ACHIEVING SECURE AND STABLE MIGRANT EMPLOYMENT

A STUDY OF AGRICULTURE, MANUFACTURING AND FOOD PROCESSING IN REGIONAL QUEENSLAND

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Professor Julian Teicher
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**ABBREVIATIONS**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARIA</td>
<td>Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASGS</td>
<td>Australian Statistical Geography Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDA</td>
<td>Committee for Economic Development of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIBP</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Border Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>International English Language Testing System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWO</td>
<td>Fair Work Ombudsman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>Migration Council of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>NESB</td>
<td>Non-English-Speaking Background</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>Net Overseas Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>QCOSS</td>
<td>Queensland Council of Social Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAI</td>
<td>Regional Australia Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RJSA</td>
<td>Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoP</td>
<td>Rest of the Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTO</td>
<td>Registered Training Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regional Australia is a major contributor to Australia’s economy, producing approximately two-thirds of the nation’s export earnings (RAI, 2015a). Currently, skill shortages exist in some regional Australian industries such as agriculture, manufacturing and food/meat processing. Getting the right person with the right skills for a specific role is often challenging for regional Australian employers. Presently many of the skill shortages in regional industries are met by temporary overseas migrants on various visa arrangements. While employing temporary migrants is widespread because of its perceived flexibility, it is problematic due to costs associated with high levels of labour turnover, red tape associated with strict visa conditions, other procedural aspects associated with hiring workers on temporary visas, and low levels of expenditure in the local economy. As one respondent commented “Backpackers come and go which is not good for business” (Respondent 6).

In the past decade, the Australian government has encouraged permanent and temporary migrants to settle and work in regional Australia. Lobbying by employers and industry bodies to simplify the process for employing temporary migrants has occurred against a background of significant unemployment among permanent migrants. There is also a common view among employers, industry peak bodies, government departments and other key stakeholders interviewed that there are significant social and economic benefits of having permanent migrants in regional industries. Despite this, we identified certain barriers to migrants settling and working in regional areas. The majority of migrants settle in capital cities and, on the available evidence, most skilled migrants are unlikely to settle in regional Australia.

In research terms, the ‘missing link’ is a lack of studies addressing issues that affect the employment and settlement of migrants in regional Australia. This project identifies obstacles to the employment of migrants in the agricultural, manufacturing and food/meat processing industries in regional Queensland. Based on the findings, recommendations are made in regard to the following areas: promoting regional communities; enhancing stakeholder communication; providing government incentives for employers and for migrants in the regional areas; employment; skills recognition; training and upskilling of permanent migrants; direct settlement of migrants in regional areas (instead of re-settlement); infrastructure development; community capacity building in regional areas, and reinvigorating effective practices for alleviating skill shortages in agribusiness in regional Queensland.

The scope of this project was necessarily confined to the views of employers’ and industry peak bodies and we have yet to include the lived experience of the migrants. Therefore, it is suggested that an action research project involving a broad range of stakeholders, including the migrant employees, is carried out. As migrant communities are generally close-knit, future research should also address the role the leadership in migrant communities in building bridges between employers in regional Australia and to facilitate integration within the community.
2 Introduction

Regional Australia is a major driver of Australia’s economy and migrants are key contributors to regional Australia’s workforce, especially in the agriculture, manufacturing and food/meat processing industries. Researchers argue that there is a critical knowledge gap when it comes to the contribution of migrant workers in Australian agriculture industries (Collins, Krivokapic-Skoko, & Monani, 2016). This research focuses on the employment of overseas migrants in regional agriculture, manufacturing and food/meat processing industries. There is overwhelming evidence that a large proportion of migrants settle in capital cities of the eastern seaboard of Australia (CEDA, 2016; Collins et al., 2016; RAI, 2015b). However, there are persistent skill shortages in regional Australia despite the fact that over the past decade the Australian government has encouraged migrants to settle and work in rural and regional Australia (Cameron, Dwyer, Richardson, Ahmed, & Sukumaran, 2012; Collins et al., 2016; Wickramaarachchi & Butt, 2012).

While Queensland is Australia’s leading producer and exporter of beef, the agriculture and manufacturing industries also contribute significantly to the State’s economy. Additionally, Howe, Reilly, van den Broek and Wright (2015) argue that horticulture is of critical importance for Australia’s food security and economic development. Collectively, “regional Australia dominates employment in primary production and manufacturing” (RAI, 2015b). However, there is limited research on employment and settlement of migrants in the agricultural, manufacturing and food/meat processing industries in regional Australia.

This research on the agricultural, manufacturing and food processing industries in Central Queensland is aimed at:

- Identifying obstacles to the employment of both skilled and unskilled migrants;
- Examining the potential socio-economic and other benefits of employing migrants;
- Making observations on the policy implications of the research findings.

The project report is organised as follows. Following a brief introduction, we review the conceptual frameworks that explain the decisions to migrate and to locate in a regional area. This part also considers the potential contribution of migrants to economic and social development. In the third section we provide an overview of Australia’s immigration program and its contribution to population growth. This section also provides a profile of migrants in Australia in terms of education, employment and unemployment and location of settlement. In Section 4, we shift to consider the significance of the regions for the national economy in order to underpin the significance of migrants in regional labour markets and communities. In Section 5 we explain our research design before moving to report the findings in Section 6. Here we draw on the views of the interviewees and these are linked with other research findings as appropriate and provide a more nuanced discussion. In Section 7, a range of policy recommendations are advanced by drawing on the views of our interviewees. The final section provides a brief conclusion and outlines the directions of future research.
3 Conceptual Frameworks

Migrants can be defined as “any person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born and has acquired some significant social ties to this country” (UNESCO, 2017). The Australian Bureau of Statistics’ definition (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017a) is “a person who was born overseas whose usual residence is Australia in that they are expected to reside in Australia for a period of 12 months or more”. To complicate matters, the term ‘Culturally and Linguistically Diverse’ (CALD) background is also used alongside the term ‘migrant’ or ‘people from a Non-English-Speaking Background’ (NESB) in the literature discussing migrants.

Prior to 1960, the literature of migration was focused on internal migration, but recent literature identifies three categories of migrants: investors seeking to maximise their human capital; consumers of public goods and amenities; and producers of their own household goods and services (Bodvarsson & Berg, 2013). The human capital approach to migration “treats the act of migration as an investment in improving one’s wellbeing” (Productivity Commission, 2016, p. 504). The focus on the human capital approach is underpinned by Sjaastad (1962), who argued that the decision-making process associated with migration is influenced by a rational cost-benefit analysis of the movement. In other words, if the perceived benefit of movement is greater than the monetary cost of the movement, people will decide to migrate (Speare, Kobrin, & Kingkade, 1982). Reflecting the human capital approach, Collier (2013) identified three drivers for international migration. The first driver is the economic gap between the income in the home and host country and the wider the income gap the more intense the pressure to migrate. Second, migration is considered as an investment and third, the cost of migration is considered in relation to the perceived benefits in the host country. It is also argued that the decision to migrate is typically the result of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors (Bodvarsson, Simpson, & Sparber, 2015; Gaston & Nelson, 2013; Kline, 2003; Richardson et al. 2004a, 2004b). Pull factors are what the destination country offers such as higher income, access to better health and education systems, lower cost of living, a wider range of goods and services. Furthermore, opportunities for children, family reunion, a better lifestyle (for example, an open and peaceful civil life, uncrowded and unpolluted environment) may also motivate people to migrate. On the contrary, the push factors reflect circumstances in the source country such as living condition, climate, social and political instability.

Push and pull factors can also be linked to residential stress and residential satisfaction models of migration (Speare, 1974). Speare argued that satisfaction with the local environment influences people’s decision to move or not to move. Speare (1974) identified bonds with other people and attachment to a job, to a particular accommodation or to a neighbourhood as causes of satisfaction among people. A greater level of bonding is associated with a higher level of satisfaction, which attaches people to a locality and makes movement decisions difficult. Thus, people who are highly satisfied will not move despite better opportunities elsewhere and only people who are very dissatisfied will carry out cost-benefit analysis which precedes their movement (Speare, 1974). Speare et al. (1982) also argue that dissatisfaction alone is not a sufficient rationale for movement. If people are strongly attached to a place or community, they will try to adjust to the situation and will not
move. On the contrary, a failure to satisfy household needs, neighbourhood conditions and lifestyle change often creates stress that motivates people to move (Bach & Smith, 1977).

There are a range of studies that identify issues that might attract migrants to regional areas. These include direct and indirect variables such as employment opportunities for spousal partners, social and cultural tolerance or inclusion, opportunities for cultural activities, critical mass and support from community of same or similar ethnic backgrounds, and appropriate support services such as transportation, accommodation, healthcare, education and childcare (Baker, Hyland, & Soosay, 2013; Cameron et al., 2012; QCOSS, 2014; Schech, 2014; Wickramaarachchi & Butt, 2014). The Migration Policy Institute of USA argues that “[i]mmigrants choose locations within a country for a range of reasons, including family tie, local economic opportunities, the distance from countries of origin or major transport hubs, the availability of housing, and the local climate of reception” (Sumption, 2014, p. 5).

Addressing skill shortages in the regional industries can contribute strongly to the successful development of regional Australia (and thus the nation more broadly). Skill shortages in regional Australia are having a profound effect on productivity and economic growth as well as regional sustainability (Cameron, 2011) and this problem is likely to become worse without effective interventions. A lack of a skilled labour force may negatively affect regional development (Cameron, 2011; RAI, 2015a). It has been argued that “productivity relates to innovative ways of combining labour and capital to maximise the output of products that can be sold to national and international markets” (Collins et al., 2016, p.1). Furthermore, increased population may contribute significantly to realising the full potentials of resource-rich regional areas.

Figure 1: The relationship between population change, economic development, social wellbeing and environmental stability


Nevertheless, there is still a debate about the contribution of population growth to Australia’s development (Picus & Hugo, 2012). One position is that population is a driver of development which increases regional economic development by sourcing needed skilled labour. On the other hand, it has been argued that population growth is not a substitute for economic potential and that it does not create growth by itself (Daley & Lancy, 2011, cited in RAI, 2015b). Therefore, population growth may be considered as a facilitator, rather than a...
driver for regional development as population change is also associated with issues such as environment development, social wellbeing and economic development as shown in Figure 1 (RAI, 2015a).

4 Overview of Population Growth and Migration in Australia

4.1 Immigration and population growth

Australia is correctly described as a nation of immigrants (Collins et al., 2016; DIBP, 2016; Productivity Commission, 2016). Since the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, Australia has accommodated about 10 million people immigrants, of which approximately 7 million arrived after 1945. Australia’s population increased by 18% in the decade ended June 2016 ABS (2017a). According to the ABS (2017b), Net Overseas Migration (NOM) to Queensland in 2015/16 was 20,019, approximately 11% of Australia’s NOM during that period. Since 2006, migration contributed more to Australia’s overall population growth than natural increase and on one estimate “by 2050, births will no longer exceed deaths and immigration will be the only source of population growth” (CEDA, 2016, p. 28).

The compositions of the migrant intake from different countries differs for multiple reasons, not the least being changes in domestic policies which are reflected in the various visa categories. Hence Australia’s migration policy is focused on its economic and labour force needs and, to a lesser extent, social benefits. The demographic composition and number of migrants has varied over time because of changes in the global economic and political environment. Cumulatively these factors have seen a shift in the composition of the migrant intake from European and Anglo-Saxon countries toward Asia, the Middle East and Africa in the past few decades. While historically the United Kingdom accounts for the largest number of migrants (see Appendix A) in 2016-17 the highest number of migrants came from India (see Appendix B).

