

## TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



Hokitika Gorge

**The situation in South Westland for tourism and hospitality operators is dire.** The lack of visitors to the Glacier Country with the closure of the Australian borders and the latest COVID-19 lockdowns is seeing some operators closing their doors for good.

**Significant funding has been allocated to health and wellbeing to cope with the increase in demand.** With the second COVID-19 lockdown, there has been a significant increase in those requiring access to mental health services in the Region. The issue has been compounded with lack of access to services, with many providers located outside the Coast.

**The first draft of the Tai Poutini West Coast Economic Strategy 2050 has been completed.** Development West Coast (DWC) developed the strategy through two through stakeholder engagement workshops. It outlines the Coasts vision, mission, values, priorities and actions for the next 30 years. This information is informing the development of the regional workforce plan.

**The RSLG members are developing the regions aspirations, priorities and actions for consultation.** The draft is based on DWC's draft Economic Strategy 2050 and other local regional and strategic plans. The RSLG will continue to build on the work undertaken by DWC and their stakeholder engagement.

## TRENDS AT A GLANCE



**-4.1%/-66** The decrease in the number of people receiving the Jobseeker benefit in August 2020 and August 2021.  
(Source: MSD, Monthly Benefit Update, May 2021)



**-16%** The decrease in spending levels on the West Coast when the Alert Level dropped to Level 3, compared to -36% decrease nationally.  
(Infometrics, compared to the same period in 2019 (pre-COVID))



**39.8%/\$100k** The increase in median house price in Buller District

**-11.3%/- \$30k** The decrease in median house price in Grey  
*\* Information for Westland not available as no sales recorded in August 2021.*

(Source: REINZ, Monthly Report, August 2021)



**17.1%/-80** The decrease in the number of people on Employer Assisted Temporary Work visas between August 2020 and August 2021.

(Source: Immigration NZ, 2021)

## TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

- Tai Poutini Polytechnic has launched a new plant operation training in Westport.** The Polytechnic has responded to a gap in the education market by providing an operating skills course at their Westport campus. The aim is for locals, including youth, to take up the course to help fill the growing shortage of operation workers in this area.
- Mining activities continued under COVID-19 Alert Level 4 keeping workers employed.** During the last lockdown mining operators were forced to close, resulting in job losses and loss of significant contracts. This time around, staff have remained employed and contracts filled.
- Underemployment is seen by the RSLG, and some employers, as an opportunity to fill workforce labour demand.** Underemployed are people who work part-time, but are looking for more hours. Some employers are beginning to make changes to the way they work to attract these workers - including reshaping roles to suit school hours and job sharing. They are also reconsidering their business models to allow changes to working weeks, including regular working days.
- A new 'Delivery' rebate scheme has been launched to help businesses operate under Alert Level restrictions.** Development West Coast provided a one-off rebate of up to \$500 per business to those offering deliveries in Level 3. The rebate was aimed at incentivising businesses to provide contactless delivery and get Coasters back to work.

## TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

- Supply chain issues are ongoing across the Coast, and are a significant issue for businesses.** Some construction companies are looking to cut back to a three day weeks because they can't get materials. Many have had to push back jobs, and are saying they will be forced to lay off staff if this continues.
- Lockdown blues are increasing for retailers.** This lockdown has not had the same level of hype and positivity as the first time around. The rebound in spending and support of local businesses in Level 2 hasn't eventuated across the Coast. This is especially evident in Westport, where retailers are struggling with the impacts of the lockdown on top of the recent flooding event.
- The affect of the recent lightning strike on business was severe.** It damaged the network cable at Chesterfield taking out cell phone, landline and internet services from Hokitika south to the glaciers for 36-hours. This highlights the Regions vulnerability as many businesses were unable to trade as Eftpos was not working and the majority of customers no longer carry cash.
- Housing availability and affordability continues to affect employers ability to attract and retain staff.** This is affecting home ownership, rentals, and short and long-term accommodation. The RSLG is coordinating with MSD, Kāinga Ora and local government on this issue.

## TE TAI O POUTINI | WEST COAST REGION

**Permanent RSLG members appointed**  
**Co-chairs:** Lisa Tumahai and Graeme Neylon

**Members:**  
Craig Churchill  
Rachael Forsyth  
Heath Milne  
Latham Martin  
Peter O'Sullivan  
Anita Halsall-Quinlan  
Ben Smith  
Michael Stevenson  
*Note: 2 more members to be confirmed*

Housing continues to be an issue, particularly for Westport residents who lost their homes in the recent floods

Growing nursing shortages are raising fears over how emergency services will cope if a COVID-19 outbreak occurred on the Coast

## OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

- Confirming aspirations, priorities, and actions as part of the development of the Regional Workforce Plan
- Targeted stakeholder/sector engagement with a view to confirming direction and actions of the RWP