

## INSIGHTS ON REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



An aerial projection of the planned new Experience Centre at Dolomite Point. Photo: Department of Conservation

**Gold struck at Snowy River Mine is expected to attract highly skilled workers.** Gold has just been struck at the mine and the operators believe it could be worth \$2.1 billion. Federation Mining is a major employer on the West Coast and 80 percent of its staff are local. "We've spent nearly \$70 million getting to where we are now, we've got 60 employees now. That will grow over the next 12 months or so to 160 people on site," Smith said. The RSLG considers the [extractive industries](#) sector to be of strategic importance for the economy and labour market with short term demand forecast for underground gold and mineral sands skilled workers.

**The Dolomite Point Redevelopment Project is expected to present economic opportunities for the region.** The new Experience Centre which will celebrate and tell the stories of the area's people, striking geology, unique wildlife, and cultural heritage, is set to open on 1 December 2023. The second phase of the project - a multi-media visitor exhibition building that will be constructed and connected to the Experience Centre by a pedestrian link bridge, is expected to be complete by April 2024. Development West Coast CE Health Milne says the facility is expected to keep visitors in the area longer than the 1hr on average they currently spend. "That opens opportunities for other businesses." The [Food services](#) sector is one of several expected to benefit from the redevelopment. In 2022, approximately 1,500 people were employed across the region in accommodation and food services. This workforce is forecast to grow by around 350 people by 2028.

*The opportunities above were provided by Te Tai o Poutini RSLG members as important indicators of regional activity that impacts current and future workforce and skills needs.*

## REGIONAL LABOUR MARKET DATA

Since our 2022 RWP was developed, there has been an improvement in the region's labour market.



**Overall, the Te Tai o Poutini West Coast economy is performing well with GDP up 6.9% (March 2022) from the previous year.** Visitor spend has contributed to this performance, up to \$22.6 million in March 2023, compared to \$11.5 million in March 2022. This compares to \$20.4 million prior to Covid in March 2019<sup>[1]</sup>.



**In the year to March 2023 employment increased to just over 15,000, with over 370 new jobs created in the region.** This growth surpasses pre-pandemic levels, with nearly 280 more jobs than in March 2020.<sup>[2]</sup> The industries that created the most jobs in 2022 were rail freight transport, hospitals and residential building construction, we expect this to be similar for 2023.



**The region is still however facing widespread skills and labour shortages,** particularly in more highly skilled roles and senior roles that require experience. This is seen across a number of our priority sectors including education, and health care and social assistance.



**The regional unemployment rate is currently 5.7%<sup>[3]</sup>, down 0.8% from last year.** The proportion of people who indicate that they would like to do more paid work is 12.4%, also down, indicating more people are finding additional work. Although New Zealand's borders have reopened and there is a return of international workers to New Zealand, migration into the region remains low. Regional workforce demand forecasts significant gaps across the region, with considerable pressure across



**Of the 335 West Coast school leavers in 2021, just over a quarter (27%) had their first enrolment in further study in our region.** That includes those who enrolled at Te Pūkenga | Tai Poutini Polytechnic, West Coast Industry Training Organisations, and extramural enrolments.

Data sources: <sup>[1]</sup> Development West Coast – MarketView data 2023 <sup>[2]</sup> Statistics NZ Infoshare – Region by Variable <sup>[3]</sup> Statistics NZ Household Labour Force Survey March 2023

## 2023 REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLAN

**[Te Tai o Poutini West Coast Regional Workforce Plan \(RWP\) 2023](#) has recently been published.** The plan includes 8 key actions to cover five focus areas, each with a set of activities, a lead agency, partners, and outcomes. Work has now started on implementation of the plan. We look forward to sharing regular progress updates with you.

### Progress update:

The input of West Coast businesses is sought in a comprehensive business survey aimed at understanding the current business climate, challenges, and opportunities. The survey is a joint initiative between several West Coast organisations and is designed to gain a deeper insight into critical areas including recruitment challenges, workforce expectations, future training needs, and the overall business sentiment within the West Coast. This approach also ensures a more holistic understanding of the West Coast business environment, enabling the organisations to work together more efficiently to meet the region's unique needs.

