

TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



For the months of January and February, the West Coast interim Regional Skills Leadership Group has been focusing on emerging technology and the education sector. The insights below have been collected through regional stakeholder engagement workshops held in February 2021.

Hospitality and Tourism businesses are 'fatigued and losing hope'. This was especially marked in Westland, where international tourism has been a significant driver of the local economy. Employers are concerned that local tourism will reduce further over winter, and this will impact on their viability and remaining labour force.

Westland job losses are effecting volunteer organisations such as Fire and Emergency Services. These job losses are 'flying under the radar' of indicators like Ministry of Social Development (MSD) data as many of the workers were foreign nationals. However, the loss of these workers is being keenly felt as community impacts on vital services that depend on volunteers.

Buller and Greymouth are experiencing growth in many businesses, with subsequent shortages in both labour and skills. These opportunities, combined with local government and MSD partnerships, are seeing significant increases in the number of entry level jobs including apprenticeships. Skilled roles such as engineers and medical staff are proving harder to fill.

TRENDS AT A GLANCE



20.7% The regional decrease in migrant workers on Employer Assisted Temporary Work Visas (EATWV)

3.9% The national decrease in migrant workers on Employer Assisted Temporary Work Visas (EATWV)
(Source: Immigration NZ, April 2020 to Feb 2021.)



2.3% The decrease in regional filled job numbers (390 jobs Dec 2020 to Jan 2021). This is an expected trend as short term jobs over the summer holiday period will have ended.
(Source: Statistics NZ)



3.1% The decrease in filled jobs by women. Attributed to women working in impacted industries - retail, hospitality and accommodation.
(Source: Statistics NZ)

TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

- A \$7m innovative project to farm whitebait in Westport is being supported by the Provincial Development Unit with a \$2m grant.** The farm itself is predicted to create 33.5 jobs directly, with another 30 jobs developing in local food businesses once production begins.
- The buoyant housing market is creating more demand for a wide range of trade and construction roles.** There is increasing demand for new subdivisions, which is promoting land and house packages.
- Zero Invasive Predators (ZIP) and the Jobs for Nature programmes are providing huge opportunities for employment and training.** ZIP is a Department of Conservation initiative that provides practical skills such as working in the outdoors, trapping, and monitoring species.
- Some businesses are focusing on upskilling mid-career workers by investing in their existing staff.** This includes taking advantage of Government support to access additional training, noting the need to balance the number of apprentices with more experienced workers.
- Some employers are thinking 'outside the box' to change business practices.** Actions include reshaping roles so that the hours worked attract a wider range of applicants; retraining local people for new roles; improving pay rates; and promoting career paths.

TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

- Fox and Franz Josef Glacier town tourism businesses are concerned about survival and retaining staff.** Most tourism operators and the four largest hotels (owned and operated by Scenic) are closed for at least the next 18 months and laid off most of their employees. They are seeking a \$35million package from the Government as re-opening will be dependent on an open border and the flow of international visitors.
- A housing shortage is creating challenges for potential new employees moving to the Region.** Employers are losing potential employees to other regions as a result, with vacancies still to fill. Employers are exploring alternative uses for existing buildings as accommodation options (especially for single workers), but family accommodation is much more difficult. There are reports residential customers are on a two year waiting list for new builds.
- Longstanding barriers to attracting and retaining skills and labour are ongoing.** These include long waiting lists to access health services; lack of public transport meaning a driver's licence and use of a car is often a requirement for accessing work; and lack of child care facilities restricting availability for work especially for women.

THE WEST COAST REGION



OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

- Tourism and sustainability sectors - to understand the current situation, forecasts, constraints and strategic opportunities.
- Preparing the foundation work for the development of the West Coast Regional Workforce Plan.