

Water industry facing an ‘engineer exodus’

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New data suggests skilled engineers leaving for other sectors

- 70% of workforce considering moving sectors in the next two years
- More than a quarter of engineers (26%) list hiring and skills as the biggest issue facing the industry
- 42% of professionals don't have access to relevant training that enables them to innovate at work

The water industry is facing an exodus of engineers, with 70% of professionals considering a move to other sectors in the next two years. That's according to a new report from specialist water industry recruitment firm, Water by Murray.

The 'Water Industry Labour Report' found that seven out of ten engineers were considering working in an alternative sector, with renewables, nuclear, and oil & gas the main destinations of choice for professionals. This comes at a time when the water industry is already facing a major talent shortage, with 26% of respondents listing 'hiring & skills' as the single largest issue facing their company.

The study of over 3,900 engineers from across the water industry also revealed that employers face an acute shortage of experienced engineers which should sound alarm bells for firms already struggling to recruit ahead of AMP8. These findings are even more concerning due to the industry's retirement cliff, with research by Stonehaven revealing that over one-fifth of the engineering workforce is set to retire by 2030.

Elsewhere, Water by Murray's research also revealed that 42% of engineers did not feel that they had access to relevant training that would enable them to innovate at work, with organisational structures and working cultures listed as the main factors hindering this.

Teo De La Cruz, Associate Director at Water by Murray, part of Murray McIntosh, commented on the report findings:

“We know that the majority of industries are battling skills shortages, but our labour report has shown that they are particularly acute within the water industry. This should be of significant concern, not

just to the industry but to the country as a whole. The shortages are most critical amongst experienced engineers, and it's therefore worrying that almost seven out of ten are considering roles in other sectors, on top of the one-fifth of the workforce who are set to retire in the next two years."

"In order to tackle these issues, employers, and the industry as a whole, need to think about how they can attract – and retain – engineering skills. In the short term, our report found that engineers are almost as equally motivated by job satisfaction as they are by pay, showing that rate increases alone won't do the job. Instead, there needs to be a more tailored and invested approach to recruitment and retention. Employers must do more to communicate their employee value proposition and respond to the individual motivators of engineers, if they want to attract and retain staff in the face of significant competition."

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