



TRADING PLACES

If you are planning to work as a tradesperson in Western Australia the more research you do before you arrive the better, writes **Katie Lawley** and **Sarah Tester**

Last time you checked the Critical Skills List (CSL) your trade was on there. 'Western Australia is desperate for tradespeople' the headlines shout and although that may be the case with some trades it is still an extremely competitive job market here.

Firstly we are going to refer to you as a 'tradie'. It's a sentimental term here for the fellas out on the tools. If you are already on the visa path to permanent residency and need to start thinking about employment when you arrive in Western Australia (WA) then there are a few important things to note.

GET YOUR WHITE CARD

You will need to obtain your White Card. This is your health and safety passport to allow you to work on any construction site; and

you cannot start work on site without one. This is easy to obtain and can be done before you arrive in the country. There are many online companies that offer the white card test. These companies will vary in price but you can expect to pay around A\$65 (£36) to complete the test. Your card will be posted to you before you leave for WA so that's one thing ticked off before you even get here.

On arrival you will also have to get your Australian Tax File Number (TFN), and if you're going to be self-employed, like most tradies, you will need to get your Australian Business number (ABN). Both can be obtained at www.ato.gov.au once you have arrived in Australia.

SHIPPING TOOLS?

When shipping tools to Australia

you need to make sure that they are spotlessly clean in preparation for the Quarantine Inspection upon arrival in Australia.

Firstly, remove all visible dirt, dust, marks and residue and then thoroughly clean and disinfect with a product such as Jeyes Fluid, Dettol or Zoflora.

When shipping large tool chests, tool trolleys and cabinets, best practice would be to pack the tools separately in cartons so that the tool chest is shipped empty. This is due to the fact that although the wheels on the tool trolley can normally take the weight of the tools, the nature of the shipping process and the movement of the vessel mean that the wheels may not withstand the pressure during transit.

The tool chest drawers and wheels must be cleaned thoroughly also and disinfected, as above.

You may wish to consider having a small air freight consignment of tools to ship over if you are starting work as soon as you arrive in Australia. Air freight transit time is around two weeks door to door.

For information about shipping your tools to Australia, contact a well-known shipping agent in the UK such as John Mason, or for Scotland, Clark and Rose.

SKILL RECOGNITION

Many tradies will need to get their relevant skills updated in their profession so their skills will be recognised and they can obtain a

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license to work. This applies to all trades unless you gained your skill qualification through a recognised training and assessment company who may organise the skill upgrade before you arrive (for more about this, see page 88).

Check out the websites for Licence Recognition (www.licencerecognition.gov.au/authorities.aspx), MPA Skills (www.mpaskills.com.au) and Challenger Institute (www.challenger.wa.edu.au/pages/default.aspx) to see what skill upgrades you will need to do.

certplus Training (www.certplus.com.au) organise nationally recognised qualifications for employment purposes in the construction industry.

SOME DIFFERENCES

Most tradies throughout their career in their home countries have relied on reputation and experience. This will no longer be the case in Western Australia. Experience is a tough one.

Many job ads you will see will

state 'must have WA experience'. Why is that? Well in the case of a plumber, the day-to-day job will differ greatly here.

Antony White, a plumber from the UK working in WA for the last four years tells us a few of the differences in day to day plumbing here in WA

"You will be expected to do outdoor drainage work which is usually completed by a ground worker in the UK. All pipework is



Bricklayers need to work the Australian way

chased into walls, whereas in the UK most is boxed out and no chasing is needed. You will need to be up-to-date with all drainage laws. I found once I got my head round the Australian plumbing work, which only took a few weeks, I realised that my trade here in WA is so much easier due to no central heating being installed."

Bryn Tester is a bricklayer from the UK who has been working in WA for three years and offers this useful insight.

"You do not need to obtain any additional qualifications once you arrive in WA. You will just need to complete your Vetassess certificate when you obtain your visa.

"When building residential property here in WA you will notice a few differences. Here you build onto a floating slab, and >>>



set up and build in your window and doorframes as you go.

“You also build roof steps into your internal block work for the roof carpenters. The majority of the houses are built in two-course faced block work.”

HOW DO I FIND A JOB?

Quite simply, networking. There are a number of agents both in the UK and Australia who will be able to help connect you with suitable employers.

A well-connected migration agent might hold the key to you finding the desired job offer

Working with Australian recruiters is another option. With today’s technology they are likely to be able to arrange an interview for you via the internet.

Seeking out a well-connected and established migration agent to process your visa application might also hold the key to you finding the desired job offer, as they too may be working with Australian employers and have professional contacts they can refer you to.

Companies such as ISA (www.isa.com.au) can help you with both your visa requirements and job

search. Contact Leanne Short by email (Leanne@isa.com.au).

Use social media and information websites such as A Piece of Perth (www.apieceofperth.com). A Piece of Perth have over 800 subscribers and members with a high percentage of tradies. They can help answer questions and put you in touch with other tradies so you can get a genuine idea of what to expect when arriving in WA.

Their unique membership offers you continued email support and

migrant meet ups where you can network with like-minded people.

When you arrive in Perth, newspapers such as *The West Australian* and the *Quokka* have large job sections, as do websites such as Seek. Sites such as A Piece of Perth also have employment companies in their directory.

PERKS OF THE JOB

As a tradie in WA you will generally find that on an average day you will start earlier and finish earlier, meaning more family time to have dinner on the beach or



Plumbers will need to get their skills updated

spend some time socialising. Also, no more icy cold mornings or cancelled jobs due to snow and lots of rain! Of course on the other side of that the summer days can hit 40 plus degrees by midday, so it’s really about adapting.

The more research you do before you arrive the better. You will need to be prepared to hit this competitive job market head on.

■ **Katie Lawley and Sarah Tester are directors of A Piece of Perth, an information website created for people migrating to WA. For more information on their unique service and the businesses they work with to make your migration easier log onto www.apieceofperth.com.** 