

TOP REGIONAL NEWS



The Prime Minister opened Te Pokapū Wāina o Aotearoa | The New Zealand Wine Centre in Blenheim on 29 September. The new facility brings together industry (Wine Marlborough, NZ Wine, Sustainable Winegrowing NZ), science (Bragato Research Institute, Plant & Food Research) and students at the new Marlborough Research Centre facility on the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology's (NMIT)/Te Pūkenga Blenheim campus.

A new Experimental Future Vineyard was also announced by the Marlborough Research Centre. By controlling aspects of the vineyard environment such as soil, temperature and water, scientists can help winegrowers protect the environment and mitigate the impact of climate change. Plant & Food Research will operate the facility and provide opportunities to students at NMIT/Te Pūkenga.

Aquaculture New Zealand received funding for their Workforce Action Plan. The Marlborough RSLG is collaborating with the Nelson-Tasman RSLG to take a Te Taihū | Top of the South approach to the aquaculture sector. The funding will assist the aquaculture industry to get the first stage of the action plan for developing a skilled, qualified, and diverse workforce underway. Aquaculture employs over 3,000 people in NZ including 1,200+ in Marlborough. The Government's Aquaculture Strategy has a goal of \$3 billion in annual sales by 2035 and to achieve this the number of workers is predicted to double. Currently, there are at least 500 vacancies across the aquaculture industry nationwide.

STATE OF OUR COMMUNITY

The Salvation Army's [State of Our Communities 2022 report](#) highlighted housing and low wages as challenges in Blenheim.



All Blenheim suburbs have lower household income than the New Zealand average of \$87,000, ranging from Redwoodtown West at \$60,000 to Witherlea West at \$86,000.



Almost all of Blenheim's suburbs spend 30 percent or more of household income on rent (except Springlands and Witherlea). The report says an ideal rental affordability level is 30 percent or less of household income is spent on rent. Suburbs in Blenheim range from 40 percent of household income in Redwoodtown West to 29 percent in Witherlea West.



Blenheim residents' aspirations in five years' time include affordable housing and wider training opportunities for our youth to reduce the number of youth leaving the area to study.

ACTIONS UNDERWAY

1. The [wine industry workforce development plan](#) has made rapid progress since March 2022. The industry led steering group is drafting a workforce plan, and working groups to progress particular aspects of the plan.
2. A Smart + Connected Aerospace group has been established to progress [shared priorities](#) including establishing Marlborough as the Aerospace Training Hub. Aviation is a priority sector in Marlborough's Economic Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032 (MEWS) and the Marlborough Regional Workforce Plan (RWP).
3. A sub-group to advocate [for local data collection and for Māori/iwi data for Te Taihū | Top of the South](#) has developed a plan and are working towards implementation. The next step is determining what data to prioritise and develop a data access engagement plan including Census 2023.
4. The RSLG has been exploring the role of immigration as part of Marlborough's future workforce. The Productivity Commission met with the RSLG and shared insights from their [immigration inquiry](#). Their advice is to look at immigration as part of an overall Marlborough population strategy. This aligns with RWP [Action 1.2](#) *Collect data from industry on how many people are required and the necessary skills and attributes. Year 2 (2023 -24).*

LABOUR MARKET ACTIVITIES

1. [SkillsVR](#) and MSD launched the Site Safe VR module at the [VR Job Expo](#) in Blenheim. A dozen job seekers earned their Site Safe Foundation Passport in VR on the day – NZ's first ever site safe virtual accreditation. The Marlborough VR Job Expo attracted over 60 people.
2. A new [Marine Farming Careers Portal](#) provides opportunities to investigate careers, training, jobs and current industry vacancies in aquaculture. The Portal is aimed at youth and school leavers investigating their careers choices, and helps introduce individuals to areas they may not have otherwise considered.
3. An Agritech Ecosystem Hui was held in Marlborough on 13 September. Marlborough District Council has a goal for Marlborough to be a recognised leader in Agritech, especially in wine, viticulture, and aquaculture. The MEWS, RWP and Te Taihū Intergenerational Strategy all see Agritech as important to innovation and increasing productivity in the region.
4. Muka Tangata - the Workforce Development Council for People, Food and Fibre, visited Marlborough to engage with industry, training providers and the RSLG. This gave them a better understanding of industry needs in Marlborough and an opportunity to hear from employers and learners. This visit coincided with the Young Winemaker of the Year competition highlighting the needs of people early career.

THE MARLBOROUGH REGION

Employers continue to report difficulty recruiting for staff at all skill levels. Potential recruits have high expectations of remuneration and flexibility.

The August 2022 weather event is significantly larger than that of July 2021, with over 670km of Marlborough's roads affected.

The RSE cap was increased by 3,000 nationwide, which is good news for growers in the region.

OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 3 MONTHS:

The focus for the Marlborough RSLG is implementing *Te Mahere Ahumahi ā-Rohe o Te Taihū o Te Waka-a-Māui* | [Marlborough Regional Workforce Plan](#).

A summary of the Year 1 (2022-23) actions for the six focus areas and five focus sectors can be found on the one-page [Marlborough Regional Workforce Plan summary](#).