people safe work processes and accident prevention.

Ben is enjoying working and training as an occupational health and safety officer and is enthusiastic about his new career. Significantly, his re-training (in computers, Certificate IV in Occupational Health and Safety Trainer and Diploma of Occupational Health and Safety at a university) have been greatly facilitated by funds made available through his rehabilitation payout. Other displaced workers do not have the same access to free training in the new career of their choice.

James: Teacher and organisational training consultant

James was a teacher in a community school for 12 years before taking a voluntary redundancy package in 1994. His story illustrates how generic skills are developed in the course of solving new problems and rising to challenges at work. It also shows that even an impressive range of technical and generic skills gives no guarantee of ongoing employment.

James went into commercial consultancy so he could 'learn new things' and experience new challenges. He sees the skills he learned as a teacher as vital for his new career in the commercial environment:

Teachers ... have to be people who are very adaptable, have to learn new systems and make them work and have to do them with a minimum of resources and time to do it in, and it was these kinds of advantages, skill sets that the company I got recruited by were looking for and they saw in me ...

For the past eight years he has worked for several consulting firms but has been out of contract for three months, and is now 'under intense financial stress' while looking for another contract or alternative work. The market for training consultancies is currently 'very depressed' and at the moment:

... the situation is really tight, so if an employer is faced with a choice between me and a cutesy graduate with three years experience and a lower rate, I'm out. I mean, there is real serious discrimination against old folk like us ...

James developed his consultancy and technical skills through experience on the job: skills in writing technical manuals, providing training in a range of software applications; applying new technical and business knowledge, skills in 'organisational sensitivity', 'commercial competency', 'analysis and condensation of ideas and texts', 'identifying and developing relationships', 'organisational problem-solving'.

Despite an impressive range of generic skills and an impressive curriculum vitae, James has been unable to pick up further consultancies. The life of a contract consultant is a life on the edge:

The whole thing is knowledge all the time, you've got to get the price right, you've got to get your quote right, you know it's like a race, if you jump too soon, you get disqualified and if you jump too late you lose and that's all very scary stuff you know.

Irena

Irena is typical of many participants in this project who, having been made redundant after 22 years in one company, is poorly equipped to find new employment despite the generic skills that she has clearly developed throughout that time.

Irena lost her job from (a telecommunications company) nine months ago. She has applied for about sixty jobs since then but has not managed to get one interview. Irena does not have confidence in the skills that she does have and is pessimistic about her current situation. Like many others, her IT and administration skills were highly customised to the company systems and the training that she did there was never accredited:

... I was with [Company X] for 22 years, I'm 53 years old ... I left with [Company X] nine months ago, and just started looking for work three months ago, very unsuccessfully. I actually haven't got an interview, after sending away my resume and I'm feeling lost because

in with [Company X] everything was formulated for us. Everything was set, we only had to fill in the missing bits and type in the data, we never had to actually even set up a letter for ourselves, everything was done for us, the format was already there, and even though we used a lot of skills in with [Company X]...

As complaints officer, Irena's main task was to engage with and attempt to placate dissatisfied customers. This task clearly called for a high level of listening, communication, negotiation, team work, systems and problem-solving skills:

I did complaints, which needed investigation and liaising with the telecommunications department and trying to stop people from going to the media and that, because we got a lot of threats, and it was basically calming down customers who came in via letter internet or email. I have extensive knowledge of the company's billing system which is very complicated.

Irena had learned the skills of listening, allowing expressions of anger, and developing empathy in order to go to the 'next level' of analysing the problem:

I know from my job as complaints officer, it is something very important, because the initial contact with the customer was to let them speak and yell and even become abusive, because once they find that the one person in [Company X] who would listen to their whole story and develop some empathy with them, a lot of the steam and everything went out of them, and then we went to the next level, we can look at what the problem is.

However, Irena does not believe that her skills can be related to another job. She believes that her skills are at once *too generic* and *too specific*:

I've been looking for work long enough, to say that I feel my skills are just too generic, because looking in the paper, they want someone specifically do data entry high speed, or a specific computer program, whereas I know just a bit of everything, specific to the telecom situation, everything else is a bit here and a bit there ... it's age.

Coming from a non-English speaking migrant background, with no formal schooling beyond grade 5 and no formal qualifications, Irena's progression through the ranks of the company, from phone operator to complaints officer, suggests an innate ability to learn and to accrue a broad set of generic skills. These include high level interpersonal and communication skills, problem-solving, understanding systems (Company X's complex billing system) and using information technologies.

Without special assistance or re-training, however, her outlook for re-employment seems bleak.

In spite of having developed an impressive set of generic skills through years of employment, Irena is unable to gain the interest of potential employers. Her 'generic' skills do not seem to be 'employability' skills as such.

Her story also illustrates the kind of re-training and support services that are needed for people such as her to rebuild confidence in herself and to name her generic skills in such a way that they would be recognised and hence valued by potential employers.

It would be useful for her to:

- ✧ be given training in naming and acknowledging the generic skills that she has acquired throughout her lifetime of employment with company X.
- ✧ participate in some kind of confidence-building program to counteract the demoralisation she is experiencing at present
- ✧ do information technology training that would enable her to build on her existing information technology skills and to actively use the software itself, rather than work with templates
- ✧ receive support and assistance in resume-writing, interviewing and job-search techniques
- ✧ do additional training in conflict resolution and negotiation in order to build on and gain some sort of qualification in the skills she developed as complaints officer.

Rosemary

On the basis of Rosemary's qualifications and her generic, technical and personal skills, Rosemary would appear to be highly employable. Here in her words is the story of her struggle, as yet unsuccessful, to find work:

I'm in my late forties, I'm 49, I've been looking for work for the last three years, I have been a mother for the last number of years, 8 years or so, stayed at home and looked after my children and did part-time studies. I had to delay entering the workforce by one-and-a-half years because one of my daughters had ear problems ... I started work as a computer operator, so my whole working life has been IT [information technology], computer operating with the Department of Defence for five years, and the Department of Social Security for the next 7 years, so altogether 12 years in the public service. I worked my way up there from computer operating to senior computer operating, training people and users, and I also had a lot of courses with the government and I'm very grateful for that ... then I moved from there to the retail industry which is [Company X], where I worked in problem analysis initially then went into programming: Cobalt programming and Basic and a couple of other programming skills there. I loved the job, it was a high component of IT, implementing programs, and writing and testing codes, training users and staff, buyers and suppliers to use the systems. I created the EFTPOS systems, the electronic data systems for suppliers, so [Company X] had all the technology by the end of 1991 and that's when the recession really hit Australia. [Company X] retrenched a lot of its staff. I was only there for seven years and many of us lost their positions, many of us were coming close to long service leave too. So from there I looked around for work, but I felt it was in my best interests to go to do studies ... business studies, because I was mainly interested in that, because I thought of my future, and I don't want to do programming for all my life. I didn't have any qualifications behind me, it was only a high degree of initiative that got me there, but it was no longer appreciated by the industry anyway.

Building on an earlier TAFE library technician's course, Rosemary put herself through a business studies degree (in library and information management) in order to update her library qualification. Since then she has gained experience in short-term contracts as a children's librarian and TAFE librarian. However, she has been unable to find work due, she believes, to her being over-qualified (in relation to existing staff) and over-aged, combined with the recent trend towards cut-backs in library positions.

Now I am a qualified librarian since 1997 and I find it difficult to get work because I'm either a threat to the workforce or there is no work because there has been a change with local governments ... because there has been a turnover of staff there are amalgamations and so there was a flux ... and there either wasn't any positions advertised. So I started applying for TAFEs and universities and only have seen advertisements in the last three months where my skills can be applied to libraries such as electronic data bases and all the software packages, whereas before ... employers mainly wanted you to work as the circulation officer, where you don't require that much IT skills and a lot of those jobs are advertised as library officers, and it's just starting now, it's because the IT has caught up with people in the workforce or in many industries, because Microsoft has come in since 1997, and now Microsoft 2000, and the staff don't know how to use it, they don't know how to use Microsoft Access ...

Rosemary sees her inability to find a job in the area she has qualified in as very much a question of her age:

... probably three-and-a-half years ago it would have been my limited experience, because of a change of career direction ... but I have had experience in the last two years ... I would say it would have to be age. I applied for my own position, I had them all [the required skills and qualifications] ... I created my own web page with limited knowledge, so I could only say the barrier now is age, because I am highly computer literate, I've got good communication skills,

in all aspects, face-to-face, telephone, good written and oral skills and problem-solving skills, my background has been a programmer ... problem analyst and computer operator.

Rosemary possesses all the important generic skills and has relevant experience and qualifications. It seems that she is one of the ones who has fallen through the cracks, despite having re-trained and seeking additional support and resources through a support group for older workers.

In this case, it appears that no amount of re-training or generic skills identification would assist her to find work in her chosen career. Her problem is that she underwent re-training just at the time when the demand for librarians was shrinking through local government cuts, technology and the trend towards casual and contract work in libraries.

Rosemary would not be able to afford career counselling with a private agency to examine how her information technology, information management and business skills could be used elsewhere. However, it is just this kind of expert counselling (not made available through the Commonwealth Employment Service or job placement agencies) that she needs.

Roy

Roy was one of ten participants in a focus group of DOME (Don't Overlook Mature Expertise) volunteers.

Roy's story illustrates the difficulties that people experience in attempting to move to a completely different area of employment—in this case, from tool-making supervisor to office worker. A large part of that difficulty seems to be not only the lack of relevant qualifications, but a lack of any kind of framework by which his generic skills could become transferable or be recognised as such, and the lack of an opportunity for work experience whereby his generic skills could be developed in the new context. (As in many cases, these difficulties seem to be exacerbated when the change in career direction is forced by injury or ill health.)

I've been working mostly in the toolmaking field, done a bit of work as a supervisor of a fish cannery which is slightly out of my field. The last few years, due to a lot of family and external situations and work situations, my health deteriorated, particularly in the last job. I was in a foundry with the fumes and everything else that was going on there. Came very close to a couple of nervous breakdowns, and a lot of sinus trouble and other health-related issues that were affected by the job. So I thought 'well the best idea would be to get out while I still can', while I can still walk out. So I did that. Now I'm looking for a different type of work to get right out of that sort of industry completely, and get into maybe office work or something like that. And what I've done, I've come here to get some experience and rebuild my confidence again which was shot through the floor and try to get back into it again.

