



# **Local Jobs Plan**

## **Bendigo Employment Region**

### **Victoria**

March 2022

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The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, water, and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the elders past, present and emerging. In particular the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung People.

## Preface

As part of supporting Australia's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Australian Government's Local Jobs Program (LJP) brings together expertise, resources and access to funding at the local level to accelerate reskilling, upskilling and employment pathways in 51 Employment Regions.

Recognising the importance of local knowledge in getting people back into jobs quickly, the LJP includes the following key elements in each region:

- a local Employment Facilitator
- a Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce
- a Local Jobs Plan
- a Local Recovery Fund to support small scale activities
- access to the National Priority Funding Pool

The Taskforces, each chaired by the respective region's Employment Facilitator, develop and update a Local Jobs Plan for their region that identifies key employment and training priorities and provides a framework for driving employment outcomes in the context of the local labour market.

The Local Jobs Plan for the Bendigo Employment Region identifies the key LJP priorities with a focus on creating employment opportunities, actively upskilling or reskilling local job seekers and meeting local employer demands.

The Local Jobs Plan will be reviewed as required to include emerging priorities or at least every six months.

## Local Jobs Program Key Priorities: Bendigo Employment Region

- Maximise the benefits of existing Australian, Victorian and local government programs, to **create pathways** into major and **growth industries**, particularly health care and social assistance, retail, hospitality and tourism, construction, mining, manufacturing and other industry sectors.
- Maximise the extent to which local job seekers, including **Mature Age, Youth and Culturally & Linguistically Diverse cohorts**, are skilled to meet the needs of local employers as well as major projects, including opportunities aligned to the health care and social assistance, disability, hospitality and tourism and other industry sectors.
- Broker opportunities for youth **skill development and employment**, including short courses (micro-credentialling), work experience, practical placements, apprenticeships and traineeships for entry into a range of sectors, including hospitality and tourism, retail, mining and manufacturing sectors.
- **Boost employment and training** in priority areas among the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI)** population in collaboration with local Indigenous organisations to support ongoing Closing the Gap targets. Identifying and addressing barriers to employment faced by ATSI peoples including but not limited to cultural beliefs; Language, Literacy and Numeracy; and disproportionate on-boarding processes.

- Develop **strategies to enhance the access** of job seekers (particularly **Youth, People with Disability and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse cohorts**) to employment and training opportunities (upskilling or reskilling), including aligning local transport solutions, providing practical placements and prospective employer engagement as well as broader job seeker needs.
- Leverage existing training opportunities and employer engagement to address the skills and labour market shortages in the local Hospitality & Tourism Industry to provide industry with job ready candidates that are skilled to meet current demand and further develop the skills of these workers through additional training, post placement support and mentoring.
- Address the short-term labour market shortage of skilled retail professionals by utilising existing training available and partnering with industry bodies to match jobseekers to employers with placements.

## Bendigo Employment Region Overview

The Bendigo Employment Region (ER) comprises four local government authorities including the City of Greater Bendigo and the Shires of Loddon, Mount Alexander Shire and Macedon Ranges.

The Health Care & Social Assistance industry sector is the region's largest employer and accounts for approximately 19.7 per cent of total employment in the ER. It is projected that employment growth in this industry to May 2024 will be 16.1 per cent resulting in 2,200 new jobs. The upgrade of the Bendigo Hospital, St John of God Hospital and associated allied health professionals and services have contributed to the continued employment growth of this sector. The Retail industry sector is the second largest employment sector in the Bendigo ER, accounting for 11.1 per cent of total employment in the ER. This sector is projected to grow by 10.5 per cent to May 2024 resulting in 1,000 new jobs in the Region.

The third largest employing industry is the Manufacturing Industry and accounts for 8.5 per cent of employment, 7,100 jobs, of which 6,500 people are employed full time. The industry predominantly employs males (6,100) and the sector faces skills shortages in engineering for welders and fabricators.

The Construction industry sector makes a significant contribution in the region and employs 6,300 people. Projected growth for the Industry for the five years to May 2024 is 15.4 per cent resulting in 1,300 new jobs. Major construction projects, including the Bendigo Gov Hub and the Bendigo Law Courts Development, as well as the continuing construction of domestic housing, is expected to generate the growth in employment.

