

Carol Wollaston finds that migrants can be the solution to skill shortages

Bringing in the best

■ Around 30 employers turned out to find out more about the rules around hiring skilled migrants to meet skill shortages last month.

Priority One CEO Dave Marriott told the group that the skill shortage is not going to go away in the near future and bringing in skilled migrants is another tool to solve the problem.

"There are skilled people coming here on holiday to check New Zealand out. If they get a job it can often fast-track the points system. The immigration department is very proactive," he said.

In town to lead the workshop, Department of Labour relationship manager Paul Miller said the process was not as hard as employers perceived it to be.

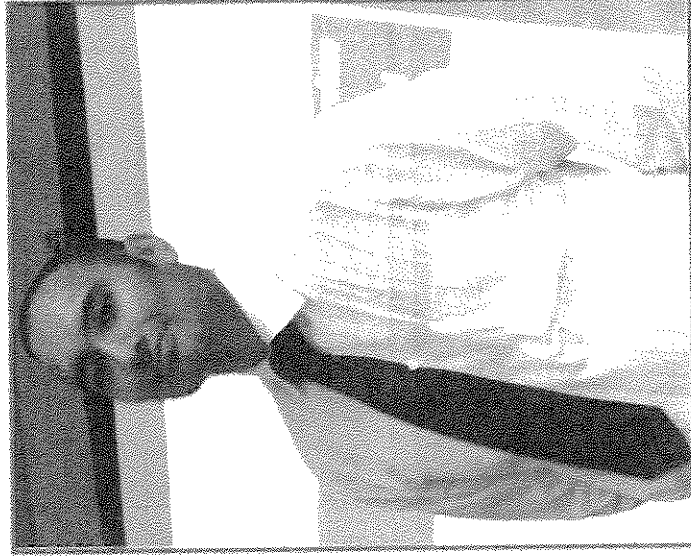
"There are currently 1800 people working in the Bay on work permits and 474 are on the long term skilled shortage lists," he said.

"On the migrant front it's not super difficult to get the talent you want."

Mr Miller assured the group the department sees migrants becoming a strong resource in terms of skills and experience.

"It's about getting the best and the brightest into this country."

He urged employers not to hesitate about taking people on a temporary basis. "Two years of available skills is better than none, and many



'It's about getting the best and the brightest into this country'

— Paul Miller, Department of Labour relationship manager (right)

seas for an annual fee. "We are facilitating employers' access to global skills and knowledge."

Potential migrant employees can apply for a "talent" work visa. This is priority-processed within four weeks, unless health or character issues arise.

Priority One is currently working with approximately 600 potential skilled migrants with firm plans to move to New Zealand within the next 18 months. A weekly analysis of positions advertised through local media is undertaken, with a summary of job vacancies circulated to a wide range of stakeholders.

"Summer has seen a significant increase in potential migrants visiting the Priority One office seeking information and guidance. To date over 150 skilled migrants that we know of have secured jobs in the sub-region as a result of this initiative," says Mr Marriott.

Detailed sector lists have been developed and distributed to project partners and employers that are having difficulty recruiting skilled staff.

Additional information and assistance on the immigration process is also provided to businesses considering employing skilled migrants.

Temporary work permits allow people to work their way toward residency, according to Mr Miller.

"Migrants can apply for residency within two years of a job offer, but can apply before then if they come through the skilled migrant category."

The department offers an accreditation scheme to employers, which allow them to more easily recruit highly talented workers from over-

will stay on," he said.

The department's Long Term Skill Shortage lists are updated every six months and are compiled on a regional basis.

"If your job is on the list you don't have to be checked to see if a New Zealand worker is available."

Around 30 per cent of work permit holders go on to gain residency in New Zealand. In the 2005/06 year, 99,700 work permits were issued.

The largest numbers come from the UK, while other key sources include China (12 per cent), South Africa (7 per cent) and India (8 per cent).