Roy has had 28 years as a supervisor in three factories and is also a lay church minister. He has rated himself highly on all of the ten skill areas contained in the survey. The main source of all his skills is 'work' or 'experience/self-taught', except for his communication skills which he said he developed mainly as a lay church minister.

He believes that the key to his being able to get into office work is to have the opportunity to gain some kind of work experience and some training:

But now it's difficult getting into the industry because I haven't got the experience and it would be good if we could get access to different jobs where we could go into different jobs, get experience in those jobs, work experience in those jobs, so that we can make that change more easily. There's very few places where you can go in and, to get, whether they'll accept you, to get that training and that experience.

In fact, Roy is working full-time (voluntarily) with DOME as a job-placement officer, contacting employers, matching unemployed DOME people to jobs and following through to ascertain

whether or not the placement was successful. However, his experience as a job placement officer will not in itself get him an equivalent paid position. Roy said:

There was a job in the paper last Saturday for a job placement officer. I thought 'this is interesting'. And when I started reading through I went 'ahh, good gracious me!' All the qualifications you needed to be able to do that was unbelievable ...

There was one where you had to go out and interview employers and get, sort of prospective employers and then matching their needs with somebody that was going to do it and then following it through. I'd like to be able to do that! But I haven't got the qualifications to be able to do that job, but I'd like to ...

If there was something I'd like to do, I'd like to be able to get in and say 'well look I've got this, this and this, can you give us a chance, I'm ready for training, I'll do other courses if I need to'. But get in there, get that experience in there, and do it. I'm sure I could do it. But I haven't got the chance.

Roy said that he is benefiting significantly from the supports and resources available at DOME and also from the work experience he has as a volunteer job placement officer. His need is not just for additional training in administrative and information technology skills, but for additional work experience in an office environment.

This suggests the need for a work experience/voluntary work scheme for older unemployed workers, along the lines of 'Work for the Dole'. A number of informants said they would like the opportunity to do voluntary work in particular contexts that would extend their skills and give them relevant experience in the kind of work they were looking for.

DOME (Don't Overlook Mature Expertise) South Australia: Supporting and placing older unemployed workers

DOME is a not-for-profit employment organisation offering services to mature-aged (over 40) unemployed people in South Australia. It began as a voluntary organisation in 1981 when a small group of older unemployed people got together to assist others in a similar situation.

There are now approximately 2500 members who are older unemployed people seeking work. DOME receives a state government grant of \$150 000 per year on the basis of per capita employment outcomes. There are three paid members of staff, including the chief executive officer, an employment officer and an administrative person. The vast majority of the job search, job placement, training, advocacy and support work is done by member volunteers. Approximately 80 volunteers work in the office for one or a few days every week.

Since its inception, DOME has seen over 13 250 of its members return to full-time work, and for the past decade, members have found employment at the rate of 1000 per year.

DOME's services include:

- ✧ a free service to employers looking to fill vacancies
- ✧ advocacy on behalf of older workers, and promotion amongst employers of the benefits they bring to the workplace
- ✧ job-matching of members with vacancies, recommendations to employers and follow-up monitoring to gauge the success of the recommendation
- ✧ job search training
- ✧ computer training
- ✧ motivational support

- ✧ opportunities for volunteering to develop the skills and disciplines of work in an office environment
- ✧ opportunities, through volunteering, for work experience in a busy yet supportive environment and hence to gain in skills, confidence and self-esteem.

The chief executive officer of Dome, Ms Sharon Davis, said in an interview that the voluntary work in the office is treated exactly like paid work so that people's experience of working will be like the real thing,

We treat DOME as an office that people come to, to go to work. So our hours are nine to five, and we expect them to do those hours ... and we also expect them if they go to lunch to come back on time, that there's always a person on the floor that can cover them on their breaks.

The positive and purposeful atmosphere of the DOME office was evident to the researcher, who, when she arrived at 9 am for a 9.30 focus group, found an office in full swing. There was a hum of activity as 20 or so people quietly went about their work on phones and in interview rooms. Some of the volunteer workers introduced themselves and spoke about their commitment to DOME, its achievements, and how their involvement had benefited them personally.

The chief executive officer commented:

It's a very vibrant organisation, for something that is a not-for-profit charitable group. I come in at 7.30 everyday and I leave here quite late at night. I've always been an early person for work, I always like to have that extra hour to myself to do things. Well now I find half of them follow me in—both staff as well as volunteers.

The Job Network and the federal government have attempted to identify the reasons for the success of DOME in training and placing older unemployed workers. Central to the success of DOME seems to be the creation of a warm and empathetic community, a sense of shared ownership of the organisation and a strong ethos about the social value of their work—that every person placed in a job is a success shared by all.

There's no secret. It's having empathy with the people, but it's having the people take ownership of what they're doing. It's no different from anybody wanting to help their fellow person. In the sense of saying, 'well I'm giving something back to the community, and OK, I might not get that job that I'm applying for but the person sitting in the next seat does, but I feel fantastic about it because that person's health is going to improve, their family life is going to improve, they're going to be working, they're putting money back into the economy'. All these other things are a flow-on effect when one person gets a job.

This seems to encapsulate what is special about DOME in combining the disciplines of 'real life' work, an empathetic environment, a sense of 'ownership' and a shared ethos which is about valuing every individual and celebrating every successful placement. In other words, DOME provides an environment in which the people are learning new skills and disciplines while being supported, knowing that their work is useful and appreciated and having a strong sense that *they are* the organisation.

Despite DOME's track record and reputation for supporting older displaced workers and placing them in jobs, its ability to expand and offer structured training to its members is curtailed by lack of funds. As a small, charitable organisation, it is not in a position to tender for Commonwealth job placement funds. This means that Job Network and other organisations who have people over 40 on their books and cannot place them, send them to DOME. However, the \$4000–\$9000 payment for the training and placement service goes to the other organisation, not to DOME.

The chief executive officer's vision for the future of DOME is for it to become a training school for the mature-aged:

... in the sense, not as a education centre per se under the strict rules, but give them the same sort of skill training that we give them today, without the high pressure, where we can take

them through a multitude of different training programs, in the sense of work skill programs, but life skill programs, motivation, attitudinal. I'd like to be able to have the resources, the people on the floor that have those skills to groom them into these sort of things, to give us that added benefit. If I had, say, a psychologist, and a qualified trainer ... I don't need many good people, but I need more. And then I think we would have a far greater output of outcomes of people getting jobs.

Participants in the focus group of 10 member/volunteers of DOME spoke from their own perspectives of how DOME had assisted them. For example:

I'm literally at the stage of life where I've had to change direction, from being a hands-on painter, landscaping house presenter, things like that, in other words cut back the physical and move into office work. So I did some training on computers, then I came to DOME, and literally used DOME to build up skills, and to look at different directions to see which way I'd like to go. And it's been very good for that. I can pick roughly the area that I have a lot of interest in and will get a lot of satisfaction out of. So at the moment I'm looking for work in that direction. I've learnt skills like interviewing and job placement here. Excellent.

I come from Romania ... Since I've been here I've been doing some volunteer work in order to improve my skills and at the moment, I'm doing the part-time study at university—spread-sheets, Excel, and Access 2000 and so on. I've been involved with DOME since last year and I do really enjoy it working full time because even from this, I've really learned a lot of skills that I needed. So I'm also looking for part-time casual work as well.

... but DOME's been good for me and I enjoy coming here. It's awful when you stop leaving the house. You don't actually realise you're doing it until you think gee ... you become very isolated too.

Job Placement Services in Brisbane: The skilled placement officer

In Brisbane, placement services have been drawn together with the assistance of government funds to deal with the Ansett collapse. Some of the placement officers were highly skilled and very successful in placing unemployed people of all ages in work. One of these, Marie, provided some important insights into the market and the techniques she has developed account for her success in placing unemployed people in new positions.

From Marie's perspective, employers are looking for a match of person and job. 'I would say it is 40% task and knowledge and skill but it is 60% who you are and will you fit in'. According to Marie, 'There are very few skills where it will shut the door if you haven't got it'. The emphasis is rather on who you are. She tells a heartening story to illustrate her point:

Let me give you a classic example. 53-year-old on Workcover, highly specialised in radio and TV masts and all that technical stuff. Three employers in Brisbane total who might employ this guy. Major emotional breakdown. Put into psych ward for a while. Medication. Get the picture? Married. Little children. Just disaster. Big mess. We rang those three employers and talked to them and I only got him an interview with one. But he went along to see them and they rang me back and said that guy is brilliant. And I said, 'Yeah I know. He is just a delight, isn't he?' They said 'Yes, he's fabulous. We wish we could take him on but we just don't have a job'. Two months later they took him on. They met him and they liked him and they just thought he was the bee's knees. If he had just sent his CV it never would have happened. They've got to see the whites of their eyes.

It is what she calls 'that cultural fit type stuff' that got the job for this client and for most others she has placed also. Marie believes that the capacity to 'fit in' can override virtually any barrier. She mentioned a number of Workcover clients who had been successfully placed because they were able to establish a relationship with the new employment organisation. The 'cultural fit type' skills

bunch around the communication-related generic skills captured in the key competencies. These skills maintain their priority once a job seeker has secured work. When asked if there was one thing that would prevent people from getting work she answered:

Yes it's the ability to manage relationships which is a combination of all this communication and working with others in teams and cultural understanding and all those things. It's that. It's all that. [Those that don't have them] are the ones that drop in and out of jobs and keep bouncing back to me.

Questions of 'fitting in' are to do with identity and Marie was very skilled in assisting people to recognise who they are as employees, what employers are looking for and mediating between the two. This means, in part, coming to terms with selling as a personal orientation. Selling is a job seeker's skill. They need to be able to sell themselves in the tough world of the employment market. 'It is highly results driven, highly competitive and you do have to have a self-employed mentality. That's just a reality whether you like it or not.'

But they will also probably need this skill in their personal kit bag:

What is very common is the ability to sell, yourself and anything. Selling is everywhere. It's in customer service, it's in banking ... in every environment now just about, there is an element of selling somewhere. There is a general resistance amongst the unemployed, or those seeking career change, to accept that selling is not a dirty word.

