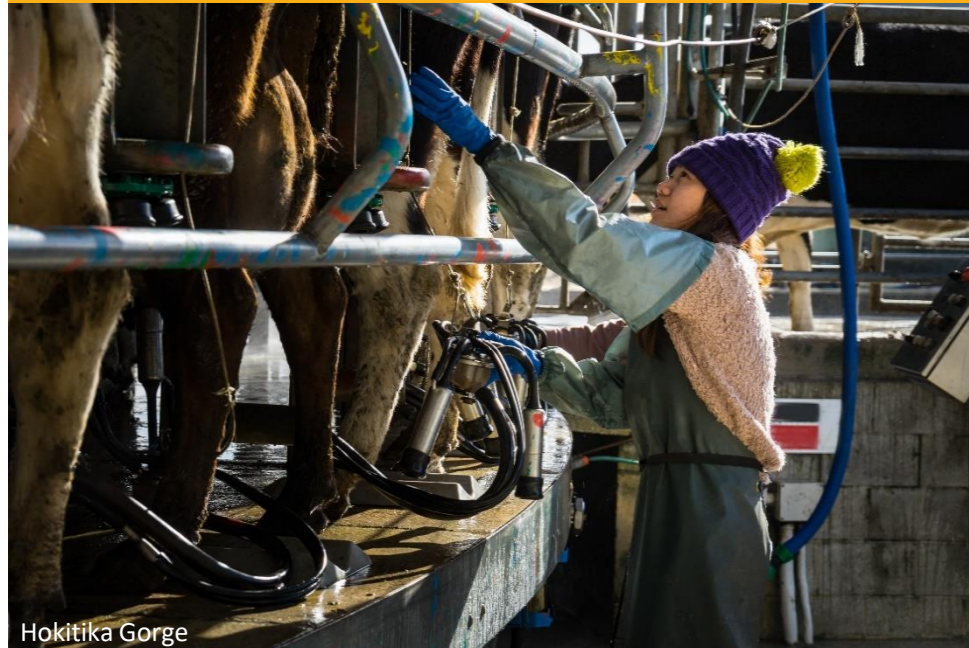


TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



The dairy sector labour market continues to tighten creating challenges for farmers. In particular they are struggling to find and retain farm managers and labourers, with fierce competition as contract staff are being offered \$2-\$5 more per-hour to switch farms. As a result, many owners are looking to cut upcoming herd numbers and run the entire farming operation themselves. This is anticipated to effect productivity and bottom lines.

The RSLG members are consulting on the regions labour market strategic priorities and aspirations. Feedback received to date has been positive, with some thoughtful debate and insights being gathered. Engagement is ongoing with key sectors and stakeholders such as local councils, iwi, and Department of Conservation.

The situation in South Westland for tourism and hospitality operators is worsening. The lack of visitors to the Glacier Country, particularly with Auckland and Waikato residents still unable to travel with the COVID-19 lockdowns, is seeing some operators permanently close their doors.

The Tai Poutini West Coast Economic Strategy 2050 has been completed and is expected to be adopted in the next month. The RSLG members will be working with Development West Coast and relevant key sectors to inform the development of the regional workforce plan.

TRENDS AT A GLANCE



1,290 / 7.9% the increase in filled jobs, between September 2020 and September 2021. The majority of this growth was an increase in women (690) and more moderate growth for men (585). The age group seeing the most growth over this period are aged 30-39 years
Source: Statistics NZ, Monthly Employment Indicators, Sept 2021.



-140 / -8.7% the decrease in Jobseeker benefit recipients between October 2020 and October 2021 taking the total recipients from 1,650 to 1,510.
Source: MSD, Monthly Reporting, October 2021.



-12 The decrease in the number of migrants working as Dairy Cattle Farm Workers (from 39 to 27 workers) on Employer Assisted Temporary Work Visas.
Source: Immigration NZ, EATW report, November 2021.

TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

- **Westport and Reefton are seeing growth in visitor numbers and spending, helping them attract and retain staff.** Visitors to the Buller District brought in \$43 million for the year ending September, up from \$36 million in 2020. Visitor dollars were also up in Westport and Reefton, with tourism operators noting a significant increase in multi-day tours. Many of the visitors are also repeat returnees.
- **Tai Poutini Polytechnic has developed a range of environmental courses to meet demand.** The Polytechnic has responded to DOC and iwi's request to develop specific courses for outdoor work including chainsaw skills, river crossing, track maintenance etc. They have also developed a specific course for iwi working on the Arahua River project.
- **A new Education to Employment Broker has been appointed under Development West Coast (DWC).** The new position is funded by MSD and MOE, and is tasked with improving pastoral care for students as they transition from school to education and employment. This includes individual wraparound support to plan pathways back to the Coast for work.
- **The West Coast DHB are working with Tai Poutini Polytechnic on running an enrolled nursing course.** At any one time the DHB has a vacancy rate of 30-50 staff mostly in the skilled area categories. They are targeting young doctor and nurse trainees to complete electives and work experience on the Coast to experience a rural lifestyle. They are running a campaign to integrate potential workers and working closely with other organisations such as FENZ and St Johns etc.

TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

- **Employers are unable to fill vacancies even though the number of jobseekers receiving a benefit from MSD make up 7.9 percent of those aged 18-64 years in the region.** This is high compared to the national equivalent (6.0 percent). There are growing concerns over why many jobseekers are not in employment, especially when there are a high number of job vacancies across Tai Poutini in a range of industries and skill levels.
- **There are heightened concerns over increased staff shortages in the health, teaching, and voluntary sectors (FENZ, St Johns) due to mandatory vaccination requirements.** In the health sector alone, with over 1,100 staff members employed at the West Coast DHB, a 3 percent staff loss equates to 35 positions. This comes on top of significant existing doctor and nurse shortages.
- **Reinstated concession fees for tourism operators is likely to result in more business closures in South Westland.** Tourism owners are required to pay Department of Conservation (DOC) concession fees once more, after they have been waived for the past two years to acknowledge business hardship. With relatively low visitor numbers to South Westland, this will test businesses viability with a likely loss of associated jobs.
- **Lack of motivation is a growing issue for jobseekers.** There are reports that the Coast is seeing a increasing issue with those that want to work, but don't have the motivation to find or apply for jobs. This is especially noted for Māori jobseekers.

REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLAN

The RSLG is developing Tai Poutini's first Regional Workforce Plan. The Plan will set out key strategic priorities and actions for addressing the region's workforce and skills opportunities and challenges over the next 15 years. The overarching aspiration/outcome sought is:

To unlock the potential of Tai Poutini West Coast by supporting and growing our businesses and our youth, supporting lifelong learning, attracting investment, creating new jobs, promoting higher wages, and increasing the wellbeing of all those that live in the Region.

Over the short term (1-3 years) the proposed top labour outcomes include:

1. Developing a Conservation and Biodiversity Learning Centre that is renowned across NZ for its skills training
2. Providing local young people with the skills they need to meet regional forecasts for job growth and employer needs
3. Educating and supporting employers to recruit, retain and upskill older workers to fill labour shortages, including adult apprenticeships.

OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

- Engaging with the community and stakeholders on Strategic Priorities and Aspirations for Tai Poutini
- Drafting the Regional Workforce Plan for consultation in early 2022