

# editor's DESK

## A BRAVE NEW WORLD

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his issue is predominantly about employment – or more to the point, the future of employment. Depending on who you speak with about the job market, the glass is half full or almost completely empty.

Certainly the latter category fits the bill for the 170 BlueScope Steel workers who are staring redundancy in the face.

The manufacturing giant is culling numbers as it reconfigures its Victorian steel production plant.

BlueScope chief executive Mark Vassella said of the decision, "The cost to implement this change is estimated to be around \$17 million, but will be recovered within one year through ongoing improvements to the operating cost base."

Vasella expects that once demand improves so will job prospects, which is why BlueScope is keeping its Western Port operations open.

However, when you consider that the company axed more than 200 positions from the same Hastings facility in August 2011, as well as one of two operational blast furnaces at Port Kembla in NSW and its hot-strip mill in Western Port due to tough economic conditions, prospects could be considered dim.

So what can we make of the job sector moving forward? It seems a change in workplace practice may be in order.

From an employer point of view, it is likely we will see more contract roles being adopted along with further outsourcing. Certainly this is the opinion of Marketing Eye founder Mellissah Smith.

"Employment structures within organisations have in the past lacked elasticity and with the emergence of low-cost labour offshore, particularly in areas such as technology and call centres, the use of offshore labour forces is now well received and commonplace," she says.

Marketing Eye is expanding its operations overseas in the coming year and employment structure is crucial to the success of the company in expanding markets.

For those who wish to remain as full time employees, the outlook is not as bleak as it seems.

Futurist Morris Miselowski believes the future of Australia's employment rate will be high and in the mid 90%. Yet the scope of the work will change to "the completion of tasks and project, not time allocation; in industries we cannot yet name, nor fathom, using skills that today are unimaginable.

"By 2025, 60% of us will be working digitally and remotely, not tethered to a fixed workspace, but rather in a time and place that best suits the work and the people involved."

The workplace is changing; employment attitudes and practices have shifted and to survive both employers and employees must shift as well.

For some, that may mean a career change.

SEEK Learning, a division of the job search group recently commissioned researchers Pure Profile to interview 1257 Australian adults about their careers.

The research found that just under a quarter of Australians are planning a career change in 2013.

"This really reflects that people are now willing to make changes and ask the question 'Am I happy in this job?' You spend a third to half your waking hours in your job, and that's a lot of time to spend doing something you're not that excited about," SEEK Learning general manager Tony Barrett says.

The positive for those who are made redundant is that a career change is not an impossibility. While there is little consolation at the time, the changing workplace demands may just mean that new opportunities with better benefits arise.

It's a brave new world.

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