The survey is estimated to take less than ten minutes to complete. Participating businesses are assured that their responses will be kept strictly confidential. The survey can be accessed on: [www.westcoast.co.nz/BusinessSurvey/](http://www.westcoast.co.nz/BusinessSurvey/)

Findings will directly contribute to 4 of our 8 year two priorities as identified in the Te Tai o Poutini West Coast Regional Workforce Plan 2023.

## TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

*The following challenges were provided by Te Tai o Poutini RSLG members as important indicators of regional activity that impacts current and future workforce and skills needs/supply.*

### Proposed future structure of Te Pūkenga sparks community leader concern

Prominent community leaders including Grey District Mayor Tania Gibson have expressed concerns about the Te Pūkenga structure consultation and the potential adverse impacts the future operating structure could have on the region. "I am extremely concerned about the future of our polytechnic and the ability for the institution to meet our regional skills needs." Te Pūkenga is region's largest vocational education provider and has an essential role in the [VET system](#) in supplying quality skills training that meets current and future demands as identified in our [workforce plan](#).

### Energy, energy, energy!

With the need for the region to transition towards a low-emission economy, issues have been identified in terms of energy security, affordability, and infrastructure capability. Of specific concern is the capacity of the region's electrical lines and whether they can support future community and economic needs. Our [RSLG advice to TEC](#) to inform 2024 investment identifies renewable energy as an emerging industry on the West Coast. The [Te Tai Poutini West Coast Renewable Energy Strategy and Roadmap](#) identifies opportunities to unlock renewable energy investment and job creation as a significant component of the overall pathway as we face a changing future.

## OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS:

Implementation of Te Tai o Poutini West Coast Regional Workforce Plan 2023, with an emphasis on Focus Areas 1 and 4.  
RSLG advice to TEC to inform Investment Plan Guidance for 2025.

## Te Tai o Poutini Regional Workforce Plan 2023 Published

On behalf of our Te Tai o Poutini Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG) we are very pleased to publish our Te Tai o Poutini West Coast Regional Workforce Plan (RWP) 2023. Twelve months ago, we launched the inaugural regional workforce plan 2022 (RWP 2022) for the purpose of helping our region better understand, coordinate, and respond to our labour market challenges. During the past year we have been on a continuous learning journey. This has involved meeting with our regional stakeholders to converse, listen and gain a better understanding of our regional labour market challenges and opportunities.

We are proud of our achievements to date. Many of the actions we set out to achieve in Year one have gained momentum or being completed. Over the coming year our focus is to implement our RWP Year two actions and we intend to build on that momentum to work collectively with our partners and community to support, influence, and improve our regional labour market.

Our region is a place full of potential, and there are many plans and policies in place to help guide us as we walk into the future. The RWP is one of those strategic key documents. Together we can ensure our tamariki have the information they need to make informed career choices, that everyone has access to education and skills, and that people are supported into rewarding work. This year there will be many opportunities for conversations and new partnerships, and we strongly encourage you to reach out and become involved.

We encourage you to read our RWP 2023. In there you will find highlights from the last year that showcase some of our region's achievements, a complete list of progress against our Year one priority action, new actions we will focus on over the coming year and the advice we provided to the Tertiary Education Commission to help focus their 2024 funding decisions.

As co-chairs of the RSLG we would like to acknowledge the many people who have contributed to our work so far. Our thanks and gratitude especially to our RSLG members, iwi/māori, workers, community organisations, training providers, and our business sector for the insights, perseverance, and willingness to contribute to the ongoing improvement of our region's labour market.



Lisa Tumahai



Graeme Neylon

### RSLG Members

- Craig Churchill
- Rachael Forsyth
- Sarah Gilsenan
- Latham Martin
- Heath Milne
- Katie Milne
- Peter O'Sullivan
- Ben Smith
- Michael Stevenson

## What is a Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG)?

- Te Tai o Poutini West Coast Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG) is one of 15 RSLGs set up to identify and support better ways of meeting future skills and workforce needs in our regions and cities.
- Part of a joined-up approach to labour market planning that is designed to see our welfare, education and immigration systems working together alongside demand-side actors in the regions.
- A government appointed group made up of iwi, industry, worker, union, and community representatives from our region.
- RSLG work is complemented by other initiatives targeting population groups, sectors and regional economic development. This includes: the Government's Employment Strategy, Employment Action Plans, Industry Transformation Plans and Identification of Regional Economic Priorities.
- RSLGs also sit as part of the Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE) and work closely with the Workforce Development Councils.

