



**Local Jobs
Program**

Interim Local Jobs Plan

Mackay Employment Region

Queensland

August 2021

Contents

Preface	3
Key Priorities	3
Regional snapshot.....	4
Industry Profile.....	6
General Overview	6
Employing industries.....	7
Top four employing industries highlights, plus Agriculture and Tourism.....	7
Mining in the Bowen Basin	7
Coal Mining Support Industries	8
Health Care and Social Assistance	8
Construction.....	8
Retail	8
Agriculture	9
Tourism	9
Vacancies and job advertisements	11
Employment Services – Providers and Caseload	12
Employment Overview.....	12
Employment Services Providers.....	12
Caseload.....	13
Key Challenges	14
Impacts of COVID-19.....	14
Attachment A: Key Priorities.....	16

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters, and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

Preface

The Local Jobs Program (LJP) brings together expertise, resources and access to funding at the local level to focus on the reskilling and upskilling of jobseekers and the enhancement of employment pathways in 51 Employment Regions (ERs) across Australia from 1 July 2021. The LJP, through targeted activities, is supporting Australia's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and will run until 30 June 2025.

Under the LJP, each ER has a designated Employment Facilitator, who is there to support the delivery of the program and chair the Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce (Taskforce). Taskforce members are locals with experience in upskilling, and reskilling jobseekers with knowledge and expertise in local economic development and are responsible for the development of a Local Jobs Plan (Plan), which identifies key employment and training opportunities for the ER.

This Plan describes key priorities for the Mackay ER, focusing on the objectives of the LJP: creating employment opportunities, meeting local employer demands and up-skilling local jobseekers. The Plan will be reviewed by the Employment Facilitator and the Taskforce every six months or when ER priorities change.

Key Priorities

The Taskforce has considered the training and employment challenges of the Mackay ER and supports the development of strategies that will drive the design and implementation of projects to address the following key priorities:

1. Identify, upskill and place appropriate job seekers into sustainable employment opportunities within the Aged Care and Disability Support Services industry, which is expected to continue to grow significantly in the Mackay ER and is experiencing current labour shortages.
2. Support job seekers to access entry level construction jobs in the ER via upskilling or applying transferable skills and filling apprenticeship/traineeship opportunities to obtain sustainable job outcomes.
3. Provide employment pathways for job seekers in tourism and hospitality, leveraging transferable technical, interpersonal and communication skillsets or up-skilling those with current industry experience.
4. Support jobseekers to upskill, train and gain appropriate work experience to build a job ready, skilled local workforce to meet manufacturing vacancies.
5. Provide local people the skills, technical knowledge and work experience required to fulfill seasonal and on-going roles in the ER's agriculture and aquaculture industries.

A full description of these key priorities and the strategies to address these can be found in [Attachment A](#).

Regional snapshot



The Mackay ER is located about 1,000 kms north of Brisbane; from St Lawrence to Gumlu, and west to Clermont, Moranbah, and Dysart.

Census (ABS, 2019) data identified the population within the Mackay ER as 173,006 individuals (4.9% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander), with 65.6% of the whole population aged between 15 and 64, with 80.4% of this cohort in employment.

The ER is split into three regions, incorporating Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday.

The Mackay region is home to a diverse and vibrant community – including rural and coastal living opportunities in 30 townships, small rural settlements, and rural residential areas. The Mackay regional government area is one of the fastest growing in Queensland, with a population of over 116,000 people. The region's prosperous economy is expected to continue to drive strong population growth over the next 20 years. Only a one-hour flight from Brisbane, the Mackay region boasts an enviable lifestyle and buoyant economy with the benefits of a fast-growing coastal city. The Mackay region comprises spectacular natural beauty – including 31 beautiful beaches, a picturesque blue river, and a pristine rainforest hinterland. Mackay Regional Council is the region's governing council. For more information visit www.mackay.qld.gov.au

The Isaac LGA spans 58,869km² and hosts 25 operating coal mines, with a further two under construction and 27 in advanced development phase. Agriculture is another key industry for the region with a growing livestock sector. The Isaac region has a vibrant and active culture which values its arts, history, and community, in particular the Clermont Historical Centre, Nebo Museum, Coalface Art Gallery and Dysart Art Space. The estimated resident population is 20,941, although with an additional 15,734 resource sector workers housed in temporary accommodation at any one time, the full-time equivalent population is estimated at 36,675.

Isaac Regional Council is the Isaac region's governing council. For more information visit www.isaac.qld.gov.au

The Whitsunday region is the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef – it encompasses a total land area of 23,863km² and includes the major townships of Proserpine, Cannonvale, Airlie Beach, Bowen and

Collinsville. With 74 Whitsunday islands, the region is one of the fastest growing populations in Queensland. Boasting a strong and diverse economy driven by the agriculture, construction, mining and tourism industries, the Whitsunday region is on track to becoming an economic powerhouse in Queensland. Renowned for its relaxed lifestyle, the region is home to beaches, rainforests, and large tracts of national parkland.

Subtropical weather patterns dominate most of the Mackay region, with heavy rainfalls experienced in summer and typically dry weather during winter.

The ER is accessible by road, rail, air, and sea. The Bruce and Peak Downs Highway cross the region. Queensland Rail has three trains that service the region and there are several flights to major population centers daily.