The Bendigo Gov Hub and Bendigo Law Courts will contribute to the 500 jobs expected for the Public Administration and Safety Industry – this sector has projected employment growth of 12.9 per cent for the five years to May 2024.

The City of Greater Bendigo is situated in the geographic centre of Victoria and is located 150 kilometres north west of Melbourne via the Calder Freeway, the Hume and Mclvor Highways or the railway freight and passenger service to and from Southern Cross Station.

Bendigo is Victoria's third largest urban centre and the major regional centre in north central Victoria. The municipality includes the smaller communities of Heathcote, Elmore, Goornong, Marong, Redesdale and Axedale. The major industry and employment sectors include: Health Care & Social Assistance, Education & Training, Manufacturing, Construction, Public Administration & Safety, Professional, Scientific & Technical Services and Financial & Insurance Services.

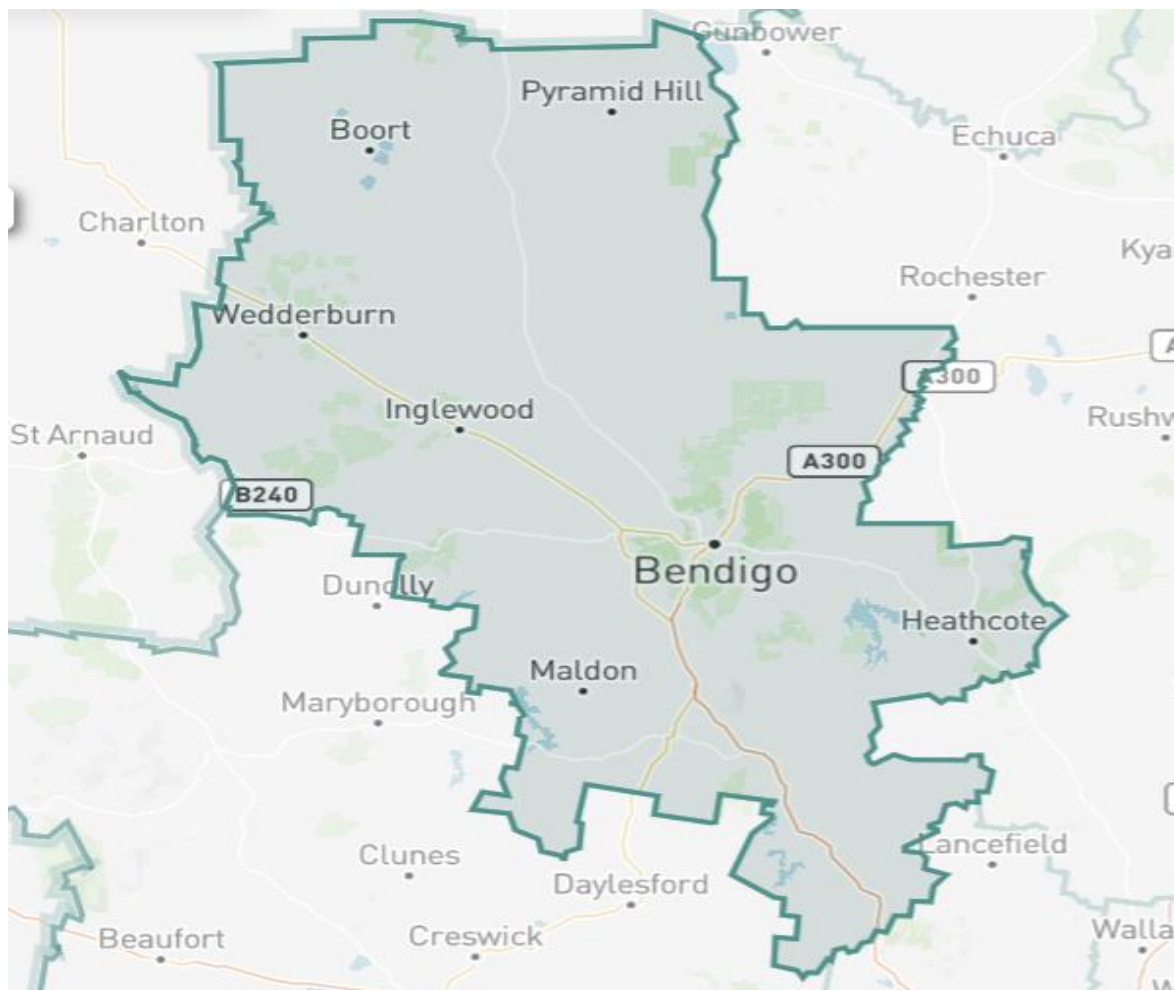
Castlemaine is the main town in the Mount Alexander Shire and is half an hour from the regional city of Bendigo, and approximately an hour from the Melbourne CBD.

