

# Old skills going, going and gone

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JOBS REPORTER

THERE was a time when a first job was a career for life.

If you were a carpenter you stayed a carpenter until you retired, but jobs are disappearing at a rapid rate because of technology.

In recent years, the garbo and milkman have disappeared and the axe is poised over dozens more, particularly in the low-skilled area and factories.

The labour-intensive industries are shipping offshore and, in the industrialised West, call centres have become modern-day equivalents of the factory.

Kevin Ayres of Sarina Russo Job Access said technology was moving so swiftly jobs were dying at a rapid rate or moving to countries with cheaper labour.

The internet also is rapidly transforming the job market, with occupations such as travel consultant slowly becoming redundant as people increasingly book on the web.

Even labouring jobs are not as common, because technology reduces the need for road gangs and for labour on building sites.

## Dying or dead jobs

**Trades:** Patternmakers, blacksmiths, bookbinders, stonemasons, shipwrights, watchmakers, shingle cutters, coachbuilders and dry stonewall builders.  
**The service industries:** Milkmen, garbagemen and conductors.

**Manufacturing:** Lathe operators.

**Food processing:** Orange packaging and pre-packed food (such as for airlines).

**Retail:** Checkout operators.

**Travel:** Airline front counter staff, toll collectors and travel consultants.

Automation is cutting into the number of supermarket checkout workers. But as shopping becomes a virtual 24-hour business, Mr Ayres said jobs were increasing for shelf stackers who used to work only

when the stores were closed.

"In my early days there were conductors on trams and buses and in Melbourne," he said. "now there are no conductors on trams. It's all automatic."

Online ticketing, bill paying and even licence renewal is taking away counter jobs.

And in some airports in Europe, an electronic menu is built into each table and orders are done electronically, doing away with waiting staff.

Within the next month Brisbane's toll booth operators will start to be phased out as the system becomes automated.

Mr Ayres said the death of some jobs was not necessarily bad as long as people continued

to improve their skills. "There is ongoing pressure on business now to keep wages costs down and technology is becoming cheaper," he said.

He said companies then had to make the balance between technology and people.

But even when a computer did take someone's job, it was not long before they recovered.

"They generally do get other jobs," he said. "It can be hard and we have found that mature-age people who have been in factory type jobs for many years and hit 50 and lack skills do find it a challenge.

"Even warehouses are computerised now and people who have not kept up with things often do have a challenge in getting another job.

"We do a bit of work with them because they may be shy of computers. Generally speaking it's the low-level jobs (that go)."

It's not only technology eating into low-skilled jobs. The financial crisis has hit hard in the low-paid sectors, particularly in tourism and retail.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures reveal 20,000 retail jobs were lost in Queensland between April and May.