Some areas of employability have escaped the attention of employees who have worked consistently with one employer. Many find themselves unprepared for the demands of the market, which has now shifted responsibility for skills, development and job readiness onto the individual. Marie has had some difficulty in convincing displaced workers that they need to take up this responsibility if they are to survive. To many, including Marie, this seems to be unjust, but their acceptance of this role is imperative to their employability in the current climate:

A lot of people I deal with I do have to give them that shake up. It's not pleasant at the time but they have to learn it because ... they are out-placed suddenly from a job ... I had a lady recently, out placed after 17 years as a reception person in a particular organisation. Had worked on systems [particular to the organisation]. Hadn't got any skills in the way of commercially available software, hadn't thought about it.

Marie worked with this client to convince her to take responsibility for her skills because the market will not make space for the explanation of long-term company commitment or family responsibility: 'That was a painful exercise for her to own that and say "Some of this is my own fault. What was happening out there, I just cruised along".'

According to Marie, this orientation to the employment market is developed in school. Marie attends a number of schools as a guest speaker helping them to prepare students for the job market. She has found marked differences between schools in the extent to which they develop skills of career management. She maintained that some schools encourage personal entrepreneurship while others 'just don't have a grip'. An employment environment such as this will inevitably create winners and losers. 'My concern is that there are some people in the community who don't have the personal ability to be self-managing. They simply don't have that skill.'

However, Marie's job is to ensure her clients are not in this category. She and her colleagues work with them over an extended period discussing questions of identity, reassessing their skills base, exposing their skills transfer and ensuring that this career change is a positive step in their lives. The starting point is what these people want from life and work and how they might realise their personal goals in the current work environment.

Marie and her colleagues demonstrate a sophisticated capacity to adapt their practices to accommodate the exigencies of the employment market. They have found a way of dealing with ageism that others have found to be the most insurmountable barrier. Marie uses an approach

particularly reserved for those over forty. 'I change from a more "do an application" technique to a marketing technique.'

She avoids advertised jobs where there will be hundreds of other applicants, many with youth on their side. Rather she works with clients on job readiness. She then gets them to identify work areas and to research companies that offer the type of work they are targeting. 'I think a lot of it is to do with people's ability to identify transferable skills and in the approach they make to the new employer.'

She assists job seekers in both areas. In particular she assists them to form relationships with employers. In preparing her clients to approach employers, the script goes something like:

We realise you probably don't have a job but, do you mind giving me 10 minutes of your time to give us some advice ... I would like to make the transition to your environment ... how do I do it, what do I lack and a key question we ask is what do I have to be to be the next person you take on.

This may involve training and specialist knowledge. She explains the process further:

That gets the client in front of the employer talking one to one with no competition ... when that employer has a vacancy, guess who they remember, the person they spent time talking to. Doors open. It just happens and it's not hard. It's not rocket science.

Marie acknowledged the goodwill of employers who, when approached with sincerity, are usually very willing to make a contribution to the community by offering their time and a willing ear.

Marie's technique comes back to her central point, that employability is about fitting in and forming relationships between unemployed people and potential employers. However, the skills part of the equation must also be attended to. Marie has found access to training to address skills gaps presents the greatest barrier to employability. She has found that the VET system is not equipped to deal with targeted gaps in people's learning. A small skills gap may require only a unit in a course. However, the VET system advises enrolment in the whole course and cumbersome timetabling arrangements that do not accommodate the immediate urgency of job seekers. The same applies with recognition of prior learning: 'it would be quicker to do the course, cos they're hopeless'. In Marie's opinion there is a pressing need for specialised VET agencies catering for displaced workers and people in career transition.

It would appear that there are not many job agencies that have the market understanding that Marie exhibits, or the capacity to work with people at this level. According to one counsellor most people have to wait 3 or even 6 months before they join a group that can offer networks and support to restore their frayed self-esteem and assist them to map out realistic strategies that will get them back into work. In the case of workers displaced from Ansett, funds were available for this service. However, the cost of this type of service puts it beyond many ordinary displaced workers. Our informants reported that the services of placement officers were beyond the reach of the unemployed. According to our informants, many provide very limited assistance; others are prohibitively expensive.

This case study exposes a significant variance between the experience of job seekers and that of skilled placement counsellors. It suggests that many people in our sample were thwarted with experience that had taken a heavy toll upon their self-esteem and their capacity to be successful in the employment market. It indicates that competent intervention can be very productive both for older workers and for employers.

Workplaces as learner environments: Case study of a laundry service

In most modern workplaces, ‘silo’ thinking is one of the challenges that managements seek to combat. Organisational structures made up of ‘silos’ encourage separate cultures to develop as employees identify with the interests of the unit rather than the interests of the whole. In contrast, modern workplaces try to be more ‘organic’ in the way the problems of one section may affect the whole organisation.

Each of these models calls for different kinds of generic skills amongst employees. While the ‘silo’ organisation might centre its decisions and structure around the individuals in the unit and the tasks to be accomplished, the more ‘organic’ organisation seeks an interchange between sections and a more open vision. The first may be self-protective but the second must open itself to change as the needs of the organisation adjust to market pressures. The second is systems-based and dependent upon the negotiation of conflicting interests and changing circumstances.

An ex-employee of an airline (a scheduler) talked about her experience of changes within the organisation which brought the two models into relief:

A few years back there tended to be almost competition between some departments. ‘We do this well and nobody else is going to impact upon it ... we can provide the best schedule’ for example. ‘... Well that’s great ... but it’s not workable.’ So then we’d actually try to get something that worked to meet the flight services budget that we could deliver and it would actually work for them as well. So you had to be able to look not just at your goals and your bottom line, you had to be able to take into account the other departments.

In this organisation, the desired generic skills are about systems thinking, adaptability and holistic vision.

The laundry at a large hospital provides an interesting case study of a ‘silo’ organisation which for years insulated itself against systems thinking and adaptability before changing. The laundry served the needs of a city hospital for many years quite adequately. However, the hospital was amalgamated into a metropolitan hospital and the laundry services were centralised. The 34 workers from the city hospital were displaced. The human resources manager was given the task of redeploying the displaced staff into jobs within the new amalgamated hospital. The human resources manager, Pam, tells the story of a work unit that was atrophied in the values and thinking of, maybe, 20 years ago when ‘silo’ thinking prevailed.

She said that at the city hospital, the work culture was, in many ways, benign. The manager knew each individual, their limitations, anxieties and special needs—the language groups, who liked to work with whom, the physical limitations experienced by employees, particularly as they got older, and the distaste that some had for body products. The manager was very approachable and made it a priority to ensure that employees were happy in their work.

Virtually all of the employees were from non-English speaking backgrounds and, for the majority, this was their first and only job in Australia. Most had limited schooling and poor English. As workplace environments had changed within industry, the laundry manager protected the workforce from demands that required employees to better understand the needs of their internal customers or that demanded the integration of quality, safety or work operation systems into the work practices of the laundry. Laundry staff had expressed distress when threatened with change, so the manager handled the onslaught from outside the unit and preserved the harmony within.

The sustainability of this culture, however, fell asunder when the employees were declared redundant and they found themselves in the employment market with few employability skills. On receiving their displacement letter, they were devastated, even though it promised their redeployment. Pam worked with each individual to translate their sense of devastation into a sense

of opportunity. She then set about coaching them in the language and culture of the workplace as a step in the transition process.

... understanding systems? This was a huge problem I had ... occupational health and safety and quality questions? This was really difficult because their understanding of that, [was] on a very basic level ... you need to do your job well, you need to make sure it's safe ... But this is the first they've ever been given any information on that in those terms. So the term 'occupational health and safety' is meaningless ... totally meaningless.

The laundry workers had been taught itemised behaviour but they had no concept of framing work practices to meet organisational goals through systematic application. Their thinking was framed around themselves as individual operators:

Working with others and in teams. I think that's fundamental, that definitely is a skill. But that was a question asked of a few of them in their interviews, 'What does team-work mean for you?', and well, taking into account the language issue, this was difficult for them, very difficult. Because they know their job, and they know that that person there needs to do their job, and their concept of teamwork is that as long as you do yours and I do mine, we'll be fine.

However, Pam coached each individual and prepared them for job interviews. She thought it should be like 'a dream come true for them' because: 'They would never have been given the assistance to [get a job] in the past, and going for an interview which no-one would've helped them with before'.

Pam managed to place each employee in work that they were happy to take up. Furthermore, she secured government funds to establish a workplace English language and literacy program aimed at improving basic communication skills within the protocols, systems and technology of the modern workplace.

From Pam's point of view the laundry had established barriers to the growth of its employees. Their skills were diminishing because they were protected from the influences of outside pressure. Information technology skills, group decision-making, broad-based communication skills and systems understandings would have helped to reshape the generic skills of laundry staff. Pam believed that the workplace has a responsibility to strategically develop these skills. She suggested that a healthy well-skilled organisation should coach and mentor to facilitate in individuals the development of social and intellectual capital and their capacity to self-realisation. She rejected the idea that individuals are singularly responsible for their own skill development:

And I see that as everyone's responsibility ... I don't know how anyone can possibly expect that they're just going to arrive with x set of skills. And that's also detrimental in terms of whatever happened to nurturing and coaching and mentoring the people around you. If you presume that they have the skills, then what are you going to give in terms of teaching others as well as learning from other people. I think that's a terrible philosophy.

In the current work environment where positions are no longer permanent, Pam noted a greater responsibility on the part of workplaces to keep skills current:

The fact is that all of these people have said, 'Once I'm in this new job, I won't get displaced again will I?' Well I wouldn't dare ever make someone comfortable and secure and say 'Oh no, that'll never happen to you again'. I wouldn't have a clue. It could. It could happen two years down the track. Because it's changing so much, so surely it would be better to keep ... these people trained ... so that if and when that does happen to them, the transition's not too difficult because they have ... grown within their own roles.

The case study of the hospital laundry illustrates how the workplace operates as a learning environment that may either facilitate or present barriers to the growth of generic skills.

Appendix B:

Research method

Reference committee

A project reference committee was established to assist and guide the project. The very high calibre of expertise provided by this group of researchers and practitioners was invaluable to the research team in all phases of the project—the literature review, research design, trial, data collection, data analysis and critical review. This committee met several times by teleconference throughout the project and remained in contact individually by email with helpful suggestions, articles and constructive critique.