There are a number of large businesses that are based in Castlemaine, such as Don KRC — A division of George Weston Foods (food processing), Flowserve FSG (design engineering and steel fabrication), Castlemaine Rod Shop (build modified vehicles), Mount Alexander Hospital and Loddon Prison. Smaller companies in the Construction and Agriculture sectors provide significant employment opportunities in the ER.

The towns of Kyneton and Woodend are in the Macedon Ranges Shire, which is within an hour's drive of Melbourne to the south and Bendigo to the north via the Calder Freeway and the Bendigo-Melbourne train service. These towns are growing rural hubs with a growing tourism industry highlighting local produce, arts and events. Kyneton is the second largest town in the Shire and performs an important retail and service role to the surrounding agricultural district and townships. A quarter of the Shires businesses are in Kyneton as well as the majority of its industrial activity.

The Loddon Shire in Northern Victoria is approximately 200km north of Melbourne and is near major centres such as Bendigo, Kerang and Echuca. The Loddon Valley is predominantly rural, with its population spread among a number of towns and rural areas with a wide range of agricultural industries represented in the region, including dairy, horticulture, viticulture, cropping, lamb and intensive poultry and piggeries, with most of the local labour force employed in this industry. Employers in the region include: Laucke Flour Mills, Hazeldene's Chicken Farms and their Contractors, Boundary Bend Olives and Water Wheel Vineyards.

## Bendigo Employment Region Boundary Map



Source: Labour Market Information Portal—mapbox

## Key challenges in Bendigo Employment Region

The four LGAs in the region have their own distinct demographics and challenges. Given this, local solutions will vary and it may be best to consider options at the individual LGA level.

Considerable labour market disparity exists within the Bendigo ER with unemployment rates ranging from 5.6 per cent in the Loddon Shire to 2.9 per cent in the Macedon Ranges Shire. See Attachment A – Labour Market Data Dashboard. Within the ER, there are also challenges with identified pockets of high unemployment with associated issues.

Public transport is not always available for job seekers, in particular in the smaller LGAs of Loddon, Macedon Ranges and Mt Alexander. The accessibility of public transport should be considered when connecting people to jobs and training. Lower socio-economic areas in Bendigo rely heavily on public transport and there is very limited availability of late night and early morning services. Consideration should also be given to the growth of the region with the expected population to rise to 200,000 by 2050 in the City of Greater Bendigo. Increased services and accessible local public transport will be required to assist jobseekers to meet the demand of employers – particularly in remote locations where large numbers of employees are required for entry level jobs in food processing and agriculture.

The unemployment rate was 4.5% for the Bendigo Region in January 2022.

See Attachment A from the National Skills Commission Labour Market Data Dashboard (Feb 2022), and Attachment B for the most recent caseload statistics.

### Youth

As at August 2021, the youth unemployment rate in the Bendigo ER was 8.8 per cent the same as the National rate for the same period and continues to present its challenges within the region.

The hospitality and retail sectors were significantly impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, being unable to operate to full capacity and in many cases closing or operating at reduced levels. A proportion of young people are most likely to work in the impacted sectors of hospitality and retail which have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. There are opportunities to broker employment for young people to be engaged or re-engaged in the retail and hospitality sectors as the economy recovers and the demand for apprentices and trainees grows.

The National Skills Commission Internet Vacancy Index data August 2021, suggests General Clerks has the highest job advertisements by occupation followed by Registered Nurses and Sales Assistants. Connecting youth to support services and employers will play an important role in driving down youth unemployment and youth disengagement in the Bendigo ER. This could also be obtained through focusing on jobs and skills in demand industries and brokering apprenticeships and traineeship opportunities for this cohort. The Local Jobs Program will focus on providing work ready skills and digital skills for this cohort through targeted activities for industries hardest hit by COVID and those experiencing the greatest demand for entry level employees.

