



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**  
HIKINA WHAKATUTUKI

## South Island Portfolio - Fortnightly Report

<b>Week ending:</b>	12 May 2025	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security classification:</b>	In Confidence	<b>Tracking number:</b>	REQ-0013485

<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Action sought</b>
Hon James Meager Minister for the South Island	Note the contents of this report.

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**Ministers' and Ministers' Office comments**

## 1. Portfolio Update

<b>1.1 Regional Economic Roundup Report</b>  Cory Hagenaaars, South Island Lead Advisor, Strategy, Planning and Performance, Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit (Kānoa)	<p>The Regional Events Promotional Fund (REPF) is a \$5.000 million initiative that is aimed at boosting domestic tourism by supporting regional event promotions over two years. The fund focuses on encouraging regional dispersal and increasing visitor spend, particularly outside peak summer season.</p> <p>In July 2024, round one of the REPF allocated \$2.375 million to 132 events nationwide. Notable South Island funded events include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$55,000 to Bayley’s Tussock Country Music Festival, Southland</li><li>• \$50,000 to Hokitika Wild Foods Festival, West Coast</li><li>• \$40,000 to George Begg Festival, Southland</li><li>• \$42,500 to Marlborough Wine and Food Festival, Marlborough</li><li>• \$31,690 True West, West Coast</li><li>• \$31,000 Hurunui Garden Festival, Canterbury.</li></ul> <p>Applications for round two were open from 3 April 2025 to 16 April 2025. The round focuses on events scheduled between 1 July 2025 and 30 June 2026.</p> <p>Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) and councils were eligible to apply if they did not receive tourism services from their RTO. Therefore, the following RTOs were not eligible to apply: ChristchurchNZ and Destination Queenstown. Announcements will be made later this month.</p> <p>Source: <a href="https://www.mbie.govt.nz/immigration-and-tourism/tourism/tourism-funding/regional-events-promotion-fund/round-1-funding-recipients">https://www.mbie.govt.nz/immigration-and-tourism/tourism/tourism-funding/regional-events-promotion-fund/round-1-funding-recipients</a></p>
<b>1.2 Regional Data Explorer</b>  Cory Hagenaaars, South Island Lead Advisor	<p>There are no new regional data explorer updates.</p>
<b>1.3 Major events</b>  Kylie Hawker-Green, Manager Major Events, Economic Development & Tourism	<p>There are no new major event updates.</p>

1.4 Key messages/statistics and figures

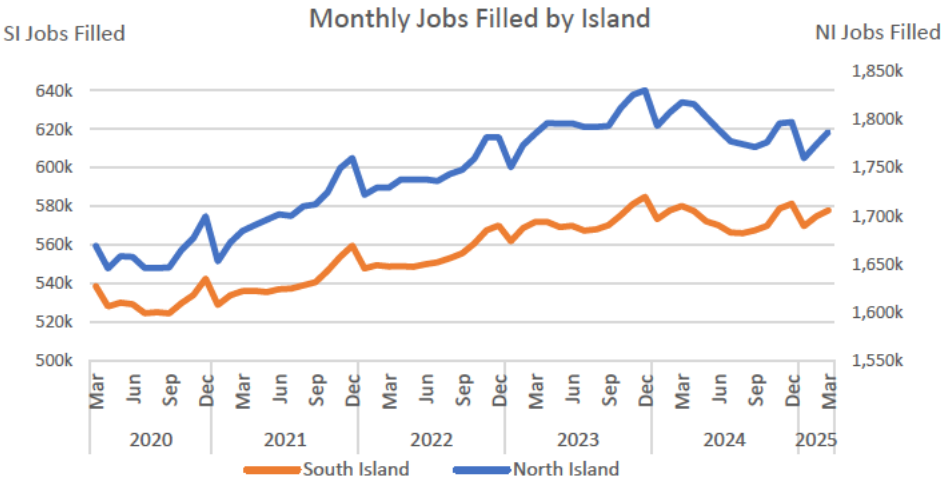
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Lead Domain Analyst, Data Service Delivery, Data, Insights and Intelligence, Corporate and Digital Shared Services

On Tuesday 29 April 2025, Statistics New Zealand (Stats NZ) released two quarterly indicators that provide a quick indication of economic and labour market activity in the regions:

- **Business count indicators: March 2025** ( <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/business-count-indicators-march-2025/>)
- **Employment indicators: March 2025** (<https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/employment-indicators-march-2025/> ).

Both indicators suggested a more resilient regional economy in the South Island than that in the North Island. The business count indicators showed that the number of business counts grew 2 per cent in the South Island from March 2024 to March 2025, compared to the 1 per cent growth in the North Island. As for the employment indicators, the total number of jobs filled in the March 2025 quarter for the South Island dropped by 2,242 (0.39 per cent) compared to March 2024, while the North Island dropped by 30,925 (1.70 per cent) in the same time period. Otago was the only region nationally with a year-on-year increase, though a modest 75 (0.06 per cent) more jobs filled.