4.2 The migration program

Immigrants come to Australia through diverse visa pathways which are broadly categorised as temporary and permanent migrants (see Appendix C). Permanent migration programs generally include Family stream (Partners, parents and other family), Skilled stream (Employer Sponsored, Skilled Independent, State & Territory & Regional Sponsored, Business Innovation & Investment Program, Distinguished Talent), Special Eligibility stream, and Child stream (Department of Home Affairs [DHA], 2018a). The majority of permanent migrants are skilled migrants, for example, in 2016-17 the skilled stream constituted 67.3 % of the total permanent migration programme (DIBP 2017a). In 2016-17 out of 123,567 skilled migrants who came to Australia, 10,198 arrived under the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS, subclass 187) program and 1,670 the under Skilled Regional visa (subclass 887) (DIBP, 2017a, b). Temporary visa programs include the Visitor, Studying and Training, Temporary Activity (subclass 408), Temporary Graduate (subclass 485), Temporary Work (International Relations) (subclass 403), Temporary Work (Short Stay Specialist) (subclass 400), and Temporary Skill Shortage visa categories (subclass 482) (DHA, 2018b).
Apart from certain permanent streams of migration to regional Australia, the Skilled Regional (provisional) (subclass 489), Working Holiday (Visitor visa, subclass 417), and Work and Holiday (Visitor visa, subclass 462) allow people to work in the regional areas. The Australian Government abolished the subclass 457 visa in April 2017 and replaced it with Temporary Skill Shortage visa that allows short term employment of foreign workers from two to four years to support businesses experiencing genuine skill shortages (DIBP, 2017b). The Australian Government also signed an agreement with Pacific Islander countries such as Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Nauru in 2017 that allows about 2000 citizens of those countries to work in remote and rural Australia in low- and semi-skilled jobs in agriculture, tourism and aged care (APP, 2017; Department of Jobs and Small Businesses, 2017). This Temporary Work (International Relations) visa (subclass 403) allows temporary migrants to return to the same workplace during subsequent years. The humanitarian program is outside of the permanent migration program, which is designed for refugees and people in humanitarian need.

Australia’s migrant intake for 2017–2018 is set for 190,000 (DHA, 2017a; 2018a). In 2016–2017 a total of 183,608 permanent visas were granted among which 123,567 visas were from the Skill stream, 56,220 places were from the Family stream, 421 places were from the Special Eligibility stream and 3400 visas were granted under child visa categories (Appendix C). In addition to lawful migration, many people overstay their visas and work in Australia.

4.3 A profile of migrants in Australia
4.3.1 Education

Most migrants arriving in Australia are of working age and they are more highly qualified than the Australian born population (Productivity Commission, 2016). In 2015, 73% of the migrants aged 15–64 had a non-school qualification which included post-secondary qualifications including the equivalent of Certificates I, II, III and IV, diploma and advanced diploma qualifications and bachelor, masters degrees or equivalents (ABS, 2017a). In Queensland in 2016, 52.3% Australian-born people had non-school qualification compared to 53.7% for migrants from ESB migrants and 61.5% for NESB migrants. According to the Productivity Commission (2016), some 30% of employed migrants in 2012-13 appeared to be over-qualified for their jobs compared with 22% in the Australian-born population. A report from Queensland Treasury and Trade (2013) showed among employed persons in Queensland in 2011, NESB migrants were generally more educated compared than the rest of the population (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Qualifications</th>
<th>NESB %</th>
<th>(RoP) %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-school qualification</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor and above</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced diploma and diploma level</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate III/IV</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate I/II</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education not stated or inadequately described</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without non-school qualifications</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Employed person’s qualification in Queensland (as on 2011)

Source: Queensland Treasury and Trade (2013, p. 10)
In addition, children of migrants achieve higher educational outcomes compared to children of Australian-born parents. Some 58% of people aged 18–24 from CALD background are enrolled in full-time or part-time schooling compared to 39% of the Australian born population (Hugo, McDougall, Tan, & Feis. 2014).

4.3.2 Employment and unemployment among migrants

A national survey conducted in 2016 found that the unemployment rate among recent migrants was 6.6% while the rate was 5.4% for the Australian born population (Department of Employment, 2017a). The unemployment rate is particularly high among refugees who have permanent residency compared to Australian citizens (Department of Employment, 2017b). A study conducted in South-East Queensland on the employment experience and aspirations of refugees (Hebbani et al., 2015) found that about 46% of migrants from a refugee background under different visa categories in their second year in Australia were unemployed.

Employment rates among migrants also vary depending on their migration status, educational background and ethnicity. For example, the employment rate for skilled migrants was higher compared to migrants who came under the Family stream. In a report on unemployment among recent migrants in Queensland, Bita (2017) found a higher unemployment rate among Middle Eastern-born migrants (17.5 %) compared with 1.9% for people from Southern and Eastern Europe. Similarly, a study using 2016 Census data found that in Queensland the unemployment rate among NESB migrants was 9.4% compared to 5.9% for migrants from English speaking countries and 6.4% for people born in Australian (Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs, 2018). In addition, 8.3% of NESB migrants with a bachelor’s degree were unemployed compared to 3.9% of the migrants from English speaking background and only 2.9% of the Australian-born population at the time of the 2016 Census. More detailed data on comparative unemployment rates by age are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Unemployment rate of people from NESB and Rest of the Population (ROP) in Queensland, 2011

[Graph showing unemployment rates by age and background]
According to the ABS (2016) less than half (43%) of recent migrants received some form of help in finding their first job in Australia. Among this minority, 74% had help from family or friends, 17% were helped by the Job Services Network providers and/or Centrelink (Department of Human Services), and only 4% finding their first job through educational institutions. Among those who succeeded in getting a job about 31% reported that they experienced some difficulty in finding the job with the most commonly reported difficulties being:

- Lack of Australian work experience (65%).
- Lack of local contacts or networks (31%).
- Language difficulties (25%).

With regards to employment of NESB migrants, the Queensland Treasury reported that in 2011, compared to the rest of the population (ROP), migrants had differentially higher employment rates in some specific industries: 10.4% in manufacturing (ROP 8.2%), 11.9% in accommodation and food services (ROP 6.4%), and 15.4% in health care and social assistance (ROP 11.5%). Compared to the rest of the population in Queensland, migrants from NESB in Queensland had a greater proportion of employment in certain occupational groups such as professionals, community and personal service workers and labourers (see Table 2). According to the Diversity Council of Australia people from Asian backgrounds are well represented in entry-level and mid-level jobs in Australian businesses, yet they are significantly under-represented in leadership roles (Diversity Council of Australia, 2014). These findings are consistent with Ressia’s (2010) study on employment of skilled NESB migrants that found many participants in that study were obliged to accept a low-income job for which they were over-qualified.

Table 2: Employment of NESB migrants by occupation, Queensland, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>NESB %</th>
<th>Rest of Population %</th>
<th>NESB share of occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicians and trade workers</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community and personal care workers</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and administrative workers</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales workers</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machinery operators and drivers</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Queensland Treasury and Trade 2013

Similarly, CEDA (2016) found that migrants were over-represented in health and social assistance, manufacturing, scientific and technical services and professional services. Regarding occupation level, more than 50% of NESB migrants earned $600–799 per week while less than 40% of the employees belonging to the ROP category were in this income group. (see Figure 3). Despite having the higher educational qualification compared to the ROP of Queensland, only 25% of the NESB group with bachelor level or above qualifications
earned $600-$799 per week (Figure 4). In summary, NESB migrants are over-represented in lower level jobs and are more likely to be unemployed.

**Figure 3: Income distribution of employed persons from NESB and ROP, Queensland, 2011**

In addition, a recent study found that among migrants in Queensland “49 in every 100 skilled migrants aren’t using [the] skills or experience [they] gained before arriving” (Deloitte Access Economics, 2018, p. 4). The report argued that there are both economic (i.e., personal income foregone, government tax revenue foregone, public housing expenditure, superannuation and foregone productivity) and social costs (i.e., health and mental health, impact on family and dependents, community cohesion and increased cost for filling skills shortage) of this underutilisation of skills.

**Figure 4: Income distribution of employed persons from NESB by non-school qualification, Queensland, 2011**

Source: Queensland Treasury and Trade (2013)
4.4 Concentration of migrants in urban areas

Urbanisation is a global trend and it is predicted that 66% of the world’s population will live in cities by 2050 up from 54% in 2015 (Queensland Government, 2017b). Australia’s population growth and distribution is mostly centred along the urban and coastal areas (see Appendix E). As reported by the Scanlon Institute, in 2011 about 82% of the Australian migrant population lived in the major cities compared to 66% of the overall population (Markus, 2015). Migrants, particularly those from NESB countries, are more likely to settle in capital cities, especially in Sydney and Melbourne (CEDA, 2016; Collins et al., 2016; RAI, 2015b).

5 Regional Areas and their Contribution to the Australian Economy

5.1 The economic contribution of regional Australia

In Queensland 61.6% of the people live in a city, 20.5% live in inner regional Australia, 14.8% live in outer regional Australia, 1.8% live in remote Australia and 1.3% live in very remote Australia. Rockhampton, Bundaberg are classified as inner regional and Biloela (Banana) falls under outer regional Australia.

The Regional Australia Institute (RAI, 2015b, p. 3) reports that “regions outside our major cities are an important source of Australia’s economic growth” and that “regional Australia contributes one-third of our national output and is home to 8.8 million Australians” (RAI, 2015c, p. 1). Furthermore, regional innovation contributes significantly to Australia’s National Innovation System through linkage with mining and agricultural productivity (Perrem, 2013; RAI, 2015b).

Excluding the effects of the mining boom, there has been a consistent increase in productivity in regional Australia compared to the metropolitan cities. In 2013 regional Australia led in terms of output per worker in seven of the Australian Bureau of Statistics industry categories. Frontiers of productivity in regional Australian are shown in Figure 6. Between 2011 and 2013 productivity gains in regional Australia were greater than in urban areas (RAI, 2015a, 2015b). Furthermore, regional innovation contributes significantly to Australia’s National Innovation System through linkages with mining and agricultural productivity (Perrem, 2013).

However, despite diversity in the labour market, regional Australia’s employment is quite volatile due to the small population and narrow base of industries, and the situation is likely to remain challenging. While regional Australia, from a sector perspective, focuses on agriculture and mining, Figure 5 reveals that other industries are significant contributors to the growth of regional areas. This suggests the need for efforts to diversify the regional employment market to make up the labour shortage. However, strategies for dealing with this challenge will vary depending on the nature of the community in terms of population, economic growth, availability of natural resources and industry base (RAI, 2015b). It is fair to
say that the future prosperity of Australia will largely depend on taking advantage of the strengths of regional communities.

Figure 5: Frontiers of productivity in regional Australia

Source: RAI (2015a, p.14) - PricewaterhouseCoopers GEM, Regional Australia Institute calculation

5.2 Changing regional employment structure

One notable feature of Queensland agriculture is the rapidly growing value of production alongside the weakening of the overall level of employment within the sector. There are some exceptions however. Employment in the mushroom and vegetable industry in Queensland increased by 69%, a recent study (Saunders & Kruss, 2017) shows. Parallel to this, Saunders and Kruss (2017) note, there is significant growth in demand in the service industries for university graduates. Figure 6 (over the page) shows the direction of employment growth over the year to February 2017.

