

Green shoots to grow jobs market

Rise in roles to be filled

SPECIAL REPORT

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HOPES that the worst of the job cuts are over have been boosted by the latest employment figures and thousands of vacancies still available around Queensland, *The Sunday Mail* has found.

While businesses are still facing tough times, the state's unemployment rate rose by only 0.1 of a percentage point to 5.4 per cent last month, Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows.

The slowdown in job-shedding, and a rise in part-time work, suggests dole queues may not reach the lengths predicted by State Treasurer Andrew Fraser and his Federal counterpart Wayne Swan, who feared an unemployment rate pushing towards 7 per cent by next year.

And it reflects a cautious optimism from employers that they will be able to retain more workers. Only 15 per cent of businesses surveyed by Hudson

Recruitment expected to cut staff numbers in the three months to September.

Hudson state manager Dean Davidson said despite stresses in the market, there was still high demand for skilled people.

"From my point of view, it's certainly not doom or gloom. We have absolutely seen a stabilisation," said Mr Davidson.

Figures from the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations show 39,000 skilled vacancies across the state.

And a scan by *The Sunday Mail*, using the Job Search Australia website, found thousands more jobs are available in hospitality, sales, cleaning, marketing, social welfare, transport, labouring and other areas.

In Brisbane, for instance, Traffic Technologies and the Sarina Russo Group are urgently looking for 100 people to train as traffic controllers.

And companies are still committed to training, anxious to

avoid a repeat of the skills shortage. Brisbane-based registered training group MRWED said demand climbed 25 per cent in the first half of this year.

Founder Marc Ratcliffe was surprised, saying training budgets were usually among the first to be cut in a downturn.

The jobs outlook is a lot tougher in the north of the state, however. Cairns and Townsville joined the list of "high-risk" Employment Priority Areas, with jobless rates above 10 per cent.

Meanwhile, the State Parliament's newly formed economic development committee wants Queenslanders' ideas for its inquiry into job creation, with submissions closing on August 7.

A discussion paper from the committee raises the possibility of a Green Jobs Initiative (renewable energy and environmentally friendly construction) and a high growth training program.