### Mature Age

Prior to COVID-19, mature aged job seekers were already experiencing challenges with securing and retaining employment opportunities in a competitive market. Post COVID-19, it is expected these challenges will remain.

The majority of LGAs within the Bendigo region have a high number of people who are mature aged. Across the region, mature aged job seekers (50 years and above) make up approximately 28 per cent of the job seekers registered in Australian Government employment services – jobactive.

The number of mature aged people in the ER who are registered in jobactive has decreased by approximately 1.5 per cent in the last month.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

The LGA of Bendigo is home to the largest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers in the ER. This area has strong Indigenous service networks and liaising and collaborating with local Indigenous organisations will be key in developing strategies that increase engagement in training and employment aligned to local opportunities.

## People with Disability (PwD)

Roughly 33 per cent of job seekers registered in jobactive in the ER identify as PwD. This suggests a growing need for support, including utilising the assistance of community support organisations. There are opportunities in education, training and engagement activities to upskill or reskill job seekers, and support those job seekers who have disability barriers. In addition, pathways for education and training and job opportunities could provide an avenue for those job seekers who have higher education qualifications but are currently unemployed.

## Impacts of COVID-19

The Bendigo region has experienced the negative impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on local economies and employment. Whilst the number of COVID-19 cases in the region have remained low compared with those in Greater Melbourne and in other regional Victorian localities, COVID-19 restrictions have resulted in less movement of people, lost revenue for businesses and a loss of, or reduced, employment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a widespread impact on the **education sector** particularly around decreased international student arrivals (La Trobe University Bendigo campus) and the **retail** sector in Bendigo. These sectors rely on local and international visitors. Hospitality and accommodation businesses have been affected by the sudden collapse in demand for services, due to declining interstate numbers visiting tourist destinations. This has also affected employment in the arts and theatre attractions in Bendigo and the historical attractions located across the smaller towns throughout the ER. Young people and women, who traditionally fill many of these roles, have been adversely affected with job insecurity.

Significant restrictions on exports, delays on imports and changed conditions in domestic markets have also negatively impacted on **construction and manufacturing** businesses. Other industry sectors have also experienced job losses due to COVID-19 with workers who have been stood down, having hours reduced or being made redundant. **Transitioning workers**, largely aged 45 and over, will need to be reskilled and upskilled for opportunities in priority industry sectors.

Some employers have experienced increased demand for workers, such as those in the health care and social assistance sector, call centres, the cleaning sector and logistic/delivery drivers.

Prior to COVID-19, the Bendigo ER had a 6 per cent unemployment rate, and as of January 2022 recorded a 4.2 per cent unemployment rate. However, additional information on the number of people in the ER registered in jobactive indicates the labour market is not so positive.

Of concern is the time taken for unemployed job seekers to find work with the number of jobseekers registered on the jobactive caseload for more than 12 months continuing to increase since August 2019.



## Local Stakeholders and Opportunities

### Existing Regional Plans and Programs

This Local Jobs Plan intends to leverage and build on the existing regional plans and programs to help move as many people as possible into work or training as quickly as possible. These include:

- A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 – where all people can thrive is Greater Bendigo’s Economic Development Strategy 2020-2030 | City of Greater Bendigo
- Plans and strategies (loddon.vic.gov.au)
- Economic Development Strategy 2021–2031 – Macedon Ranges Shire Council (mrsc.vic.gov.au)
- Report to Infrastructure Victoria
- Australian Government Regional Recovery Partnerships Fund
- Australian Government Building Better Regions Fund
- Regional Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing Skills Roadmap 2019
- Loddon Campaspe Health Sector Skills and Pathways Roadmap 2021

### Large Employers

Health care and social assistance as well as the retail trade are the primary employing industries in Bendigo, followed by manufacturing, education and training and public administration and safety. Other sectors are also significant contributors regionally including construction and accommodation and food services. The ABS Labour Force Survey, detailed four quarter averages Aug-21, suggests public health care and social assistance has experienced the largest growth in the last five years with 2,900 new jobs created and this industry accounts for 19.7 per cent of employment in the Bendigo Region.

Bendigo and Adelaide Bank is one of Bendigo's largest businesses. Headquartered in Bendigo, Bendigo and Adelaide Bank is well established Australia wide with over 3000 staff and over 1 million customers. Gold mining, defence equipment, engineering, creative industries and food manufacturing are other areas where industry has flourished in Bendigo.

