



SEGRA 2010

# MEDIA RELEASE

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Attention News Editors / Chief of Staff  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## RURAL AUSTRALIA PUTTING OUT THE WELCOME MAT

It might be as simple as a 'welcoming committee', to secure skilled workers including professionals such as doctors, police and teachers, for rural Australia.

Skilled workers are slipping through the fingers of rural communities and the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) has released a report based on Australian-first research that explains how to hang on to these prized new residents.

The research was borne out of **SEGRA** 2006 in Launceston, when regional development professional Martin Homisan from Mackay-Whitsunday- Isaac region, teamed up with some academics to try to understand the lack of commitment from mobile workers.

The collaboration resulted in a research project to understand the motivations of mobile workers across all six States.

The research team including Deakin University and Southern Cross University is now applying for a grant to look at the role of social entrepreneurs.

The findings of the initial research will be presented at this year's **SEGRA** conference, 19 – 21 October in Townsville and the full report can be downloaded from <https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/10-077>

This article was first published in the RIRDC Rural Diversity – Issue Number 5, available at <https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/10-166>

The RIRDC is also sponsoring a workshop on 'Developing Research Collaborations' at the **SEGRA** 2010 conference.

## ROVING WORKERS TO THE RESCUE IN RURAL AUSTRALIA

Helping rural Australia get the most out of a skilled workforce

Attracting and retaining skilled workers is a common problem for many employers and communities in Australia.

It's a challenge felt most keenly in rural communities, where they also often face ageing populations, and an ongoing struggle to hang on to their young people.

The irony is that many of these rural towns often enjoy a steady flow of skilled workers, passing through their communities – the problem they face however, is getting these roving workers to establish their roots there and enticing them to stay for the long term.

RIRDC has released Australia's first ever study into how rural communities can encourage these mobile professionals such as doctors, locums, teachers, 'tree changers', and 'sea changers' to live and work in rural communities longer.

*The Mobile Skilled Workforce* (RIRDC Pub. No. 10/077) undertaken by Deakin University led by Professor Sue Kilpatrick also looks at how rural communities can get the most out of these skilled professionals during their stay.

The report found that communities that were innovative, embraced diversity, accepted newcomers and acknowledged the skills of new arrivals were more likely to attract and retain skilled workers.

The study also found there is much local government, employers and community groups can also do to assist mobile skilled workers to integrate into new communities and to encourage them to extend their stays.

For example, communities which are proactive in welcoming skilled workers and their families and which help them to integrate and feel a sense of belonging, are most likely to benefit during their stay.

The researchers also argue that it's important to achieve the 'right fit' before a mobile skilled worker starts work in a rural area. To do this, employers and HR managers are encouraged to assess the capacity and willingness of mobile skilled workers and their families to become involved in community life outside the workplace.

The Deakin University research team will present their findings at the upcoming **SEGRA (Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia)** conference that is being held this year in Townsville from 19 – 21 October.

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*SEGRA 2010 is proudly supported by the Townsville City Council; the Queensland Government; James Cook University; Regional Futures Institute, Southern Cross University; Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation; and Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government; James Cook University; Townsville Enterprise; Port of Townsville; Indigenous Business Australia and the Australian Rainforest Foundation, National Institute for Rural and Regional Australia and Remplan.*

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