According to Saunders and Kruss (2017) in the next 10–15 years 40% of jobs will be automated and two-thirds of jobs will be in construction, accommodation and food, health, professional services and education and training sector. Although the future job market is likely to be challenging, it will also produce opportunities. Specifically, there will be greater opportunities in technology-based industries, and growth in the personal care, education and training, accommodation, food services and administration sectors.
6 Research Design

This research focuses on the coastal Central Queensland region, extending to the northern parts of the Wide Bay Burnett (see Appendix F). The major industries in this area are agriculture, fisheries and forestry, retail trade, healthcare, retail, education and training, and mining; for more detail (see Appendix G). Figure 6 shows the industries the historically predominant industries in the target areas (Rockhampton, Livingstone, Banana and Bundaberg) are declining in Queensland. Considering various socio-economic indicators such as population, age, recipients of social benefits (age pension, new start allowance, disability support and carer allowance), house rent, employment status, family income per annum (see Appendix H) the areas included in this project are more disadvantaged than Queensland as a whole.

A qualitative research method was adopted for this research. Besides data collection from secondary sources (existing literature and government reports), face-to-face and telephone interviews were used. Based on a review of the literature, two questionnaires were developed; one for the employers in the agriculture, manufacturing and food/meat processing industries and the second for the industry peak bodies and other stakeholders (see Appendix I and J). The questionnaires were piloted in order to assess their clarity and the convenience of completing the items. Eight employers from local agriculture, manufacturing and meat processing industries participated in the interviews as did five state and federal government departments, eight industry peak bodies and three other. Thematic content analysis of the data obtained from the interviews was conducted to identify the problems and prospects of employing migrants in the regional areas.

Basing on the responses of the participants and available secondary data the following section will describe and analyse whether industry perceives there are skill shortages in the agriculture, manufacturing and meat/food processing industries of Queensland, as well as
industry perceptions of what types of skill shortages exist and how those skill shortages may be addressed.

7 Results and Discussion

7.1 Skills shortages in regional Queensland

Surprisingly, there is no uniformity of opinion among respondents as to whether there is a ‘people shortage’ i.e., availability of people to do the job in the agribusiness irrespective of their skills (Respondent 11) or a ‘labour shortage’ (Respondent 6), ‘knowledge shortage’ (Respondent 20) or ‘skills shortage’. Some respondents suggested that there is more of a labour shortage in general, particularly for low-skilled jobs instead of a ‘real skills shortage’ (Respondent 19). One respondent also stated that “it’s not so much of a job shortage but a knowledge shortage” (Respondent 20).

The respondents also argued for that there was a gap between the jobs that were available and the pool of potential employees and their desire for jobs in general, or particular categories of jobs. For example, an industry peak body respondent argued that “local people do not want to do casual jobs” (Respondent 20). Some respondents advanced the stereotypical view that many people in the community do not want to work but prefer to rely on social welfare (Respondent 17). Another respondent echoed this view saying that there is neither a skills nor a labour shortage in regional areas but rather, “a lot of people who prefer not to work rather than to work in what they consider to be menial job” and that seems very apparent (Respondent 19).

However, various respondents emphasised that there is a crucial need for both unskilled and skilled employees in regional Australian agribusiness. For example, the meat industry requires both skilled and unskilled labour for sustainable operations in regional plants. An industry peak body respondent observed that the, “[v]iability of the meat industry needs a continuous pool of employees in the regional area” (Respondent 17). Peak body respondents also pointed to shortages of highly skilled people such as, economists, doctors, teachers, information technology specialists and bankers, shearers, butchers, slaughterers, boners, slicers, trimmers, administrative staff, farm managers, data management specialists marketing staff, information technology specialists, robotics, engineers, mechanics, machine operators, drivers of specialized vehicles, people with horse- riding skills, specialists for new product development and drone operators in the agribusiness because of expansion of business, the changing nature of operations, transformation of the agriculture industry and trade opportunities across the globe (as indicated by Respondents 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 and 18). With an eye to the future one respondent mentioned that “[t]here are always opportunities for high skills, especially in agriculture, the way it is going now, [since] there is so much new technology coming in that a lot of farmers aren’t on top of … driverless tractors, drones and all of these sort of new things” (Respondent 20).

Skill shortages are visible in regional Queensland. The agriculture sector is traditionally family-operated and shortages of skilled employees emerge when some family members move elsewhere in pursuit of alternative careers (Respondent 12). Furthermore, the nature
of much agricultural work is seasonal and it is often physically demanding. Another respondent commented that “Australian employees don’t want to work on farms, they are not reliable as migrant workers” (Respondent 23). This comment is consistent with earlier observations that Australian-born workers are averse to working in physically taxing environments, thus creating space for migrants to fill the ‘undesirable’ roles.

There are also skill shortages in the meat industry in regional Queensland. According to an industry peak body respondent, in 2016, some 61% of people applying for jobs in the regional Queensland meat processing industry were unsuitable; that is, the majority of the applicants did not have the experience or skills for the job and some did not have the customer service, product knowledge or merchandising skills required in the meat industry (Respondent 17). Highlighting the reasons for skill shortages, it was explained that the work is unattractive to many local people due to factors like physically demanding work requiring high levels of fitness, long and inconvenient shift times, and instability in the availability of work. As this respondent explained (Respondent 17):

When we are looking for new employment locally … all of them require medical examination, pre-employment medical. There has been a lot of occasions where they have either not shown up or where they have and they got the results, they have failed it. That’s one area. Another is that they start the job and they find it’s not what they are looking for and might last a month or few days … Others … [it seems] their intention is not to work … just going through the motion of as far as the unemployment benefit. That’s another area …They don’t like the actual [shift] times. Because, you are talking about in a lot of occasions 5.30–6.00 am start and being in the regional area there is not always the opportunity for public transport. So, that could be another issue that comes to the decision of not to take up the job on or not last in the job for very well … All the tasks are fairly hands-on as far as the requirement physically to do the duties of the task. So, you can find a person that finds that, I suppose it’s not restricted to our industry, it’s any manual labour task that they find that it’s too strenuous for them.

Despite terminological differences among the respondents regarding whether there is a skill shortage, labour shortage or job shortage, stakeholders were unified in their willingness to employ any person who would enable them to maintain operations regardless of national origin or visa category. The respondents are focused on getting people with the skill required for the job and getting the right person at right time in order to meet skill shortages (Respondents 10, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21 and 24). Hence Respondent 24 commented that:

The skill shortages can be filled by anyone to match the requirements of the employer; we are not differentiating migrants apart from any other person as an eligible job seeker … it is about people available with the right skill set at the right time.

In terms of targeting migrants for work in regional agribusiness, one respondent commented that “[a]ny willing reliable worker can be used to fill these shortages including but not limited to migrants.” (Respondent 21). Similarly, another commented that employers will hire anyone “who [is] willing to undertake the work available” (Respondent 16). Most of these comments however related to low skill manual jobs in the agribusiness industry that can be performed by any willing persons. Motivation, these respondents argued, was the key.
As observed above, respondents attribute employers’ inability to find the ‘right’ person with the required skills at the ‘right’ time, as a motivation for employing temporary migrants either directly or through labour hire companies. This represents not necessarily a preference for migrant labour, but a limit in alternative options. Interestingly one respondent in the agribusiness sector commented that employers would not hire temporary migrants if they could meet their employee needs locally (Respondent 6).

7.2 Evaluating the benefits of temporary migrant workers

It is evident from the discussion above that employers in the region argue their willingness to employ any person that they think can do the job. Most of the jobs in the agribusiness sector are filled by hiring people through informal networks, ‘word of mouth’, local newspaper advertisements or through labour hire companies (Respondent 12). We found that in effect, in regional Queensland agriculture, this led to a high level of dependence on temporary migrant workers such as back packers/working holiday makers and seasonal Pacific Islander workers who come to Australia for a short period of time. The pivotal role of temporary workers in this sector is unchallenged with one respondent observing: “Without migrants it [horticulture industry] will be unsustainable” (Respondent 2 and another going still further: “Without them [i.e., temporary migrants] we will not have a business” (Respondent 6).

Respondents highlighted aspects of backpacker workers that make them attractive to potential employers in agribusiness. Backpackers are available to work for short periods based on the season of a particular crop; they are keen to work, often preferring to stay on the farm making them available for flexible shift work based on the weather condition and workload on the farm and are willing to work in demanding manual jobs that Australian-born workers may avoid. The availability and willingness of backpackers was not their only asset, our respondents argued. Some backpackers’ skills are in demand in the Australian agricultural industry (Respondent 16). Temporary migrants under the Seasonal Worker Program from the Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste are also valued in agribusiness.

While responding to a question about characteristics of migrants a respondent (Respondent 21) referred to the benefits of continuity with this program:

Regional producers who engage in the Seasonal Worker Program do so because they have invested in the training and temporary relocation of the workers for that season, often the workers will return for consecutive seasons and this is of importance to the producers involved as it provides them with a reliable work force that have transferrable skills from one season to the next. The common factor in accessing this program is that the workers are known to be more flexible and committed to remaining for the designated period of time. This reduces training and induction costs to the employer for each season of new workers. Producers will rely on itinerant workforce where additional short-term workers are needed.

Despite the apparent convenience for employers, there are problems associated with hiring temporary migrants. Strict visa conditions and associated procedural aspects are considered as a hurdle for employers who wish to hire temporary migrants (Respondents 2, 3, 7 and 17). For example, obtaining overseas workers is quite difficult due to strict government regulation on visa condition (e.g., duration), time taken to process the visa application, requirement of obtaining a minimum English language competency and required
remuneration levels of $55,000–58,000 (Respondent 17). As per the Federal Register of Legislation (2017), the minimum standard of English proficiency for a 457 visa was IELTS 5. In addition, temporary visa holders, e.g., Seasonal Worker Program/Temporary Work (International Relations, subclass 403) for citizens of Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste, are required to leave Australia after specified timeframe in compliance with their visa conditions and then to later apply for a new visa. Under the Seasonal Worker Program employees with a temporary working visa may work only for the sponsoring employer for a period of seven months and then must return to their country of origin. They are, however, allowed to return to Australia later under a new contract.

Furthermore, due to the nature of seasonal work and the associated dependence on a transient workforce (backpackers), the turnover rate is usually high in the agriculture sector. Except for the Seasonal Worker Program, high labour turnover means that in most cases new workers have to be employed for jobs which results in additional costs and lower productivity (Respondent 2). Furthermore, employers are confronted by the reality that as most of the backpackers are unskilled and on short duration visas and harbour a desire to travel around the country, and also lack the motivation to upgrade their skills (Respondent 3). A common view is that backpackers earn money in one place and spend it elsewhere (Respondent 12) and that “backpackers come and go which is not good for business” (Respondent 6).

On the other hand, there are instances of exploitation of temporary migrant workers that some regard as ‘modern day slavery’. In 2013–2014, the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) assessed 1,029 workplaces employing temporary migrants and found that for 338 employees, position and wage obligations were not met (FWO, 2014). In the agricultural industry 25,650 complaints were made to the FWO by workers claiming to have been abused (Collins et al., 2016; FWO, 2014). It is pertinent that in a recent investigation in New South Wales it was found that a reputable employer in the meat processing industry, a local government council and a major retail trader worked together “to create an endless supply of disposable, exploitable workers” (Australian Meat Industry Employees Union, 2018). It is alleged that a labour hire company would recruit workers from China, Taiwan, Korea and other Asian countries for a large meat processor and that 80% of the employees of that factory were temporary migrant workers. It was further alleged that the labour hire company told these workers to rent their accommodation from properties owned by associates of the labour hire company and to pay a $500 bond to an associated company as a condition of receiving additional work opportunity. Responding to these concerns, the Queensland government introduced the Labour Hire Licencing Bill 2017 to ensure more accountability and fairness to the employees. More recently, some employers have commenced employing humanitarian entrants (refugees) and other permanent migrant workers instead of temporary migrants to avoid the complications associated with hiring people from overseas or the labour hiring companies (Respondent 20).

