

## TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



The first iteration of the Canterbury Regional Skills Leadership Group's (RSLG) Regional Workforce Plan (RWP) focuses on three key sectors (Technology, Manufacturing, and Healthcare & Social Assistance) and one demographic group (Rangatahi). These groups will be analysed with consideration to the impact that they have on the whole of the region's labour market. Engagement and testing have also occurred with a number of stakeholders from the focus areas. The finalised plan will be available from 1 July 2022.

Rangatahi are primarily reaching out to their peers for careers advice and guidance, as opposed to relying on traditional school careers advisors or their parents. At a recent RSLG hui with rangatahi from around Christchurch, rangatahi shared their experiences and journeys navigating from school to further education or training. They spoke of the ease of access and trust they had with their peers when looking at options and making decisions. Canterbury RSLG will be looking at careers support for young people through their Regional Workforce Plan.

The Canterbury manufacturing sector is experiencing labour shortages and rising businesses costs which are being exacerbated by ongoing supply chain difficulties. These have increased export and import costs and significantly disrupted business scheduling and reliability of logistics planning. During the RSLG's recent sector engagement, there were widespread stories of businesses unable to complete or take on large scale orders as materials and skilled labour became more and more scarce. Minimising situations like this will clearly only provide positive effects for the region's economy.

Businesses are struggling to operate as staff and whānau illness, as well as isolations, increase. In some cases temporary closures have been necessary as a result of the current COVID-19 wave. In larger businesses, reduced staffing numbers have been planned for through business continuity plans, however, many smaller businesses don't have that flexibility and are needing to react as staffing situations present themselves.

## TRENDS AT A GLANCE



As at the December 2021 quarter, the Canterbury region had a lower rate of young people Not In Education Employment or Training (NEET) compared to the national average (9.4% vs 11.3% total NZ). However, this still equates to approximately 8,200 young people who could be in the workforce or training.



The health care and social assistance sector has a much higher share of female workers than the Canterbury labour market as a whole. In 2021, female workers accounted for 81% of the workforce compared to 46.5% in the total Canterbury labour market.



Canterbury has one of the largest tech environments in the country with its tech sector contributing \$2.4 billion worth of GDP and over 15,000 jobs.

Source: Infometrics online portal

## TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

1. **The new \$344 million Antarctica research base will be built in Timaru** and is expected to create hundreds of jobs over the next six years. Construction is expected to begin once the design and planning is complete in 2022, and it's estimated there will be 170 jobs involved during peak construction, with more than 700 jobs created overall. It is expected this project will bring millions of dollars of investment into the Timaru district, benefiting everyone from trades and subcontractors, to accommodation and hospitality providers.
2. **University of Canterbury are currently establishing a new online platform (UC Online)** which will be a fully online academic unit. The phased design approach will see this platform grow in content and partners. The intent is to also engage industry leaders to help design content that will support future qualification and skill needs. This will be the only NZ education entity specifically targeted at students who choose to study online.
3. **A cluster of Canterbury tech companies are looking to form an alliance to codesign a new approach to skills attraction.** The Canterbury Tech Sector Skills Pilot will look at how to attract, embrace and support those with dyslexia into the sector. The co-design model will include a reference group made up of experts in the field of dyslexia and those struggling with the challenges of dyslexia.
4. **A collaboration opportunity has been identified to align RSLG's RWP actions with a new Christchurch NZ initiative.** The focus will be on aligning objectives to support industry to attract, recruit and retain more women into their workplaces. This has emerged as a priority through RSLG engagement with sector focus groups such as manufacturing and technology.

## TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

1. **Attracting, retaining and developing an appropriately skilled and experienced tech workforce is a significant issue,** both within Canterbury, but also nationally and globally. It has become clear that there is a need to develop both a stronger domestic talent pipeline as well as enable immigration settings that allow specialised overseas talent to support the current and future needs of this sector. The Canterbury RWP will focus on actions that will assist the sector to address some of these challenges.
2. **The wellbeing of employees and employers in Canterbury's rural sector is being further affected as staff absences increase.** Increased COVID-19 cases are adding to an already challenging business environment where employers are struggling to get necessary farming tasks completed. These absences are coming on top of the sector having experienced negative weather events including floods, and excess rain at harvest time. They are also not easily able to move stock off the land due to meat processing plants working at reduced hours due to staff absences. All these negative effects are increasing outgoings and reducing incomes, which are expected to have a long-term effect on the health of the sector's workforce and long-term business viability.
3. **Staff from tech firms in Canterbury are being headhunted to work in Australia and the UK.** COVID-19 has increased employers need to recruit from offshore and amplified their understanding that the only barrier to talent working offshore is time zones. One of the country's largest tech exporters, who is based in Christchurch, suggests New Zealand could reverse that trend. If they were able to seize the opportunity for "New Zealand Inc" to play on the global stage, there is a large employee market overseas and New Zealand has a global brand that the tech workforce here can take advantage of.

## THE CANTERBURY REGION



Source: Christchurch NZ

## OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT TWO MONTHS:

- Continue to engage with key focus sectors/groups and partners to help shape the first iteration of the Regional Workforce Plan
- Finalise draft content of the Regional Workforce Plan to share with key stakeholders and partners
- Explore and test potential actions with external parties to contribute to the final draft of the RWP