



Local Jobs Plan

Hunter

New South Wales

September 2021

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The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional ownership, custodianship and ongoing connection to country of the Traditional Owners of the lands known as the 'Hunter Region'— The Awabakal, Darkinjung, Geawaegal, Gomeroi/Kamilaroi, Gringai, Wonnarua/Wanaruah, and Worimi. We pay our respects to their people, cultures and their Elders past, present and emerging, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Hunter Region.

The Local Jobs Program

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.

This updated Local Jobs Plan for the Hunter 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.

Key employment and training priorities

This **Local Jobs Plan** details the key priorities for the Hunter Region:

1. **HEALTHCARE** - Meet growing workforce demand by creating sector-specific solutions and pathways to employment within the Healthcare sector, specifically across Aged and Disability Care also considering other care industries, supporting industries and supply chain.
2. **HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM** - Meet growing workforce demand by creating sector-specific solutions and pathways to employment within the Hospitality and Tourism sector, specifically across key hubs which face additional barriers like high youth unemployment and lack of transport e.g. Cessnock and Port Stephens, Newcastle.
3. **MANUFACTURING AND CONSTRUCTION** - Address growing workforce demand and current skills-gap across manufacturing and construction with consideration to emerging skill sets and roles within advanced manufacturing environments across the Hunter. Specific focus required on key areas where additional barriers around transport, and accessibility e.g. High-level clearance requirements.
4. **STEM AND INNOVATION** - Address emerging industries in the Hunter by preparing job seekers for both immediate and longer-term employment opportunities through collaborative projects.
5. **THE UPPER HUNTER** - Support a key area of the region experiencing structural change, and work closely with key stakeholders, groups, and industries to facilitate a collaborative approach to skills and workforce.

Each of the key priorities are underpinned by four main cohorts as the focus when considering local job seekers/employers. The four key cohorts are:

1. Youth
2. Indigenous
3. Displaced workers
4. Small and micro business

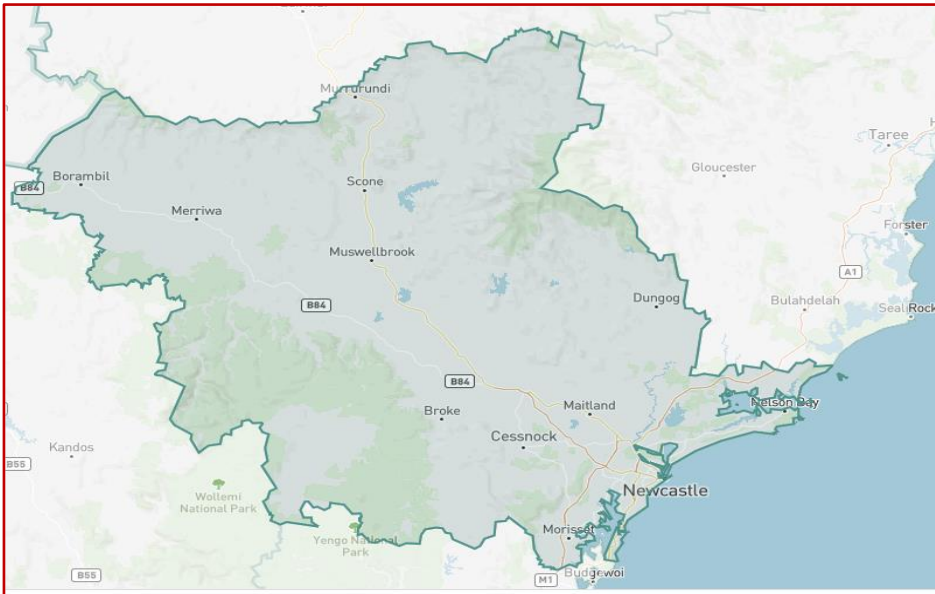
The plan identifies the strategies and actions to be undertaken to address these priorities. The Employment Facilitator will have responsibility for enabling and ensuring agreed strategies are implemented.

The plan is intended to provide a set of priorities for the Local Jobs Program. The plan will be reviewed by the **Hunter Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce** on a quarterly basis, to ensure local leadership and expertise is fully leveraged to deliver outcomes, and to assess progress against each priority. The plan is flexible and can be amended to respond to changes in local opportunities and circumstances (or every six months).

