

## TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



For the months of March and April 2021, the Tai Poutini | West Coast interim Regional Skills Leadership Group has been focusing on tourism and the minerals and energy sectors.

Hospitality and tourism businesses are cautiously optimistic about the opening of the trans-Tasman bubble. This is especially so in the Westland Glacier country, where international tourism is a significant driver of the local economy. Australians historically visit the glaciers during the months of September to December, so Operators are in a 'wait and see' mode.

Supply chain disruptions are happening across the Coast with Carter Holt Harvey's recent announcement not to supply some major retailers. This is becoming increasingly evident with reported long waits for material and cancelled orders impacting on construction projects.

Two significant tourism operations in Franz Josef have closed their doors and gone into hibernation. In early May 2021 the Te Waonui Forest Retreat luxury hotel (run by the Scenic Hotel Group) closed, along with the Ngai Tahu owned Glacier Hot Pools. The closure of the hot pools is a significant setback as many domestic visitors come specifically for that attraction.

## TRENDS AT A GLANCE



**-22.7%** 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 April 2021)

**1.1%** The regionally filled job numbers have increased (180 jobs Mar 2020 compared to Mar 2021). This could be expected as things settle down after the end of the summer season jobs.  
(Source: Statistics NZ, Monthly Employment Indicators)



**-5.8%** The decrease in JobSeeker benefits paid in the Westland District. The very low levels of benefit support is attributed to many workers particularly in the Franz and Fox Glacier areas being migrants (so unable to register as a jobseeker), and moving to other parts of the country for work.

(Source: MSD, Monthly Benefit Update, Feb-Mar 2021)

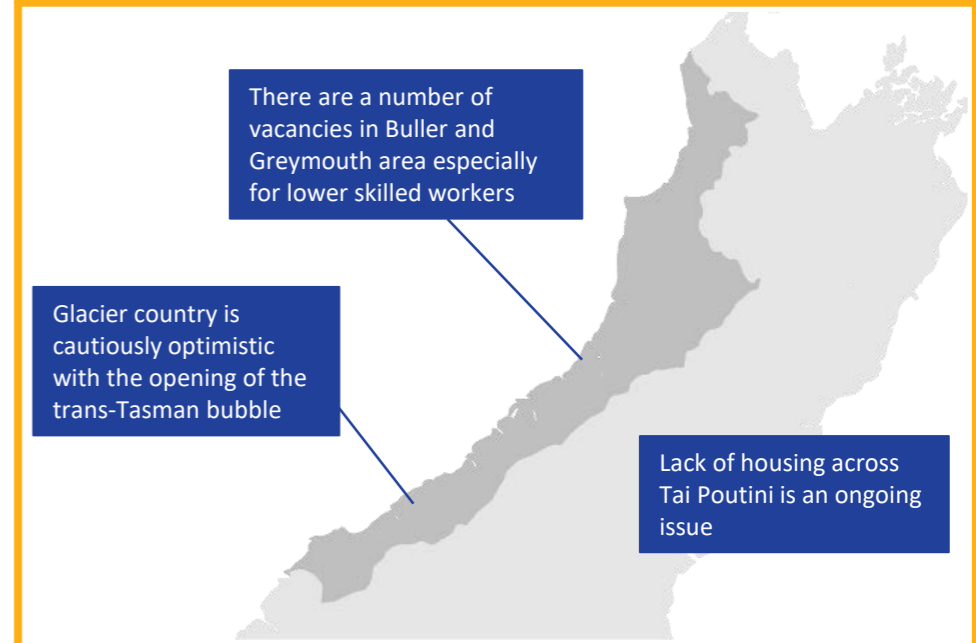
## TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

- The trans-Tasman bubble is creating potential opportunity for the Coast.** Businesses are hoping to see a renewed flow of Australian visitors to support the local economies. The 220 room Scenic Hotel Franz Josef is set to reopen due to forecast demand, providing opportunity across a range of roles for locals who have been affected by the closure of the Te Waonui Forest Retreat luxury hotel.
- The buoyant housing market is creating more demand for a wide range of trade and construction roles.** With the increasing demand for new houses, there are plenty of roles and opportunities for trades.
- New jobs are being created in the Buller area as a result of Provincial Development Unit funding.** In Reefton, the Snowy River Mine has two tunnels currently under construction employing 35 full-time roles directly and another 50 full-time roles indirectly. The operation is employing locals, with a reported 75 local businesses contracted between Buller and Greymouth for various work and supplies. This benefits material supply businesses for products such as concrete and steel.

## TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

- The lack of available housing for rent or purchase is still a significant issue/barrier for the Coast.** Attracting new employees is difficult with no homes to move into, so potential recruits are taking on roles in other regions as a result. The aging housing stocks and the costs of heating, insulation, and maintenance are also concerns that will need to be addressed in order to attract people to the region in the future.
- Demand for driver licencing practical tests is continuing to grow as wait times exceed six months.** The long queues and wait times of six to nine months for a practical test are creating many challenges and are a barrier to employment. With a lack of public transport, holding a full drivers licence is often critical for accessing work and education. The outcome of the national drivers licence review is keenly awaited.
- There is a shortage of lower skilled workers to fill the current demand.** Vacancy signs are common across the Tai Poutini for farm workers and labourers. The Westport based fishing school has also reported difficulty with recruiting people into training.

## THE TAI POUTINI | WEST COAST REGION



## OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

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