

Down Under looks to Houston to fill energy jobs

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[Not only are the U.S. neighbors to the north looking to Houston to fill gaps in their energy workforce](#), but folks are also coming here from Down Under to recruit.

Sponsored by the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, dozens of Australian energy companies will gather in the Bayou City May 19-20 in its first on-site North American “Skills Australia Needs” job fair.

Companies are looking to fill about 650 positions, including jobs for petrochemical engineers, surveyors, spatial scientists, and mining and construction workers, said [Sandi Logan](#), spokesman for the immigration department.

“We don’t see it as easy pickings (in Houston) — far from it,” Logan said. “But, we’re in a global economy where companies in Australia are in a situation where we simply don’t have sufficient locally trained workers in these sectors.”

Australian energy companies have reached out to North American workers in the past through online and social media recruiting. Australian officials decided to make a personal trek to Houston because the demand is pressing, Logan said.

“We need to act,” he said. “Whether it’s today, tomorrow or yesterday, it can never be too soon, and we don’t want it to be too late.”

Luring Houston workers isn’t an easy job, Logan said, but cultural similarities can make the relocation a smooth transition.

“We all speak English. We all eat at McDonald’s and drink coffee at Starbucks,” he said. “But we also have vegemite and Aussie meat pies.”

Recruiters will be looking to hire workers for positions in shale plays, offshore drilling, coal and iron ore mining, as well as pipeline development. Much of the work is performed in shifts in remote areas. In Australia, pay starts at a minimum \$50,000 a year for unskilled workers, Logan said. These workers can make up to \$250,000 in annual salary, plus free health care, at least four weeks paid time off and a company-funded retirement plan.

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