On Monday 05 May 2025, Stats NZ released **Agricultural production statistics: Year to June 2024 (final)** (<https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/agricultural-production-statistics-year-to-june-2024-final/>) which showed a yearly decline in sheep and dairy livestock for the South Island (-3.2 per cent and -0.8 per cent respectively). Beef cattle however increased by 4.4 per cent from 2023 levels.

The total areas used for growing fruit, vegetables, and grains increased as well between 2022 and 2024. Hectares of wheat harvested increased 13 per cent (5,100 ha), wine grapes and apples increased 10.2 per cent (3,090 ha), and onions nearly doubled with a 97.1 per cent (1,110 ha) increase.

1.5 Regional Council Updates

There are no new regional council updates.

## 2. Hon. James Meager - Upcoming Ministerial Items – Minister for the South Island

### 2.1 Upcoming Meetings, Events and Ministerial Visits

Event details	Event	Event Details
14/05/2025	Meeting with South Island Electricity Network Chief Executives (online meeting)	<p>You will attend an online meeting with 15 Chief Executives from the South Island Electricity Network. You will be discussing the important role Electricity Distribution Businesses have in driving economic growth in the South Island.</p> <p>You will also be provided an overview of affordability, right energy and capacity mix, resilience, the South Island EV journey mapping project and energy strategies.</p> <p>A briefing has been provided to your office (briefing REQ-0013603 refers).</p>
17/05/2025	Attending the NZ Century Farms and Station Awards Ceremony (Lawrence, Otago)	<p>You will attend, speak, and present at the New Zealand (NZ) Century Farms and Station Awards Ceremony on Saturday 17 May, from approximately 5 – 10.30pm. This event is hosted by NZ Century Farms Incorporated (Century Farms) over two days, and you will be attending on day two.</p> <p>This event is organised by Century Farms and aims to recognise and celebrate NZ farming families. The objective of your attendance is to honour families who have had tenure on their land for 100 years or more. Your speech will note the Government's priorities and your role as Minister for the South Island.</p> <p>A briefing is being prepared for you.</p>
21/05/2025	Attending the BusinessNZ Event (Wellington)	<p>You will attend and speak at the BusinessNZ event on Wednesday 21 May, from 11 – 11.45am in Wellington.</p> <p>BusinessNZ is made up of four large regional organisations, is New Zealand's largest business advocacy body, and represents a wide range of business groups. You will be invited to deliver your speech, followed by a moderated Q&amp;A session tailored around your Ministerial portfolio.</p> <p>The objective for your attendance is to provide an opportunity to inform stakeholders on the South Island portfolio and government policy development. You will be in attendance with approximately 90 business leaders and stakeholders from across New Zealand and online.</p>

		A briefing is being prepared for you.
05/06/2025	Meeting on Datagrid Data Centre (Parliament, Wellington)	<p>You will be meeting with representatives from Datagrid Data Centre on Thursday 5 June, from noon to 12.45pm at your office in Wellington.</p> <p>Datagrid is an information technology company, specialising in Artificial Intelligence, that is developing a 50-hectare sustainable data centre park in Invercargill.</p> <p>The objective of this meeting is to discuss the opportunities that the new Datagrid Data centre could bring to New Zealand. You will be discussing multiple topics, including the benefits to New Zealand's economy, regional development and Commercial Information</p> <p>A briefing is being prepared for you.</p>

## 2.2 Upcoming Briefings and Aides Memoire

Due to MO	Tracking Number	Product
13/05/2025	REQ-0013563	Attending the NZ Century Farms and Station Awards Ceremony, 17 May 2025
16/05/2025	REQ-0013525	Attending the BusinessNZ Event, 21 May 2025
29/05/2025	REQ-0013783	Meeting on Datagrid Data Centre, 5 June 2025

## 2.3 New Written Parliamentary Questions

There are no new written Parliamentary Questions.

## 2.4 Ministerial correspondence received

New items are indicated in red.

Due to MO	Tracking number	Requester	Summary of request
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20/05/2025	JMC-274	Privacy of natural persons [REDACTED]	Writes in regard to concerns about funding allocated for travelling within the South Island.
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## 2.5 Official Information Act requests received

New items are indicated in red.

Due to MO	Tracking number	Requester	Summary of request	Status
15/05/2025	MOIA-REQ-0013206 /JMOIA-25	Privacy of natural persons [REDACTED]	Requests copies of any aides-mémoire, briefings, memos, notes, reports, or any other advice the Minister or their Office received related to the South Island portfolio during the week of 24 March and 31 March 2025.	In Progress
22/05/2025	MOIA-REQ-0013540 /JMOIA-28	Privacy of natural persons [REDACTED]	Requests copies of any aides-mémoire, briefings, memos, notes, reports, or any other advice the Minister or their Office received related to the South Island portfolio during the week of 21 April and 28 April 2025.	In Progress

## 2.6 Meeting advice requested

There are no outstanding meeting advice requests.