

TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS

Increasing employment opportunities for rangatahi remains a key focus in the region. A series of initiatives and events (outlined below) have been held in Tairāwhiti, aiming to expose rangatahi to various job opportunities and career pathways available in the region. This will increase the attraction and retention of local rangatahi to employment in the region.

Youth representatives have noted they are seeing a disconnect between students and teachers, which may be correlated with lower attendance rates in schools. There are concerns that increasing reports of students feeling pressured to help provide financially for their families, in part due to COVID-19, is also taking a toll on our rangatahi and may be attributed to students disengaging with school in favour of work.

Seasonal work opportunities in the horticulture and agriculture sectors are increasing and there is school holiday work and seasonal work available in the region. The Spring season is described as the easiest time to enter the industry, especially for kiwifruit. The Tairāwhiti Growers' Association (TGA) has been formed to replace Primary Producers and will advocate on behalf of the horticulture sector to encourage a collective approach to training, employment, and sustainability. The TGA had its inaugural meeting on 22nd June where more than 20 growers in the region attended. The TGA have outlined Water and Labour as their two key focus areas for the next 12-months.

Employers are struggling to provide adequate wages to attract and retain staff amid record inflation. Workers are calling for higher wages and encouraging employers to consider providing a living wage, however, Union advocates are reporting a divergence in priorities between local managers and executives. Local managers are eager to increase wages to retain and hire staff, but the executives are facing budget constraints due to inflation.

Forestry contractors call for more certainty of employment. Log prices are heavily influenced by the export market price. With the growing uncertainty surrounding our largest log importer, China, many in the industry are facing mounting pressure to reduce their output and workforce capacity in the forestry sector. At the same time the rising cost of fuel, a lack of domestic log processing plants, issues at our port, and severe weather events which have decimated the region's roads have resulted in multiple forestry contractors having to stop operating or to leave the region for better opportunities elsewhere. Accordingly, forestry contractors are calling for support so they can provide more certainty of employment for their workers.

TRENDS AT A GLANCE



Both the labour force participation (LFP) rate and the employment rate have continued to decline over the year to September 2022, to 58.7% and 57.2% respectively. However, the long-term trend over the decade shows both the LFP and employment rates in a slow climb, with the employment rate increasing by an estimated 5 percentage points over that time. This indicates a higher proportion of locals are engaged in employment over the decade.



The unemployment rate has decreased to an estimated 2.9% for the September 2022 quarter, which is lower than the Total NZ unemployment rate of 3.3%. This is a decrease of 2.0 percentage points compared to September 2021*, and continues the long-term trend which shows the unemployment rate decreasing from around 9 to 4 percent over the decade.



The underutilisation rate for men has dropped by 1.0 percentage points compared to pre-covid levels, while female underutilisation rate has dropped 0.7 percentage points over the same period. This indicates that there has been improvement in maximising the available labour force.

Source: NZ household Labour Force Survey – September 2022.
*Note: With a small population, Tairāwhiti's quarterly results will include a larger sampling error range, so long-term trends should be the focus as they will give a better view of the direction that the true figures are moving.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

EVENTS AND UPDATES



More Tairāwhiti wahine are passionate about a career in civil construction after taking part in the hands-on "Girls with Hi-Vis (GWHV)" initiative at Downer Gisborne in June. The GWHV event was created by Connexis - a work-based learning subsidiary of Te Pūkenga New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology. Students heard from successful wahine staff at Downer and learnt about the wide range of jobs available in civil construction.

EIT and Trust Tairāwhiti held a "Build the Whare" vocational careers day in August for secondary school students. Focusing on entry-level jobs and trades needed to 'build the whare', the event connected students directly with employers to explore the range of industries, and to understand what skills are needed to do the job.

Gisborne Boys' High School staff held their annual accord in collaboration with Trust Tairāwhiti and MBIE. A key focus of the accord was developing a curriculum that is responsive to the students, whānau and wider community. The accord will align the curriculum with local job opportunities to develop meaningful and relevant connections between the school and local employers. This approach reflects a key aspiration of the CARE-Regional Skills Leadership Group's (RSLG) Regional Workforce Plan: "Kaimahi know what their job opportunities are and can easily acquire the right skills to realize those opportunities".

Te Whatu Ora hosted a Health Careers Expo to provide rangatahi an opportunity to engage with local health providers. The nationwide shortage of healthcare workers has been felt particularly hard in Tairāwhiti, with staffing shortages leading to a reduction in hospital services throughout the year. The Expo promoted numerous varied roles available in the health sector that may be of interest to rangatahi, including nursing, ambulance, dental, pathology, and mental health and addiction services.

Civil construction and horticulture sectors collaborated to pilot a new soft-skills programme. With calls for increased pre-employment training in the horticulture sector, Thompsons Horticulture worked with Downer and MSD, to launch a pilot programme focused on developing soft skills for their new starters. Up to 10 participants recently completed the 4-day programme based on Te Whare Tapa Whā, which included modules on teamwork, communication and financial well-being. The intention is to look for opportunities to deliver this again to a broader cohort.

NZQA approved the application to continue development of the NZ Certificate in Fluid Power Fundamentals (Level 3). Tasj Paulson (Gisborne Hydraulic Services Ltd.) spearheaded the establishment of the NZ Fluid Power Association. The association formed an advisory group in conjunction with Hanga Aro Rau WDC to scope out the main Graduate Profile Outcomes for the fluid power qualification. In mid-September, NZQA approved the continuation of this work moving the qualification one step closer to being inputted into the NZQA framework.

REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLAN UPDATE

A key focus of the Tairāwhiti Regional Workforce Plan is investigating training provision offered in small rural settlements on the East Coast. The delivery of training in these rural areas will allow better access for locals and could be tailored to align with local job opportunities. This would support more local people to remain in the area and potentially encourage those who had moved away to return.

Planning



- A map of current training provision on the East Coast shows it is difficult to assemble information about the delivery of specific courses and the number of learners enrolled in each. To get the necessary detail, direct engagement with the training providers will be required.

Collaboration



- Te Rimu Trust has several workstreams already underway that would benefit from having locally delivered training. The proposed development of the Marine Access Facility could be a catalyst to more work opportunities in the future.
- An opportunity exists to create a training hub to support Te Rimu and other ventures in Te Araroa and surrounding settlements.