The Mackay ER covers a large section of Central Queensland and, as a result, there are a variety of employment opportunities in different industries. The ER supports an estimated 85,165 jobs, representing 4% of the 2,130,837 people working in Queensland, and 0.8% of the 10,683,322 people working in Australia (ABS, 2016 Census). The locality of Mackay contains the highest number of jobs in the ER, with 47,975 in Mackay (56.3%), 21,462 in Isaac (25.2%) and 15,805 in Whitsunday (18.6%). The main industries in the Mackay ER are: Coal Mining and its supporting industries (Mackay, Clermont, and Moranbah areas), Agricultural Industry Sugar Cane (Mackay Region) and Tourism (Bowen, Proserpine, and Whitsunday).

The Queensland Department of Education and school directory identifies 78 schools across the ER, 59 state primary and high schools, 16 are non-state schools and there is one special education school. Nearly all the schools are in the major population centers of Mackay, Moranbah, Sarina, Clermont, and Bowen.

There are two universities located in the ER: James Cook University (JCU) and CQ University (CQU). JCU's campus is in Mackay and offers multiple fields of study including courses in marine science, nursing, and midwifery, teaching and education and veterinary and animal science. CQU has two campuses: Mackay City and the Ooralea Campus. CQU offers multiple fields of study include allied health, visual and creative arts, health, education, IT, law and following a merger with CQ TAFE in 2014, trades.

TAFE training in the ER is delivered by TAFE Queensland and CQU ([DESBT, Building Future Skills Report, 2019](#)). TAFE Queensland's Cannonvale and Bowen training centres deliver general education and training, tourism, and hospitality training. Bowen's training centre delivers training in trades and technology-related fields as well as community services. The Mackay campus is at CQU and delivers programs in hair and beauty, fitness, childcare and hospitality utilising a training kitchen. Ooralea specialises in trade training, engineering technology and computer laboratories. The Clermont site no longer offers training and includes a single unused residential building.

The Mackay ER has seven public hospitals and one private hospital. The Mackay Base Hospital is the largest public hospital for the region and is the major referral centre for patients in the region who need specialist services. The hospital offers general health support as well as coronary care, renal support, oncology, and dental services. The hospital was upgraded in 2014 and the total number of beds increased to 318.

The other six hospitals are based in Sarina, Proserpine, Moranbah, Bowen, Dysart and Collinsvale and two Community Health Centres located in the Whitsundays and Middlemount.

Industry Profile

General Overview

Mackay features a diverse industrial sector that is a world leader in mining equipment, technology, and services (METs). As one of the six key growth industries identified by the Queensland State Government, Mackay's METs sector will continue to expand and capitalise as the service industry hub of the Bowen and Galilee Basins.

Coal is Queensland's largest output in the resources sector, with a large portion of the state's coal coming out of the Mackay and Central Queensland regions. Within the Mackay region, substantial coal mining activity takes place around the Bowen Basin which makes the Mackay ER subject to the boom or bust cycle of mining. It is also unknown how the uncertainty around the trade issues with China will affect Mackay in the future.

Surrounding Mackay, Whitsunday, Isaac and Sarina LGAs, sugar production is still a mainstay of the agricultural sector. Beef and poultry are also produced in the region. While the seasonal nature of much primary produce provides opportunities for those seeking short term work options, there is also a growing demand for technical and scientific support for the agricultural sector.

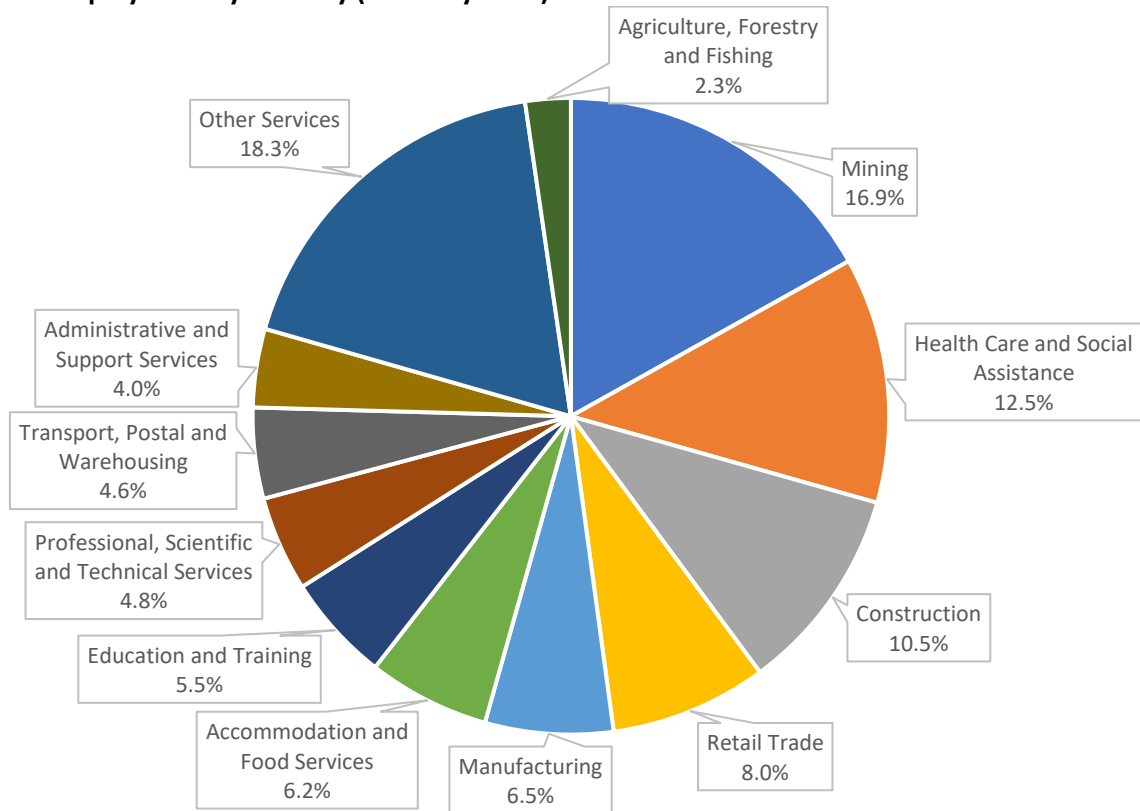
Ever increasing health needs are driving the growth of the health sector and are reflected in the focus on health-related qualifications at the regions universities. Allied health roles are in demand both in hospital settings and throughout the community

