

TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



Wage rates continue to be both an opportunity and a challenge in Taranaki. Employers are struggling to meet the wage premiums typically paid in the region as companies compete with higher wages offered in the oil and gas industry. As some oil and gas companies reduce their presence in Taranaki, some employers are wanting to realign pay rates to be more reflective of the current climate. This is contrasted by smaller employers feeling pressure to increase wage rates as the cost of living increases, while they struggle to balance their books as incoming work is slower than usual due to ongoing COVID-19 uncertainty (nationally and internationally).

Transport between Districts remains an ongoing challenge. Housing in the region continues to be limited, forcing worker mobility to increase. Recently DIALOG Fitzroy and Taranaki Regional Council launched a 12-month trial bus service for employers to transport their staff to large industrial sites Kapuni and Fonterra's Whareroa site in the South. The bus will travel from Bell Block in North Taranaki, stopping in New Plymouth and smaller towns along the way. The low-emissions buses are equipped with Wi-Fi to enable employees to relax during the commute, and remove the transportation barrier for many.

TRENDS AT A GLANCE



~1,130 migrants in Taranaki are on visa types eligible for consideration for the new 2021 Residents Visa pathway announced in September. In addition to visa type, there are other requirements that must be met to be eligible to apply for this visa type.



24% of migrants in the region on eligible visa types are employed within the Accommodation and Food Services Sector. This sector historically doesn't commonly pay wages at or above the \$27/hour requirement, so applicants would need to meet one of the other required criteria.



14% of migrants in the region on eligible visa types are employed within the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Category. This category has the highest number of migrants on Essential Skills Visas in Taranaki.

(Source: MBIE, Migrant Employment Data, July 2021)

TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

- The introduction of the 2021 Resident Visa pathway has provided a level of certainty and relief for many employees** working within the Health Sector. Many of these people were on Skilled Migrant Visas and provide valuable services in some of the smaller towns in the region.
- Local beekeepers have developed a 5 ½ week training programme to meet the demand this industry is seeing in the region.** The training is privately funded and will be locally delivered. This is a great example of the industry coming together to identify a gap in training provision, and working together to fill it.
- Energy Skills Aotearoa and Te Pūkenga will work together to grow the skilled energy workforce supporting the transition to a lower emissions economy at the Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT).** They have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and their first step will be to develop an industry skills action plan for the broader energy sector including both renewable and non-renewable companies. This work will be led by Energy Skills and supported by Te Pūkenga.
- The business community is realising the importance of upskilling in Te Reo and Tiriti o Waitangi.** Te Reo classes offered by Taranaki Chamber of Commerce and WITT reached capacity within a day, and a second course was running within the week. Enterprises are reporting that they are enjoying providing a more inclusive work environment for staff.

TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

- Employers are considering health & safety, employment law and consumer demand drivers in grappling whether to mandate vaccinations for their staff.** Some employers are proactively promoting the vaccination status of their staff, while large employers such as Fonterra are providing on-site vaccination clinics to try and increase vaccination rates. Taranaki Chamber of Commerce is working with individual employers on this, including supporting a campaign around the importance of high vaccination rates.
- The lifespan of employment opportunities provided through Jobs for Nature funding is increasing anxiety among employers and employees** as they begin to think 'what next' once the funding for these programmes stops. Te Aranga o Taranaki (Ngā Iwi o Taranaki Strategy and Action Plan) is looking to address this and create more defined pathways for permanent employment.
- Stratford High School is reporting significant reduction in enrolment numbers for Māori boys in Years 11-13.** Stratford High School is working with the Ministry of Education, Ngāti Maru and WITT. They are exploring different career / education options that could be implemented to keep engagement levels high, or to ensure direct pathways into alternative education or trades training, as many rangatahi are reporting increased pressures in their home environments to leave school.
- There is concern that the urban/rural divide is widening in the region.** This disruption has been compounded by COVID-19, leading to ground swell activity in the major towns. The divide is of particular concern given mental health concerns in the rural sector and the struggles they face with recruitment.

REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLAN

The Regional Skills Leadership Group has begun the development of the Workforce Plan, to be published in June 2022. The Group is looking to engage with regional stakeholders and partners on the labour market and skills needs in the following sectors, with additional sectors to be covered in later years.

- Energy
- Food and Fibre (including Primary Processing)
- Engineering, Construction & Infrastructure
- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Information Technology / Digital
- Biodiversity / environment / sustainability
- Manufacturing
- Hospitality / Tourism / Arts

The first two sectors to be included in the Regional Workforce Plan will be finalised in October. The Regional Skills Leadership Group will be continuing community and stakeholder engagement to support the development of the Plan.

OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

Confirmation of the first two sectors to be included in the Regional Workforce Plan, with sectors for the following years identified.
Stakeholder engagement around barriers to participation in the identified sectors.
Understanding and appreciation for existing regional strategies and plans in identified sectors.