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Research methodology

This study was essentially qualitative in nature, although the collection of some quantitative data was included in the research design. In essence, however, the research method involved capturing the stories and experiences of displaced workers in an attempt to illuminate the nature of generic skills, their development and transferability. While a survey instrument was developed and utilised throughout the study, it is important to emphasise that the main research ‘instruments’ were the researchers themselves. This approach is consistent with qualitative approaches to social and educational research as described by Caulley (1994) and Garman (1996) and with concepts of ‘grounded theory’ as discussed by Strauss and Corbin (1994).

A key benefit in utilising the researchers as ‘human instruments’ of the research process (Caulley 1994, p.5) is their capacity to be flexible and to adapt the research methods to shifting circumstances as the enquiry unfolds. As it turned out this was particularly necessary in this case. Thus, while there was an established research design at the outset of the study, it was necessary to make adjustments. Such adjustments were in keeping with the principles of ‘emergent design’ (Caulley 1994, p.11) for research and with the overall objectives of the project.

As a qualitative and interpretive study, it does not attempt to offer a representative sample of displaced workers from across the Australian economy. The sampling for this study was purposive—and to some extent necessarily opportunistic rather than random (see Caulley 1994). The survey data indicate certain trends in the acquisition and transferability of generic skills amongst displaced workers and supports the qualitative data collected from this group of participants.

Research design

It was initially proposed to have three levels of data collection, a focus group discussion followed by the individual completion of a survey questionnaire and interviews with several of the participants. The interviews and focus groups utilised Field’s (1991) iceberg diagram that provided a metaphor for generic skills as ‘submerged’ or ‘underpinning’ skills of which we are not always consciously aware. This provided a framework for interviewees and groups to explore the skills that gave them competence as workers or community members. The logic was that the discussion within the focus group would help to clarify and broaden the concept and understandings of generic skills and provide a common language or discourse for participants to take up in their responses and discussions. Answers to the survey questions, while also providing a range of useful and interesting data, would provide the starting point for a more in-depth discussion in individual interviews.

Focus groups

The initial approach was to explain the project’s purpose and the team’s interest in ‘general’ or ‘generic’ skills. These skills were distinguished from technical or vocationally specific skills and aligned with notions of ‘soft skills’, ‘people skills’ and ‘key competencies’ such as ‘communication skills’ and ‘problem-solving’. Participants were asked to identify and share the generic skills they had developed through their years of life and work experience. One approach was to ask participants about what it was (apart from technical or vocationally specific skills) that set them apart from younger people at the beginning of their working life. Another was to ask participants what they ‘carry’ with them from one job to another. Participants were invited to share and discuss their examples of these various skills, attributes, competencies or abilities. Issues of skills for employability and understandings of the transferability of skills were discussed.

Confidentiality and privacy issues

Participants were provided with a letter guaranteeing that their information would be used in ways that ensured their privacy, anonymity within the final report, and confidentiality measures for the data they provided. They were asked to sign a release for the use of their information under these conditions and permission was sought for the use of recording equipment within focus groups and interviews.

Data collection

Originally it was planned to conduct focus groups and complete survey questionnaires with 200 participants, and to interview approximately 30 people. Several factors intervened to make this inappropriate:

- ✧ The organisations originally targeted for data collection were found to be dealing with largely the same constituents, thus narrowing the sample. While a narrow focus would have provided an in-depth analysis of a range of workers from one industry, it would not provide the data necessary to meet the project brief.
- ✧ Many agencies dealing with the target group of displaced workers were working with them individually and the arrangement of focus groups proved impossible. However, access to individuals was possible, once confidentiality arrangements were approved by the agency.
- ✧ Some agencies initially involved found it impossible to participate for a number of reasons that were quite outside the project and withdrew from participation.
- ✧ The negotiations with some agencies and organisations became so drawn out that the project moved on without including them in the data collection.

Through the use of networks, a new set of agencies was contacted and, where possible, focus groups were arranged. These were only possible where a group of unemployed/displaced workers were already together as a group for some purpose. In some cases these were support groups that were facilitated by volunteers, for instance DOME in Adelaide, and the 45+ Workforce group in Melbourne. Others were instituted by employment placement officers for a particular group of displaced workers. In one case, a class within a VET provider was utilised and in other cases, a union had gathered groups of their displaced members for retraining and/or credentialing purposes.

Contact with individuals was made through referral from employment placement officers who gave their clients a flier about the project, explained it to them and asked if they would participate. If they agreed, the researcher would conduct the interview at the placement agency. In one case, the researcher spent many days at one agency, talking to staff and clients, and asking people if they would mind taking part in the project, as well as conducting interviews with clients who were referred by the staff. This allowed a broader sample in this area of people who had only come in to fill in forms, rather than talk to staff.

Efforts were also made to include participants who had made a successful transition back into employment following displacement from the workforce. This was achieved through personal networks. However, the principal source of data was displaced workers who were currently unemployed. Consultants working with this group of people also offered a valuable source of information. Their input was sought through interviews or especially convened group discussions. In many cases it was only possible to interview displaced workers individually, as they were not part of any support network.

Although there was an effort made to broaden the sample, this was achieved through the use of networks that were not necessarily representative of the wider community. The sample was in this sense opportunistic rather than purposive. The purpose of the study was to utilise diverse

experience and understandings to illuminate the topic of generic skills, not to provide a definitive set of statistics representative of the broader community.

These factors impinged on the established research method and required some adjustments to be made. In particular, dealing with participants who had not taken part in a focus group meant that some of the focus group activities needed to be conducted with each person. This was achieved by a brief introductory discussion of Field's 'iceberg' and the list contained in the survey. The survey questionnaire was then used as an interview instrument, with the researcher filling it in and asking the questions, with appropriate follow-up questions, and making extensive field notes of both the discussion that emerged and the important points that might be re-discussed in the taped interview that followed. This allowed the researcher to gain a quick and in-depth understanding of the participant's background, experience and concerns, and provided a sound basis for discussion. Permission was then asked to turn on the tape recorder and, if given, a taped interview followed.

Data analysis

A database of responses to the survey questionnaire was established using Microsoft Access. Transcripts were made of taped focus groups discussions and individual interviews. Researchers developed a range of case studies of individual participants that encapsulated the range of responses from the survey, field notes and interview data. Case studies of some focus groups were also developed from the data and transcripts were made of interviews and focus groups with facilitators of groups/placement officers.

The research team then analysed their findings in relation to the research questions and identified significant issues and trends that emerged from the data.

Appendix C:

Composition of the sample

Table 1: Age of participants

Age group in years	Number	Percentage
16–20	3	2.4
21–25	3	2.4
26–30	3	2.4
31–35	9	7.1
36–40	13	10.2
41–45	15	11.8
46–50	32	25.2
51–55	25	19.7
56–60	17	13.4
Over 60	6	4.7
Not stated	1	0.8
Total	127	100.0

Table 2: Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	77	60.6
Female	50	39.4
Total	127	100.0

Table 3: Country of birth

Country of Birth	Number	Percentage
Australia	90	70.9
Other – ESB	20	15.7
Other – NESB	17	13.4
Total	127	100.0

Note: ESB – English speaking background
NESB – non-English speaking background

Table 4: Highest level of schooling completed

Level completed	Number	Percentage
Grade 6/Year 7	1	0.8
Form 2/Year 8	4	3.1
Form 3/Year 9	7	5.5
Form 4/Year 10	31	24.4
Form 5/Year 11	36	28.3
Form 6/Year 12	46	36.2
Not stated	2	1.6
Total	127	100.0

Table 5: Age left school

Age left school	Number	Percentage
14 years	3	2.4
15 years	25	19.7
16 years	27	21.2
17 years	39	30.7
18 years	26	20.5
19 years	3	2.4
Not stated	4	3.1
Total	127	100.0

Table 6: Post-school training and education courses

No. of courses	Number	Percentage
0	26	20.5
1	30	23.6
2	16	12.6
3	11	8.7
4	15	11.8
5	12	9.4
More than 5	17	13.4
Total	127	100.0

Table 7: Post-school training and education courses—place and completion

Place of course	Number of courses				Total listed courses	
	Number of completed courses	Number courses not completed &/or current study	Completion not stated	No.	%	
University	46	14	0	60	20.2	
TAFE	70	16	1	87	29.3	
Other institutions	11	0	0	11	3.7	
Adult & community ed.	5	0	0	8	2.7	
In-house	122	0	1	123 ¹	41.4	
Overseas	7	0	1	8	2.7	
Total	261	30	3	297²	100.0	

Notes: ¹ A number of people had unrecognised in-house qualifications

² Note that most participants attempted more than one course

Table 8: Year of completion of last course for each participant

Year of completion	Number of participants	Percentage
2000–2002	51	52.6
1995–1999	22	22.7
1990–1994	5	5.1
1985–1989	0	0.0
1980–1984	7	7.2
Before 1980	12	12.4
Total	97	100.0

Table 9: Types of courses people listed

Site of course	Details	Examples of courses
University	Degree	BA; B. Business Administration; B. Business; B. Education; B. Engineering (Electrical); B. Engineering (Electrical/Electronics); B. Engineering; B. Science; B. Social Science (Ministry); B. Theology; CPA (Certified Practising Accountant)
	Higher degree	BA (Honors); BA Geography (Honors); B. Architecture (Honors); B. Science (Honors); MA (Occupational Psychology); MA (preliminary); M. Adult Vocational Education & Training; M. Business; PhD
	Grad dip/cert	Grad. Cert. in Adult Literacy & Basic Education; Grad. Dip. Internet & Web Computing; Grad. Dip. Education; Grad. Dip. in Technical Education
	Diploma	Dip. of Adult Education; Dip. of Business Studies; Dip. of Civil Engineering; Dip. of Community Service; Dip. of Education; Dip. of Electronics; Dip. of Marketing; Dip. of OH&S; Dip. of Technology Management; Dip. of Training & Development
	Certificates	Advanced Cert. of Landscape Design & Construction; Cert. in Teaching a Second Language; Cert. IV in Workplace Training & Assessment; Cert. of Technology; Cert. Technology Management; Fitness Instructor Certificate; Teaching Certificate
	Short courses	CPA; Funeral Management
	TAFE (includes private providers)	Apprentice
Certificate		Advanced Cert. in Business Catering Operations Advanced Cert. in Parks Operations Advanced Cert. of Landscape Design & Construction Advanced Cert. of Music Performance (Jazz/Popular) Cert. Black & White Photography Cert. I, II, III & IV in Occupational Health & Safety Cert. II in Business (Small Business Traineeship) Cert. II in Commercial Cookery & Hospitality Cert. II in Hairdressing Cert. II in Retail Cert. III in Business (Office Administration) Cert. in Childcare Cert. in Estimating Cert. in Hospitality Cert. in Hospitality & Tourism (Front Office Operations) Cert. in Human Resources Cert. in Remedial Massage Cert. in Secretarial Cert. in Supervision Cert. in Textile Technology Cert. in Warehousing & Distribution Cert. IV in Business Studies (Travel & Tourism) Cert. IV in Electronics Cert. IV in Social & Community Services (Disabilities) Cert. IV in Workplace Training & Assessment Cert. Level II & III Firefighter Cert. of Applied Science Cert. of Business Studies Cert. of Catering Cert. of Commercial Studies Cert. of Farm Management Cert. of Logistics Management Cert. of National Teaching & Learning Strategies

