

Graduate job offers face axe

Report Joanna Mather

Seventy per cent of graduate employers affected by the financial crisis are considering scaling back job offers this year.

Although three-quarters of employers surveyed by Graduate Careers Australia said they would not axe their graduate recruitment programs, many were reviewing targets for 2010.

Nine per cent said they were certain they would make cuts to graduate employment.

Graduate Careers Australia executive director Cindy Tilbrook said economic downturns inevitably led to softer demand for graduates and a decline in starting salaries for graduates.

However, underlying factors such as the ageing workforce and the expected return of skills shortages in key areas such as mining could soften the blow this time.

"There's no doubt there will be a slight downturn, but we're hopeful it won't be as severe as it could otherwise have been," she said.

Still, some businesses have already reneged on graduate job offers to cut costs, and others have offered cash and even international airline tickets to encourage would-be employees to defer their start date. The unluckiest have been told their promised job no longer exists.

Graduate Careers Australia surveyed 100 employers late last year.

Ms Tilbrook said she hoped businesses would take a long-term view, particularly in light of the wave of baby boomer retirements due in the next decade.

"A lot of organisations have become very aware of the fact that they need to get graduate talent in and start to get them trained up to replace those senior people who are going to retire," she said.