

## TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



**The freight and logistics sector is experiencing a significant labour shortage**, and this is a key focus area in the Manawatū-Whanganui RSLG's 2023 Regional Workforce Plan. With Manawatū-Whanganui being a key central freight and logistics hub for the country, the RSLG is keen to understand how much the predicted critical labour shortage could impact the region. Nationally, the shortfall of workers is set to widen to 18,000 workers by 2028 (from a current shortfall of 4,700 workers), according to a report commissioned by Hanga-Aro-Rau Workforce Development Council. Through engagements with small and medium enterprises in the rohe, the RSLG has heard concerns that this growing dearth of workers could stunt, or even reverse, the expected growth of the sector regionally (based off developments, it is predicted to grow from 3,913 workers to 4,027 by 2028\*).

**The NZ Careers Expo in Palmerston North took place on 18 May 2023 at the Central Energy Trust Arena.** The expo provided 3,140 rangatahi with the opportunity to discover what future career pathways are available to them and what businesses they can connect into. Such an opportunity is integral to smooth School Transitions, which is an area of continued importance to the Manawatū-Whanganui RSLG from the 2022 Regional Workforce Plan. RSLG members who attended this event noted that it would be great to have more parental involvement, due to their strong influence over the career decisions our rangatahi make. Furthermore, the cost of \$1,425 for a stall could be a barrier for some local businesses wanting to showcase available career pathways.

**A submission has been made by Horticulture New Zealand to the Rangitikei District Council on the draft Rangitikei Community Spatial Plan.** The Manawatū-Whanganui RSLG will be closely following the developments that come out of this, given the focus on the 'Seasonal elements of the Horticulture Sector' in the refreshed 2023 Regional Workforce Plan. The submission details how the Rangitikei District Council can reap the benefits of the horticulture sector in light of the spatial plan, and how expanding horticulture can contribute to the spatial plan's goals. Consultation is now closed, and the Council are reviewing all feedback with a view to update the spatial plan in late 2023 to early 2024.

\*Infometrics: Manawatū-Whanganui Sector Profile 2023-2028

## TRENDS AT A GLANCE



**The Māori unemployment rate is 7.1% in March 2023, up from 4.5% in March 2022.** The unemployment rate for those who identify as European is 2.8%, up from 2.4% in March 2022. This indicates Māori are being disproportionately affected in the labour market\*.

Source: Household Labour Force Survey, March 2022/23

\*Due to the small sample sizes, fluctuations are likely to be larger for Māori.



**The underemployment rate in the rohe is 2.8%.** This means that only 2.8% of those employed part-time (less than 30 hours) want to work more hours than they usually do and are available to do. This indicates that either kaimahi have additional commitments limiting working availability, or that their current employment is meeting their needs. This figure also represents the lowest rate in over a decade, exacerbating the struggle for businesses in finding workers.

Source: Household Labour Force Survey, March 2023.

## REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

### OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES

*The following three points are strongly connected to School Transitions, which is an ongoing focus for the Manawatū-Whanganui RSLG.*

**1. The Manawatū-Whanganui RSLG is highly supportive of initiatives that increase the localisation of provision, such as the Enhanced Taskforce Green project in Taranua.** This project, which is being funded by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), supports the clean-up work in coastal areas and farms. Land Based Training – a RSLG partner for the 2023 'Seasonal elements of the Horticulture Sector' focus – will host and employ six workers and one supervisor. These kaimahi will undertake eight weeks of clean-up starting in June.

**2. Through the Ruapehu Skills and Talent Action Group the RSLG has heard concerns around the growing numbers of absenteeism and non-attendance in schools.** The Ruapehu district 2022 NEET rate is sitting at 19.4 percent, which is the highest in the region and 8.5 percentage points higher than the national level (10.9 percent).

**3. Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa Te Puna Education Training and Employability Services are the new contract holders for the Ministry of Education South Rangitikei and Whanganui Attendance Services.** This new approach to getting tamariki and rangatahi back to school uses a whānau ora approach that works with the whole family and not just the individual.



### EVENTS and UPDATES

*The following events and updates were provided by the Manawatū-Whanganui RSLG members, as critical indicators of what is happening to understand current and future workforce and skills needs in the region.*

**4. The Whanganui Port Employment Precinct had a successful first intake of eight participants in the Fast Track Employment programme.**

Of these eight, six are in the process of securing employment and two are going on to do higher study. This is a strong example of Transition Support happening in the region, which is an overarching labour market theme of interest to the RSLG.

**5. Through the RSLG's MSD representative, the group has been notified of 14 business closures or downsizings since February this year.** These adverse events involved high profile employers such as NZ Post, Stevensons, Ezibuy, Goodman Fielder and Massey University with up to 390 workers losing their jobs across the region. MSD have been working with union entities and a network of employers to help support the immediate transition of the affected workers.

**6. Demolition of most of the Tupoho Community Complex buildings in Whanganui has begun.** In its place will be Te Puna Hapori, a wellness hub encompassing whānau centred community services. The RSLG supports this through its focus on kaiāwhina health and holistic wellbeing in the workplace.

## REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLAN UPDATE

**The Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG) are in the final stages of developing the refreshed 2023 Regional Workforce Plan.** As well as focusing on key labour market themes, the plan takes an in-depth look at the 'Freight, Logistics and Warehousing Sector' and the 'Seasonal elements of the Horticulture Sector'.

**Supplementing the plan itself will be a Supporting Insights document and Actions Update from the 2022 Regional Workforce Plan.** Together, this suite of documents will comprehensively communicate the unique story of the region, affirmed by both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Moreover, the Actions Update will highlight progress on the implementation of the 2022 Action Points and, thus, the positive impact that has been made regionally.

**The refreshed 2023 Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Workforce Plan and supplementary documents are set to be published in July.** The 2022 Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Workforce Plan can be accessed here:

<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/assets/manawatu-whanganui-regional-workforce-plan.pdf>