Employment growth

Employers have strong hiring intentions for the first quarter of 2010 compared to the same period in 2009, with 19 per cent intending to increase hiring, according to the results of the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey released in December.

Australian employers reported the sixth strongest first-quarter hiring plans, behind India, where 39 per cent of employers intended to increase hiring, Brazil, 31 per cent, Singapore, 26 per cent, Taiwan, 25 per cent, and Costa Rica, 20 per cent. By comparison, six per cent of United States employers intended to increase hiring, while no United Kingdom employers had plans to do so.

By sector, education saw the most growth in hiring intentions in the first quarter of 2010, up 16 points to 19 per cent.

In Victoria, the 2008 *Teacher Supply and Demand Report* predicts 'a small and decreasing surplus' of primary-trained teachers and a shortfall of secondary-trained teachers between now and 2012.

According to the Managing Director of Manpower Australia and New Zealand, Lincoln Crawley, Australia's robust employment outlook reflects the fact that the nation avoided a recession.

The robust employment outlook means employers need to get their talent strategy in order, Crawley said. 'Competitive pay, career opportunities, work-life balance and management quality should be focus points for organisations looking to retain existing employees and attract new talent,' he said.

Snapshot on teen mortality, child obesity and early learning

AUSTRALIAN YOUTHS ARE UP TO FOUR TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DIE THAN CHILDREN, THE NUMBER OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE PRESCHOOLERS IS GROWING, BUT MOST FIVE-YEAR OLDS EXPERIENCE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO SCHOOL. **STEVE HOLDEN** REPORTS.

Young people from developed countries including Australia are up to four times more likely to die in their late teens and early 20s than in earlier childhood, according to a global study on youth mortality funded by the World Health Organisation, and Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council, published in *The Lancet* last year.

Leading an international team of scientists, researchers at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) found the death rate increased rapidly from puberty, particularly in developed countries where those aged 20 to 24 years died at almost four times the rate of children aged 10 to 14. Those aged 15 to 19 years were three times more likely to die than younger children.

The study is the first to report on the rates and causes of global mortality in young people aged 10 to 24, with data collected from 192 countries. It found death from injury, including traffic accidents, violence and suicide, accounted for two in five deaths worldwide and almost half of male deaths.

Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare showed young Australian males were twice as likely to die as females, with motor vehicle accidents and suicide the leading causes of death.

The death rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths was on par with the average for those living in low- and middle-income countries and almost four times higher than the death rate of non-Indigenous Australians. The death rate of Indigenous males was higher than male deaths in all regions except Africa.

Lead researcher Professor George Patton said current health policies in many developed countries focused on the health status of babies and young children, with further attention needed to reduce death rates among youths.

'In the past 50 years we have seen extraordinary reductions in mortality in earlier childhood, but far less in adolescence and young adulthood,' Patton said.

'Young Australians are now much more likely to die in their late teens and early 20s than in earlier childhood, even

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though many of these deaths could be prevented.'

That doesn't mean we can turn attention away from earlier childhood, according to further MCRI research, which has found that the number of overweight or obese Australian preschoolers increased by more than 8,000 between 2004 and 2008 as children spent more time watching television and less time being physically active.

The MCRI study of four- and five-years olds taking part in the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children found that 20.6 per cent were overweight or obese in 2004. By 2008, the figure rose to 23.8 per cent – representing an estimated 8,000 extra preschoolers in Australia.

The percentage of children who watch more than three hours of television per day on a weekend increased from 22 to 32 per cent during the same period, and from 20 to 24 per cent per day on weekdays during the same period, while the percentage who choose inactive over active pastimes increased from 26 per cent to 28 per cent, and the percentage of mothers who are overweight or obese increased from 43 to 46 per cent.

The study recommended the establishment of a national monitoring program to track children's obesity, fitness and diet across Australia.

According to the *Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) National Report 2009*, meanwhile, 23.4 per cent of children in their first year of formal schooling are developmentally vulnerable in one or more of five domains, these being:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive and communications skills, and
- general knowledge.

Conducted by MCRI's Centre for Community Child Health in partnership with the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research in Perth, the *AEDI* indicates that children living in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged communities and in very remote areas of Australia are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable on each of the five domains.

In particular:

- 47.2 per cent of children living in very remote areas are developmentally vulnerable on one or more of the *AEDI* domains, and
- 30.6 per cent are developmentally vulnerable on two or more of the domains.

According to the *AEDI*, 10.5 per cent of all children were identified by teachers as requiring more assessment in terms of the need for additional support.

In good news from the report, the majority of Australian five-year olds experience a successful transition to the school environment, since:

- 65.1 per cent participated in a preschool or Kindergarten program
- 76.6 per cent are making good progress in adapting to the structure and learning environment of the school
- 69.9 per cent have parents or caregivers who are actively engaged with the school and support their child's learning, and
- 69.8 per cent of children are regularly read to or encouraged in their reading at home.

LINKS: For the full report, visit www.rch.org.au/aedi

In brief

Receivers sell ABC Learning Centres

The receiver of failed child care services group ABC Learning Centres, Chris Honey of McGrathNicol, has sold 678 of the 705 ABC Learning Centres still in his hands to GoodStart, a not-for-profit syndicate backed by Mission Australia, the Benevolent Society, Social Ventures Australia and the Brotherhood of St Laurence. The deal involves debt funding from National Australia Bank and $15 million in medium-term loans from the Commonwealth government. Honey has already closed 81 centres and sold 216 others to 78 new owners. McGrathNicol is preparing legal action against ABC Learning Centres founder Eddy Groves and fellow board members. Groves and other senior executives are expected to appear before the Federal Court in Sydney in March.

Global warming warning

Student film-makers from Mundingburra State School in Townsville, far north Queensland, won the Best Script award at the Asia Pacific Kid Witness News (KWN) Regional Awards in Singapore in December for their short film, *The Global Warming Rap*. The five-minute film features three penguins, who answer questions about global warming: is it fact or fiction; are we exchanging our values for valuables; and is it a reason or an excuse to explain natural disasters? Students Rhys Kern and Cameron Bell, and teacher Erick Blechen accepted the award on behalf of Mundingburra. *The Global Warming Rap* was up against contenders from Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, and now goes in the running to represent Australia at the Global KWN Awards in Tokyo in July.

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