The tourism sector is also key as both a large employing sector providing entry level jobs and as a growth stimulator. While employment in this sector is not recognised as secure, there are many introductory level opportunities which can develop skills in new entrants to the workforce and help orient them for working life.

Employing industries

The largest employing industries in the Mackay ER are mining (16.9%), healthcare and social assistance (12.5%), construction (10.5%) and retail trade (8%). Together, these top four employing industries account for 48% of employment in the region.

Figure 1: Employment by Industry (February 2021)



Source: Labour Market Information Portal, ABS Labour Force Regions – SA4 Data, Mackay – Isaac - Whitsunday, February 2021. 'Other Services' includes 8 industries: *Other Services, Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services, Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services, Arts and Recreation Services, Information Media and Telecommunications, Financial and Insurance Services, Public Administration and Safety and Wholesale Trade.*

Top four employing industries highlights, plus Agriculture and Tourism

Mining in the Bowen Basin

Currently, the Bowen Basin (approximately 220 kms from Moranbah) contains most of Australia's high-quality coal reserves and there are currently 47 operating or under construction coalmines. The two types of coal mined in the basin are coking and thermal coal. Coking coal is used in the steel production industry, while thermal coal is for power production.

In June 2019, around 37,000 persons were involved in the coal industry workforce. Around 19% of the full-time mine workforce were fly-in-fly-out (FIYO) or drive-in-drive-out (DIDO) workers who lived in workers' accommodation villages while on shift. The Isaac Region near Mackay and the towns of Moranbah, Dysart and Tieri supply workers to the Bowen Basin. There are also five coal seam gas operations and two metalliferous (gold, copper etc.) mines in the Bowen Basin, with the extracted gas transported via pipelines to the Gladstone liquefied natural gas plants.

Source: <https://www.gqso.qld.gov.au/issues/3366/bowen-basin-population-report-2019.pdf>

Coal Mining Support Industries

The coal mining industry supports different industries in the Mackay ER, which includes three ports (Mackay, Abbott Point, and Port Hay Point) to export the coal. Abbot Point (located 25kms from Bowen) and Port Hay Point (located 40kms south of Mackay) are coal export only ports, with about 150 thousand tonnes of coal exported last year. The port operating at Mackay not only exports coal, but also fuel, sugar, and grain.

There are also many businesses in the Mackay ER that provide services and equipment to the coal industry, including businesses that manufacture, maintain and service mining equipment; others that construct building and infrastructure; and some that offer transport, cleaning and catering services.

Health Care and Social Assistance

The second largest employment sector in the Mackay ER is health care and social assistance, with 11,900 people employed in this industry. The roles include nursing, personal care workers, receptionists, general practitioners, and psychologists. Major employers in this industry include hospitals, medical practices and centres, aged care facilities and disability support services. In Central Queensland, including the Mackay ER, health care and social assistance is the largest employer of women, with almost three times as many women than men employed in the industry.

Construction

The construction industry in Mackay is the third largest area of employment with 10,000 people employed. The construction industry includes occupations such as carpenters, electricians, plumbers, labourers, painters, architects, concreters, plasterers, and earthmoving plant operators. The Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) Report (February 2021) indicated that over the past 12 months, vacancies for construction and trade workers had increased significantly, with vacancies in December 2020 up by 109%.

The [Construction Skills Queensland Major Projects Explorer](#) (May 2021) lists planned or commenced construction projects, including:

• East Point - Masterplan	(\$250M)
• South Mackay Secondary Catholic College	(\$50M)
• Northern Beaches Community Hub	(\$30M)
• Sarina Hospital Redevelopment	(\$31M)
• Clarke Creek Wind and Solar Farm	(\$1500M)
• Shute Harbour Restoration Project	(\$55M)
• Proserpine Entertainment Centre	(\$14M)
• Funnel Bay Hotel	(\$160M)
• Whitsunday Paradise Housing	(\$1100M)

Sources: ABS Labour Force Survey, Employment Region – Employment by Industry, February 2021.
<https://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/GainInsights/VacancyReport>

Retail

Retail trade is the fourth largest employer in the region, employing 7,600 people. It includes occupations such as customer service representatives, cashiers, store managers, sales associates and inventory control specialists. Most workers are employed in shops and supermarkets, ranging in size from large chain stores and supermarkets to small or family run businesses.