7.3 Employing permanent migrants to address skill shortages in agribusiness

While there is a push from the industry bodies and employers to simplify the process of hiring overseas labour, there is also some community resentment regarding the use of
temporary migrants when there is a large youth unemployment in regional Queensland (Respondent 19). There is also evidence to suggest that migrants are disadvantaged with regards to employment as we have discussed above (Department of Employment, 2017a; Diversity Council of Australia, 2014; Hugo et al., 2014; Productivity Commission, 2016; Queensland Treasury & Trade, 2013). For example, unemployment rates among migrants are higher compared to overall unemployment rate in Queensland (Department of Employment, 2017b) and there is evidence that humanitarian entrants (refugees) skills are underutilised (Department of Immigration and Citizenship [DIAC], 2011).

7.3.1 Benefits for employers

Employing permanent migrants in regional agribusiness has potential socioeconomic benefits for employers as well as the wider community. Characteristics ascribed to migrant workers by respondents is detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Characteristics of migrant workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good work ethic</td>
<td>Respondent 1, 5, 6 &amp; 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitude towards work</td>
<td>Respondent 16 &amp; 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to do what needs to be done</td>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-motivated</td>
<td>Respondent 9 &amp; 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive</td>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to learn</td>
<td>Respondent 6 &amp; 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to succeed</td>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardworking</td>
<td>Respondent 8, 16 &amp; 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>Respondent 1, 9 &amp; 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diligent</td>
<td>Respondent 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive</td>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>Respondent 2 &amp; 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilient</td>
<td>Respondent 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thankful and happy to have a job</td>
<td>Respondent 1 &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take pride in the work</td>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author generated

Interviewees saw value in the diversity brought to the workplace by immigrants, specifically that they add different perspectives to workplace and culture (Respondent 8) and they often bring a variety of skills from overseas that often benefit the organisation (Respondent 7). They also contribute to increased tolerance in the workplace (Respondent 5). Related to the issue of skill, migrants often show new ways of doing things and thus broaden horizon of knowledge at workplace (Respondent 16). Getting employees with appropriate skillsets helps local industries to grow. It was also stated that the agricultural and tourism industries are likely to benefit from the experience of migrants, their knowledge of potential export markets and their linkage with their country of origin may contribute to business growth (Respondent 13). For example, migrants bring knowledge about markets for Australian products in their home countries and the preferences of those consumers in terms of
packaging and marketing. Such knowledge may help Australian businesses to expand through extended supply chains and new market opportunities.

Migrant workers often bring skillsets that are beneficial for agribusiness employers (Respondents 8, 13 and 18). According to one interviewee “migrants can bring in skill sets that [are lacking] in regional Queensland, especially in the farming industry” (Respondent 18). Collins et al. (2016, p. 2) argued that migrants with farming backgrounds may add value to local farming practice through “knowledge and skills in growing particular crops, achieving more productive and sustainable land management practices”. Further migrants have “contributed substantially to establishment of the modern horticulture industries in Australia and have been highly successful at introducing new crops” (Collins et al., 2016, p. 2).

As environmental sustainability is becoming an increasingly important issue in the global economy, there has been research interest in how people from diverse ethnic background may facilitate environmentally sensitive and conservative agricultural practices (Sommers & Napier 1993; Paterson, 1989). A recent report (Brown, 2017) described how the Burundian community in North-West Victoria who came as refugees successfully established a community garden in collaboration with the local community and demonstrated new ways of cultivating maize. There is also historical evidence showing the positive contributions of the Dutch, Italian, German, Scandinavian, Indian, and Chinese migrants in the Australian agricultural sector (Collins et al., 2016). Some employers have even indicated that migrant workers have the physical structure (finger size and shape) which is suitable for agricultural activities such as removing weeds in the field (Respondent 20). It was also reported by employers that turnover intention of migrant workers is lower compared to that of the whole organisation (Respondents 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7).

7.3.2 Benefits for the community

Besides visible benefits for the employers, there are also potential socioeconomic benefits for regional and rural communities. A government official explained that many migrants are from rural backgrounds and settling them in the rural and regional areas will be beneficial for the migrants as well as the receiving communities (Respondent 12). Migrants bring with them a wide range of financial, human, and social capital (Productivity Commission, 2016) which is not always utilised.

According to our informants “different experience brings in diversity to the regions” (Respondent 16) and diversity is good for society (Respondents 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13 and 14). Another responded argued “Australia is very multicultural but less so in the rural areas” (Respondent 18). Diversity increases acceptance and tolerance in the society (Respondents 5 and 14), increases the richness of life experience (Respondent 13), breaks down preconceived ideas about others (Respondent 2), raises awareness of other cultures and develops the cultural fabric of the society (Respondent 10). Migrants are said to bring cultural wealth such as food, sports and cultural diversity (Respondents 9, 12, 13 and 23). As one interviewee commented “I think it is quite important for broadening the horizon (of knowledge) in the regions” (Respondent 16). In a diverse community, children interact with each other at school and adults mix with each other resulting in an increased understanding
and cohesiveness in the community (Respondent 4). The contribution of migrants in the society is summarised by an industry peak body representative (Respondent 16):

> When they have kind of welcomed by the community, and then they integrate quite easily, then they kind of bring another level in to the region, they bring more experiences, they bring different food, they bring, you know, different ways of thinking, they build the community and they help the community when needed.

From the economic perspective migrants are viewed as opening up “massive opportunities for economic activities in the regional areas” (Respondent 12). Respondent 17 argued that meat factories in the regional Queensland are big stakeholders in the region and to keep those industries viable there is a need for workers. Any shortage of labour may affect the viability of the industry and have a domino effect on the economy of the region or community. Settlement of migrants in the regional areas may help economic growth in regional areas. Examples of economic contributions may also include business growth due to consumer demand, growth in the rental market, and more students in the schools. Furthermore, a major portion of the money earned by the migrant community is spent locally and that contributes to the local economy (Respondents 1, 4, 14 and 21). With regards to the economic benefits of migrants (including the temporary migrants) on the regional economy, an industry peak body (Respondent 21) argued that:

> All workers employed within a community present the opportunity for contributing to the economic viability of that community. It is recognised that whilst income generated in each region will in some form be returned to the community of which the worker originated. However, they still provide a contribution to the community and pastoral care duties of the employer should be encouraged so that the worker contributes to the community during their stay.

Immigrants may also complement the local workforce rather than displace local employees, and in the process increase productivity, especially by filling skill shortages (Productivity Commission, 2016). In addition, migrants often bring entrepreneurship into the community and create new businesses. Highlighting the entrepreneurship of the refugees an industry peak body representative observed that “[t]he refugees bring lot of skills with them and that itself can drive economy; because they have the capacity to set up their own businesses” (Respondent 19). Similarly, a Queensland study of the employment experience of refugees and their employment aspirations, found that “[r]efugees from the Burmese communities (regardless of employment status) were the most interested in starting their own business” (Hebbani et al., 2015, p. 44). Similarly, Collins and his colleagues’ (2016) research on the contribution of migrants in improving productivity in Australian agriculture also found that skilled migrants engaged in the agriculture sector were more likely to setup their own businesses.

### 7.3.3 Benefits for the nation

From a national perspective, migration has a wide array of benefits and in this regard it is interesting that a survey conducted by the Lowy Institute found that most people have a
positive view about immigration and its effect on Australia’s economy (Lowy, 2016). However, Healey (2016, p. 1) argues that “despite the widespread proof of Australia’s migrant-driven economic resilience, our enviable immigration story is hardly recognised, let alone celebrated widely by our government or businesses”. In 2015, the Migration Council of Australia (MCA) undertook a comprehensive modelling of Australia’s migration program and concluding that migration will: account for 40% of GDP by 2050, add $1.6 trillion to Australia’s economy, increase GDP per capita by 5.9%, increase labour force participation by 15% and enhance low skilled after-tax wages by 21.9% (MCA, 2015). According to CEDA (2016) permanent migrants bring accumulated wealth (savings), facilitate linkage to home country funds (foreign capital), add opportunities and demand for scale, and strengthen the national innovation system (infrastructure), fill skill gaps (health and education system), facilitate export and imports (foreign trade), add thickness to domestic markets (demand), bring a strong work attitude and motivation (social capital) and add to product and labour market competition (business environment).

Migration also has non-economic implication for the composition of Australian society. A recent report by the Deloitte Access Economics and AIMS reported that when well-facilitated, settlement of migrants in the regional areas of Australia “makes a significant contribution to the economic and social fabric of regional communities” (AMES & Deloitte Access Economics 2018, p. 3). Cameron et al. (2012, p. 125) argued that:

Key benefits of skilled migrants include the economic benefits (growing the population and skilled workers) and the cultural diversity migrants bring to regions and the follow-on effects this bring to the social fabric of a community.

It is also argued that under the right circumstances, cultural diversity may promote social tolerance, foster bridging social capital and reduce insularity (Carrington, McIntosh, & Walmsley, 2007; Productivity Commission, 2016). According to the Productivity Commission (2016, p. 2)

Australia’s current immigration profile is projected to deliver a demographic dividend to Australia and higher economic output per person. By increasing the proportion of people in the workforce, immigration can reduce the impacts of population ageing, but it does not offer a long-term panacea—immigrants age too.

It is estimated that without migration, the proportion of the population aged over 65 years would rise from 15% in 2014 to 30% in 2060.

### 7.4 Barriers to employing migrants in regional areas

From the literature review and the opinions of the participants in this study, we have identified a range of barriers to the employment and settlement of migrants in regional areas. The first category is related to the migrants themselves and includes issues such as language proficiency, overseas skill recognition, not having right skills for the job, lack of knowledge about jobs in regional areas, lack of communication between employers and migrants, and unwillingness to work in regional or rural areas.
7.4.1 Individual issues

**Language:** Irrespective of industry type the prime barrier for employing migrants was found to be their English language proficiency (Respondents 3, 5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 17 and 20). Obviously this made it difficult for managers to communicate with employees and hindered their ability to understand instructions, especially safety instructions. Inability to communicate in English may even contribute to turnover as workers lacking English language proficiency find it difficult to cope (Respondent 20). The inability of many permanent migrants to communicate effectively also encourages managers and employers to hire temporary visa holders as the English language proficiency pre-requisite ensures a functional level of English in the workplace.

As noted above, 25% of migrants who found a job after arrival reported language was a barrier in finding a job (ABS, 2016). Hebbani and colleagues’ (2015, p. 8) study on refugee employment and aspirations found that “English language proficiency (i.e., speaking, writing, and reading) continues to be a key barrier to finding employment”. They also found that there was a medium effect of size for association between employment and ability to speak English ($V = .35; \chi^2 [6, N =211] = 53.11, p <.001$) and write English ($V = .34; \chi^2 [6, N =211] = 51.71, p <.001$). However, the association between English reading proficiency and employment was small ($V = .27; \chi^2 [6, N =211] = 32.93, p <.001$).