TAFE (includes private providers) cont.		Cert. of Small Business Studies (Book Keeper/Clerical)
		Cert. of Technology
		Cert. of Technology (Survey Drafting)
		Cert. Technology (Design Drafting Mechanical)
		Cert. Technology (Electronics)
		Cert. Technology (Telecommunications)
		Higher National Cert. in Engineering
		Higher Technicians Certificate
		Horticulturist Certificate
		IATA Certificate (Travel Agent)
		School Certificate
		TV/Video/Audio Technician's Certificate
	Associate diploma	Assoc. Dip. (Technical Officer)
		Assoc. Dip. Business Studies (Accounting)
		Assoc. Dip. Electronics
	Assoc. Dip. in Travel & Tourism	
Diploma	Commercial Diploma	
	Diploma Business Studies	
	Diploma in Hotel Management & Catering	
	Diploma in Workplace Training & Assessment	
	Diploma of Education	
	Diploma of Primary Teaching Education	
	Diploma of Teaching	
	Diploma of Travel & Tourism	
Construction tickets	Advanced Rigging; Advanced Scaffolding; Asbestos Removal; Crane Operator; Dogman; Elevated Work platform; Forklift; Winch Operator	
Short courses	Alpine Technician Course	
	Basic & Interim AutoCAD	
	Basic Computers	
	Black & White Photography	
	Cert. III AIN	
	Computer Skills	
	Electronics	
	Farm Bookkeeping	
	Pneumatics & Hydraulics (levels 1&2)	
	Preparation for Employment Training (PET)	
	Service of Alcohol	
	Small Business Studies	
	Women & Work	
	Wool Classing (Owners)	
	Word Perfect	
Other institutions	Psychiatric Nursing Agency	Aggression Prevention Management Train The Trainer
	Food Craft Institute	Diploma in Hotel Reception/Bookkeeping
	St John's Ambulance	First Aid Course
	Adelaide Hospitality & Tourism	Cert. Hospitality & Tourism (Front Office Operations)
	Red Cross	Workplace First Aid
	Technical College	Higher National Cert. of Engineering
	South Australia – Road Transport Training	Semi-trailer (H.A) & Forklift License
	Aero Club	Pilot's License (Restricted)
	Flying School	Commercial Pilot's License
	Drake Training	Intermediate Microsoft Access 2000 – Statement of Attendance
	WEA	Cert. in Windows 98

In-house	Airlines	Aircraft Endorsements (to pilot's licence for F27, DC9, 737, F28, A320 aircraft) Aircraft Engineering Cabin Manager Training Dangerous Goods Emergency & Customer Relations First Aid (Level 2) In-Flight Service LAME Proficiency on Aircraft types Licenses Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (LAME) Management (short courses) Occupational Health & Safety Orientation (ground training) Rank Leadership Responsible Serving of Alcohol (RSA) Safety & Technical Training Simulator Proficiency Targeted Selection Interviews Ticketing Course Annual License & Model Updating Aviation Technician Apprenticeship Technical Change Annual License & Model Updating First Aid In-Flight Service
	Telecommunications	Certificate of Mobile Customer Care Open Cable Registration Apprenticeships – Technician Telecom Mechanic AXE Transmission/Supervision/OH&S Cat. 5 Optical Cabling Certificate II in Open Cable CML/SDH/DSL Technical Training COAX Cable Endorsement Commissioning & Installation Eligibility Cert. (Technical Officer) Management Open Cable Presentation Skills/Rostrum Team Leader Development Technical & Supervisory Short Courses Technical Officer Certificate Telecom Switching Telecom Transmission Telecommunications Technician Various in-house technical & supervisory courses Various people skills & management courses
	Navy	Aircraft Electronics Technician Clearance Diver (explosives/demolition) General Seamanship (submarines) Promotional
	Army	Commonwealth Explosives Certificate Handling Dangerous Goods Handling Dangerous Goods (water explosives) Sergeant & Officer Training
	Hospital	Fire Brigade Training
	Safeway	Ezy Bank Training The 'I Care' program
	Apprenticeships	Apprentice Mechanical Draftsman Apprentice Textile Mechanic Architectural Technician Apprenticeship

In-house cont.	Certificates	Certificate in Textile Technology Certificate of Technology
	Licenses	Heavy Vehicle License Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineer
	Miscellaneous	Aircraft engineering Anti-discrimination training AutoCAD Aviation medicine Commissioning & installation Computer training Computer up-grade Customer relations Customer service training First aid Flower arranging General industry course Ikebana (Japanese flower arranging) Internal bank training Leadership – interpersonal skills Logistics training Management training Middle management development New world mapping system Occupational health & safety Presentation skills Presentation skills/rostrum Public speaking QA auditor training R.I.B.D Port 3 Safety/emergency training Sales training Scotchworks negotiation skills Targeted selection training Understanding the requirements for ISO 9001: 9002 Vocational guidance psychologist training
Adult & community education	Neighbourhood House	Computer Basics Introduction to Computers Introduction to 'Word'
	Adult Education Centre	Safe food handling
	SkillShare	Cert. II in Office Administration
Overseas	CentreLink	Required courses
	Romania	Certificate in Office Work
	United Kingdom	Apprentice Butcher – Certificate of Proficiency (Shop Butcher)
	New Zealand	Diploma of Fashion Design Trade Certificate in Clothing
	Navy	General Seamanship (Submarines)
	USA	Occupational health & safety Professional Cert. in Employee Assistance Various human relations courses
Other	Licences	Commercial pilot Fork lift Heavy truck Restricted pilot Semi-trailer
	Certificates	Asbestos removal First aid
	Computer	AutoCAD New world mapping system Upgrade courses

Table 10: Relevance of formal course to current employability

Site of course	Percentage of responses						Total	
	Not at all relevant	Neutral				Very relevant		Not stated
	1	2	3	4	5			
TAFE (Incl. private providers)	10.3	9.2	13.8	14.9	42.5	9.2	100.0	
University	8.3	15.0	16.7	30.0	30.0	0.0	100.0	
In-house	13.0	5.7	13.0	8.9	47.2	12.2	100.0	
Other*	12.0	8.0	12.0	32.0	32.0	4.0	100.0	
Total	11.2	8.8	13.9	17.0	41.0	8.1	100.0	

Note: *Adult and community education, other institutions, overseas
 Totals may not add exactly to 100 due to rounding

Table 11: Number of workplaces of participants

Number of workplaces	Number of responses	Percentage
1	33	26.0
2	20	15.7
3	15	11.8
4	19	15.0
5	8	6.3
More than 5	32	25.2
Total	127	100.0

Table 12: Number of positions held

Number of positions	Number of responses	Percentage
1	9	7.1
2	23	18.1
3	21	16.5
4	23	18.1
5	8	6.3
More than 5	40	31.5
Not stated	3	2.4
Total	127	100.0

Table 13: List of positions held

Area of work	Examples
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	Dairy Farming Farm (Domestic Duties) Farmer Fishing Trawler (Fisherman, Clean Fish) Lobster Fisherman
Airline	Aircraft Technician Air Hostess Airline Maintenance Baggage Handler Cabin Manager Crew Manager Crewing Officer Customer Service Officer Flight Attendant International Cabin Manager International Flight Attendant Manager Leading Hand Manager Manager Cabin Crew Manager (Crew Related) OH&S Training Operations Officer Pilot Porter Purser Ramp Services Reservations Controller Resource Planning Security Lounge Porter Senior Flight Attendant Storeman Supervisor Team Leader (Movement Control) Team Manager (Line Operations) Team Manager Technical Crewing Officer
Architectural services	Apprentice Architect (Reporting) Architect Architectural Technician Draftsman Draftsman (University)
Defence forces	Air Force (Aircraft maintenance) Air Force (RAAF Maintenance) Army (Op. Spec) Navy (Clearance Diver) Navy (Petty Officer) Navy (Petty Officer/Painter) Navy (Servicing Jet Aircraft) Navy (Servicing Jet Aircraft–Missile Range)
Community, social services & non-profit	CFA Fire Fighter (Volunteer) Community Aid Abroad (Administration Assistant) Community Job Project (Railway) Community Services – Victorian Disability Services (Housing Project Officer) Residential Direct Care – Intellectual Disability (Residential Care Worker) Residential Direct Care – Intellectual Disability (Liaison Officer) Drug & Alcohol Advisory Committee (Volunteer) Employee Assistance Professional Association – Australian President

Area of work	Examples
Community, social services & non-profit cont.	HR & Psych Consulting Job Placement Officer (Volunteer) Meals on Wheels (Volunteer) OH&S Industry Advisory Convener Psychologist 1 & 2 School (Volunteer) Student Counsellor Youth Drop-In Centre (Youth Leader)
Construction industry	Asbestos Removal Carpenter Civil Engineer Concreter Crane Driver Dogman Elevated Work Platform Operator Labourer Leading Hand Plumber Rigger Scaffolder Steel Erection Trades Assistant Tradesman (Fitting & Machining, Toolmaker, Boilermaker, Painter, Carpenter) Truck Driver
Education and training	Art Teacher Children's Librarian Demonstrator Demonstrator (Nuclear Medicine) English Teaching (Overseas) Health Service Librarian Maths Teacher Physics Teacher Research Science Teacher Supply Teaching (Self-Employed) Teacher of Travel & Tourism Teacher Teacher (Adult Education) Teaching Principal Trainee Trainer in OH&S Trainer Tutor
Engineering	Civil Engineer Civil Engineer (Consultant – Land Development) Design Engineer Development Engineer Engineer Mechanic (Mental Hospital) Engineer Manager Production Engineer Project Engineer (Consulting Engineer Manufacturing Mechanical Engineering Company) Sales Engineer Technical Engineer Test Engineer