The demand for retail staff in the Mackay ER has declined mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2017, retail was the number one employing industry in the ER, followed by accommodation and food services, construction, health, and mining. However, following COVID-19 lockdowns and contingency

planning the number of people employed in retail dropped to fourth highest employing industry in the ER.

Due to increased online and click and collect shopping behaviour and burgeoning economic recovery, there has been a gradual increase in retail vacancies. In the last 12 months, the IVI data shows that vacancies for occupations relating to sales have generally increased. For example, vacancies for Sales Assistants and Salespersons increased from 42.2% in January 2020 to 80.9% in December 2020, however within this period there was a drop to 28.8% in May 2020, before large increases in October and November of 2020.

Source: ABS Labour Force Survey, Employment Region – Employment by Industry, February 2021.
<https://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/GainInsights/VacancyReport>

Agriculture

The agricultural industry in the Mackay ER is mostly known for sugarcane, beef, vegetable, and salad crops, as well as grains and tropical fruits. Sugar cane is the largest industry in the region with just over 57% of farms growing this product. The area also has a well-established commercial and recreational fishing industry and is developing a small-scale aquaculture industry in the ER which focuses mainly on the production of prawns and barramundi. The Queensland Government's 2021-2022 budget announced funding for industry specific training and commercial support, including a new Agricultural Centre of Excellence at Bowen TAFE, Aquaculture Training Centre at Cannonvale TAFE, and the development of a business case for the Future Foods Bio-hub Mackay.

Tourism

The tourism industry in the ER can be split into two distinct areas - the Whitsundays and Mackay.

The Whitsunday area encompasses the regional hubs of Proserpine, Bowen, and Airlie Beach, which is the gateway to the 74 islands off the Queensland coast in the middle of the Great Barrier Reef. A mix of accommodation is offered, from camping in national parks, AirBNBs, caravan parks and motels to high-end all-inclusive resorts and island 'glamping'. The Whitsundays is serviced by two airports, Whitsunday Coast Airport in Proserpine, and Great Barrier Reef Airport on Hamilton Island.

The Whitsundays are a hub for domestic and international tourists, including self-drive, grey nomads, backpackers, and intra-state holidaymakers. Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) Whitsundays Regional Snapshot (December 2020) shows the area hosted 575,000 visitors to December 2020 - 92% of visitors were domestic holiday makers, with 90% of these being from intrastate. For international visitors to Queensland, the Whitsundays is the fifth top holiday destination in the state (9%). Whilst most visitors to the Whitsundays are domestic, the area only attracts three percent of the share of total domestic visitors to Queensland.

In the three years ending December 2020, annual domestic Overnight Visitor Expenditure (OVE) in the Whitsundays grew by 9.7% on average to \$630.9 million even with the effects of COVID from March 2020. While visitation was steady (down 0.4% on average) at 532,000, spend per night grew by 17.7% on average to \$297 per night. Part of the increase in spend per night over the last three years reflects the impacts of Cyclone Debbie in 2017 and the recovery work which followed. In 2019, recovery workers gradually left the region and Hayman Island and Daydream Island both reopened in mid-2019. It also reflects the large increase in intrastate visitors who have increasingly preferred to stay in 4-5-star accommodation; and are increasingly likely to be Millennial and Generation X visitors in comparison to Generation Z visitors who are likely to spend less.

The Mackay tourism area is centered around Mackay city and is popular with business travelers, grey nomads, backpackers, self-drive and intrastate holidaymakers. Being the ER's commercial center,

63% of domestic visitors to Mackay stated their purpose was 'business' (TEQ, December 2020). To December 2020, the Mackay area hosted 946,000 visitors, with 92% of all visitors being domestic and from intrastate. Mackay is the sixth most visited Queensland holiday destination, with a six percent share of total visitors to Queensland. International tourists are the least likely to visit the Mackay region, with only one per cent of total international visitor share in Queensland.

Looking at visitor trends, intrastate visitation grew by 7.6% on average over the past three years. The largest intrastate markets were intraregional travelers (up 11.8% on average to a record 301,000 and Brisbane (up 14.2% on average to 178 000). International visitation to Mackay decreased by 27.8% on average over the past three years to 7,000 visitors in the year ending December 2020. The international market contributed one per cent of all overnight visitors to the region.

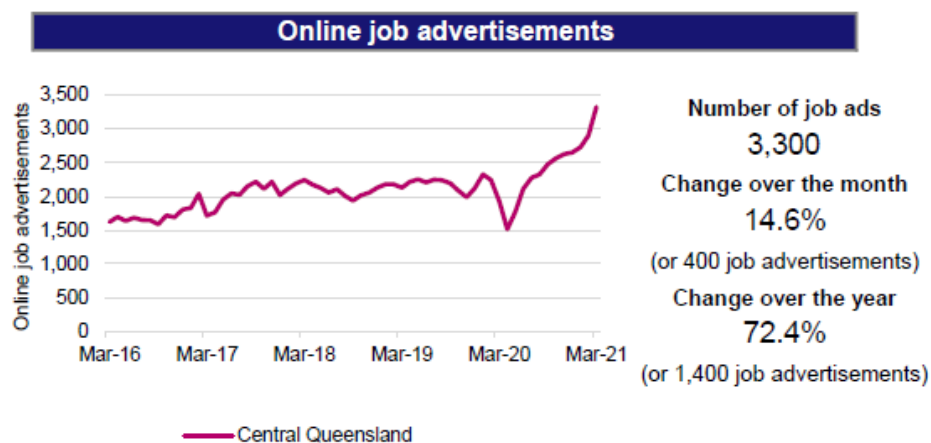
Looking forward, the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact the tourism industry in both the Whitsunday and Mackay tourism areas in the ER. International borders will potentially remain closed for a significant period of time, which will limit international visitors' ability to enter Australia, whether it be for a short holiday, working holiday or backpacking. Domestic tourism is an opportunity for the region, but ongoing sporadic lockdowns and a trend to holiday intrastate will continue to be challenging to manage. Tourism Australia's Aviation Capacity Report (March 2021), showed that 123 flights are scheduled per week from Brisbane to either Mackay, Proserpine, and Hamilton Island and only three direct from Hamilton Island to Sydney. The number of aviation seats available further illustrates the downward trend- seat numbers are down 43.8% on the Brisbane to Mackay route, 31.3% down on the Brisbane to Proserpine route and the direct flight from Hamilton Island to Sydney is down 91.5%.