**Skill Recognition:** Skill recognition was another barrier to migrant employment (Respondents 8, 10 and 18) even though there is a system in place for skills recognition for both the professions and the trades including the agribusiness sector.

As indicated earlier in section 3.3.1, although a majority of the skilled migrants are highly educated they tend to be employed in jobs that do not match their educational qualifications. In an earlier study Correa-Velez and Onsando (2009) found that refugees who are permanent migrants struggled to get their overseas qualifications recognised in Australia. A recent study (Hebbani et al., 2015, p. 44) found that “[t]here are many participants who worked in specific industries in their home country and who had to transition into a job in a different field”. As observed above 49% of migrants are not utilising their skills and experiences obtained overseas due to a lack of opportunity (Deloitte Access Economics, 2018). According to this report, the total cost per annum due to underutilisation of the skills of the migrants is over $219 million (Deloitte Access Economics, 2018). The report also estimated that if the skills of the migrants are better utilised, it will have positive impact on economic outputs contributing to productivity and as a result in ten years’ time Queensland’s economy would be $250 million larger.

**Communication between employers and migrants:** Interview participants also identified a problem in a lack of communication between the employers and the migrant community (Respondents 10, 13 and 18). Many migrants may be unaware of job opportunities in regional industries because of their limited involvement with the mainstream community while employers often have limited connection with migrant communities resulting in an inability to utilise the skills that are available in the migrant community (Respondent 13). But this problem may not be confined to migrants as “regional Australia struggles to attract
anyone whether it is migrant or Australian citizens … [a] lot of … migrants do not realise the opportunities in regional Australia” (Respondent 18). Based on opinions of twenty stakeholders who successfully settled migrants in regional areas, the Regional Australia Institute (2018, p. 2) reported that “[t]here is currently no systemic ways for migrant workers to link up with rural employers, nor is there a systemic policy or integrated support mechanism to facilitate secondary migration away from metropolitan cities”.

**Unwillingness to work in regional areas:** Respondents identified a number of issues that affect migrants’ decision to locate in regional areas. Respondent 20 stated that many migrants are unwilling to take up jobs and settle in regional areas. Another attributed this unwillingness to a lack of meaningful employment opportunities fitting their aspirations and qualifications (Respondent 5). As observed above (see section 4.3.2), often migrants are employed in roles that are not commensurate with their educational qualifications. Some respondents (Respondents 1 and 12) identified the unwelcoming attitude of local communities as a reason for the unwillingness among the migrants to work in regional areas. This echoes the findings of an earlier study in Queensland (Hebbani et al., 2015, p. 95) in which some participants “thought that their neighbours were unwelcoming”.

Furthermore, issues such as the lack of opportunities for a good education for their children (Respondent 2), lack of a communication network/infrastructure (e.g., telephone and internet) to communicate with family members (Respondents 16 and 20), lack of information about regional areas or negative portrayal of regional areas in the media (Respondents 2, 8, 13, 15 and 18), social isolation or lack of people from same community/cultural background in regional areas (Respondents 5, 12 and 20), absence of cultural associations (Respondents 12 and 13), lack of cultural or social events (Respondent 1), lack of support service from specialised settlement organisations (Respondent 19), and the lifestyle of regional areas (Respondents 8 and 23) were also identified as barriers for migrants’ decision to settle and work in regional areas. These issues will be discussed further while discussing barriers for skilled migrant settlement in regional areas below.

**7.4.2 Work related issues**

**Nature of the work:** Work in the agricultural sector is mostly labour intensive and (Respondent 10, 16, 17 and 20) and often does not provide year-long income due to its seasonality. It is argued that because of the nature of seasonal work, temporary workers are employed in the agriculture sector (Respondents 3, 6, 7 and 8).

**Cultural barriers:** Employers, industry peak bodies and other stakeholders also identified cultural barriers as contributing to employers resistance to employing migrants (Respondents 3, 13, 17 and 20). Some employees are accustomed to a different work culture than that prevailing in Australia; specifically, strict start and finish times in meat processing, flexible work schedules in the agriculture sector due to weather conditions (Respondent 17), and religious practices requiring prayers at times which may not be compatible with the requirements of the job (Respondent 13).
**Workplace attitudes**: The workplace environment and the attitude of employers may affect employment of migrants in regional industries. A respondent argued that as more and more people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are entering regional workplace, people need to be more culturally sensitive and able to accommodate differences (Respondent 13). In a study of refugee employment in South-East Queensland most participants were found to be happy with their employers and colleagues, but some experienced poor treatment by colleagues and employers. For example, under-payment and the inability of work colleagues to understand limitations of migrants’ experience and ability to handle office equipment such as computers, were of concern for some of participants in that research (Hebbani et al., 2015).

While there are many highly-skilled migrants as discussed earlier in this report (see section 3.3) and while there a growing need for highly skilled workers in the regional agribusiness, migrants are mostly employed in the low skilled end of the job spectrum that are shunned by the local population (Respondent 16). This view is not confined to our respondents, with a Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS) report stating that “[i]n regional Australia, humanitarian migrants [refugees] make a significant contribution to labour shortages in low-skill, low-status and low-paid occupations which other Australians are unwilling to take” (Schech, 2014, cited in QCOSS, 2014, p. 14). Such stereotypes about the migrant community may act as a barrier for identifying skilled migrants with appropriate skills for the agribusiness. In a study among African refugees (permanent migrants), Correa-Velez and Onsando (2009, p. 114) found this group were “more likely to take jobs that are below their level of skills and qualifications [and] are more dissatisfied with their jobs”. In a study among skilled migrants (N = 50) in the Ballarat, Bendigo and Warrnambool areas of Victoria, Wickramaarachchi and Butt (2014) found that the workplace satisfaction (e.g., engaged in a paid work and job relevant to qualification) significantly (p < .01) contributed to skilled migrants’ preference to settle in regional Australia. It may be useful to tap into the pool of highly skilled migrants to work in the regional areas.

**Social network within workplace**: Lack of social networks within the workplace is also a factor that affects employees’ decisions to work in any industry. An agribusiness peak body suggested that a support network at work is important to retain employees in the agriculture sector (Respondent 14). Another respondent commented that “when people feel they are part of the work community,, they stay” (Respondent 16).

**Industry location**: Industry location may also be a reason attracting people to larger cities. Respondents also highlighted a lack of a transportation network as a barrier for migrants to work in regional areas (Respondent 6 and 17) According to the respondents, the unavailability of suitable public transport in regional and rural areas restricts migrants—who do not have their own transport—and poses a major hurdle in accessing workplaces, particularly in rural and regional areas where distances from residences to places of work are larger.

### 7.5 Barriers to migrant settlement in regional areas

There is overwhelming evidence that employment is important for successful resettlement in new country (Ager & Strang, 2008; Colic-Peisker & Tibury, 2003, Correa-Velez & Onsando,
Respondents identified a number of reasons that negatively affect migrants’ motivation to settle in regional and rural areas.

7.5.1 Individual issues

The first theme in the category of individual issues that represent impediments to migrant employment in the regions is language proficiency (Respondents 1, 3 and 12), and an inability or unwillingness among the migrant community to integrate with the mainstream community (Respondents 1, 12 and 13). Inability to communicate with others in English is also a barrier for migrants at workplaces as well as in the community (Respondent 6). Our results are consistent with Hebbani et al. (2015) who found that some of their respondents did not communicate with their neighbours “due to communication issues and low English language proficiency” (p. 95).

7.5.2 Work related issues

The second domain relates to characteristics of work (fit) and patterns of employment. Employers identified a lack of employment opportunity in regional areas have been a barrier for regional settlement of migrants (Respondent 5 and 7). It was also indicated by the respondents that there is a lack of awareness among the migrant communities about the opportunities available in the regional industries and employers in the regional areas are also unable to tap into the pool of potential employees from CALD background (Respondent 3). This argument is consistent with earlier studies (e.g., QCOSS, 2014; Wickramaarachchi & Butt, 2014) who argued that employment is a key driver for migrants to settle in regional areas. Getting a job relevant to their qualifications is an important issue which was discussed in sections 3.1 and 6.4.2 of this report.

7.5.3 Infrastructure and support services

The third domain is facilities and infrastructure in regional areas. Respondents identified a lack of assistance from specialised settlement-support organisations (Respondent 19), lack of adequate communication network/infrastructures (i.e., telephone and Internet) to communicate with family members (Respondents 16 and 20), lack of opportunities for quality education for children (Respondent 2) and lack of information about regional areas (Respondents 2, 8, 13 and 15) as factors that may affect migrants’ decision to settle in regional areas.

In this regard, we note the QCOSS (2014) observation that attracting and retaining people in regional areas is a complex issue. Factors such as access to government-funded services (education and health), access to humanitarian settlement services, affordable housing, availability of jobs, and support from the ethnic communities are success factors for regional dispersal. However, the crucial support provided by the local community and the contribution of community social capital is frequently overlooked in the findings.
7.5.4 Social aspects

Respondents also identified issues such as social isolation or lack of community with shared cultural, language and ethnic background in regional areas (Respondents 5, 12 and 20) and, absence of cultural associations (Respondents 12 and 13) as issues that adversely affect migrants' decision to settle in regional areas. In addition, migrants who are from densely populated countries may regard thinly populated geographically large regions, and the associated (perceived) social isolation, with dread (Respondent 8, 13, 14 and 20). Some of these perceptions are well founded, some of our respondents argued. For example, an agriculture industry peak body respondent described the situation as:

Some of these farms are extremely isolated. They are 200,000 hectare farms, so once you are there, that's it, you are not in the town, and you are just living in the farm. So to get people want to move there and live that lifestyle is probably the biggest challenge (Respondent 20).

Lack of cultural or social events (Respondent 1) may also contribute to migrants' decisions not to settle in a regional area. Interestingly, in a study on migrant settlement, Wickramaarachchi and Butt (2014) also found significant correlation between intention to move and practicing culture \( (p < .01) \).

A lack of awareness of other cultures among the local community (Respondent 13) may adversely affect migrants' experiences in regional areas. The lack of exposure to the outside world of many Australians may impede their ability to understand other cultures and results in fear of unknown and a preconceived idea about the migrant population based on negative portrayals in the media (Respondent 13). Apart from the above issues, attitudes of the local community, an unwelcoming host community (Respondent 1 and 12), and the slow paced lifestyle (Respondents 8 and 23) may also negatively influence migrants' decisions to settle in regional areas.

Our findings reinforce earlier studies that explored the settlement of migrants in regional Australia and the barriers potential migrants to these regions saw as impeding their willingness to resettle. In a study of skilled migrants in regional Queensland, Cameron et al. (2012) found that employment for self and spouse, social and cultural tolerance and inclusion, opportunities for cultural activities and appropriate service support such as transportation, accommodation, healthcare and childcare were key drivers of decisions to remain in regional areas. Unlike Wickramaarachchi and Butt (2014), Cameron and colleagues found that lifestyle reasons (42.2%) had a greater influence than employment (18.8%) on skilled migrants remaining in regional areas. A study on refugee settlement in regional Queensland (Schech, 2014) identified issues such as support from the ethnic community, the presence of a critical mass of refugees from a similar background, work opportunities and access to a range of services as drivers for successful resettlement of refugees. Similarly, Baker, Hyland and Soosay's (2013) study of attraction and retention of migrants and their families in rural and remote communities in Queensland found that the key elements were again access to services (such as childcare, healthcare and education), contentment with the current job and social participation of workers and their families.
According to Baker and colleagues (2013), social participation is dependent upon people’s perception of their quality of life and how it matches their expectations prior to re-settlement. The authors recommended that measures such as re-designing work to increase flexibility, providing social amenities and activities that nurture a sense of belonging to the local community, and providing incentives and benefits with regards to health, education accommodation for workers and their families may help attract and retain workers in the regional areas.

