

## **WORKSHOP**

# ***New Sources of Growth for Dynamic Local Labour Markets: Policies and Strategies in Western Sydney and Beyond***

**21-22 August, 2013**

**Urban Research Centre, University of Western Sydney, Bankstown NSW**

*This workshop is being organised by UWS's Urban Research Centre within the framework of the OECD LEED project on local economic strategies for shrinking and ageing labour markets*

## **DRAFT AGENDA @ 17 July 2013**

Regions facing demographic change are the laboratories of future labor market challenges for the whole country. Anticipating these challenges can bring significant advantages to a region to keep the competitiveness of firms, particularly local SMEs, up to speed with global developments. Western Sydney, though not older is ageing at a faster pace than the national average (25.9% persons 50+ in 2001 rising to 27.3% in 2010 compared to the national average of 50+ 30.5% in 2001 rising to 32.3% in 2011). This will have implications for the composition and performance of the workforce. In addition, consistently higher unemployment than the national average (5.5% in 2001 and 6.8% in 2010 – compared to the national average of 5.1% in 2001 and 5.5% in 2010) are posing complex challenges for economic development and labour market transition. A particular challenge is youth unemployment: in 2012, Western Sydney had a youth unemployment rate of 17.9% , compared to the New South Wales rate of 15.3%.

But there are new opportunities to be found in the development of the green economy, the silver economy (senior entrepreneurship and product-service ecology for seniors) and the white economy (active ageing approaches and new technologies for care of the young and the elderly). The workshop will contribute to identify the main issues and proposals for policy development and initiatives to address local and thus national labor market challenges. Local activities, initiatives, and strategies are of particular importance for the development of proposals for sustainable and resilient communities and in coordination with national goals.

## Day 1 - 21<sup>st</sup> August 2013

9:00-9:30 Registration

### 9:30-10:30 Opening Session

#### 9.30-9.40 Welcome from the Dean

*Professor Kevin Dunn*, Dean, School of Social Sciences and Psychology

#### 9:40-10:00 UWS as a engine for growth in Western Sydney

*Dr. Paul Rowland*, UWS Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement, Strategy & Quality)

#### 10.00-10.30 Demographic change and new sources of growth in OECD countries

*Dr. Cristina Martinez*, Senior Policy Analyst, OECD LEED Programme

10:30-10:45 Coffee break

### 10.45-12.00 Session 1: New sources of growth in changing labour markets and sustainable communities

Chair: TBC

The complexity of urban-rural change, both expansion and shrinkage, is posing numerous challenges to job creation and sustainable development agendas. Strategic solutions cannot be based on addressing one factor alone but should take into account the interplay of the elements within a particular local area of development (urban or rural). Immigrants and new-comers to the labour market face skills challenges that can limit their potential to contribute to economic growth in the region. To curb this potentially self-re-enforcing process, public policy may help by encouraging new sources of economic growth that increase employment opportunities and foster absorption capacity for those new to the labour market. These policies for new sources of economic growth could (1) encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment, (2) attract emerging industry sectors to the region, (3) develop a silver, white or green economy, (4) increase the spin-off of high-tech firms from universities at newly built campuses, (5) increase employment in higher education by attracting foreign students to the region, or (6) create new cross sectoral alliances/businesses for modern work-ecologies.

#### *Questions for discussion:*

- ✓ Which are the opportunities for new sources of economic growth for regions?
- ✓ Which initiatives and strategies (including planning strategies) could facilitate entrepreneurship or self-employment?
- ✓ Which social/cross sectoral innovations can strengthen the competitiveness of the region?  
How can we support the opportunities offered by an aging population?