Large employers in the region include: Bendigo Health, Hazeldene’s Chicken Farm, City of Greater Bendigo, Thales Australia, Australian Defence Apparel, La Trobe University, Bendigo TAFE, Keech Australia, Parmalat, Fosterville Gold Mine, Mandalay Resources and Hofmann Engineering. There are also a number of large businesses based in Castlemaine, such as Don KRC – a division of George Weston Foods (food processing), Flowserve FSG (design engineering and steel fabrication), Castlemaine Rod Shop (build modified vehicles), Mount Alexander Hospital and Loddon Prison. Other smaller companies include construction (Leech Earthmoving, Armstrong’s Engineering, R & R McClure Excavations), and agriculture (including sheep and cattle, wineries and apples).

These larger employers could provide opportunities to job seekers and skilled workers displaced by COVID-19.



## Selected Major Projects/Initiatives

Vital infrastructure and transport upgrades are underway in Bendigo and surrounding areas to position the region for future population growth and investment opportunities. These projects will provide essential infrastructure, connections and services to support the city's growing population.

- [Search | City of Greater Bendigo – Projects](#)
- [Mount Alexander Shire Council – Search Results](#) – Major projects
- [Current projects \(loddon.vic.gov.au\)](#)
- [Search Results – Macedon Ranges Shire Council \(mrsc.vic.gov.au\)](#)
- The \$90m Bendigo Gov Hub delivered by Regional Development Victoria in partnership with Development Victoria, is forecast to inject around \$130 million into the regional economy during the life of the project. Construction is scheduled to be completed by mid-2022.
- The Australian Rail Track Corporation has awarded an \$80 million contract to Vossloh Cogifer Australia (Castlemaine manufacturer) as part of the Inland Rail project.
- Rail Projects Victoria (RPV) is responsible for the planning and delivery of the Bendigo and Echuca Line Upgrade (\$159m) – three new stations at Goornong, Huntly and Raywood, along with other works to be completed by the end of 2022.
- The Bendigo Law Courts Development Program (\$156M) providing jobs (both during construction and ongoing).
- Bendigo TAFE Development (\$60M).
- Major hotel development in Hargreaves Mall, Bendigo.
- Construction of the new \$6m headquarters in Kyneton of global prestige brand RATIONALE Skincare is expected to attract 103 full-time jobs.
- [RDA Loddon Mallee Projects - Regional Development Victoria \(rdv.vic.gov.au\)](#)

The Investment Fast Track Fund will help take important projects from the ideas phase to be ready for development, with grants of up to \$500,000 available to local councils, community organisations and the private sector for planning, design and business case works.

Current and emerging projects will provide opportunities for skill development and employment to meet the needs of the labour market.

The Bendigo ER hosts a wide range of employer organisations and peak bodies that will present opportunities for engagement to broker skill development and employment initiatives. These include Be.Bendigo, GROW Bendigo, Young Professionals Network - Bendigo, Bendigo Tourism, the City of Gastronomy Committee, Bendigo Manufacturers Group, Bendigo Winegrowers Association, Heathcote Winegrowers Association, Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre and Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services.

Peak bodies representing a number of retail, accommodation and hospitality businesses such as the Australian Retailers Association, Australian Hotels Association, and the Victorian Hotels and Hospitality will be key bodies to engage with to broker opportunities, given the impacts of COVID-19 in those sectors.

The State Government's commitment to the City of Greater Bendigo has seen recent investments in the areas of health, education, and law and order, together with assistance to economic development activities initiated by Council. Bendigo is currently experiencing significant growth with key infrastructure projects and developments reaching fruition.

There are three jobactive providers in the ER who deliver employment services, these are Asuria, MatchWorks and WDEA Works. Job ready job seekers are being assisted by the Department through the Digital Services Contact Centre. Other programs include:

- Transition to Work (TtW) delivering intensive employment services to youth
- ParentsNext supporting parents to prepare and return to work
- New Business Assistance with NEIS providing self employment opportunities
- Career Transition Assistance to help mature aged people to build confidence and skills
- Employability Skills Training to provide intensive pre-employment training and help young people become job ready

Other Australian Government programs include Disability Employment Service Providers (DES), Australian Apprenticeship Support Networks (AASN) and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

There will be opportunities to work with the Victorian Government who deliver Jobs Victoria Services including Jobs Victoria Advocates, Community Employment Connectors, Career Counsellors, Mentors as well as specialist youth programs. The Jobs Victoria Partners are located [here](#).