Drawing on studies on refugee re-settlement in South East Queensland, Correa-Velez, Spaaij and Upham (2012) and also Correa-Velez and Onsando (2009) similarly found that people in the project areas experienced discrimination at public places, difficulty in getting services such as housing and healthcare, and negative attitudes in education institutions. In contrast a successful settlement program conducted in Central Queensland in 2010—2011 found the local community to be supportive of the migrant community (Casy, n.d.). In a three--year longitudinal study among temporary and permanent migrant workers in the rural agricultural industries in five states, Collins et al. (2016) reported that the migrants experienced local residents as warm and welcoming. These contrasting findings of migrant settlement may be explained by a variety of reasons including procedural factors, such as the way settlement is carried out and the level of engagement with the local community at different stages of settlement; and contextual issues, such as the locality chosen for settlement, economic conditions in the area, availability of appropriate resources in the community, and the ethnicity and cultural backgrounds of the refugees.

7.5.5 Government policy

The initial settlement of migrants in big cities has been identified as a barrier to attracting migrants to regional areas. Once people are settled in big cities where there are greater numbers of people from a similar background it becomes relatively difficult to encourage them to shift (Respondents 1, 4 and 18). Hence a government respondent commented:

Most of the migration goes to the east coast major cities whether we offer the right lifestyle, infrastructure, or access or whatever might be. It is extremely challenging to get people thinking out[side] of those major population centres to regional Australia (Respondent 18).

The QCOSS (2014) argues that initial settlement of refugees and asylum seekers in regional areas would be useful to avoid social problems and inter-ethnic tensions which apparently are caused by the “tendency of asylum seekers and refugees (and migrants in general) to concentrate in “migrant dense” and often low income metropolitan areas” (QCOSS, 2014, p. 14). In this regard an interviewee from the government sector commented (Respondent 18):

I think if they come from big cities somewhere else in the world’s developed cities, they will head to the big cities; but then we see the other part of migration … you know the Sudanese people who are coming to Australia, the government still place them in Sydney and all the places like that because all the support services are there
… and they are not in regional Australia. But you can see studies where eventually their families are being put in Western New South Wales farming community. They come from the farming background and those communities are welcoming and they love it because they are on the land doing what they have done all their lives, not stuck in a Western Sydney kind of ghetto.

These views are echoed in a speech by Alan Tudge (Federal Minister for Cities, Urban Infrastructure and Population) citing a report of the Scanlon Foundation:

There is an increasing geographic concentration of the overseas-born population, particularly in Melbourne and Sydney. In Sydney, there are 67 suburbs with more than 50 per cent born overseas … and with a greater concentration, there is less likelihood of interaction with established community. And therefore, slower integration (Tudge, 2018, p .6).

He also observed how communication technologies may impede the process of integration:

Today, however, diasporas can be larger, making it easier for the new migrants to settle initially, but which may limit their external interaction. Further, technology means a person can communicate easily and cheaply back to their birth country or within their own diaspora in Australia. In short, a person can more easily today live within a language and cultural bubble in suburban Australia.

Australia grants 19,500 visas for refugees every year for permanent residence; however, a majority of humanitarian entrants are settled in metropolitan areas in the context of providing better services to them (QCOSS, 2014). Recent settlement of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Fairfield (New South Wales) is an example of an emerging flashpoint between government policy towards migrant settlement and media, public and political discourse (Fernando, 2018). While the Australian Government is occasionally critical of migrant concentration in the urban areas, government policy is primarily directed to settling refugees in specific settlement zones. As the Department of Social Services (2017, p. 1) states:

The Australian Government works to ensure the best assistance possible is provided to each person when they arrive in Australia, and in the months ahead as they settle into their new life. Some of the considerations include:

- Availability of mainstream services such as health and education;
- Opportunities for employment;
- The size and ethnic/cultural/religious composition of potential settlement communities;
- The potential for the harmonious settlement of the specific group.

Clearly, this approach contributes to settlement of refugees in urban zones, and is a significant barrier to (re)settling migrants in regional areas. The skills of the migrant population (including the refugees), their social capital and capacity of our regional communities are often ignored in such settlement policies. Emphasising the need for population growth in regional areas, a government respondent (Respondent 18) stated:
I just think that we can change the Australian Government’s view on how they support and deal with migration in Australia, where it is basically putting them into major population centres, in actually put them out to the regions where we have a skill shortage, where we want population growth. That is the number one thing.

In the past governments at different levels have invested in re-settling migrants in regional areas. Incentives in terms of relocation assistance is offered to eligible people to take up jobs in the regional areas. According to QCOSS (2014, p. 14):

The Australian Government’s dispersal policies to settle new arrivals in less culturally diverse and less populated areas is considered to speed up integration and enable these areas to share in the economic, cultural and social benefits that immigrants can contribute to addressing job shortages, and to the revitalisation of country towns.

However, the concept of re-settlement after initial settlement in the metropolitan areas is problematic due to the additional cost to government and the immense inconvenience for people who are uprooted from a place where they are already settled. With regards to re-settlement of migrants in Australia, a public service respondent commented: “They congregate in the cities and it is extremely challenging to get the people think about getting out of those major population centres to regional Australia” (Respondent 18).

There is also mounting evidence that large concentration of people in metropolitan areas cause pressure on environment, infrastructure and cost of living (CEDA 2016; Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011; Hugo, 2008a; Productivity Commission, 2016; Wickramaarachchi & Butt, 2014). Highlighting the same point, a respondent (Respondent 18) argued:

If big cities have so many social infrastructure issues then they (the Government) are making it worse and worse as migrants are all going there where it has roads, transport, infrastructure, housing costs and social issues. They have got all these problems and they are going to pump more and more people into there and making it worse.

In Table 4 we summarise the barriers to employment and settlement of migrants in regional Queensland.
### Table 4: Barriers to employment and settlement of migrants in regional Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Barrier for Employment</th>
<th>Barrier for settlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td>• Lack of language proficiency</td>
<td>• Lack of language proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Skill recognition</td>
<td>• Inability or lack of willingness among the migrant community to integrate with the mainstream community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inability to fulfilling job requirement</td>
<td>• Inability to fulfilling job requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication between employers and migrants</td>
<td>• Communication between employers and migrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unwillingness to work in regional areas</td>
<td>• Communication between employers and migrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work</strong></td>
<td>• Nature of work</td>
<td>• Lack of meaningful employment opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cultural</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Workplace attitude</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Social network within workplace</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Industry location</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of transportation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication network/infrastructure</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Support from specialised settlement support organisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of opportunity for good education for the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of integrated promotion of regional areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Social isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of people from same community/cultural background in regional areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Absence of cultural association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of cultural or social events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Migrants' backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of awareness of other cultures among the local community.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Attitude of local community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Slow-paced lifestyle of regional area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government policy</strong></td>
<td>Government policy on sourcing employees for agribusiness.</td>
<td>Government policy driving initial urban settlement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author generated

### 7.6 Reasons for migrant settlement in regional areas

This research also sought to identify factors that may motivate migrants to settle in regional areas. According to the interviewees non-employment related reasons for settling in regional areas.
areas include: natural beauty of regional areas and (Respondent 8), relaxing lifestyle (Respondents 5, 8, 10, 13 and 18); living costs (Respondents 10 and 14), affordable housing (Respondent 2, 5, 9 and 19), and ease of raising family in small community (Respondents 2, 5 and 18). In this regard one respondent remarked “if you come [with] a young family and stuff like that I do not think there is a better place to bring up your children then rural Queensland or regional Australia” (Respondent 18). Other respondents referred to shorter commutes to work allowing for more time with the family (Respondents 10 and 18).

Some earlier studies argued the importance of child care and education of children as drivers for migrant settlement (Baker et al., 2013; QCOSS, 2014). However, there were differing opinions among our interviewees on whether children’s education is a motivator or barrier in the decision to settle in regional areas. While an industry peak body representative and a government sector interviewee argued that regional Australia provides good educational opportunities (Respondents 2 and 18), other stakeholders indicated a lack of good education for children as a barrier for settlement in regional Australia (Respondents 6 and 9).

Availability of people from same cultural background and family connection was found to be a driver for migrant settlement (Respondents 6, 12, 13 and 18). However, ensuring a critical mass of people from a similar ethnic or cultural background is of utmost importance for settlement in regional areas. One respondent commented that “if there is a group of people from same background, people will come to regional areas” (Respondent 6). A critical mass can include a pool of friends and relatives, and opportunities for practicing joint cultural activities, which scholars argue shape migrants’ perception of safety and act as a key driver for migrants to settle in a place (Hugo, 2008a; Hugo, 2008b; Wickramaarachchi & Butt, 2014; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008).

While there is some evidence that migrants perceive that local communities hold negative attitudes to the newcomers (see section 6.5.4), many interviewees felt that welcoming host communities were an attraction for migrants to settle in regional areas (Respondents 9, 11, 12 and 18). Respondents also mentioned other issues such as opportunity to know more people compared to big cities (Respondent 3), support from the employers (Respondent 1), and help from local community (Respondent 8), less crime (Respondent 9), ease of moving around (due to small geographical area) (Respondent 2) may attract migrants in regional areas.

8 Policy Issues

8.1 Promotion of regional communities

There is a commonly held ‘metro-centric’ assumption that if migrants move to regional Australia they may end up unemployed as limited jobs in the regional areas impede the resettlement of migrants. The responses from employers and industry peak bodies suggest that the regions are not appropriately promoted (Respondent 13) resulting in many potential employees including migrants being unaware of the opportunities available in the regional areas (Respondents 8, 10, 15, 18 and 20). Stakeholders suggest that the three levels of
government co-operate to promote regional areas and to involve the leaders of migrant communities in this process. As respondents from industry peak bodies (Respondents 8, 18 and 20) and other stakeholders (Respondents 10 and 13) indicated, migrants are often unaware of regional areas and the associated opportunities.

8.2 Stakeholder communication

A sense of belonging in the workplace and the community is very important in retaining employees at work and in any community. The importance of feeling part of the workforce (social network) in an organisation has been highlighted earlier (see section 6.4.2) in discussing work related barriers for employment. The importance of this sense of belonging was summed up neatly by an interviewee from an agriculture peak body “social support is quite important ... when you feel like you belong to the community and when you feel like you are part of the society and when you are supported that obviously influence you to stay” (Respondent 16). It is also suggested that this extends to ensuring that rural and regional communities are aware of the new arrivals and can welcome them (Respondents 10, 13, 15 and 18). Our findings also suggest a dearth of communication between government and the community. For example, one interviewee believed that local communities were largely unaware of the settlement program in the regional areas (Respondent 15), thus inhibiting communities from preparing to accommodate and welcome migrants.

In discussing the barriers for employment in regional areas, stakeholders suggested, like the communities themselves, migrants were inhibited by ignorance of the opportunities. Many migrants, they argued, were unaware of the opportunities in regional areas and that equally regionally-based employers lacked communication channels that would enable them to tap into the unexplored talents within migrant. It is recommended that a framework be developed for smooth communication among stakeholders; i.e., government at different levels, industry peak bodies, local communities and migrant communities.