Potentially reflecting the increase in intrastate, self-drive holidays, Tourism and Events Queensland, Queensland Accommodation Report (April 2021), showed that Queensland's accommodation sector is recovering, with the industry reporting higher levels of average daily rates (ADR) and revenue per available room. The April period was strong in Mackay, with accommodation providers reporting higher levels of ADR and occupancy rates compared with the pre-COVID month of April 2019.

Vacancies and job advertisements

The March 2021 IVI Central Queensland indicates that vacancies in the ER are returning to pre-COVID levels. Figure 2 shows online job advertisements have increased 14.6% versus the previous month and 72.4% versus March 2020.

Figure 2: Online job advertisements (March 2021)



The top ten advertised occupations reflect the top four employers in the region, namely mining, health and allied services, construction, and retail. In Table 1, health and allied health services accounted for 610 jobs or 40.2% of the top ten advertised roles. By number of jobs, hospitality is the tenth highest advertised occupation category, however in specific regions (such as the Whitsundays), the industry has greater representation.

Table 1: Top 10 advertised occupations (April 2021)

ANZSCO Occupation	# Jobs Advertised
Automotive and Engineering Trades Workers	194
General-Inquiry Clerks, Call Centre Workers, and Receptionists	193
Sales Assistants and Salespersons	179
Medical Practitioners and Nurses	174
Carers and Aides	174
Other Labourers	136
Legal, Social and Welfare Professionals	132
Health Diagnostic and Therapy Professionals	130
Drivers and Store persons	119
Hospitality, Retail and Service Managers	88

Source: National Skills Commission, Internet Vacancy Index, April 2021. Raw data is used for this analysis. Note: the Central Queensland region is the best fit from the regions available from the contributing job boards and does not precisely correspond to the Mackay Employment Region.

Employment Services – Providers and Caseload

Employment Overview

The current unemployment rate (March 2021) for the ER is 5.2%, which is a decrease of 0.1% on this time last year. The Mackay ER has a much lower unemployment rate than Queensland, with the state unemployment rate currently at 5.9%. The ER overall has a higher participation rate than Queensland at 76.1%.

Unemployment rates across the ER vary widely with the highest rate of unemployment within the Mackay Local Government Area (LGA). The Mackay City suburb is a mix of both residential and business dwellings and is subject to flooding. Rents in these suburbs are lower compared to surrounding areas and are more affordable for those on low income or Centrelink payments. Most other suburbs in Mackay show on average a much lower unemployment rate of around 4.0%. In the regional areas of the ER, the unemployment rate is lower again - for example Moranbah and Clermont are 2.2% and 3.9% respectively. Moranbah is a main employment hub for the coal mines and supports a large workforce that live locally or fly-in-fly-out.

Historically, the Mackay ER has been subject to the ebb and flow of the mining industry. The unemployment rate in the region has averaged 5.1% over the last five years, below the 6.2% recorded for Queensland and 5.6% recorded for Australia.

Employment Services Providers

The Mackay ER's nine Employment Services Providers (ESP) support seven programs, namely jobactive, New Enterprise Incentive Scheme, Transition to Work, ParentsNext, Career Transition Assistance, Employability Skills Training and Harvest Trail Services (HTS).

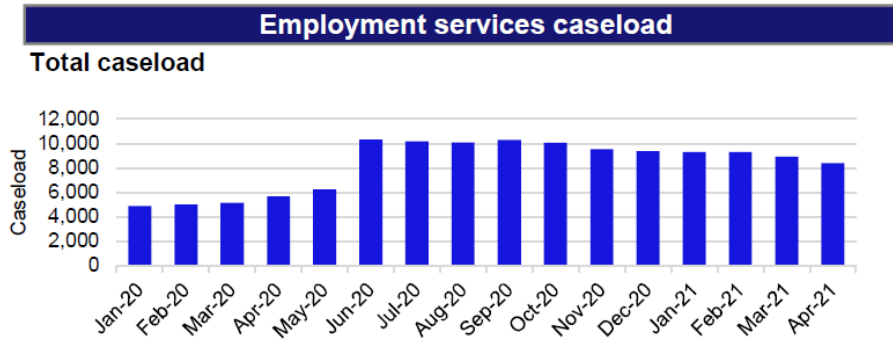
The ESPs have physical premises throughout the region, with either full-time or outreach hours to support jobseekers and Program participants.