#### **Panellists:**

*Phil Raskall*, Strategic Research Manager, City of Sydney (TBC)

*Professor Phillip O'Neill*, Professorial Fellow, Urban Research Centre, University of Western Sydney

*Johanna Pitman*, Director, Innovation, Industry Policy and Services, Department of Trade & Investment

*Patrick Fensham*, SGS Economics and Planning

*Kerry Bartlett*, CEO, Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils

*Adrian Hack*, Planning Institute of Australia

12:00-13:30 Lunch break - Screening of OECD short film on "Labour markets in terms of ageing and shrinkage in the Netherlands"

**13.30-15.00 Session 2: International experiences of promoting resilience when confronting demographic challenges**

**Chair:** *Robert Strauss*, Head of Employment Analysis, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Demographic change is affecting all OECD member countries and developing economies. Fertility rates are falling in many although these have picked up again in some of the richest countries, the elderly population is increasing, and youth unemployment is rising in many places. Demographic change is today one of the key challenges for labour markets. Although the potential for further employment growth beyond the levels of pre-crisis is uncertain in many OECD countries in the short term, in the near future shortages are expected due to a declining and ageing labour force. Regions in transition face an important dilemma. On the one hand productivity will become the main engine of economic growth. On the other hand regions in transition face large shares of older people that may not be active in the labour market or unable to participate in productive work, i.e. with physical and mental disabilities. This raises the question of how to invest in future employment growth; at the same time perspectives must be offered to older and vulnerable groups on the regional labour market, now and in the near future.

*Questions for discussion:*

- ✓ What are the challenges faced by the labour market due to demographic change for current and future generations? What are the implications for young people today and tomorrow? What lessons can be extracted for growing and shrinking regions and cities and their regeneration strategies? What makes resilient regions resilient?
- ✓ What are the causes and consequences of early losses from the labour market? How can we integrate the skills from newcomers and build the new skills needed?
- ✓ What are the most effective methods and tools to maintain older workers, local youth and other vulnerable people in the labour market in relation to the expected demographic change? Are there best practices from firms (e.g. HR counseling services) or public (national, regional, local) support services that have approaches of working to counter the impact of demographic change? What are the practices that are not considered as good practices, that discourage older people from staying in the labour market?

**Panellists:**

*Dr Wenmeng Feng*, Director, Research Department II, China Development Research Foundation (CDRF)

*Dr. Rae Dufty-Jones*, Senior Lecturer, Geography and Urban Studies, University of Western Sydney

*Professor Tong Wu*, Professor Emeritus, University of Western Sydney

*Dr. Laura Schatz*, Lecturer, , Geography and Urban Studies, UWS

**15.00 AFTERNOON TEA WITH THE INTERIM DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH)**

*Professor Andrew Cheetham*, Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), University of Western Sydney – “The University of Western Sydney Innovation Concentration”

## Day 2 - 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2013

### 10.00-12.00 Session 3: Re-positioning regions with skills, employment and entrepreneurship

**Chair:** *Dr. Paul Rowland*, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Engagement, Strategy & Quality), University of Western Sydney

Regional specialization may require a better match of skills of the regional labour force on one side, and the skills required by the employers on the other side. Skill mismatch may have different causes: low-skilled people without relevant competences for the modern labour market, young people not choosing fields of study that are needed by firms, the competences of older workers that are not up-to-date or their skills or employability weakened if they have lost their job. Therefore employers are often inclined to recruit migrants, attract graduates from other regions, or move to where the potential labour supply is bigger and more diverse. At the same time it is frequently difficult for educational institutions to meet all the needs of employers and thus there is little connectivity between the supply and demand of skills.

#### *Questions for discussion:*

- ✓ How can we make sure that young people choose study fields that are in demand by companies? What is the role of regional educational institutions and employers in this case? How can cluster competitiveness be addressed?
- ✓ How can we raise the employability of the low-skilled? What is the role of training and skill development?
- ✓ How do we prevent skill obsolescence? What is the role of the employers?

#### **Panellists:**

*Robert Strauss*, Head of Unit – Employment Analysis / European Employment Strategy, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

*David Berger*, Western Sydney Director, NSW Business Chamber

*John West*, Executive Director, Asian Century Institute

*Professor Ed Blakely*, Honorary Professor in Urban Policy & disaster recovery expert, Sydney University  
Australian Industry Group (TBC)

### 12:00-12:15 Closing Session

*Dr. Cristina Martinez*, Senior Policy Analyst, OECD LEED Programme

*Professor Michael Darcy*, Director, Urban Research Centre, University of Western Sydney

*Screening of OECD short film on “Demographic Transition and an Ageing Society: implications for local labour markets in Poland”*