

TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS - COVID-19 IMPACTS AND LABOUR MARKET FORECASTS



The region is being effected by the lack of **Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) beds for Agriculture Sector staff entering New Zealand.** The Agriculture sector, particularly the Dairy Industry, is frustrated by the lack of MIQ beds available for staff who have been approved entry to the country. The cost for the MIQ bed, and of the preparation and application for a Visa is now over \$10,000 per worker. Having the staff member working means this cost is justified, however it becomes an additional cost to the employer if no MIQ bed is available. The sector supports further consideration of the number of beds available for people who are approved to enter the country on Working Visas.

Mental health and mental wellbeing are growing concerns across Primary Industry. Farmers continue to have a high level of stress caused by uncertainty. This comes as a result of the proposed Southland Regional Water and Land plan process – the outcome of which lays heavily on our farming community. Additional pressure comes from staff shortages. Regional support and advocacy groups are seeing more indication of high mental health concerns in this sector and continue to offer support services throughout the region.

The Transport Industry is experiencing major driver shortages. They have recognised that a major recruitment barrier is not having an overarching Truck Drivers apprenticeship programme on offer. Establishment of an apprenticeship programme will create a more attractive and sustainable pathway to recruit people to the industry. The industry continues to advocate for drivers to be recognised on the Immigration skills shortage list while it investigates the viability of an apprenticeship pathway.

TRENDS AT A GLANCE



For the year **March 2020 – March 2021** the region has experienced the following job market outcomes:

- Number of **filled jobs** has **decreased by -0.2% / -118 jobs** (Stats NZ)
- Number of **Jobseeker benefit recipients** has **decreased by -16.6% / -402 person** (Ministry of Social Development)



In addition, the latest **Employer Assisted Temporary Work visa data highlights that for the year April 2020 – April 2021:**

- In the region the number of visa holders has **decreased by -14.3% / -265 people**
- Nationally the number of visa holders has only **decreased by -3.9%** (Immigration New Zealand)

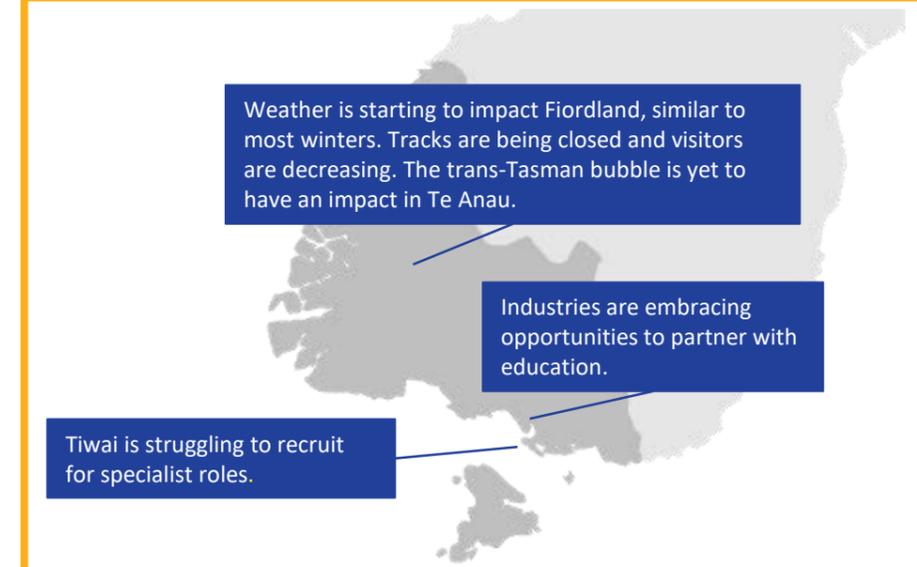
TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

1. **The iRSLG is working with an independent consultant to determine the workforce demand and skill needs across the regions industries and sectors (today and into the future).** This work will influence the Regional Workforce Plan and ultimately inform vocational education opportunities in the region. We anticipate this work will also be a valuable document for the region to assist with forward planning.
2. **The Construction sector is investigating opportunities to increase the number of school leavers entering the sector.** The primary proportion of the construction workforce are 'career-changers'. Secondary and tertiary leavers only make up a small proportion in comparison, however this could support activities to reduce the number of young people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) in Southland.
3. **Engineering and Manufacturing industries are partnering with education to expand on a successful pilot programme launched in the South.** The initiative offers High School students an introduction to the Industry. Students are placed with employers one day per week. The initiative was created and implemented by the Southland + Otago Regional Engineering Collective (SOREC), and they are currently looking to roll this out in other urban and rural areas.

TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

1. **Supply chains and container availability continue to effect the way in which products come into the country.** Construction seem to have the highest impact with shortages of core products such as nails, glue, wood and GIB board. There is at least a six-month wait on windows in Southland which is having a huge impact on completion of jobs. This challenge has also effected general freight as it is becoming harder for transport to plan and schedule drivers due to the inconsistency.
2. **The Accredited Employer announcement by Immigration has created a new challenge for the region.** Employers have raised that they want assurances that there will be strong support and guidance once they are accredited, to ensure the process provides value for the time and money they expend.
3. **The Tiwai work force has experienced a higher turn over this year** than they have over the past two years. Although they are offering flexible and reduced working options the majority of those who have left in the past two months have chosen to retire. Specialist roles such as fitters, electricians, mechanics, crane operators, and process control technicians remain the roles that can not be filled.
4. **There has been a significant increase in enquiries from migrant communities regarding resident visa applications,** for both the Single Migrant and Work to Residence visa categories. People are desperate for updates on the processing time, perceived delays and eligibility. Employers continue to support applicants through the uncertainty.

THE SOUTHLAND MURIHIKU REGION



OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

- Investigation into the Immigration and welfare profile of the region, to determine any areas of challenges and opportunities
- Development of a report around labour market needs, now and in the future