All ESPs have physical offices located in Mackay that are staffed full-time, apart from HTS who is based in Bowen and staffed part-time. Outside Mackay, ESPs physical locations are in key regional towns or industry centres, namely Bowen (four sites), Cannonvale (three sites), Proserpine (one site), Sarina (two sites), Clermont (one site) and Moranbah (one site).

Caseload

Reflecting the downward unemployment rate trend, the ER’s caseload decreased from 9,536 people in December 2020 to 8,115 in May 2021, a decrease of 15% (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Employment services caseload

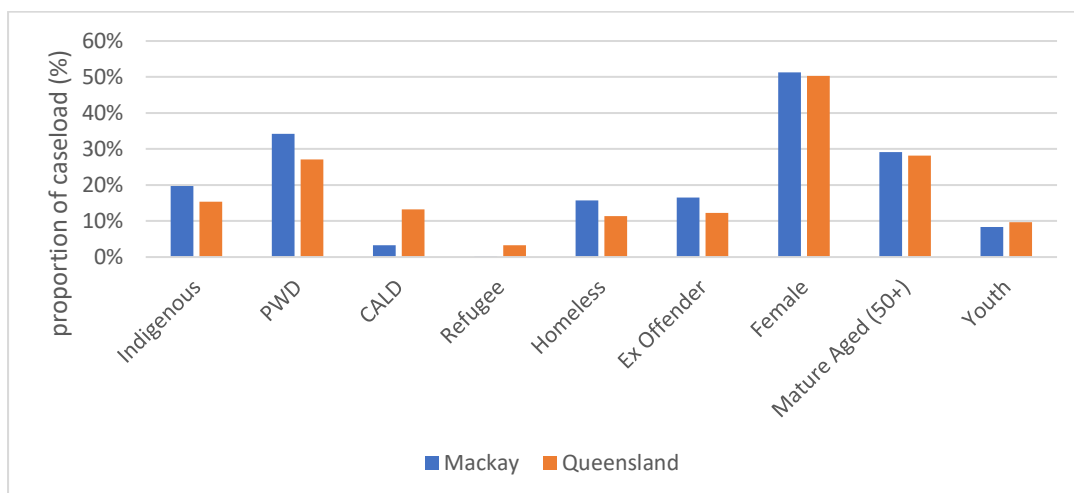


Source: Monthly Labour Market Data Dashboard, Employment Services Caseload (published 12 May 2021)

The May 2021 caseload reflects the regional employment, industry and employer distribution throughout the region. The Mackay region accounts for 83% of the jobactive caseload, followed by 15% in Whitsunday and 2% in the Isaac regions (*Qlik, jobactive current caseload (jCASE02), May 2021*).

Figure 4 shows the caseload cohort compared with Queensland. Overall, Mackay has a higher percentage of Indigenous, People with a Disability (PWD), Homeless and Ex-Offender caseload and significantly lower Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and Refugee cohorts. Anecdotally, Mackay’s position as a regional hub is responsible for the ER’s higher Indigenous, PWD and Ex-Offender cohort representation. There is no prison in the Mackay ER, with prisoners sentenced to either Capricornia Correctional Centre in Rockhampton or the Townsville Correctional Centre. The Ex-Offender cohort includes those returning to the region once their custodial sentence has ended.

Figure 4: Employment services caseload for selected cohorts (May 2021)



Source: Qlik, jobactive current caseload (jCASE02), May 2021. PWD = Persons with disability. CALD = Culturally and Linguistically Diverse.

Key Challenges

The region has many outlying areas which lack (or have very limited) public transport, making it difficult or infeasible for some seeking work to access job opportunities or training in the major centres.

Internet access is patchy, ranging from Mackay, where access is strongest, to towns to the west such as Clermont, where access relies on satellite and mobile data coverage is intermittent. Additionally, many young people and those on the jobactive caseloads either do not have their own mobile phones or do not have sufficient data capability to utilise online support.

In the current climate, Mackay is struggling to retain skilled workers in the region. The cessation of tourist activity and the ongoing travel limitations both domestically and internationally will continue to be a challenge for the Mackay workforce.

Conversely, there is early indication that migration from southern states may increase over the short to mid-term, and Mackay business infrastructure will need to adapt quickly to ensure that skilled workers have suitable support to engage in work activities from the region.

Agricultural output is still strong, however the diverse workforce base previously available for seasonal work is now limited, resulting in significant income loss from some crops. The sugar industry seems somewhat immune to this due to most of their seasonal workers being locals.

Impacts of COVID-19

COVID-19 had a disparate impact across the Mackay ER. Mining in the Isaac region continued with minimal impact, however all other industries and employers experienced forced closures due to the national lockdown in March 2020 and subsequent challenges posed by transportation restrictions, social distancing requirements and global supply chain disruptions. While the ER's unemployment rate trend continues to follow the national downward trend, the region continues to struggle with shortages in skilled labour and pickers and packers in the agricultural industry.

COVID -19 severely affected tourism and hospitality across Australia. With the closure of international and state borders and state and national lock-down protocols, virtually all tourism operators and accommodation were forced to close. Hospitality providers were limited to take-away service only, operated with reduced hours and skeleton staff or closed completely. In 2019, 37% of tourists to the Mackay and Whitsunday regions were from overseas so this region has been impacted heavily. The Whitsunday Council, [Whitsunday Region Priorities](#) report states that in May 2020 alone, there were 2,700 jobs lost and 38% of employers were registered for JobKeeper.