Employment Region overview

The Hunter Employment Region corresponds to the combination of the ABS 'Hunter Valley excluding Newcastle' and 'Newcastle and Lake Macquarie' areas. In the coastal section it stretches from Catherine Hill Bay to Hawks Nest. The central areas include major coal mining centres such of Muswellbrook and Singleton. In the north the region borders the Mid North Coast and New England North West employment regions. To the south the region adjoins the Central Coast part of Sydney North and West Employment Region. The western boundary is with Central West Employment Region.

Figure 1 Hunter Employment Region



The city of Newcastle is the Hunter's economic hub and is home to Australia's largest coal export port by volume. It is also home to the University of Newcastle, a large regional employer with recognised research and industry collaboration particularly in Health and Energy Resources i.e. mining.

Health is the strong industry sector within the region with major public hospitals in Newcastle and Maitland being leading employers and serving areas outside the Hunter. The region also has substantial employment in Care sectors with Health and Care, consistent leaders in occupational vacancy categories.

Key value-added sectors include Coal mining; Electricity generation; advanced manufacturing; Defence; Agriculture including Viticulture; Thoroughbred breeding; Meat processing; and Tourism particularly in the Hunter Valley wine region and Port Stephens.

The Hunter region functions as relative discrete functional economic region with substantial commuter flows. However, there are some notable (and overlapping) intra-region variations that reflect labour, economic, social, political, and planning realities, and boundaries. For example, there is substantial commuter traffic within the 'Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area' – also generally referred to as the 'Lower Hunter' – comprising of the following LGAs: Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Maitland and Cessnock. There is particularly high two-way commuter flow between the large population centres of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. In broad terms, this Lower Hunter economy is more diverse and has characteristics more similar to urban economies.

The 'Upper Hunter' – Singleton, Muswellbrook, Scone and Dungog – has a more concentrated resource based and rural economy. For example, Coal mining is responsible for 30-40% of employment in Singleton and Muswellbrook LGAs. There is also substantial commuter overlap between these two sub-regions, with thousands of workers commuting from areas such as Maitland and Cessnock to the Upper Hunter on a daily basis.

See Appendix A and B for detailed labour market data.

Key Challenges in the Hunter Employment Region

Key challenges in the Hunter as of 2021, include:

- Known friction in securing adequately skilled workers in growth and demand sectors with accessible entry level work. For example: Aged care, Disability, Tourism, Grape and Wine production, and Meat processing.
- Pandemic-specific economic risks in key value-added sectors across the region, including: Mining, Construction, Manufacturing, Grape production, and Tertiary education.
- Acute information deficits for job seekers and students on growth sectors and career pathways. Long-term occupational change trends and widely recognised challenges in information access are compounded by the uncertain impacts of the pandemic and structural change risks.
- Substantial pandemic employment impacts on young people in the Newcastle / Lake Macquarie region and associated scarring concerns.
- Enduring employer concerns regarding soft and employability skills amongst young people.
- Structurally high unemployment amongst specific groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. For example, pre-COVID (February 2020) analysis suggests an Indigenous person of working age in the Hunter is more than twice as likely to be a registered job seeker compared to the general population.¹
- Structurally high unemployment in specific locations such as Cessnock, Muswellbrook, and areas of Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, and Port Stephens.
- Lack of access to transport, particularly in rural and larger regional towns.
- Ongoing shifts and uncertainty in sectors with available work, leading to labour market information deficits and the need to transfer and/or build skills.
- A high likelihood of a persistent lack of available work over extended periods.
- More acute impacts for already disadvantaged groups, such as those under 30 years of age and Indigenous workers.
- Increased employer expectations due to high levels of unemployment during the pandemic leading to assumption that higher skilled candidates are in the market and resulted hikes in entry level role requirements.
- Lack of available 'full-time' work, many needing to take on casualised work which have no benefits around sick leave impacting sustain income (e.g. child with a cold unable to go to day-care and the parent needing to stay home for caring responsibilities).

Local stakeholders and opportunities

Local stakeholders include the nine Councils within the Employment Region (Cessnock, Dungog, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Muswellbrook, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Singleton and Upper Hunter). The Hunter Joint Organisation is made up of ten councils, including nine across the Hunter employment region, and the Mid-Coast Council. Their board includes the Regional Manager of the NSW Department of Planning, Industry, and Environment. The Hunter Joint Organisation

¹ Source: Indigenous Economic Pathways and Participation in the Hunter Region, Submission to the Inquiry of the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs: Pathways and Participation Opportunities for Indigenous Australians in Employment and Business. 9th April 2020, Hunter Region Employment Facilitator

provides a collaborative approach for the Local Councils across the region on large scale projects and opportunity for cross- LGA initiatives.

