

Lack of work ethic

Skills shortages and laziness baffle employers: Survey

By **BRAD GARDNER** of **USC**

A COMBINATION of skills shortages and “lazy workers” has forced Caboolture businesses to adopt new ways to build qualified staff.

A survey carried out by Sarina Russo Job Access in 2006 interviewed 859 employers in South-east Queensland with some interesting results.

A whopping 70% of blue-collar businesses said a lack of work ethic was a major problem and 66% were worried about skill shortages.

“Skill shortages are the inevitable result of a tight labour market and the Caboolture region is experiencing one of the most competitive labour markets in 30 years,” Sarina Russo Job Access manager John Whatley said.

Businesses are being hit hard with slack workers or unqualified labour.

Halley Homes CEO Kim Steer said the labour quality, whether casual or permanent, was poor. “People don’t want to work,” Mrs Steer said.

The CEO said there was also the money factor, with mines offering upwards of \$75 an hour.

“Caboolture’s labour market, like many other regions across Queensland and Australia, is being affected by the resurgence of the mining boom which is luring many skilled tradespeople and technicians out of the area,” Mr Whatley said.

But rather than be overrun by unqualified or slack workers, businesses are thinking outside the square in the hope of attracting and retaining much-needed tradespeople.

The Australian Industry Group’s Sandy Aslett said one initiative already in place in Caboolture was Adopt-a-School, which was based on industry working with students to teach them a trade. Mrs Aslett expected the project would be successful.

“These businesses are able to address the skill shortage areas by taking students for structured workplace

learning,” she said.

“This will provide students with informed choices about career opportunities in that industry and provide the employer with a more work-ready pool of potential employees.

“By showcasing these job opportunities there is the potential that less people will leave the region seeking employment elsewhere, which will in turn bring benefits back into the local economy.”

Mrs Steer said Halley Homes had to take matters into its own hands. The company had lured a manual arts teacher in order to fast-track apprentices.

But it has not come cheaply. By taking on more apprentices, Mrs Aslett said Halley Homes had to spend about \$200,000 a year to employ specialised workplace safety officers.