

## TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



**Te Tahua o Rangitāne Business Hub was officially launched in Dannevirke in September 2022.** Māori business owners, community members and Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua (Iwi Authority) were invited to the opening of the Hub. The hub is designed to support the ongoing growth of Rangitāne o Tamaki-Nui-ā-Rua through commercial and economic activities in the rohe. While at an early stage of its development, they have aspirational goals of growth within housing, property development, food production, environmental services and tourism. The programme has already seen success in placing people into employment and helping local employers with pastoral care of new employees.

**Reports are that rural communities are disproportionately affected by labour shortages and inflation.** Businesses throughout Ruapehu describe amplified effects, which is stagnating economic growth and limiting job creation in the district. The compounding effects of increasing costs for fuel, housing, transport and childcare are also leading some to remain on the jobseeker benefit, seeing it as a more cost effective and 'safety net' option rather than traveling to work. Businesses in Raetihi and Ohakune are also reporting further strains with worker shortages which are affecting services levels, reducing opening hours, and in some cases resulting in closure.

## TRENDS AT A GLANCE



**The total unemployment rate has increased by 0.9% since September 2021.** The current unemployment rate is 3.6%, compared to 2.7% the previous year. The long-term trend is positive however, with unemployment falling from 7.9% in September 2012.



**Māori unemployment has increased by 0.5% since September 2021.** However, the long-term employment trend for Māori in Manawatū-Whanganui is positive. Over the decade, the Māori unemployment rate has decreased, and both the employment and labour force participation rates showed slow and steady increases.



**Over the decade the rate of youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) has continuously decreased.** The NEET rate for the 15-19 years and 20-24 years cohorts are starting to converge, as the 20-24 years rate is decreasing over time. This quarter there was a 2.9% decrease in the number of youth aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training (NEET).

Source: Statistics NZ, Household Labour Force Survey, September 2022.

## REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Talent Central have been running successful driver licensing courses for high school students** as part of their Work-Ready programme. Driver's licencing is a major barrier to employment particularly for rangatahi, and Talent Central is showing rangatahi the benefit of gaining a drivers licence as it relates to gaining onward employment. With over 1,500 students enrolled across Palmerston North and Tararua, rangatahi are also learning work-ready skills in communication, teamwork, CVs and money management within the programme.
- Tararua are addressing a major barrier to employment in the region.** Thirty new homes will be built in Pahiatua as part of the Government's Infrastructure Acceleration Fund. The land is a Rangitāne o Tamaki nui-ā-Rua owned property development and will consist of a mixture of rental houses, affordable housing for sale and papakāinga housing. Pahiatua is one of many towns in the district where the need for housing is becoming a critical issue, with Tararua District mayor Tracey Collis indicating that she is grateful to the central government for unlocking the funds to make this possible. The RSLG has identified housing as both an enabler and a barrier to employment in the region; increasing housing stock provides an increased likelihood of people moving to the district to take up available roles.
- The rural farming sector in the Ruapehu district held a hui in November.** Members of the rural farming sector met to discuss the policy implications of He Waka Eke Noa, increased carbon capture farming, and increased operating costs.



- Tararua Council is expanding support for jobseekers.** The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) has partnered with Tararua Council to get jobseekers into work. Under the programme Kaimahi are employed to work 30-hours a week, for a duration of 12-weeks. The work involves clearing up the town's walkways and overgrown bush; and cleaning community assets. The work scheme is seen as a win to the people participating, and to the district's communities, as it supports jobseekers to grow their skills, knowledge and experience. This is the fourth MSD funded employment project in the region, and it builds on the earlier successes where the majority of earlier workers have been supported into permanent work as a result of the project.
- The UCOL Te Pūkenga "U-Skills Academy" programme is celebrating Learners.** Ākonga (learners) from UCOL Te Pūkenga Academy programmes have been recognised for their hard work and achievements at a series of prize-giving events. The programme supports Year 11 to 13 students to learn industry-relevant skills on site at Te Pūkenga one or two days-per-week. Completing the Academy programme enables Ākonga to gain industry-relevant skills, and develop self-confidence, problem solving and teamwork skills, while remaining in a supportive educational environment.

## REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLAN UPDATE

**The Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG) has continued to facilitate cross-rohe dialogue** and information sharing, as outlined in the 2022 Regional Workforce Plan.

We have initiated attendance of districts Skills and Talent Advisory Groups and Workforce Development Councils at RSLG hui as well as connections between the different districts. Given the geographic, economic and social disparity across the region, bringing together key regional actors with common interests has been deliberate and will remain a continual focus of the RSLG.

**The RSLG has identified Freight, Logistics and Warehousing, and the seasonal elements of the horticulture sector** as focus areas for the 2023 Regional Workforce Plan. Over 50 targeted stakeholder engagements have been completed with key personnel across the regional labour market. These will inform the Actions and Recommendations in the 2023 Regional Workforce Plan.

**The Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Workforce Plan is available here:**

[mbie.govt.nz/manawatu-whanganui-regional-workforce-plan](https://mbie.govt.nz/manawatu-whanganui-regional-workforce-plan)