Other local stakeholders include the Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation and the Regional Directors of Training Services NSW; Regional NSW; AiGroup; Services Australia; the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications and AusIndustry. Also, the CEO and Managers of Business NSW Hunter, RDA Hunter, Committee for The Hunter, The Master Builders Association (Newcastle); Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association, HunterNet, National Disability Services, Newcastle Tourism Industry Group, NIAA (National Indigenous Australians Agency), land councils and DESE funded Employment Service Providers including jobactive, Transition to Work, NEIS, Career Transition Assistance and the Entrepreneurship Facilitators.

TAFE and other RTOs are important stakeholders as is the Hunter Skills Broker appointed by Training Services NSW. The division within Destination NSW that covers the Hunter is Sydney Surrounds North which is based in Gosford and in addition to the Hunter covers the Blue Mountains, Penrith, Hawkesbury and the Central Coast. The NSW Government's NCAP (New Careers for Aboriginal People) is delivered in the Hunter and Central Coast by Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation based in Singleton.

There are eight Australian Government employment programs delivered by sixteen employment service providers in the region. Five Providers deliver jobactive services in the Hunter: Workskil Australia, The Salvation Army Plus, APM Employment Services, MAX Employment and Joblink Plus. Job ready job seekers are being assisted by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment through the Digital Services Contact Centre. Other employment services in the region include ParentsNext (PNX), Transition to Work (TtW), New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS), Career Transition Assistance (CTA), Employment Preparation Activity (EPA), Employability Skills Training (EST), and Harvest Trail Services.

Other Australian Government programs include Vocational Training and Employment Centre (VTEC), Disability Employment Services (DES), National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Australian Apprenticeship Support Network and more.

Bushfires and Drought

Severe fires in the 2019-20 season caused considerable property damage in the Cessnock and Singleton areas including the loss of 21 houses and 63 outbuildings in Cessnock with other areas such as Wollombi also badly impacted. While only one house and five outbuildings were destroyed in Singleton it was estimated by the Bush Fire Royal Commission that possibly up to 348 landholders had been impacted by fire with the estimate for Cessnock being 342 landholders.

Bushfire smoke taint meant that much of the 2020 Hunter Valley wine vintage was unusable. This consequently reduced harvest which has had flow on effects including less expenditure by backpackers who provide a large portion of the harvest labour workforce.

In November 2020 the \$250 million Bushfire Local Recovery Fund (BLERF) was announced to give local communities and Industries access to significant grants in order to drive economic recovery. Grants were available across 47 bushfire-affected LGA's, resulting in 10 projects funded across the Hunter Region including; Merriwa Cycle and Walkway Upgrade, Camping to Common Trail Connections, Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association Recovery and Resilience Project, and RFS Sheds Upgrades. This brings the joint investment for the BLERF for the Australian and New South Wales governments to more than \$550 million which is being administered by Regional NSW.

As at 21 June 2021, none of the Hunter regions were classified by the NSW Department of Primary Industries as being in 'drought'.

Key employment and training priorities: strategies and stakeholders

The Hunter Local Jobs Program is focused on addressing the specific challenges for job seekers, workers and employers within the Hunter Region specifically in relation to developing and sustaining a skilled workforce.

To this end, and incorporating local information on broader structural change and local growth priorities, the overall **Objective** of the Hunter Local Jobs Program is to:

- a) Transition people of the Hunter from unemployment or under-employment to available jobs
- b) Build skills required by the region's economy and community

This objective will be addressed through three primary actions for each priority:

- 1) Develop projects to address labour market friction, leveraging Australian, State and Local Government programs, plus the Local Recovery Fund.
- 2) Collaboratively develop projects that build skills for job seekers to access entry level careers and pathways, in line with regional growth priorities (e.g. apprenticeship opportunities and skilling through both accredited and non-accredited training, skill-sets, and tickets).
- 3) Prioritise participation for groups suffering labour market disadvantage including Youth, Indigenous, and Retrenched Workers due to structural change.

An area of focus for the taskforce will be to encourage the uptake of new programs - such as the NSW Government Reskilling for Recovery program, utilising the NSW Skills Broker role, the Australian Government's JobMaker Apprenticeships, Wage Subsidies, and the Local Jobs Recovery Fund.