Me mahi Tahi Matou, mo te  
oranga o te katoa

We shall work together for the  
betterment of all.

## A Snapshot of some of our Year 1 Achievements

- We supported Tai Poutini Polytechnic | Te Pūkenga to develop a new conservation training programme, supporting a regional initiative to boost economic growth through our environment.
- We produced Local Insights Reports which help develop an understanding of the local labour market and trigger regional conversations.
- The RSLG provided advice to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) in May 2023 to help guide its investment process and decisions for 2024 funding for the Te Tai o Poutini region.
- We have brought together key stakeholders to establish the West Coast Drivers Licence Stakeholder Group. The group undertook key activity including identification of barriers to obtaining drivers licences.
- We engaged with Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) on our regional needs and also encouraged stakeholders to participate in WDC workstreams. We also supported WDCs with their regional engagement.
- We supported the West Coast Trades Academy to secure funding for oversubscribed places in 2023 enabling access to youth that would not have otherwise been able to undertake training.
- We gained insights into current and future skills and labour supply and demand for our region through engagement with the key sector leaders, employers and agencies.
- We worked with key stakeholders to enable the 'Pathway Advisors in Schools' project to be extended for an additional 6 months, providing valuable support to rangatahi.

## Labour and Skills for Te Tai o Poutini West Coast

### Our Regional Workforce Plan 2023

### OUR VISION

An innovative and resilient economy delivering opportunities and high-paying jobs for our community/hapori. Caring for our people and our environment is part of who we are and what we are known for.

*He ōhanga e hihiri ana, e manawaroa ana e kōkiri ana i ngā āheinga me ngā umanga whai rawa ki tō tātou hapori. He wāhanga nō mātou, kua hau hoki tō mātou rongo mō te kumanu i ō tātou tāngata, i tō tātou hapori anō hoki*

Te Whanaketanga  
Te Tai Poutini West Coast  
2050 Strategy

### OUR KEY FOCUS AREAS

To achieve our vision and address the labour market challenges, we have identified five key focus areas. They affect every sector in Te Tai o Poutini West Coast and directly link to our Action Plan.

### OUR YEAR 2 PRIORITIES (2023/24)

We have proposed 8 key actions to cover our five focus areas, each with a set of activities, a lead agency, partners, and outcomes.

- Young people have the skills they need to meet regional forecast job growth and employer needs**
  - Help ākonga to discover, explore, and connect to the world of work through initiatives that enable meaningful connections with employers from our priority sectors.
- Maximising Te Tai o Poutini's workforce to meet our current and future skills and labour demands**
  - Encourage and support employers to understand their current and anticipated future workforce skill sets and needs that are required to be high performing organisations.
  - Identify business strategic human resource advice and support needs and potential service providers. Provide information and support to help employers.
- Connecting our employers, educators, and workers to future-proof our labour market**
  - Promote the sharing of ideas and learnings between sectors and businesses for improved labour market outcomes.
- Enabling workplaces to be more worker friendly, flexible and inclusive**
  - Actively engage with older workers to understand what information, support and training they need to successfully participate in our labour market.
  - Assist employers with the implementation of wellbeing strategies that benefit both the employee and employer.
- Māori have the skills and knowledge to succeed at all stages of their careers**
  - Understand the training and support needs that are required for Māori to successfully participate in our labour market.
  - Promote to whānau the diverse career opportunities and pathways available to their rangatahi.

### OUR KEY FOCUS SECTORS

There are several key sectors that are important for Te Tai o Poutini's economy and labour market. They are areas where we know that significant gains can be made and where we currently or are anticipated to have a shortage of skills and labour.

- Accommodation and food services
- Construction
- Extractive industries
- Manufacturing
- Health care and social assistance

### OUR PRIORITY GROUPS

With a key focus on more inclusive employment outcomes and opportunities, we have identified five priority groups within our community.

- Māori
- Women Wahine
- Older Workers Ngā kaimahi kua tūhūhūhū
- Youth Rangatahi
- Disabled People and/or People with Health Conditions Te Hunga Whaikaha, te Hunga hoki/rānei kua Pāngia e T/ētahi Mate Hauora