

## TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



**The inaugural Otago Regional Workforce Plan has been launched**, on July 15, by Minister of Social Development and Employment Carmel Sepuloni. The document emphasises the need for more collaboration within the region to counter factors such as skills shortages and unclear career pathways. The plan is a *wero* [challenge] to strategise for the future and a mechanism to stimulate discussion, coordination, and action towards meeting the emerging skills and workforce needs of Otago. It informs how the region can tackle some of the issues, challenges, and opportunities faced in the Otago labour market, and is an important step to a better planned regional workforce. The Otago Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG) developed the plan after combining in-depth regional analysis with extensive stakeholder and partner input. The RWP responds to, and incorporates, the mahi of regional organisations such as economic development agencies, councils and Otago rūnaka – all of which have been invaluable in building a comprehensive scan of the region’s labour market. The full plan is available [here](#).

**Concerns for mental health and wellbeing in Otago.** Reports from social service providers across the region point to an increased and acute demand for mental health and well-being support in the Otago workforce. Agencies indicate that work related issues are driving this rise, with ongoing impacts of COVID-19, labour shortages and general uncertainty cited as determinants. Agencies are being stretched to meet this need, especially given equitable access to mental health and well-being support for those in need is in question. Staff absences relating to mental health and well-being are placing even further pressure on workplace capacity.

**Waitaki District Council releases draft Economic Development Strategy.** The Waitaki District Council has adopted a draft economic development strategy that calls for the creation of 1350 more jobs in the district by 2032 and the formation of a new Economic Development Agency, Venture Waitaki. The strategy has been developed by Polis Consulting Group who worked on it with the Council and Te Rūnanga o Moeraki whilst also engaging with businesses and other stakeholders in the district. The next steps will be for the Council to engage with partners and stakeholders to investigate potential delivery options for the draft Plan, which can be read [here](#).

**Clutha Development commissioned report on their workforce issues.** The report showed that food processing has been a significant driver of employment growth in the Clutha district, with over 1,200 jobs created from 2016 to 2021, a year-on-year increase of close to 8% in the sector. Population growth in the district has exceeded predictions, but an ageing population and lagging school leaver numbers have placed pressure on the district’s ability to fill these roles without increased migration levels.

## TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

**Queenstown Resort College launches Machine Learning micro-credential.** The micro-credential is aimed at learners with no prior experience and will provide them with practical skills to support and develop machine learning in various industries. Building machine learning capability across the region will accelerate the appropriate use of this technology, lift productivity and shift workforce requirements (skills and people). More information can be found [here](#).

**Alternative construction qualification pathway being trialled.** Te Pukenga has launched an Otago based unified construction qualification pilot. The pilot will explore how the BCITO and local polytechnics can work together to create a seamless construction training and qualification pathway, as well as accelerate sector training. The pilot will seek to build more flexibility into in-work qualification by providing alternative entry and exit points for learners, alignment of skills recognition within the construction qualification and sub-industry requirements, and the recognition of prior learning from secondary education and other contexts. This could potentially shorten the time taken for learners to achieve a relevant qualification, widen the scope of sector employers who can take on apprentices, and build more capacity into the training system.

**Workforce shortages in horticulture and viticulture** are prompting Central Otago growers to explore efficiencies in their operations, including automation. These include the investigation of movable harvest platforms, and efficiencies from different growing techniques. Growers advise that widespread automation across varieties grown locally is some time away, meaning the sector will be reliant on human-centric harvesting for the foreseeable future.

## TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

**Nursing Shortages in the Otago Region have hit severe levels**, which is creating significant issues for delivery of core services in Aged Residential Care (ARC) facilities. Since 1 April 2022, there have been 81 Section 31 notifications to Health NZ from ARC facilities across the lower South, all related to short-staffed shifts. A Section 31 notice is required when the health and safety of ARC residents is considered at risk. Prior to COVID, these reports numbered 1-2 per annum. The ARC Nursing Workforce Steering Committee in Otago/Southland is advocating for a lift in workforce numbers through faster pathways to accreditation for immigrant nurses and a more flexible pathway to nursing practitioner qualifications.

**As the border opens, the Queenstown Lakes Hospitality sector remains under pressure.** Visitor activity in Queenstown Lakes surged in July and August with school holidays and record early season snow attracting an influx of visitors. Recreation and hospitality businesses report they have struggled to meet demand, with staff shortages being exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19 and winter illness. Instances of sudden, temporary business closures and executive staff having to ‘chip in’ to meet front line activities are commonplace. There is widespread concern that the region will not be able to deliver a quality visitor experience in the coming summer months as labour shortages continue.

**Support for in-work learning lacking.** At a recent Southland Otago Engineering Collective (SOREC) summit, members commented that a lack of in-work support for their apprentices is impacting learning and working outcomes. Academic progress for learners is being hampered and workplaces feel they are not equipped to adequately support their workers in learning. Feedback received is that increased pastoral support for learners needs to be a priority for ROVE related entities and reform processes.

## NUMBERS AT A GLANCE



**8.0% - Labour underutilisation rate in Otago remains the lowest in New Zealand.**

Source: Household Workforce Survey to 30 June 2022  
[www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases](http://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases)



**97 - The total number of people available for and actively seeking work in Central Otago, the lowest number since March 2020.**

Source: Ministry of Social Development



**1308 – Despite a decline, COVID-19 cases remain comparatively high in the Southern DHB. As at 25/8/22 there were 1308 active cases.**

Source: <https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-data-and-statistics/covid-19-current-cases>

## THE OTAGO REGION

Inland Otago Hospitality businesses are struggling to meet increased customer demand as staffing shortages continue.

Waitaki Draft Economic Development Strategy adopted with a goal of creating 1350 more jobs by 2032

Clutha Development report indicates food processing driving workforce growth

## OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 2 MONTHS:

- Otago Regional Workforce Plan actions in progress
- September RSLG Hui to be held in Clutha District