

ANOTHER MITEK ADVANTAGE

## TACKLING THE SHORTAGE

Fabricators would be well aware that with unemployment at record lows throughout Australia and the resources boom drawing people from other industry sectors, attracting staff to the pre-fabricated timber industry is becoming increasingly difficult.

Compounding this problem is the fact that with the ever increasing complexity of roof designs for the domestic and commercial markets, the pressure is on fabricators to satisfy this need with skilled truss & frame designers (estimators and detailers).

Mastering powerful design software, provided by nail plate suppliers, to satisfy the ever increasing challenges of new and more creative designs only comes from designers with experience, and finding new, or training existing staff to fulfill this role, is a major problem for our industry.

What then do we need to do to attract talented energetic people to secure the future of the industry?

There will of course be many ideas and suggestions but a key factor in our current shortage is the lack of awareness of the industry as a potential career.

Talk to someone on the street and they will know about coal mining, the car industry etc. but few will be able to identify with the pre-fabrication timber industry even though their house is made using such components.

Ideally we would all like to be able to simply recruit skilled experienced designers from a magic pool, but in reality there are a finite number of experienced people and a vast number of competing workplaces for people with these skills.

There is no quick fix.

The industry needs to take a multi-pronged approach consisting of short and medium to long term strategies to tackle the shortage.

In the medium to long term we need to increase awareness of the industry at school level and look to improve general public awareness and appreciation of what goes into building a safe house.

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This can be done by working with local school career advisers to educate them about our industry and arranging for students who may be interested to visit various areas to get a feel for what is involved.

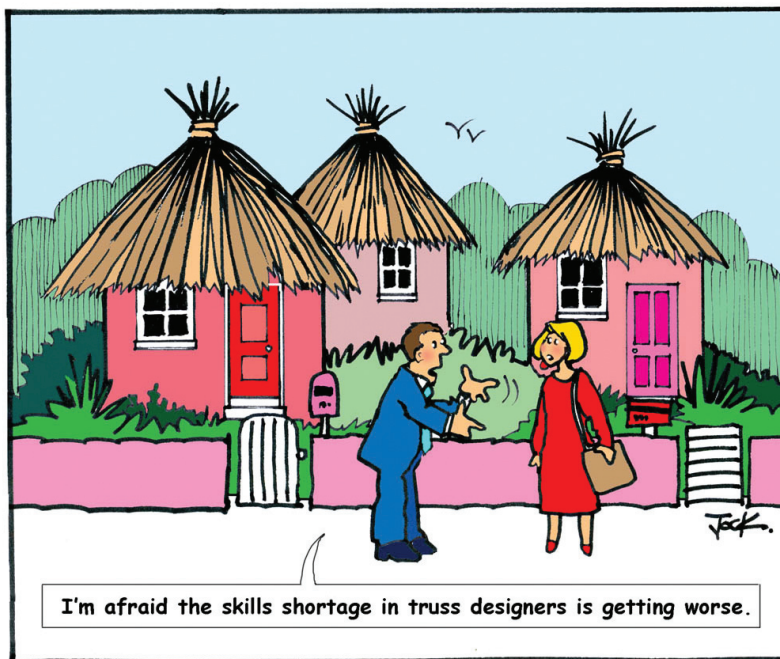
Similarly TAFE and University career awareness talks can be arranged which simply involves arranging to give talks about our industry or specific jobs to relevant groups of students.

gains in the work force should not be underestimated either.

These certificates require up to 13 weeks of training spread over a two year period along with mentoring in the work place.

This combination has the benefit of fast tracking skill acquisition in a structured manner compared to ad hoc on the job learning.

Existing employees need not worry about the prospect of 2 years "back to school" as they can gain recognition for prior learning for either existing qualifications or experience which will exempt them from some of the subjects in these courses.



For a more immediate solution the industry is able to offer Certificate II and III in various areas such as Timber Manufactured products.

These have options which are aimed at producing Pre-fabricated timber designers or assemblers.

Certification should be promoted and used as much as possible to offer school leavers and existing employees ongoing career prospects which is an important factor in skilled work force retention.

The additional benefit of improving knowledge and subsequent efficiency

There are also State and Federal monetary incentives which are aimed at encouraging employers to up-skill their work force in this way.

These are just some core initiatives aimed at improving the perception of job and career prospects in our industry, and there will be other opportunities and possibilities.

But for long term improvement we all need to work together, suppliers, manufactures and industrial bodies to tackle what has become, a critical shortage.

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