It should be noted that there is extensive experience in and across these sectors from organisations such as RDA Hunter, local Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and Group Training Organisations, Training Services NSW, Industry bodies, work placement and student support organisations, collaborative forums, and employers themselves in constructing pathway opportunities. Care should be taken to expand rather than overlap with these initiatives.

Priority One: Healthcare

Meet growing workforce demand by creating sector-specific solutions and pathways to employment within the Healthcare sector, specifically across Aged and Disability Care also considering other care industries, supporting industries and supply chain.

The Hunter has a set of industries with clear employment growth trajectories, consistent challenges in attracting appropriately skilled labour, and/or pandemic specific needs. Many of these career and job opportunities within the Healthcare sector can broadly be classed as 'entry level', providing opportunity for identifiable friction points to be addressed in relatively short timeframes.

Healthcare highlights the need to direct job seekers to consider careers that they may not have previously considered. Providing targeted information on pathway opportunities, and direct assistance to address friction points can deliver efficient outcomes for workers, employers, and the regional economy.

The region is also fortunate to have a substantial ecosystem of existing models, employers with active participation in pathway creation, and training and service providers that can be leveraged.

Key Strategies:

- Build profile of 'Care Careers' as a desirable career choice for job seekers including awareness of long-term career progression, and awareness of other roles within the industry (e.g., Support services, HR, maintenance, etc).
- Industry consultation to refine and tailor pathways into entry level roles e.g. increase availability of traineeship options, and industry endorsed training programs.

- Support small and micro business in the sector to employ through collaborative programs, connection to funding and incentives, and tailored supports.
- Streamline access to opportunities for all cohorts with specific focus to disproportionately disadvantaged cohorts including youth, indigenous, and displaced workers.
- Leverage existing funding opportunities, projects, and programs including (but not limited to); Skilling for Recovery, Aged Care Workforce Industry Council 'Bring Your Thing' initiative, Department of Social Services 'A Life Changing Life' campaign.

Priority Two: Hospitality and Tourism

Meet growing workforce demand by creating sector-specific solutions and pathways to employment within the Hospitality and Tourism sector, specifically across key hubs which face additional barriers like high youth unemployment and lack of transport e.g. Cessnock, Port Stephens and Newcastle.

The Hunter is home to multiple Hospitality and Tourism hubs, all with unique offerings. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has seen increased trade with Australians holidaying regionally, coupled with a limited workforce as a result of travel restrictions to international workers. This industry has had immediate impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic which has resulted in financial institutions becoming increasingly hesitant around lending creating an additional friction point to industry attraction and retention.

Anecdotal feedback from stakeholders highlights the gap left from international workers is amplified across Hospitality and Tourism sectors, and even more-so in seasonal areas who have typically utilised working holiday or seasonal worker visa holders as a main source of labour. Feedback highlights a supply issue of skilled workers in which workers are being drawn between organisations rather than reskilling new employees into these roles.

Key friction points due to layoffs have impacted roles such as administration as well as frontline roles. The ability to attract and retain Chefs is an issue cited across the region and is exacerbated by the increase in regional tourism driving demand. Further limitations worth consideration are the high level of casualisation and low entry level pay rates, the perception of 'short term' work and absence of career pathways, and employer support through training, onboarding, and ongoing mentoring.

Key Strategies:

- Streamline access to opportunity for key groups including youth, indigenous, and retrenched workers.
- Build collaborative employment and training solutions which fit Local Government's Destination Management and Economic Development strategies.
- Develop projects which address attraction and retention issues with input from both industry, and employment service providers.
- Build awareness and attraction campaigns around long-term career pathways within the industry.
- Leverage existing funding and initiatives across the Region including Skilling for Recovery, and Destination Australia Program.
- Utilise existing working groups and industry groups to minimise duplication but provide specific focus to workforce development industry activity through the Hospitality and Tourism LJP Working Group. Inc; Newcastle Tourism Industry Group, Skills IQ NSW ITAB, Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association.

Priority Three: Manufacturing and Construction

Address growing workforce demand and current skills-gap across manufacturing and construction with consideration to emerging skill sets and roles within advanced manufacturing environments across the Hunter. Specific focus required on key areas where additional barriers around transport, and accessibility e.g. High-level clearance requirements.

As large-scale infrastructure projects are taking place in the region, the ability to sustain a local workforce within the construction industry has been a friction point. This has resulted in the increase use of sub-contractors to ensure timelines are met.

