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MUMS AND SUPER SENIORS KEY TO OUR FUTURE PROSPERITY

Mothers and older Australians hold the keys to our future prosperity amid a chronic worker shortage.

That's one of the big findings from Business NSW's [State of Skills 2024 report](#), prompting calls for better access to childcare and easing restrictions for over-60s who are looking to re-enter the workforce.

Business NSW CEO Daniel Hunter said 77% of employers are struggling to recruit the staff they need, with nearly 40% expecting negative impacts on their business if the situation persists.

Mr Hunter said the skills report reveals a growing trend among businesses — hiring older workers and mothers as a key strategy to address the skills shortage.

“Many of our members are actively tapping these often-overlooked talent pools as a strategic response to the tight labour market,” he said.

“With skilled workers in short supply, businesses are turning to these groups to fill gaps, drive efficiencies and secure our future prosperity.”

Mr Hunter stressed that to unlock the potential of these groups, “we must address the barriers that prevent them from joining or rejoining the workforce — chiefly, the lack of accessible, affordable childcare”.

“For many parents, finding reliable childcare is a major hurdle to returning to work,” Mr Hunter said.

“Without adequate support, businesses are missing out on a skilled and dedicated workforce that could drive efficiencies and growth.”

[Business NSW](#) is urging state and federal governments to invest in childcare funding to expand access for parents returning to work and support early childhood development.

It is also calling for an increase in the Federal Government's Work Bonus program limits to help address the skills shortage in the short to medium term.

Business NSW wants the government to double the age pension work bonus to \$600 per fortnight (\$15,600 annually).

Mr Hunter said this increase would enable businesses to hire more retirees or allow current pensioners to work more hours. The current small bonus limits workforce participation and reduces overall productivity.

“Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are grappling with significant challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers,” Mr Hunter said.

“This shortage is affecting everything from daily operations to long-term growth, resulting in higher workloads for existing staff, lower productivity, and difficulties meeting customer demands.

“There is an incredible amount of unmet capacity within NSW’s 860,000-plus businesses. If we don’t realise our economic potential, we face a grim future.”

Key findings from the State of Skills 2024 report include:

- Sectors experiencing ongoing recruitment challenges include manufacturing, health, hospitality, construction and technical services industries, with shortages in these industries being particularly acute in regional areas
- 75% of employers experiencing a skills shortage reported an increase in the workload being carried by existing staff, with many business owners having to ‘get back on the tools’ to keep the business running
- 38% of employers anticipate significant negative impacts for their business if these challenges continue
- 4% fear their business may not survive if they are unable to meet their skills needs
- 42% reported a reduction in the range of products or services being offered
- 36% have had to defer the expansion of their business
- 27% reported loss of business to competitors through being unable to recruit the people they need

- Almost a quarter of employers facing a skills shortage (23%) indicated they lacked the additional capacity needed to supervise and train staff, and
- Factors underlying difficulty in recruitment include difficulty in keeping pace with salary expectations, staff turnover, a lack of interest in available roles and location-based challenges. About half of all employers surveyed indicated they struggled to keep pace with wage or salary expectations (47% of all employers, and 52% of those in shortage).

About Business NSW

Formerly the NSW Business Chamber, **Business NSW** is the peak policy and advocacy body which has been representing businesses in NSW since 1826. We represent almost 50,000 businesses.

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