Latrobe University in Bendigo is its largest regional campus, is home to more than 4,000 students and hosts the Bendigo Tech School providing cutting edge learning to Secondary School students for the Bendigo area. There is also a number of TAFE campuses, the Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN), and Neighbourhood Houses who are key stakeholders for job seekers, including youth, to prepare to meet employer and in demand skills.

The ER also has a number of not for profit organisations that can be connected with to offer a range of social and other supports to local job seekers.

# Attachment A – Labour Market Data Dashboard (24 February 2022)



## Bendigo Employment Region Victoria

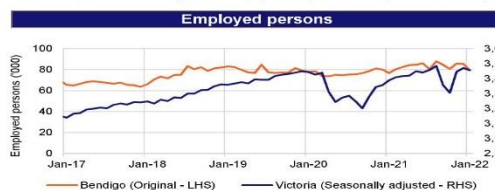
## Labour Market Data Dashboard

Data current as at 24 February 2022  
Refer to source notes for data reference periods

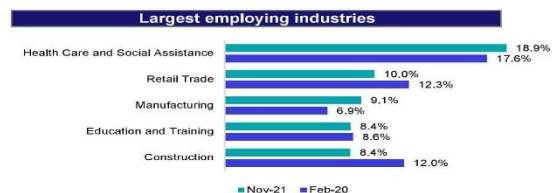
This Labour Market Data Dashboard provides key indicators for the labour market by Employment Region and is updated monthly.

	Employment			Unemployment			Unemployment rate		Participation rate		Youth unemployment rate	
	Jan-22 ('000)	Mar-20 ('000)	Change (%)	Jan-22 ('000)	Mar-20 ('000)	Change (%)	Jan-22 (%)	Mar-20 (%)	Jan-22 (%)	Mar-20 (%)	Jan-22 (%)	Mar-20 (%)
Bendigo	79.5	74.1	7.3	3.7	4.8	-22.4	4.5	6.1	62.8	58.8	8.8	8.9
Victoria	3,455.7	3,439.9	0.5	146.7	187.7	-21.8	4.1	5.2	66.6	66.3	9.8	12.3
Australia	13,255.0	12,995.5	2.0	580.0	723.2	-19.8	4.2	5.3	66.2	65.9	9.0	11.6

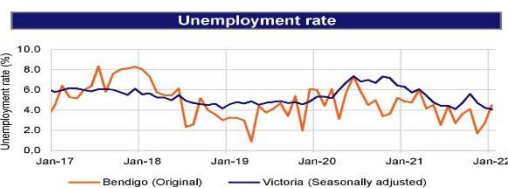
Source: ABS, Labour Force Survey, Jan-22. Employment Region data are original estimates, except for the youth unemployment rate, which is a 12-month average of original estimates. State youth unemployment rates are original estimates. Remaining data are seasonally adjusted.



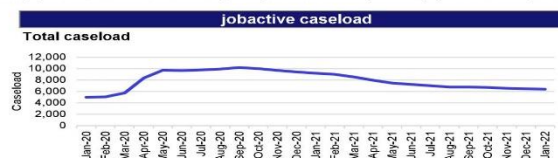
Source: ABS, Labour Force Survey, Jan-22



Source: ABS, Labour Force Survey, Detailed, four quarter averages, Nov-21 quarter



Source: ABS, Labour Force Survey, Jan-22



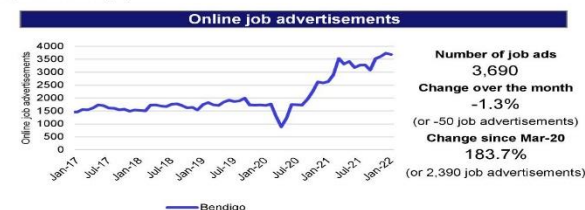
	Bendigo	Victoria
Caseload - Feb 2020	5,046	138,586
Caseload - Jan 2022	6,372	215,115
Change from Feb 2020 to Jan 2022	1,326	76,529
	26%	55%