Similarly, to the rest of Australia, the Mackay ER is facing accommodation challenges. Southern state migration to regional Queensland, overseas residents returning to Australia and continuing low interest rates has resulted in increasing residential accommodation prices, and rental vacancy rates are among the lowest on record, especially in the lower value end of the rental market. Building new homes is becoming increasingly challenging with interruptions occurring in the building supply chain and a lack of availability of qualified trade workers to meet regional demand. Accommodation availability and affordability is compounding existing transportation limitations, especially outside the population centres of Mackay and Airlie Beach.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the Queensland and Federal Governments have announced programs to stimulate the ER's economy and employment. Announced programs include:

- Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) introduced *Local Jobs Program* to the Mackay ER in July 2021. Federally funded to 2025, the Mackay Employment Facilitator will work with local employers and industry throughout the ER to deliver funded activities with jobseekers to fill defined job outcomes.
- *COVID Works for Queensland Program* allocated \$2.7m to the Whitsunday Regional Council to start regional infrastructure projects.
- Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads funded major transportation projects, including the Mackay Ring Road (\$497.3m), Mackay Northern Access Road (\$120.35m) and Bruce Highway safety and overtaking lane upgrades.
- Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport's *Work in Paradise Program* aims to fill regional tourism and hospitality roles with eligible participants able to apply for a \$1,500 incentive and \$250 travel bonus from 01 July 2021.
- Tourism and Events Queensland's \$2m marketing campaign *Good to Go* targeted intrastate and interstate domestic and New Zealand tourists to drive \$1b in tourism and accommodation bookings in Queensland between March and July 2021.

Attachment A: Key Priorities

Priority One: Identify, upskill, and place appropriate job seekers into sustainable employment opportunities within the Aged Care and Disability Support Services industry, which is expected to continue to grow significantly in the ER and is currently experiencing labour shortages.

As the second highest employer in the Mackay ER, the healthcare and social assistance industry would provide a variety of employment outcomes for the region's jobseekers. However, as not all health and social assistance roles are entry level and either require a degree or minimum Certificate III qualification, this priority aims to upskill jobseekers with transferrable skills into the sector with the highest growth rate, Aged Care and Disability Support Services.

Aged Care and Disability Support Services roles have grown exponentially with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Australia's aging population. Service providers in this sector support those with a disability who require varying levels of personal support or are an advanced age with in-home care or undertake various roles in aged or disability care homes. Most entry-level roles are in personal support, which require a minimum Certificate III in Individual Support and 120 hours of work experience.

Activities will be developed to effectively meet the recruitment needs of disability support and aged care employers in the Mackay ER by identifying, training, upskilling, and placing appropriate job seekers into sustainable employment opportunities.

Strategies:

- Review of aged care and disability support services in Mackay, Isaac, and Whitsunday regions to identify employers, the range of roles/jobs and immediate to mid-term job outcomes and map both the job demand and seasonable employment peaks and troughs (if any).
- For identified roles and jobs within aged care and disability support services, assess the minimum training, education, work experience, competency baselines and personal and physical attributes job seekers require to either enter or maintain sustainable employment within the industry and create defined job descriptions.
- Map the location of employers in the distinct Mackay, Isaac, and Whitsunday regions to direct LJP activities to the most appropriate location within the ER.
- Identify the key stakeholders including employers, local, state, and federal government agencies or departments, advocacy groups, professional associations and subject matter experts. Create a stakeholder engagement plan to ensure professional relationships are made with individuals/organisations who will guide and deliver successful LJP activities.
- For identified roles in aged care and disability support services, determine knowledge, skills, and experience gaps in the Mackay ER's jobactive cohort and map short to mid-term opportunities for employment

Priority Two: Support job seekers to access entry level construction jobs via upskilling or applying transferable skills and filling apprenticeship or traineeship opportunities to obtain sustainable job outcomes

With a funded project pipeline over the next two-to-five years, construction presents significant employment opportunities.

The Local Jobs Plan will aim to collaboratively develop activities that build skills for local jobseekers to access entry level careers via upskilling or applying transferable skills and filling apprenticeship opportunities.

Strategies will increase the region's pool of jobseekers with construction-specific skillsets, tickets and formal qualifications to retain and build a locally-based workforce, by supporting participants through agile training, upskilling opportunities and innovative activities that provide valuable, role specific work experience to obtain sustainable job outcomes.

Strategies:

- Review the Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday regions construction industry to identify employers, the range of roles/jobs and immediate to mid-term job outcomes and map both the job demand and seasonable employment peaks and troughs (if any).
- For identified roles within construction, assess the minimum training, education, work experience, competency baselines and personal and physical attributes job seekers require to either enter or maintain sustainable employment within the industry and create defined job descriptions.
- Map the location of employers in the distinct Mackay, Isaac, and Whitsunday regions to direct Local Jobs Program activities to the most appropriate location within the ER.
- Identify the key stakeholders within the Mackay ER, including employers, local, state, and federal government agencies or departments, advocacy groups, professional associations and subject matter experts. Create a Mackay ER stakeholder engagement plan to ensure professional relationships are made with individuals/organisations who will guide and deliver successful LJP activities.
- For identified construction roles, determine knowledge, skills, and experience gaps in the Mackay ER's jobactive cohort and map short to mid-term opportunities for employment.
- Review local, state and federal government, not-for-profit and private sector employment incentives, including wage subsidies, employment programs and funding and identify opportunities for the construction industry.