Key Strategies:

- Collaborate with industry to build clear pathways into manufacturing and construction.
- Build awareness campaign around long-term career opportunities within manufacturing and construction including starting new businesses.
- Work with employers to create streamlined access to programs and projects that provide a direct filter to employment.
- Work with industry to ensure training meets future workforce demand, specifically in a proactive way for large scale projects to ensure workforce is available locally at each interval.
- Provide a proactive approach to training and ticketing job seekers in collaboration with Training Services NSW to ensure suitably skilled pools of candidates are available to meet workforce demand on infrastructure projects including Newcastle Airport Code E Upgrade, Kurri Kurri Gas Fired Power Station, John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct, Maitland Council Administration Building, and Astra Aerolab and Defence Williamtown Special Activation Precinct.
- Ensure collaboration with industry bodies (ie. Master Builders Association, Hunternet Cooperative, AiGroup) to maximise opportunity and minimise duplication.

Priority Four: STEM and Innovation

Address emerging industries in the Hunter by preparing job seekers for both immediate and longer-term employment opportunities through collaborative projects.

The Hunter region is experiencing a number of emerging industries and precincts which require an adequate skills-base for these industries to sustain and grow their workforces.

Two key points should be emphasised in relation to this priority. Firstly, and notwithstanding the strong local ecosystem of service provision and pathway creation, interventions that seek to directly address the information deficit for young people, transitioning workers, and disadvantaged cohorts are important.

Interventions that improve the application of labour market information to job and career decision making that clearly illustrate the opportunities and sequence for particular career paths are valuable (such as the National Skills Commission and the National Careers Institute). Particularly for young people, those who have limited visibility or awareness of opportunities as a result of disadvantage, or those looking to or forced to move career paths as a result of the pandemic.

Secondly, regardless of the speed of recovery there will be persistent challenges in accessing employment for some. Activities that avoid unemployment scarring through full time training, work placement and internships, skill-building volunteer opportunities, mentoring and other pathway projects may be required to assist those that cannot access durable employment opportunities.

Key Strategies:

- Streamline access to opportunity for key groups including Youth, Indigenous, and Retrenched Workers.
- Build collaborative employment and training solutions which fit Local Government's Destination Management and Economic Development strategies.
- Leverage existing opportunities to support businesses emerging within key precincts e.g., Williamtown Special Activation Precinct.
- Leverage existing funding models and programs including Skilling for Recovery, New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS), and the local Entrepreneurship Facilitator.
- Utilise existing programs including the RDA Hunter STEMship and ME Programs to coordinate streamlined and consistent work preparation activities.

- Proactively approach training and awareness activities in collaboration with all levels of government to address emerging opportunities i.e. Williamstown Special Activation Precinct, John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct, Hunter STEMM Precinct/Regional Transformation Hub.
- Draw upon to increase knowledge and awareness of regional activity through existing networks and groups inc. Hunter Defence Taskforce, Hunter Hydrogen Taskforce, Hunter Young Business Minds, University of Newcastle.

Priority Five: Upper Hunter

Support a key area of the region experiencing structural change, and work closely with key stakeholders, groups, and industries to facilitate a collaborative approach to skills and workforce.

The Upper Hunter is a key area of the region facing structural change across the Resources sector. However, providing opportunity to many emerging and expanding industries requires support to overcome labour market friction points unique to the area and structural barriers for building a sustainable workforce.

It should be acknowledged that there is a large body of work being undertaken through the Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Committee, led by Regional NSW. The Local Jobs Program has an opportunity to contribute and expand on the development of local workforce. This can be done through capitalising on the existing, expanding, and emerging industries to support the regional advantages noted within the *Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Action Plan*.

Key Strategies:

- Address industries with immediate workforce demand including Equine, Meat Product Manufacturing, and Agriculture through pre-employment and skill set based training programs.
- Support the diversification of the energy sector through skill transition programs.
- Utilise existing funding to facilitate job seekers relocating to the area for work e.g. AgMove and Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job (RATTUAJ).
- Build regional skills capability by mapping future workforce and skill requirement within the region.
- Build engagement with Local Government across the Upper Hunter to determine LGA industry priorities and economic development outlook and respond to employment opportunities as they emerge.
- Support self-employment and entrepreneurship within the Upper Hunter.
- Leverage existing funding including Regional Jobs Creation Fund, Resources for Regions, Skilling for Recovery.
- Leverage existing programs and groups including Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Committee, NEIS, Hunter Entrepreneurship Facilitator, Singleton City Council Worker Support Program, Ride Dungog, Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association.