Area of work	Examples
Finance	Accountant Accounts Payable Officer Accounts Receivable Officer Assistant Manager Bank President Bank Teller Book Keeper Branch President Budget Officer Co-ordinator Redevelopment (Head Office) Cosmetic Company (Accounts Clerk) Customer Service Officer Information Teller Lending Officer Manager of Strategy Development Office Manager Stationery Dept. Manager National Manager Acquisition & Supply Payroll Officer Project Manager Reconciliation Officer Relieving Accountant Senior Accountant Clerk Stationery Administration Union National Treasurer
Food industry	Baker Baker's Apprentice Kitchen Hand Cook Waitress Seafood Preparation (Process Worker) Inspection (Food Industry) Manager (Food Industry) Packing (Food Industry) Process Worker (Food Industry) Quality Control (Food Industry) Boiler Maker (Food Industry) Food Harvesting
Health/hospitals	AIN Clerk Hospital Security Maintenance (Engineer Mechanic) Medical Centre (Assistant Manager) Medical Diagnostics (Manager). Nurse Aide Senior Security
Horticulture	Florist (Manager) Florist (Proprietor) Florist (Shop Assistant) Gardener Landscape Designer Landscape Designer (Self-Employed) Landscape Gardener Nurseryman Nursery (Manager) Retail Nursery (Apprentice) Self-employed Supervisor Workplace Trainer

Area of work	Examples
Hospitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barman Catering Manager Chef Cleaner Cook Manager Cook Cook (Tourism Industry) Dishwasher Drinks Waiter F & B Manger Kitchen Hand Café Manager (Self-Employed) Waiter/Waitress Waiter/Waitress (Food/Bar)
Information technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computer Operator Computer Programmer Computer Repairs Computer Tutor Consulting (I.T Manager) IT Consultancy (Office Manager) IT Specialist Independent Contractor. Senior Computer Operator
Manufacturing & production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assembler Food Processing (Operator Maintenance) Group Leader Packing Line (Winery) Inspection (Food Industry) Ledger Machinist (Brewery) Machine Operator Manufacturing Ceramic Products Manager Manager (Food Industry) Operations Manager Operator Packing (Food Industry) Process Worker Process Worker (Food Industry) Production Manager Production Planner Quality Control Quality Control (Food Industry) Sales Engineer Sales/Technician Co-ordinator Sales Manager Supervisor (Food Industry) Textile, clothing, footwear (Weaver, Comptometrist, Machinist, Tier & Warp Gaiter, Tuner, Machine Operator, OH&S Aware, Inspection of Quality, Quality Control – Process Work, Mechanic, Project Officer) Training Standards Supervisor
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertiser (Real Estate) Market Research Telemarketer Sales Sales & Marketing Representative (Cigarette Industry)
Mining industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boiler Maker Crusher Operator Driver Mill Operator

Area of work	Examples
Office work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration Assistant Administration Clerk (Telemarketing Company) Administration Manager Administration Manager (Rubber Recycling Plant) Administration Officer Administration Officer (Registered Training Organisation) Clerical Assistant Clerical Front Office Reception Group Co-ordinator Hotel Receptionist (Not Computerised) Mail Dispatch Clerk (Conference Organiser) Management Office Co-ordinator (Electrical Engineering Contractor) Office Manager Receptionist Receptionist (Advertising Agency) Representative Secretary
Other miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistant Hairdresser Casino (Recruitment Consultant) Designer/Pattern Maker (Fashion Industry) Fitness Instructor Fruit Picking Funeral Director Gas Distribution Manager Graphic Designer Assistant Interviewer (Research Firm) Job Placement Officer Owner-Operator Go-Cart Track Pre School/Mothercraft (Child Care Centre) Stock Management
Retail/wholesale sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration Manager Blinds Boutique Shop Owner Business Manager Butcher's Shop Checkout Operator (Food Industry) Checkout Operator (Supermarket) Commercial Vehicle Sales (Sales Person) Counter Sales Customer Service Assistant Director (Self-Employed) Extension Sales Furniture Sales Human Relations Manager Ice Supplies (Manager) Manager Milk Bar Operator (Self-Employed) Occupational Health & Safety Representative Office Work Operations Assistant Produce (Fruit & Veg) Manager Real Estate (Area Manager) Retail Assistant Sales & Marketing Representative (Cigarette Industry) Sales Assistant Sales Assistant (Confectionary Shop, Jewellery Shop, Knitting Wool Shop, Supermarket) Sales Representative Service Station Attendant

Area of work	Examples
Retail/wholesale sales (cont.)	Service Supervisor Shop Assistant Shop Console Stall member for photos with Santa Store Manager Store Person Supervisor
Telecommunications	Apprentice Technician Apprentice Tradesman Assistant Technician Communication Officer Complaints Officer Credit Checking (Data Processor) Customer Service Draftsman Event Manager Field Supervisor Installation Officer Installation Supervisor Mobile Customer Care Operator Phone Operator Principal Technical Officer 1 & 2 Principal Technical Officer Project Co-ordinator Project Officer Promotion Manager Scientist Senior Technical Officer (Supervisor) Senior Technical Officer 1 & 2 Senior Telecommunications Technical Officer Supervisor Team Leader Technical Officer 1 & 2 Technical Officer Technical Training Officer Technician in Training Technician Tester Testing Officer Trainee Technical Officer
Tourism	Boat Cruises (HR & Training Manager) Computer Help Desk Operator Driver (Tourist Buses) Sales Shopping Spree Tours (Bus Hostess) Tour Leader Training Travel Agent
Trades & services	Apprentice Boiler Maker (Railways) Apprentice Framer Auto Electrician (Apprentice) Boiler Maker (Electrical) Boiler Maker (Food Industry) Boiler Maker (Railways) Carpet & Interior Suppliers (Personal Assistant) Carpet (Machine Operator) Cleaner Commercial Cleaner Draftsman (Electrical) Draftsman grades 1,2,3 & 4 (Electrical)

Area of work	Examples
Trades & services (cont.)	Electrical Contractor (Office Co-ordinator) Electrical Contractor (Service Co-ordinator) Electrical Tester Electronics Repair (TV Repairman) Electronics Technician (Tourism) Engineer (Electrical) Fire Appliance Attendant (Electrical) Fire Officer (Electrical) Foreman (Electrical) Home Presenter & Repairer (Owner/Operator) Hospital (Laundry Cleaner) Leading Hand (Gas Industry) Machine Operator (Cable) Machine Operator (Carpets) Mechanic (Self-Employed) Motor Mechanic Operator (Electrical) Operations Manager Production QAS Distribution (Manager) Regional Draftsman - Group Leader (Electrical) Rigger (Electrical) Rubbish Collector (Self-Employed) Sales Scaffolder (Electrical) Security Officer Service Co-ordinator (Electrical Contractor) Service Industry (Operator) Supervisor (Electrical) Supervisor Tandem Operator (Cable) Tool Maker Tool Maker (White goods manufacturer) Trades Assistant (Electrical) Tradesman (Airline) Tradesman (Electrical) Trainee Draftsman (Electrical) Whitegoods Manufacturer (Serviceman) Whitegoods Mechanic (Self-Employed) Window Assembly & Glazing
Transport	Bus driver Owner operator Pilot Taxi driver Truck Driver (Removals, Courier, Distribution) Truck Driver (Owner)
Warehousing	Administration Driving Forklift Operator Gas Mining Steel Stock Management Storeman Storeman/Driver (Aluminium Products) Storeman (Satellite/Cable Company) Stores Assistant Stores Training & Development Manager Warehouse Manager

Table 14: Relevance of skills learnt at work (on the job) to current employability

Relevance (5-point scale)	Number of responses	Percentage %
Not at all relevant: 1	27	5.1
2	35	6.6
Neutral: 3	50	9.4
4	129	24.2
Very relevant 5	188	35.3
Not stated	104	19.5
Total	533*	100.1

Note: *Includes all jobs listed by participants

Table 15: Current employment status

Status	Employed		Status	Unemployed	
	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Full time	7	25.0	Seeking work	91	91.9
Part time	8	28.5	Not seeking work	8	8.1
Sessional/casual	12	42.9			
Other	1	3.6			
Total	28	100.0		99	100.0
Percentage	22			78	100.0

Table 16: Time unemployed following displacement from the workforce

Time unemployed	Number of responses	Percentage
0–3 months	64	50.4
4–6 months	16	12.6
7–12 months	14	11.0
13–18 months	5	3.9
19–24 months	2	1.6
More than 2 years	25	19.7
Not stated	1	0.8
Total	127	100.0

Table 17: Reason for displacement from the workforce

Reason for displacement	Number of responses	Percentage
End of contract/job	10	7.9
Workplace closed	32	25.2
Job made redundant	52	40.9
Voluntary redundancy	11	8.7
Injury/accident	7	5.5
Other	12	9.4
Not stated	3	2.4
Total	127	100.0

Appendix D: Responses to questions relating to generic skills

Table 18: Self-assessment of skills by skill area

Skill area	Self-assessment of skills (percentage of responses)										Total %	Average score /10
	Low					High						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
1	0	0.8	0	2.4	2.4	5.6	13.5	38.1	23.0	14.3	100.0	8.06
2	0	0	0	2.4	2.4	5.6	13.6	32.2	24.0	12.8	100.0	8.08
3	0	0	0	0	1.6	4.8	8.8	26.4	27.2	31.2	100.0	8.66
4	0	3.2	5.6	5.6	6.3	11.1	17.5	19.8	18.2	12.7	100.0	7.40
5	0.8	0	0.8	0	0.8	4.8	12.0	28.8	33.6	18.4	100.0	8.37
6	7.2	4.0	7.2	6.4	9.6	10.4	16.0	16.8	12.8	9.6	100.0	6.30
7	0	0	1.6	1.6	4.0	7.1	27.0	26.2	14.3	18.2	100.0	7.83
8	3.2	3.2	4.8	4.8	8.0	8.0	17.6	33.6	12.8	4.0	100.0	6.78
9	0.8	0.8	3.25	1.6	4.1	0.8	16.3	27.6	22.8	22.0	100.0	8.03
10	1.9	0	1.9	1.9	4.9	4.9	19.4	23.2	25.2	13.6	100.0	7.78
Average total	1.4	1.2	2.5	2.7	4.4	6.4	16.1	28.3	21.3	15.7	100.0	7.70

