



Ralph and Jenny Andrews are signed-up talent.

*“Filming is a lot like being in the Army. You spend a long time sitting around waiting.”*

IMAGE: INDIESTUDIOS.COM.AU

“Accessibility is definitely an issue in web design, where developers have to consider text contrast and how big buttons are,” Viv says.

“If you can cater to people who will find it the hardest, then even the people who don’t find it hard will find it better to use as well.”

Participants might be interviewed over the phone or asked to meet with researchers at an office for a small-group discussion.

If a website’s being tested, they might be asked about the menu design or how pages on the site should be linked together. But it’s more than how people interact with screens that’s being studied.

Their habits and views on anything from grocery shopping to driving through road tunnels are coming under the microscope. Woolworths is a regular Askable client.

The supermarket giant tweaks its apps and online store based on frequent user testing with its customers.

“They might ask people about their shopping journey, what they typically do day-to-day, why they might buy certain foods, or what prompts them to go the shops versus buying online,” Viv says.

Other businesses might have a prototype they’d like to show people who have never used it before, wanting to know if it makes sense.

Another client ran “design thinking workshops” where participants were sent pictures to cut and paste as homework before the sessions.

They were testing physical products but wanted to know about what people cooked and how they used products in their homes.

“People get pretty creative with how they test things,” Viv says. “Some of the sessions can be quite fun.”

## Seasonal work for seasoned workers

Pin money, pocket money, cruise money – call it what you will, but when you’re on a fixed income, a few extra bob in the bank is always welcome and, writes ANGELA BENSTED, you don’t have to sacrifice freedom to get it.

There’s seasonal work on offer around southeast Queensland and it turns out mature candidates are in demand.

Did you know you could earn a quid just for having an opinion, especially about digital products?

Today’s world might be run from apps rather than service counters, but the customer is still king.

While more businesses and government agencies are looking to deliver services over the internet, to do it well they need feedback from users.

That’s where Brisbane-based agency Askable helps, recruiting people to participate in user testing. The company finds people with a range of backgrounds to give feedback and Askable founder Vivien (Viv) Chang says they’re often looking for mature perspectives.

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For those with a more serious bent, universities need exam supervisors, invigilators, at the end of each semester (May/June and October/November).

Invigilators marshal students, checking their identification, answering questions and monitoring their conduct during exams.

There are no special qualifications for the job, but it demands a level of fitness according to QUT Senior Examinations Officer Andrew Roach.

"People need to be able to stand for three hours at a time and be comfortable walking around very slowly," Andrew says. "They should also be able to lift a pile of exam papers which could weigh up to 12 kg."

But the most important part of the job is to have meticulous attention to detail and respect for the process.

"This is a very rules-based job," Andrew says, "with a lot of procedures which have to be followed to the letter. There's no scope for thinking outside of the box."

People accepted for the role do some training which involves a three-hour classroom session followed by three practice sessions with a senior invigilator.

QUT currently has about 300 invigilators on its books with an average age of 54.

In any given semester, about 250 of those get work, with more experienced invigilators with good availability working as many as 30 hours a week.

Andrew says a lot of people assume invigilators are there to catch cheats. In fact, their job is to prevent cheating.

"By creating an atmosphere where people don't believe they can gain an unfair advantage, that sort of activity hopefully doesn't happen," he says.

"It can be confronting for people the

first time they come across that type of activity, for the student and the invigilator.

"But we have processes in place to deal with it," Andrew says, "and it's certainly not a daily occurrence."

For students, exams can be stressful and even overwhelming, with anxiety sometimes getting the better of them.

"We're seeing that happening more now than it did 10 or 15 years ago," Andrew says, noting the training program for invigilators includes strategies for dealing with students who are distressed.

For those interested in odd jobs with a bit more fun and frivolity on the side, maybe some film and television work might appeal.

Production companies are flocking to southeast Queensland, enticed by our climate and generous financial incentives, and demand for film, television and commercial "extras" is strong, particularly for faces with some life in them.

Who Artists director Natalie Hall says she's always looking for mature talent.

"Nine times out of 10 I need people who are aged 40-plus," Natalie says. "We just can't get enough of them."

She often approaches parents and grandparents who have brought children in to the agency.

Usually they're a bit taken aback, protesting they "can't act".

But that's not what Natalie's looking for.

"Basically, we just need people who can stand in the background," she says.

"Then, as they do a bit, they get to see that it's not scary and that they can have a bit of fun."

Retired high school teacher Ralph

Andrews signed up with Natalie the year he finished teaching, encouraged by a past pupil.

He had no work in the first year and then only background extra jobs for the next two before gradually landing gigs as a featured extra.

Now in his late 70s, Ralph is in hot demand.

This year he worked for eight days over a four-week period on a series being shot in Murwillumbah, where the production company put him up at a local air B&B.

"It was really enjoyable," Ralph says.

And despite the long schedule, he didn't find it tiring.

"Filming is a lot like being in the Army," Ralph says.

"You spend a long time sitting around waiting."

He also spent three days as a featured extra on the ABC television series Harrow, mostly lying on a table as a dead body.

"I was murdered in the first minute or so of episode nine," Ralph says.

"The rest of the time I spent in my pyjamas in a body bag while he (the pathologist) was looking at me trying to find out how I'd died."

Ralph was having so much fun on set his wife Jenny joined the agency as well and soon picked up some work of her own.

Since then, the couple has appeared in ads for QSuper and Heritage Bank and featured in a video on the Ergon Energy website.

The money on offer varies depending on the role, with a minimum \$25 an hour up to almost \$2000 for a day's work.

Sometimes featured extras earn bonus income in royalties when a commercial continues to air past the

original contract period.

But there are some upfront costs before people can cash-in on this opportunity.

People signing with a talent agency are expected to have a professional photo and may be asked to pay an annual fee.

And despite the demand, Natalie Hall says the work is sporadic.

"Clients might only get one or two jobs a year. Sometimes it could be one a month," she says.

## USER testing

### Askable

Sign up online at [use.askable.com/join](http://use.askable.com/join)  
Pays \$50 - \$75 for 30 minutes, and up to \$75 - \$120 an hour

### Invigilating

QUT - QUT recruits 15-30 people per semester to add to its invigilator pool. To apply, email [exams.invigilators@qut.edu.au](mailto:exams.invigilators@qut.edu.au). Pays \$34 hour.

### University of Queensland

To be notified of next recruitment drive, visit: [www.asd.uq.edu.au/casual-examination-supervisors-recruitment](http://www.asd.uq.edu.au/casual-examination-supervisors-recruitment). Pays from \$30 hour. Contact 3365 2488, email: [examinations@uq.edu.au](mailto:examinations@uq.edu.au)

### TV and film extras

Who Artists. [whoartists.com.au](http://whoartists.com.au)  
To arrange a meeting call 3871 0906 or email: [studio@whoartists.com](mailto:studio@whoartists.com). Pays a minimum \$25 an hour up to almost \$2000 for a day's work. Upfront costs include a professional photograph (headshot) and online profile \$125.

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