

**RETURNING TO WORK**

Kia ora koutou, the insights in this report are reflections from the group members on what they have seen and heard through their work, and from the people that they support or depend upon. This report has a 'Health and Welfare' aspect with a focus on 'What does the workplace look like now and what will it look like when COVID restrictions ease and more people return to work' and 'What are the skills that are more relevant now than ever before'.

**There is a need to develop a clear legal framework to allow employers to understand their legal position when dealing with customers and employees.** We are hearing it is becoming an issue particularly for construction workers, retail, hospitality and other customer-facing roles where there seems to be a lack of clarity around protocols such as vaccinations. Many [Whāriki](#) businesses are asking for clarity around legislation.

**Hospitality employers are concerned that returning workers who have not been working for months will no longer be engaged.** There is a need for more return to work support and clarification of what can or can't be done in the workplace. Additionally staff with children face pressure to balance work / life, so support will be needed to ensure their needs are met. Therefore a co-ordinated effort is required to engage and support the workforce.

**There is a growing level of customer aggression** which is having an effect on workers in the health and retail industries. Workplace aggression is an issue that will result in more training requirements such as the need to give people tools and training to avoid confrontational situations escalating.

– Ngā mihi – RSLG Co – Chairs

**TRENDS AT A GLANCE**



**Auckland Businesses** – In 2020 there were 206,001 business units in the region, a 2% increase from 2019. [Link](#) to data and definitions (Source – Infometrics)



**Auckland GDP** – Despite lockdown in 2020 the region had GDP of \$122,776 million, an increase of 1.5% compared to the same time last year (2019-2020). [Link](#) to data and definitions (Source – Infometrics)



**Total Tourist Expenditure** – In 2020 the Auckland Region saw \$8,814m of tourism related spend. Nationally the figure was \$29,885m (Source – [Infometrics](#))

**TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES**

- The Pacific Business Trust are holding Drop-in Clinics as an opportunity for Pacific businesses to 'talanoa'** (Share ideas, skills and experience through dialogue). The 'Next Step – Alert Level 3.2' drop-in clinic will focus on how to open your business safely when restrictions ease in Auckland and the next steps changes in alert levels when they come into effect. This 'talanoa' will be held in partnership with Retail NZ and will talk about; The COVID - 19 Environment and Impact, Navigating Level 3 Step 2, Supporting your Staff, and Covid-19 recent and upcoming changes.
- The Tourism – Industry Transformation Plan is currently being developed by government** and is welcomed by the RSLG. This [plan](#) will see the government work with tourism businesses and the tourism workforce, councils, iwi, researchers and independent advisers to lift industry standards and shift towards a more sustainable model.
- Go with Tourism workforce wānanga.** Hosted by the MBIE-funded [Go with Tourism](#) initiative, over 100 participants workshopped creative ideas to support future sector workforce development. Tamaki Makaurau RSLG was represented by Marisa Bidois and Pam Ford. Marisa is focussed on supporting Restaurant association members to reopen, when Auckland is expected to move to the traffic light system.

**TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES**

- Soft skills are in heavy demand.** Pre-COVID 19, employers placed high value on employees with [soft or people skills](#). The need for this skill set is in demand due to the need for workers being able to de-escalate confrontational customer situations that are becoming more frequent in the workplace. This is being seen in industries such as hospitality and contact centres.
- Some seasonal growers are struggling to find workers to harvest crops.** In some situations this has led to employers enticing workers with 'No Tax' payment incentives and hourly rates below minimum wage.
- Shortages persist in the hospitality industry.** Around 63 percent of the industry is currently trading and when demand increases after alert level restrictions ease and everyone is back, there will continue to be a severe skills shortage when demand increases after alert level restrictions ease.
- Rising incidences of customer dissatisfaction in the workplace have seen the employment of security staff,** across numerous workplaces that normally would have no need for security. This is being seen in industries/places such as quick service restaurants and cemeteries. Staff recruitment in the security industry will see a boom as a result and need to recruit more people to meet demands. The Private Security Personnel Licensing Authority has also made allowances for Auckland where non certified security staff can be employed up to three weeks rather than the normal two.



**OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:**

- The group continues to focus on planning towards the development and delivery of a Regional Workforce Plan by June 2022
- The developing of a case study into 'Māori Health Workforce'
- Gaining feedback from stakeholders on the recently published [Regional Labour Market and Socio Economic Profile](#)
- A survey of Hospitality employees and employers on skills, careers and aspirations