Note: Totals may not add exactly to 100 due to rounding

Legend for skill areas:

Skill area 1: Communication skills

Skill area 2: Planning and organising activities

Skill area 3: Working with others and in teams

Skill area 4: Using mathematical ideas and techniques

Skill area 5: Solving problems

Skill area 6: Using information technology

Skill area 7: Cultural understanding

Skill area 8: Understanding/designing systems

Skill area 9: Adapting to change

Skill area 10: Being creative and innovative

Table 19: Sources of skill development

Where did you learn this skill ¹	Skill area ²										Across all skill areas %
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Home/family/community	80.3	62.2	62.2	45.6	61.4	26.7	58.3	14.8	48.8	59.0	51.9
School	48.8	38.6	42.5	67.2	36.2	19.2	26.0	12.3	20.5	35.2	34.7
Formal course (post-school)	39.4	26.0	26.8	29.6	29.1	42.5	16.5	23.8	18.1	20.0	27.2
Work	89.0	89.8	93.7	82.4	91.3	78.3	81.9	90.2	87.4	80.0	86.4
Experience/self-taught	78.4	70.9	65.4	58.4	74.8	71.7	66.1	61.5	74.8	86.7	70.9
Other	17.3	9.4	5.5	6.4	7.1	1.7	5.5	5.7	5.5	9.5	7.4

Notes: ¹ Respondents were asked to tick all which applied

² See table 18 for skill areas

Table 20: Most important source of skill development

Source ¹	Skill area ²										Across all skill areas %
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Home/family/community	15.0	13.1	16.5	5.6	14.4	2.9	23.7	0.9	10.9	11.0	11.4
School	1.9	0.9	3.7	29.0	0.9	4.9	1.8	0.9	0.0	6.6	5.1
Formal course (post-school)	7.5	3.7	1.8	11.2	7.2	19.4	0.9	5.5	3.6	2.2	6.3
Work	53.3	62.6	65.1	39.3	54.1	41.7	47.4	76.1	53.6	37.4	53.1
Experience/self-taught	18.7	16.8	11.0	13.1	21.6	30.1	25.4	16.5	28.2	41.8	22.3
Other	3.7	2.8	1.8	1.9	1.8	0.9	0.9	0.0	3.6	1.1	1.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes: ¹ Respondents were asked to tick one only

² See table 18 for skill areas

Totals may not add exactly to 100 due to rounding

Table 21: Importance of skills to work

Skill area	Response to statement 'My skills were (are) very important to the work I performed (perform) in my last (current) job'					Total %
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	0	1.4	11.4	24.3	62.9	100.0
2	2.9	2.9	10.0	27.1	57.1	100.0
3	0	4.3	8.7	23.2	63.8	100.0
4	7.1	7.1	24.3	32.9	28.6	100.0
5	2.9	1.4	1.4	39.1	55.1	100.0
6	14.7	7.4	17.6	25.0	35.3	100.0
7	7.1	10.0	25.7	34.3	22.9	100.0
8	5.8	5.8	21.7	37.7	29.0	100.0
9	0	4.3	10.0	45.7	40.0	100.0
10	17.6	5.9	27.5	21.6	27.4	100.0
Total (across all skill areas)	5.5	5.0	15.5	31.4	42.6	100.0

Note: See table 18 for skill areas
Totals may not add exactly to 100 due to rounding

Table 22: Opportunities to develop skills at work

Skill area	Response to statement 'In my last (current) job I was (am) given many opportunities to further develop my skills'					Total %
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	8.6	11.4	24.3	30.0	25.7	100.0
2	7.1	7.1	27.1	30.0	28.6	100.0
3	2.9	4.3	17.4	34.8	40.6	100.0
4	10.0	22.9	22.9	32.8	11.4	100.0
5	4.3	10.1	8.7	40.6	36.2	100.0
6	19.1	13.2	19.1	32.4	16.2	100.0
7	12.9	18.6	31.4	21.4	15.7	100.0
8	8.7	11.6	26.1	37.7	15.9	100.0
9	2.9	14.3	17.1	34.3	31.4	100.0
10	2.0	3.9	9.8	39.2	45.1	100.0
Total (across all skill areas)	8.0	12.0	20.7	33.1	26.2	100.0

Note: See table 18 for skill areas
Totals may not add exactly to 100 due to rounding

Table 23: Assessment of skills in relation to work sought

Skill area	Response to statement 'My skills are good enough to meet the expectations of the work I am aiming for (in my current job)'					Total %
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	2.9	1.4	7.2	55.1	33.3	100.0
2	1.4	15.7	34.3	48.6	0	100.0
3	0	0	7.3	42.0	50.7	100.0
4	4.3	7.1	18.6	44.3	25.7	100.0
5	0	2.9	1.4	50.0	45.7	100.0
6	14.7	7.3	16.2	35.3	26.5	100.0
7	0	4.3	15.7	51.4	28.6	100.0
8	4.3	5.8	23.2	50.7	15.9	100.0
9	0	7.1	7.1	50.0	35.7	100.0
10	5.9	3.9	15.7	31.4	43.1	100.0
Total (across all skill areas)	3.3	5.6	14.6	46.3	30.2	100.0

Note: See table 18 for skill areas
Totals may not add exactly to 100 due to rounding

Table 24: Confidence that skills will help employment prospects

Skill area	Response to statement 'I am confident that the skills I have developed will help (have helped) me to get another job'					Total %
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
1	7.1	5.7	15.7	38.06	32.9	100.0
2	2.9	4.4	16.2	42.6	33.8	100.0
3	0.0	7.1	10.0	40.0	42.9	100.0
4	5.7	10.0	22.9	38.6	22.8	100.0
5	0.0	4.3	10.0	44.3	41.4	100.0
6	16.2	11.8	22.1	26.5	23.5	100.0
7	2.9	10.0	21.4	41.4	24.3	100.0
8	5.8	10.1	18.8	46.4	18.8	100.0
9	0.0	8.6	15.7	40.0	35.7	100.0
10	5.9	7.8	13.7	41.2	31.4	100.0
Total (across all skill areas)	4.6	8.0	16.7	39.9	30.8	100.0

Note: See table 18 for skill areas
Totals may not add exactly to 100 due to rounding

Table 25: Responses to statements

Statements	Percentage of responses					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
I have found that my general skills readily transfer to new areas of work	7.1	1.4	22.9	37.1	31.4	100.0
In order to find work I have found it necessary to continually learn new work skills	0.0	1.4	11.4	38.6	48.6	100.0
It is important to me that my work makes a contribution to the good of society.	2.9	2.9	20.0	35.7	38.6	100.0
It is up to my employer to train me in the general skills I need at work.	7.1	11.4	28.6	35.7	17.1	100.0
My prospects for employment have more to do with the available local jobs than my skills.	5.8	13.0	20.3	23.2	37.7	100.0
There are jobs available but I am not 'in' with the local scene so I am not likely to be successful.	14.7	30.9	20.6	20.6	13.2	100.0
Employers want people who are younger than me.	7.1	11.4	21.4	21.4	38.6	100.0
I am prepared to compromise my values to get a job.	38.6	20.0	18.6	12.8	10.0	100.0
Employers are more interested in paper qualifications than real skills.	5.7	8.6	28.6	24.3	32.8	100.0
Written assessments of my general skills would help me to get another job.	4.3	2.9	34.8	42.0	15.9	100.0
I find it difficult to accept that I have to market my skills.	12.9	17.1	21.4	31.4	17.1	100.0
I am optimistic that I will be able to get another job at the same level of work that I have done in the past.	18.6	30.0	12.8	15.7	22.9	100.0
I taught myself things I needed to know for work.	1.4	7.1	12.9	38.6	40.0	100.0
An active imagination is a valuable asset at work.	1.4	2.9	15.7	42.9	37.1	100.0

Note: Totals may not add exactly to 100 due to rounding

Appendix E: Survey instrument

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Generic Skills & the Displaced Worker

1. Age

16 – 20 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 – 25 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>
26 – 30 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>
31 – 35 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>
36 – 40 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>

41 – 45 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>
46 – 50 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>
51 – 55 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>
56 – 60 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 60 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Gender

Male

Female

3. Country of Birth

Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Country _____

4. First Language

English	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Language _____

5. Other Languages

6. Schooling

Highest Level Completed

Year/Grade

Age left school in years

Age

8. Time unemployed following displacement from the workforce

0-3 months	<input type="text"/>	13-18 months	<input type="text"/>
4-6 months	<input type="text"/>	19-24 months	<input type="text"/>
7-12 months	<input type="text"/>	more than 2 yrs	<input type="text"/>

9. Reason for displacement

End of contract/job	<input type="text"/>	Voluntary redundancy	<input type="text"/>
Workplace Closed	<input type="text"/>	Displaced by injury/accident	<input type="text"/>
Your job made redundant	<input type="text"/>	Other _____ (Reason)	<input type="text"/>

10. Current Employment Status

Please complete 1 column only.