8.3 Labour market development

Several studies (Ager & Strang, 2008; Colic-Peisker & Tibury, 2003, Correa-Velez & Onsando, 2009; Hebbani et al., 2015; Valtonen, 2004; Wickramaarachchi & Butt, 2014) show that employment is a key driver for people to migrate and settle in regional areas. Similarly, it was recommended that government settlement programs should incorporate an employment strategy in the settlement plan (Respondent 15). While employment is a key driver for settlement, it is also important to identify the needs of the regional areas and to plan settlement of migrants accordingly (Respondent 15). However, identification of the skills and attributes required for migrants to obtain a meaningful employment in regional agricultural, manufacturing and food processing sectors may involve specific training programs being developed. There is also a need to identify the actual skill shortage depending on the evolution of the agribusiness industries so that skill matching can occur as far as possible. As Respondent 16 stated “understanding the requirements of the industry and where the shortfall is and where migrants can add value is very important”. In this regard our attention was drawn to the skill-matching systems in place in Canada which informs potential immigrants of opportunities for migration to Canada because of their skill matching with the needs of that particular region in Canada. In a Canadian provincial program
“workers can gain a path to permanent residence in low and middle-skilled occupations, and language requirements are less stringent than the national level” (Sumption, 2014, p. 12). The provinces of Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Ontario in Canada introduced programs to attract immigrant farmers to their provinces. Apart from Canada, there is also evidence that the USA, UK and Germany governments have also immigrants with farming skills settle in the regional areas (Collins et al., 2016).

As discussed above, this research found that there are skills shortages at different levels in the agriculture, manufacturing and food and meat processing industries in regional Queensland and the full potential of migrants is not always utilised despite their higher levels of educational background compared to the mainstream society. The interviews and secondary data suggest that there will be significant changes in job requirements in the coming decades and this is likely to lead to a demand for highly skilled professionals. Already there is a demand for IT specialists, technicians, data managers, and supervisors besides low-skilled employees (Respondents 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 and 18). It is therefore recommended that migration policy and settlement needs to be better planned and integrated and founded on a needs assessment of regional areas.

8.4 Skills recognition

As highlighted above, skills recognition appears to be a barrier to employing migrants in the rural and regional industries (Respondents 8, 10 and 18; Queensland Treasury & Trade, 2013). The system of skills recognition apparently gives insufficient consideration to recognising and converting skills that are necessary in agriculture, manufacturing and food and meat processing industries.

Furthermore, in a recent report, Deloitte Access Economics (2018) reported that currently there are approximately 6,240 under-utilised migrants and refugees equipped with skills aligned to areas of the current skills shortage. However, 14% of the participants in their research reported that their overseas work experience was not recognised, 25% of the respondents did not have their overseas qualifications recognised and 27% of them could not find an appropriate job suited to their qualifications (Deloitte Access Economics, 2018). They also identified “[t]ransparency, coordination and fairness; system navigation; and local networks and experience” as contributing to underutilisation of migrants in Queensland.

8.5 Training

As mentioned above, we found that there are persistent skills shortages at different levels of the agriculture, manufacturing and food and meat processing industries in regional Queensland and the full potential of the migrants is not fully utilised despite their higher levels of educational attainment.

A major barrier for employing migrants has been identified as lack of English language proficiency but migrant placement in large cities within established migrant communities may reduce the motivation to learn English. As a result, migrants may not be pushed from an immediate comfort zone and given the opportunity to “spread their wings and do what they
want, because they end up in their little community” (Respondent 18). There is a need to have a system that will help allow migrants to achieve better English language proficiency.

In light of the discussions made in the report it is recommended that actual skills shortage in regional Queensland may be assessed in collaboration with the industry bodies and that training programs be developed to train or upskill people (including the migrants) and to facilitate clear career pathways. Specific employment focused training for the regional industries could be developed in collaboration with stakeholders including employers, community groups, Registered Training Organisations (RTO), higher education providers, and industry peak bodies.

8.6 Direct settlement in regional areas

To avoid segregation and division in the society it is important to settle more migrants in regional areas. Our interviewees recommended governments should adopt policies that spread migrants across Australia, not just catering for big cities such Sydney Brisbane, Perth or Melbourne. For example, an interviewee from the government sector (Respondent 18) proposed:

How about start focusing on trying to grow our regional communities like Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns and Toowoomba [or] wherever by putting in that infrastructure so we can get migration and push migration into those communities. Cause, I am a true believer, you know, these communities welcome migrants.

It is therefore recommended that government policy should facilitate initial settlement of migrants (skilled, unskilled, family and humanitarian entrants) in regional areas based on the skill needs of the regional areas. It is further recommended that the humanitarian entrants may also be granted region specific visas based on regional skill shortages. The present option of settling refugees initially in metropolitan cities where there is concentration of people of their own background may be reviewed and refugees may be directly settled in any region where there is a skill shortage, and where communities are receptive to migrants. Taking into account our earlier findings, the government should consider building a critical mass of people from similar cultural or ethnic backgrounds through direct settlement of migrants including refugees in regional areas.

8.7 Infrastructure development and community capacity building in the regional areas

It is also important to identify both the needs of refugees and the regional communities when settling migrants in regions. The need for appropriate infrastructure in the regional communities has been described at section 6.5.3 of this report. To maximise the benefits of migrant settlement in regional areas, there is a need for infrastructure such as communication networks, transportation and government services as well as empowering local communities to manage migrant settlement in their locality.
8.8 Reinvigorating effective practices

Finally, it is important to explore what programs worked in the past and approaches that proved less effective in order to address skill shortages in agribusiness. For example, a respondent commented that before the advent of labour-hire companies and the employment of back packers, people used to work in a cyclic order on different farms within a locality and return to same farm in each season as part of a ‘horticulture food chain’ (e.g., Respondent 12).

9 Conclusion

This study aimed to identify obstacles to the employment of migrants in regional industries through the eyes of stakeholders well placed to have an overview of the challenge and possible solutions. The study examined the potential benefits of employing migrants and identifying policy implications for governments at all levels and future research through the eyes of these stakeholders. The respondents confirmed that skill shortages exist in the agribusiness sector of regional Queensland where there is a need for highly skilled employees as well as low-skilled workers, but real or perceived misalignment between the communities and their industries on the one hand, and migrants on the other, as well as between state and federal policies and approaches to migration and regional requirements, are impeding a solution.

So, for example, in agricultural industries in particular, employers are dependent on employing temporary migrants who provide a flexible short-term option—one which comes with its own limitations. At the same time, despite having higher qualifications (which may not be seamlessly recognised in Australia) many skilled migrants are unemployed in the metropolitan areas and this potential workforce to fill skill shortages in regional agribusiness is left under-utilised. The challenge for policy makers is to devise effective measures to settle migrants in regional areas. The challenge for industry bodies and regional communities is to come up with an integrated approach that is clearly communicated and understood by new migrants and addresses the anxieties that new migrants feel in considering a regional option for their future.

The research found that employers and peak bodies expressed satisfaction with the work ethic of migrant workers in regional industries. However, the seasonal nature of work in the agricultural industries and other barriers to settlement and employment of migrants in the regional areas mean that for migrants the regional employment option (regardless of social and service access factors) poses problems. Many of these barriers and attractions (pull and push factors) for migrant employment and settlement in regional areas are consistent with the cost-benefit rationale (Bodvarsson et al., 2015; Sjaastad, 1962; Speare et al., 1982) and non-economic (Richardson et al., 2004a, 2004b) or have a social-structural perspective (Bach & Smith, 1977; Wolpert, 1965). However, for migrants, this cost-benefit analysis is being conducted in an information vacuum. Internal migration of migrants from urban centres to meet regional needs is generally not taking place in a systematic, organised fashion, but instead in an ad hoc manner. Since settlement is associated with employment, policy formulation to facilitate settlement and employment of migrants in the regional areas is required.
In view of the limited scope of this research project, recommendations are made for future research. This research project was based on the opinions of employers and employer bodies in regional Queensland agribusiness and other industry stakeholders. A more complete understanding of the issues requires an examination of the lived experience of migrant workers, especially in regard to the barriers and enablers of their employment in regional locations.

A larger study would also necessarily include wider coverage of regional Queensland and potentially other parts of Australia. A further area for research is the need to better understand community dynamics both among migrants and host communities. A related line of inquiry arising from this research is the role of communities and community leadership in facilitating migrant settlement including the role of leadership in migrant communities in building a bridge between employers in regional Australia and to facilitate integration within the community. Finally, there is a need to examine how to mitigate the impact of the seasonal nature of much agricultural work as this is clearly a major barrier to settling migrants in regional Queensland. As discussed earlier in section 7.6, ensuring a critical mass of people from similar ethnic, cultural and religious background is essential for successful settlement in the regional areas. However, above all, the problem and opportunity of a migrant response to employment needs in rural and regional Australia requires a more integrated and coordinated approach from government (including federal, state and local levels), organisations that work with migrants, and industry bodies.
References


Correa-Velez, I., Spaaij, R., & Upham, S. (2012). “We are not here to claim better services than any other: Social exclusion among men from refugee backgrounds in urban and regional Australia’. Journal of Refugee Studies, 26(2), 163–186


## APPENDIX A: Top 10 countries of origin of Australian overseas born population at 30 June 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Birth</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>% of Australian Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man</td>
<td>1 198 000</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>607 200</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China(e)</td>
<td>526 000</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>468 800</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>246 400</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>236 700</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>194 900</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>181 400</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>166 200</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>124 300</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2017a

## APPENDIX B: Top 10 Source countries of migrants in 2016-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Birth</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>38,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peoples Republic of China</td>
<td>28,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>17,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>12,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>6,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>5,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of South Africa</td>
<td>4,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>4,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>4,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Republic</td>
<td>3,855</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from DIBP 2017a
APPENDIX C: Visas categories for entering in to Australia

Visitor visas
  Electronic Travel Authority (subclass 601)
  eVisitor (subclass 651)
  Transit visa (subclass 771)
  Visitor (subclass 600)
  Work and Holiday visa (subclass 462)
  Working Holiday visa (subclass 417)

Studying and training visas
  Student visa (subclass 500)
  Student Guardian visa (subclass 590)
  Training visa (subclass 407)

Working and skilled visas
  Business Innovation and Investment (permanent) visa (subclass 888)
  Business Innovation and Investment (provisional) visa (subclass 188)
  Business Owner (subclass 890)
  Business Talent (Permanent) visa (subclass 132)
  Distinguished Talent visa (subclass 124)
  Distinguished Talent visa (subclass 858)
  Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 186)
  Investor visa (subclass 891)
  Regional Sponsor Migration Scheme (subclass 187)
  Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189)
  Skilled Nominated visa (subclass 190)
  Skilled-Recognised Graduate visa (subclass 476)
  Skilled Regional (provisional) visa (subclass 489)
  Skilled Regional visa (subclass 887)
  State or Territory Sponsored Business Owner visa (subclass 892)
  State or Territory Sponsored Investor visa (subclass 893)
  Temporary Activity visa (subclass 408)
  Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485)
  Temporary Work (International Relations) visa (subclass 403)
  Temporary Work (Short Stay Specialist) visa (subclass 400)
  Temporary Skill Shortage visa (subclass 482)