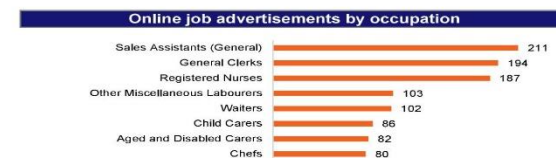
Source: Department of Education, Skills and Employment, caseload data, Jan-22

LGAs with highest unemployment rates (%)		
Local Government Area (LGA)	Sep-21	Sep-20
Loddon (S)	5.6	6.2
Greater Bendigo (C)	4.4	5.5
Mount Alexander (S)	3.7	4.5
Macedon Ranges (S)	2.9	3.5

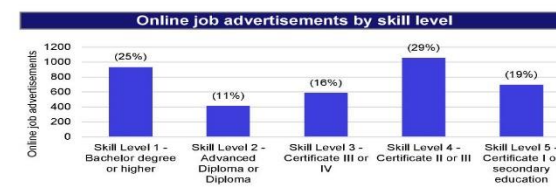
For more insights, access SALM data via [lmp.gov.au](http://lmp.gov.au). Source: National Skills Commission, Small Area Labour Markets, four quarter averages, Sep-21 quarter



Source: National Skills Commission, Internet Vacancy Index, seasonally adjusted, Jan-22



Source: National Skills Commission, Internet Vacancy Index, 3 month average of original data, Jan-22












Source: National Skills Commission, Internet Vacancy Index, seasonally adjusted, Jan-22







Note: Data are not readily available for all sources by Employment Region. ABS Labour Force Survey data are based on the Bendigo SA4. The Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) uses a unique geographical approach. For this region, the IVI Bendigo & High Country region has been used. jobactive caseload reports at the Employment Region level and includes participants receiving both digital and provider servicing (it excludes other programs, such as ParentsNext or Transition to Work (TTW)). For caseload data, the Employment Region is based on (1) the location of the provider for jobactive provider serviced participants, (2) where the participant resides for Online Employment Services (OES) participants; (3) the NEST Employment Regions of Adelaide South or Mid North Coast for NEST participants. jobactive caseload by duration registered is based on the participant's time registered in employment services. Caseload data are based on current methodology which has been retrospectively applied to historical jobactive caseload dates. As such, the data may not align with earlier figures. For any enquiries related to the data in this dashboard, please contact [EmploymentPathwaysAnalysis@skillscommission.gov.au](mailto:EmploymentPathwaysAnalysis@skillscommission.gov.au).

## Attachment B – Employment Services Caseload as at 31 January 2022

### Bendigo Caseload Cohorts

	jobactive (including OES, NEST) <sup>2</sup>			Transition to Work (TtW)	ParentsNext (PN) <sup>3</sup>	Unique Participants in JA, TtW or PN			
Participant Characteristics <sup>5</sup>	Provider	Digital	JA Total	TtW Total	PN Total	No.	%	Change this Month (%) <sup>7</sup>	
<b>Total Caseload</b>	<b>5,377</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>6,342</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>7,168</b>	<b>N/A</b>		<b>-1.0</b>
Indigenous	330	52	382	25	84	488	6.8%		0.8
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)	345	45	390	<20	56	447	6.2%		0.7
People with Disability (PwD)	1,944	256	2,200	23	122	2,343	32.7%		-0.1
Refugees	162	<20	n.p.	<20	40	216	3.0%		1.9
Youth (aged under 25)	719	204	923	136	132	1,186	16.5%		-3.1
Mature (aged 50+)	1,776	231	2,007	N/A	<20	2,015	28.1%		-1.5
Parents	1,110	105	1,215	<20	699	1,910	26.6%		1.6
12 months + <sup>6</sup>	4,676	346	5,022	91	398	5,503	76.8%		-1.6

### Bendigo Caseload numbers by LGA

	Unique Participants in JA, TtW or PN			
Local Government Area (LGA) <sup>4</sup>	29/02/2020	30/09/2020	31/01/2022	Change this Month (%) <sup>7</sup>
Central Goldfields (S)	<20	<20	<20	 N/A
Greater Bendigo (C)	4,446	8,236	5,607	 -0.5
Loddon (S)	337	553	439	 -0.9
Macedon Ranges (S)	284	772	392	 -3.0
Mount Alexander (S)	605	1,276	720	 -3.6
Not Stated	<20	20	<20	 N/A