Employed	Unemployed
<input type="text"/>	
Full Time <input type="text"/>	Are you seeking work YES / NO
Part-time <input type="text"/>	Comments _____
Sessional/Casual <input type="text"/>	_____
Other _____ (Please Specify) <input type="text"/>	_____
Comments _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

11. Number of different jobs/positions (shifts/changes in career) you have undertaken

(eg. waitress, shop assistant, call centre telephone operator = 3
or technician, supervisor = 2)

1 <input type="text"/>	4 <input type="text"/>
2 <input type="text"/>	5 <input type="text"/>
3 <input type="text"/>	more than 5 <input type="text"/>

13. Source and Use of General Skills

Skill Area: 1. Communication Skills

Section A

How would you grade your <i>communication skills</i> ? (circle one number)									
Low									High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Section B

Where did you learn this skill? (tick all that apply)	What was the <i>most important</i> source of your skills (tick one)
<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community	<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)	<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)
<input type="checkbox"/> Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Section C

Please circle one answer for each statement	Strongly Disagree	2	Neutral	4	Strongly Agree
My <i>communication skills</i> were (are) very important to the work I performed (perform) in my last (current) job?	1	2	3	4	5
In my last (current) job I was (am) given many opportunities to further develop my <i>communication skills</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
I am good enough at <i>communicating</i> to meet the expectations of the work I am aiming for (in my current job).	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that the <i>communication skills</i> I have developed will help (have helped) me to get another job.	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other comments that you would like to make? _____

Skill Area: 2. Planning and organising activities

Section A

How would you grade your skills in <i>planning and organising</i> ? (circle one number)									
Low									High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Section B

Where did you learn this skill? (tick all that apply)	What was the <i>most important</i> source of your skills (tick one)
<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community	<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)	<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)
<input type="checkbox"/> Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Please circle one answer for each statement	Strongly Disagree	2	Neutral	4	Strongly Agree
My skills in <i>planning and organising</i> were (are) very important to the work I performed (perform) in my last (current) job.	1	2	3	4	5
In my last (current) job I was (am) given many opportunities to further develop my skills in <i>planning and organising</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
I am good enough at <i>planning and organising</i> to meet the expectations of the work I am aiming for (in my current job).	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that the skills I have developed in <i>planning and organising</i> will help (have helped) me to get another job.	1	2	3	4	5

Section C

Are there any other comments that you would like to make? _____

Skill Area: 3. Working with others and in teams

Section A

How would you grade your skills in <i>working with others and in teams</i> (circle one number)									
Low									High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Section B

Where did you learn this skill? (tick all that apply)	What was the <i>most important</i> source of your skills (tick one)
<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community	<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)	<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)
<input type="checkbox"/> Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Section C

Please circle one answer for each statement	Strongly Disagree	2	Neutral	4	Strongly Agree
My <i>teamworking</i> skills were (are) very important to the work I performed (perform) in my last (current) job.	1	2	3	4	5
In my last (current) job I was (am) given many opportunities to further develop my skills <i>in working with others and in teams</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
I am good enough at <i>working with others and in teams</i> to meet the expectations of the work I am aiming for (in my current job).	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that the skills I have developed in <i>working with others and in teams</i> will help (have helped) me to get another job.	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other comments that you would like to make? _____

Skill Area: 4. Using mathematical ideas and techniques

Measuring quantities/tolerances, production quotas, money stock-taking, calculating bonuses/discounts, financial planning, budgeting.

Section A

How would you grade your skills in using *mathematical ideas and techniques* (measuring quantities/tolerances, production quotas, money stock-taking, calculating bonuses/discounts, financial planning, budgeting) (circle one number)

Low										High
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Section B

Where did you learn this skill? (tick all that apply)	What was the <i>most important</i> source of your skills (tick one)
<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community	<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)	<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)
<input type="checkbox"/> Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Section C

Please circle one answer for each statement	Strongly Disagree	2	Neutral	4	Strongly Agree
My ability to use <i>mathematical ideas and techniques</i> was very important to the work I performed (perform) in my last (current) job.	1	2	3	4	5
In my last (current) job I was (am) given many opportunities to further develop my skills in using <i>mathematics</i> at work	1	2	3	4	5
I am good enough at using <i>mathematical ideas and techniques</i> to meet the expectations of the work I am aiming for (in my current job).	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that the skills I have developed in using <i>mathematical ideas and techniques</i> will help (have helped) me to get another job.	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other comments that you would like to make? _____

Skill Area: 5. Solving problems

Identifying the source of problems, examining alternatives, finding solutions.

Section A

How would you grade your skills in <i>solving problems</i> (circle one number)									
Low									High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Section B

Where did you learn this skill? (tick all that apply)	What was the <i>most important</i> source of your skills (tick one)
<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community	<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)	<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)
<input type="checkbox"/> Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Section C

Please circle one answer for each statement	Strongly Disagree	2	Neutral	4	Strongly Agree
My skills in <i>solving problems</i> were (are) very important to the work I performed (perform) in my last (current) job.	1	2	3	4	5
In my last (current) job I was (am) given many opportunities to further develop my <i>problem-solving</i> skills.	1	2	3	4	5
I am good enough at <i>solving problems</i> to meet the expectations of the work I am aiming for (in my current job).	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that the skills I have developed in <i>problem solving</i> will help (have helped) me to get another job.	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other comments that you would like to make? _____

Skill Area: 6. Using information technology

Computers, computer-operated equipment, internet, telecommunications.

Section A

How would you grade your skills in <i>using technology</i> (circle one number)									
Low									High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Section B

Where did you learn this skill? (tick all that apply)	What was the <i>most important</i> source of your skills (tick one)
<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community	<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)	<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)
<input type="checkbox"/> Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Section C

Please circle one answer for each statement	Strongly Disagree	2	Neutral	4	Strongly Agree
My skills in <i>using information technology</i> were (are) very important to the work I performed (perform) in my last (current) job.	1	2	3	4	5
In my last (current) job I was (am) given many opportunities to further develop my skills in the <i>use of information technology</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
I am good enough at <i>using information technology</i> to meet the expectations of the work I am aiming for (in my current job).	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that the skills I have developed in <i>using information technology</i> will help (have helped) me to get another job.	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other comments that you would like to make? _____

Skills Area: 7. Cultural understanding

Working with people from different ethnic backgrounds and languages.

Section A

How would you grade your skills in <i>Cultural understanding</i> (circle one number)										
Low										High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Section B

Where did you learn this skill? (tick all that apply)		What was the <i>most important</i> source of your skills (tick one)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Home/family/community	<input type="checkbox"/>	Home/family/community
<input type="checkbox"/>	School	<input type="checkbox"/>	School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Formal course (post school)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Formal course (post school)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work
<input type="checkbox"/>	Experience/self-taught	<input type="checkbox"/>	Experience/self-taught
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

Section C

Please circle one answer for each statement	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
My skills in <i>working with people from different ethnic backgrounds & languages</i> were (are) very important to the work I performed in my last (current) job.	1	2	3	4	5
In my last (current) job I was (am) given many opportunities to further develop my <i>understanding of different cultures</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
I am good enough at <i>working with people from different ethnic backgrounds and languages</i> to meet the expectations of the work I am aiming for (in my current job).	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that the skills I have developed in <i>cultural understanding</i> will help (have helped) me to get another job.	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other comments that you would like to make? _____

Skill Area: 8. Understanding/designing systems

Production, OH&S, quality, management systems.

Section A

How would you grade your skills in <i>understanding/designing systems</i> (circle one number)										
Low										High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Section B

Where did you learn this skill? (tick all that apply)	What was the <i>most important</i> source of your skills (tick one)
<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community	<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)	<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)
<input type="checkbox"/> Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Section C

Please circle one answer for each statement	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
My skills in <i>understanding and designing systems</i> were (are) very important to the work I performed (perform) in my last (current) job	1	2	3	4	5
In my last (current) job I was (am) given many opportunities to further develop my skills in <i>understanding and designing systems</i>	1	2	3	4	5
I am good enough at <i>understanding and designing systems</i> to meet the expectations of the work I am aiming for (in my current job).	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that the skills I have developed in <i>understanding and designing systems</i> will help (have helped) me to get another job.	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other comments that you would like to make? _____

Skill Area: 9. Adapting to change

Changes in work practices, range of jobs, new responsibilities, and new technology.

Section A

How would you grade your skills in <i>adapting to change</i> (circle one number)									
Low									High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Section B

Where did you learn this skill? (tick all that apply)	What was the <i>most important</i> source of your skills? (tick one)
<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community	<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)	<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)
<input type="checkbox"/> Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Section C

Please circle one answer for each statement	Strongly Disagree	2	Neutral	4	Strongly Agree
My ability to <i>adapt to change</i> was (is) very important to the work I performed (perform) in my last (current) job.	1	2	3	4	5
In my last (current) job I was (am) given many opportunities to further develop my skills in <i>adapting to change</i> .	1	2	3	4	5
I am good enough at <i>adapting to change</i> to meet the expectations of the work I am aiming for (in my current job).	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that my ability to <i>adapt to change</i> will help (has helped) me to get another job.	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other comments that you would like to make? _____

Skill Area: 10. Being Creative and Innovative

Section A

How would you grade your <i>creative & innovative</i> skills (circle one number)									
Low									High
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Section B

Where did you learn this skill? (tick all that apply)	What was the <i>most important</i> source of your skills? (tick one)
<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community	<input type="checkbox"/> Home/family/community
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)	<input type="checkbox"/> Formal course (post school)
<input type="checkbox"/> Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught	<input type="checkbox"/> Experience/self-taught
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Section C

Please circle one answer for each statement	Strongly Disagree	2	Neutral	4	Strongly Agree
My <i>creative and innovative</i> skills were (are) very important to the work I performed (perform) in my last (current) job.	1	2	3	4	5
In my last (current) job I was (am) given many opportunities to further develop my <i>creative and innovative</i> skills.	1	2	3	4	5
My <i>creativity and innovative</i> skills are good enough to meet the expectations of the work I am aiming for (in my current job).	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident that my <i>creativity and innovative</i> skills will help (have helped) me to get another job.	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other comments that you would like to make? _____

14. Employability & Other Issues (Circle one answer for each statement)

	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
I have found that my general skills readily transfer to new areas of work	1	2	3	4	5
In order to find work I have found it necessary to continually learn new work skills	1	2	3	4	5
It is important to me that my work makes a contribution to the good of society.	1	2	3	4	5
It is up to my employer to train me in the general skills I need at work.	1	2	3	4	5
My prospects for employment have more to do with the available local jobs than my skills.	1	2	3	4	5
There are jobs available but I am not 'in' with the local scene so I am not likely to be successful.	1	2	3	4	5
Employers want people who are younger than me.	1	2	3	4	5
I am prepared to compromise my values to get a job.	1	2	3	4	5
Employers are more interested in paper qualifications than real skills.	1	2	3	4	5
Written assessments of my general skills would help me to get another job.	1	2	3	4	5
I find it difficult to accept that I have to market my skills.	1	2	3	4	5
I am optimistic that I will be able to get another job at the same level of work that I have done in the past.	1	2	3	4	5
I taught myself things I needed to know for work.	1	2	3	4	5
An active imagination is a valuable asset at work.	1	2	3	4	5

15. Number of workplaces/organisations where you have been employed

1	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<input type="checkbox"/>

4	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	<input type="checkbox"/>
more than 5	<input type="checkbox"/>



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