Family and spousal visas
  Adoption visa (subclass 102)
  Aged Dependent Relative visa (subclass 114)
  Aged Dependent Relative visa (subclass 838)
  Aged Parent visa (subclass 804)
  Carer visa (subclass 836)
  Carer visa (subclass 116)
Child visa (subclass 101)
Child visa (subclass 802)
Contributory Aged Parent (Temporary) visa (subclass 884)
Contributory Aged Parent visa (subclass 864)
Contributory Parent (Temporary) visa (subclass 173)
Contributory Parent visa (subclass 143)
Dependent Child visa (subclass 445)
New Zealand Citizen Family Relationship (temporary) visa (subclass 461)
Orphan Relative (subclass 117)
Orphan Relative (subclass 837)
Parent visa (subclass 103)
Partner (Provisional and Migrant) visa (subclass 309 100)
Partner visa (subclass 820 801)
Prospective Marriage visa (subclass 300)
Remaining Relative visa (subclass 115)
Remaining Relative visa (subclass 835)

Refugee and humanitarian visas
Global Special Humanitarian (subclass 202)
Protection visa (subclass 866)
Refugee visa (subclass 200, 201, 203 and 204)
Safe Heaven Enterprise visa (subclass 790)

Other visas
Bridging visa A – BVA- (subclass 010)
Bridging visa B – BVB – (subclass 020)
Bridging visa C – BVC – (subclass 030)
Bridging visa E – BVE – (subclass 050 and 051)
Crew Travel Authority visa (subclass 942)
Former Resident visa (subclass 151)
Maritime Crew visa (subclass 988)
Medical Treatment visa (subclass 602)
Resident Return visa (subclass 155 157)
Special Category visa (subclass 444)
Special Purpose visa
  Retirement visa (subclass 410)
  Investor Retirement visa (subclass 405)
  Confirmatory (Residence) visa (subclass 808)

Replaced visas
Business (Short Stay) visa (subclass 456)
Business Skills (Provisional) visa (subclass 160 and 165)
Domestic Worker (Temporary) Diplomatic and Consular visa (subclass 426)
Domestic Worker (Temporary) Executive visa (subclass 427)
Electronic Travel Authority (Business Entrant) visa (subclass 956 and 977)
Electronic Travel Authority (Visitor) visa (subclass 976)
Employer Nomination Scheme (subclass 121 and 856)
Established Business in Australia visa (subclass 845)
Exchange visa (subclass 411)
Foreign Government Agency (subclass 415)
Government Agreement visa (subclass 406)
Labour Agreement visa (subclass 120)
Labour Agreement visa (subclass 855)
Media and Film Staff visa (subclass 423)
Medical Practitioner visa (subclass 422)
Medical Treatment (Short Stay) visa (subclass 675)
Medical Treatment Long Stay visa (subclass 685)
Regional Sponsor Migration Scheme (subclass 119 and 857)
Religious Worker visa (subclass 428)
Skilled Designated Area Sponsored visa (subclass 496)
Skilled Independent Regional (Provisional) visa (subclass 495)
Skilled Independent visa (subclass 175)
Skilled Independent visa (subclass 885)
Skilled Regional Sponsored visa (subclass 475)
Skilled Regional Sponsored (subclass 487)
Skilled Sponsored visa (subclass 176)
Special Program visa (subclass 416)
Sponsored visa (subclass 886)
Sport visa (subclass 421)
Superyacht Crew visa (subclass 488)
State or Territory Sponsored Regional Established Business in Australia visa (subclass 846)
Temporary Work (Entertainment) visa (subclass 420)
Temporary Work (Skilled) visa (subclass 457)
Tourist visa (subclass 676)
Temporary Work (long Stay Activity) visa (subclass 401)
Training and Research visa (subclass 402)
Visiting Academic visa (subclass 419)
Foreign Affairs or Defence sector visa (subclass 576)
Higher Education Sector visa (subclass 573)
Independent ELICOS Sector visa (subclass 570)
Non Award Sector visa (subclass 575)
Postgraduate Research Sector visa (subclass 574)
School Sector visa (subclass 571)
Student Guardian visa (subclass 580)
Vocational Education and Training Sector visa (Subclass 572)

Source: Getting a visa, Australian Government, Department of Home Affairs (2018b),
APPENDIX D: Distribution of migrant intake in Australia in 2007--2017

Source: DIBP (2017a), 2016–17 Migration Programme Report
APPENDIX E: Australia’s remoteness index

Source: AHRI + (2011)
APPENDIX F: Map of Queensland showing case study area

Source: Queensland Treasury 2017b
**APPENDIX G: Diversity in industries and employment levels in selected case study areas compared to Queensland**

![Bar chart showing employment levels in various industries across different areas compared to Queensland.](chart.png)

Source: Adapted from Queensland Treasury 2017a, b, c, d, e
APPENDIX H: Demographic information of Queensland state overall, Rockhampton, Livingstone, Banana and Bundaberg LGA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
<th>Rockhampton</th>
<th>Livingstone</th>
<th>Banana</th>
<th>Bundaberg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population June 2016</td>
<td>4,848,877</td>
<td>81,489</td>
<td>37,055</td>
<td>14,607</td>
<td>94,453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14 years</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-64 years</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+ years</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average annual growth rate 2006-2016</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>1.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>37.0 year</td>
<td>35.3 year</td>
<td>41.9 year</td>
<td>36.08</td>
<td>44.6 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected population in 2036</td>
<td>6,763,153</td>
<td>104,100</td>
<td>57,042</td>
<td>16,290</td>
<td>117,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple families with children</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet access</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age pension Recipients</td>
<td>9.78%</td>
<td>10.57%</td>
<td>11.20%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>17.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carer Allowance</td>
<td>2.48%</td>
<td>2.85%</td>
<td>2.54%</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>4.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability support</td>
<td>3.21%</td>
<td>4.18%</td>
<td>2.97%</td>
<td>2.08%</td>
<td>5.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Start Allowance Recipient</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
<td>5.01%</td>
<td>3.91%</td>
<td>2.67%</td>
<td>5.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of schooling Year 11-12</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-school qualification Overall</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24 year</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-44 years</td>
<td>65.9%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64 years</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥65</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House rent</td>
<td>$ 350</td>
<td>$ 270</td>
<td>$ 300</td>
<td>$ 350</td>
<td>$ 285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median rent per week for 3 bed house</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median rent per week for 2 bed unit</td>
<td>$ 350</td>
<td>$ 200</td>
<td>$ 260</td>
<td>$ 350</td>
<td>$ 230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>Rockhampton</td>
<td>Livingstone</td>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>Bundaberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median rent per week for 1 bed unit</td>
<td>$ 309</td>
<td>$ 160</td>
<td>$ 200</td>
<td>$ 309</td>
<td>$ 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fulltime Employee</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 15-20 years</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 25-54 years</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged ≥55 years</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment (March 2017)</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median total personal income-2016 Census ($/year)</td>
<td>$ 34,320</td>
<td>$ 32,552</td>
<td>$ 32,136</td>
<td>$ 37,128</td>
<td>$ 25,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median total family income-2016 Census($/year)</td>
<td>$ 86,372</td>
<td>$ 80,028</td>
<td>$83,044</td>
<td>$ 98,540</td>
<td>$ 61,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income families</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>10.07%</td>
<td>10.01%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Queensland Treasury 2017a, b, c, d, e
APPENDIX I: Questionnaire for employers

Organisation related questions

1. Name of the organisation.
2. What sector would you identify your organisation as predominantly working in?
   a. Agricultural industry.
   b. Food/meat processing industry.
   c. Manufacturing Industry.
   d. Others. (Please specify).
3. Is your factory/plant/farm an independent organisation, or part of a larger organisation?
4. Are the human resources management and employment relations issues of your organisation controlled locally or from any central office?
5. Is your organisation
   a. Australian owned?
   b. Partly owned by foreign company? (Please provide details).
   c. Completely owned by foreign company? (Please provide details).
6. Does your organisation produce for only domestic market or international market as well?

Employment

7. How many employees you have in your organisation?
8. What is the proportion of male/female in your organisation?
9. What percentage/proportion of your workforce are from following age group:
   a. 15-20 years
   b. 20-24 years
   c. 25-29 years
   d. 30-34 years
   e. 35-39 years
   f. 40-44 years
   g. 45-49 years
   h. 50-54 years
   i. 55-59 years
   j. 60-64 years
   k. >65 years
10. What are the major occupational categories and their proportion in this plant/farm (i.e., Administrative, skilled/technical and unskilled)?
11. What is the annual employee turnover rate of your organisation (both local plant as well as overall organisation if it is part of a bigger organisation)?

12. Does your organisation face skill shortages or are there job categories in which you are unable to hire labour at any time? Could you please describe this situation?

13. Usually how do you fill those skill shortages?

14. What proportion of employees are from Non English Speaking (NESB) / Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds?

15. What ethnic backgrounds of people you have employed in your organisation?

16. How many of the CALD background employees arrived in Australia in less than five years?

17. In your perception, what kind of employee would constitute a ‘migrant worker’?

18. a. Do you specifically target migrant workers?

   b. Are there characteristics that make it desirable for your organisation to hire migrant workers?

   c. Could you think of any reasons why your organisation would prefer not to hire migrant workers?

19. a. Is there a problem with labour turnover among migrant workers compared to Australian born employees?

   b. Are there any particular issues that make it difficult for you to retain them within your organisation?

20. More generally, in your experience are there particular barriers that make it difficult for migrants to settle/resettle in rural/regional Australia?

21. a. Do you provide in-house training for your employees?

   b. Do you have any separate in-house training for the migrant employees? If so what type of additional in-house training, do you conduct for the migrant employees?

22. Are there any forms of government assistance that provide an incentive to hire migrants (whether targeted at migrants or not)?

23. What, if anything, would you like the Queensland/Australian government to do in relation to making it easier to access migrant workers in your business?

**Other issues**

24. In your opinion, what are the factors other than employment/job that encourage migrants to settle in the rural/regional areas?

25. Do you consider training migrants for work in rural/regional industries would be more cost effective compared to recruiting temporary employees (i.e., 457 visa holders) from overseas or hiring workers through labour hire agencies?

26. Are there any social and economic benefits of employing migrants at workplace in the regional Queensland/Australia? Please explain.

27. Any other comments you would like to make which have not been covered by the questionnaire.
APPENDIX J: Questionnaire for other stakeholders (Peak bodies)

Organisation related questions

1. Please tell us about your organisation and its function.

Migrants

2. How do you define migrants?
3. What are the skill shortage in industries of regional and rural Queensland?
4. Can migrants be used to fill these shortages? If yes, why is this option not being utilised?
5. Are there any characteristics of migrant workers make it desirable to hire them for the agriculture, manufacturing and food processing industries in regional Queensland?
6. Are there any particular issues that make it difficult for industries (e.g., agriculture, manufacturing and food processing/meat & livestock) in regional Queensland to employ migrants within their organisations?
7. Are there any particular issues that make it difficult for industries (e.g., agriculture, manufacturing and food processing/meat & livestock) in regional Queensland to retain migrant employees within their organisations?
8. What are the barriers for migrants to settle/resettle in rural/regional Queensland?
9. Is there any incentives in place from the federal, state or local governments that encourages employers to employ migrants in their organisation?
10. What measures (policy and practice) would you recommend to promote employment of migrants to overcome the skills shortage in regional Queensland?
11. Are there any social and economic benefits of employing migrants at workplace in the regional Queensland/Australia? Please explain.

Other issues

12. In your opinion, what are the factors other than employment/job that encourage migrants to settle in the rural/regional areas?
13. Do you consider training migrants (Permeant residents) for work in rural/regional industries would be more cost effective compared to recruiting temporary employees (i.e., 457 visa holders) from overseas?
14. Could you recommend other employers or peak bodies in the agriculture, manufacturing and food processing/meat & livestock industries for further consultation?
15. Any other comments you would like to make which have not been covered by the questionnaire.