Priority Three: Provide employment pathways for job seekers in tourism and hospitality, leveraging transferable technical, interpersonal and communication skillsets or upskilling those with current industry experience.

Hospitality and tourism employers are spread throughout the Mackay ER. However, there are distinct sections of the ER where hospitality and tourism are the primary employers, especially in the tourist hubs of Airlie Beach and the Whitsunday Island chain. This priority aims to develop regionally appropriate activities to meet tourism and hospitality employer seasonal workforce needs.

In addition, as tourism and hospitality roles require foundational, interpersonal and communication skills, there is an opportunity for jobseekers with transferrable soft skills to retrain, gain relevant work experience and transition into this industry. This priority will create opportunities for job seekers to gain entry level job outcomes leveraging transferable skillsets or upskill those with existing industry experience.

Strategies:

- Review Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday regions hospitality and tourism industry to identify employers, the range of roles/jobs and immediate to mid-term job outcomes and map both the job demand and seasonable employment peaks and troughs (if any).
- For identified roles and jobs within hospitality and tourism, assess the minimum training, education, work experience, competency baselines and personal and physical attributes job seekers require to either enter or maintain sustainable employment within the industry and create defined job descriptions.
- Map the location of employers in the distinct Mackay, Isaac, and Whitsunday regions to direct LJP activities to the most appropriate location within the ER.
- Identify the key stakeholders within the Mackay ER, including employers, local, state and federal government agencies or departments, advocacy groups, professional associations and subject matter experts. Create a Mackay ER stakeholder engagement plan to ensure professional relationships are made with individuals/organisations who will guide and deliver successful LJP activities.
- For identified roles in hospitality and tourism, determine knowledge, skills, and experience gaps in the Mackay ER's jobactive cohort and map short to mid-term opportunities for employment.

Priority Four: Support jobseekers to upskill, train and gain appropriate work experience to build a job ready, skilled local workforce to meet manufacturing vacancies

As the hub for Central Queensland's agriculture, mining and commercial industries, manufacturing is an important employer in the ER's employment ecosystem. Manufacturers in the ER provide secondary and tertiary production of commercial goods or are the regional warehousing base for distribution to North Queensland, supported by an army of warehouse, storage and distribution, road transport or courier, driver and postage personnel.

This priority will support the growth of manufacturing jobs in the ER's manufacturing sector by upskilling or training jobseekers to build a job ready, skilled local workforce, with a focus on providing appropriate work experience and qualifications to fulfill entry level packing, transport, warehouse and storage and distribution coordination roles.

Strategies:

- Review manufacturing in the Mackay, Isaac, and Whitsunday regions to identify employers, the range of roles/jobs and immediate to mid-term job outcomes and map both the job demand and seasonable employment peaks and troughs (if any).
- For identified roles and jobs within manufacturing, assess the minimum training, education, work experience, competency baselines and personal and physical attributes job seekers require to either enter or maintain sustainable employment within the industry and create defined job descriptions.
- Map the location of employers in the distinct Mackay, Isaac, and Whitsunday regions to direct LJP activities to the most appropriate location within the ER.
- Identify the key stakeholders within the Mackay ER, including employers, local, state, and federal government agencies or departments, advocacy groups, professional associations and subject matter experts. Create a Mackay ER stakeholder engagement plan to ensure professional relationships are made with individuals/organisations who will guide and deliver successful LJP activities.
- For identified roles in manufacturing, determine knowledge, skills, and experience gaps in the Mackay ER's jobactive cohort and map short to mid-term opportunities for employment.

Priority Five: Provide local people with the skills, technical knowledge and work experience required to fulfill seasonal and ongoing roles in the ER's agriculture and aquaculture industries.

Agriculture in the Mackay ER is seasonal and employment opportunities are regionally based, with farms concentrated in distinct rural areas. This priority aims to provide local people with the skills, technical knowledge and work experience required to fulfill regional agriculture jobs throughout the growing/primary production season/s. Jobseekers with appropriate transferrable skills will be identified and linked with employers to meet industry demand in both periods of high demand and longer-term sustainable employment for crop maintenance and/or secondary or tertiary primary production employment opportunities.

Whilst a smaller subset of the ER's agricultural industry, aquaculture is a growth industry and will provide sustainable employment for qualified individuals. This priority will support the growth of the region's aquaculture sector by upskilling and re-training local jobseekers to access entry level careers and pathways to sustainable employment outcomes within the burgeoning marine farming sector.

Strategies:

- Review agriculture industries in the Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday regions to identify employers, the range of roles/jobs and immediate to mid-term job outcomes and map both the job demand and seasonable employment peaks and troughs (if any).
- For identified roles and jobs within agriculture, assess the minimum training, education, work experience, competency baselines and personal and physical attributes job seekers require to either enter or maintain sustainable employment within the industry and create defined job descriptions.
- Map the location of employers in the distinct Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday regions to direct LJP activities to the most appropriate location within the ER.
- Identify the key stakeholders within the Mackay ER, including employers, local, state and federal government agencies or departments, advocacy groups, professional associations and subject matter experts. Create a Mackay ER stakeholder engagement plan to ensure professional relationships are made with individuals/organisations who will guide and deliver successful LJP activities.
- For identified agricultural roles, determine knowledge, skills, and experience gaps in the Mackay ER's jobactive cohort and map short to mid-term opportunities for employment.