Delivery Strategies

The key strategies detailed in the Plan will be implemented through a strategic collaborative approach of regional stakeholders, supported by resourcing from all levels of government. All will work together to continue to identify existing programs and resources that can be deployed to the strategy implementation. Where none exist, the stakeholders will work to develop new programs and seek out new resources.

The key stakeholders involved in the Plan implementation are:

Employment Facilitator Team

Comprising of the Hunter Employment Facilitator and Local Jobs Program Support Officer.

- Responsible for the overall coordination of the LJP and Plan implementation.
- Chair the Hunter Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce.
- Identify and manage projects related to each priority and strategy.

- Develop and maintain region-wide connections between stakeholders.

Hunter Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce

A ten-member group comprising representation from sectors and organisations that align with the current LJP priorities, plus a representative from DESE and the Employment Facilitator.

- Provide input to and oversight of the LJP implementation and particularly the development and deployment of the Local Jobs Plan.
- Act as a communication pathway on LJP issues to and from their respective sector and network.

Working Groups

Groups aligned with different labour force issues and/or employment sectors.

- Support the Hunter Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce by providing insights, advice, recommendations and feedback on strategies and outcomes.
- Act as a conduit for information flow to and from their respective sectors and organisations.

Partner Organisations

Government, industry and community individuals and groups with interest in one or more Plan issues, priorities and/or strategies (e.g. NSW government agencies, Local Councils, Employment Service Providers, employers, schools).

- Work collaboratively with the Employment Facilitator and the Taskforce to ensure an integrated approach to employment and training programs across all sectors.

Alignment with Other Plans

The LJP and Local Jobs Plan is designed to align with plans and programs developed by other government agencies and groups. These have been noted as they apply through each priority area and will continue to be developed in future iterations of the Plan.

Appendix A: Labour market update April 2022



Hunter Employment Region New South Wales

Labour Market Data Dashboard

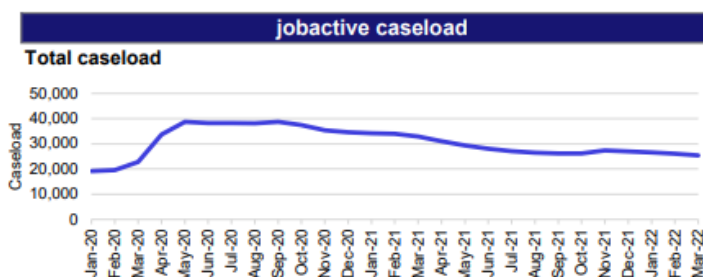
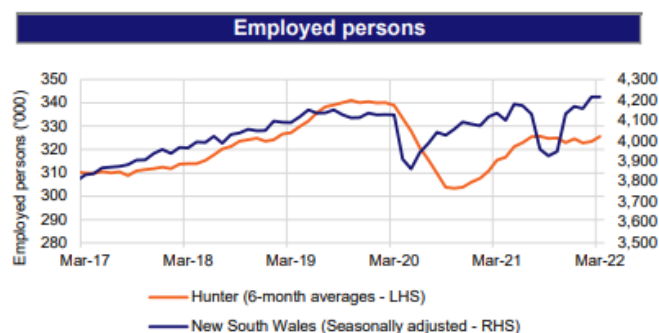
Data current as at 21 April 2022

Refer to source notes for data reference periods

	Employment			Unemployment			Unemployment rate		Participation rate		Youth unemployment rate	
	Mar-22 ('000)	Mar-20 ('000)	Change (%)	Mar-22 ('000)	Mar-20 ('000)	Change (%)	Mar-22 (%)	Mar-20 (%)	Mar-22 (%)	Mar-20 (%)	Mar-22 (%)	Mar-20 (%)
Hunter	325.5	338.9	-4.0	13.6	16.3	-16.4	4.0	4.6	62.4	66.3	8.3	10.3
New South Wales	4,214.9	4,127.5	2.1	172.4	214.9	-19.8	3.9	4.9	65.5	65.4	9.9	10.5
Australia	13,389.9	12,995.5	3.0	551.3	723.2	-23.8	4.0	5.3	66.4	65.9	8.3	11.6

Source: ABS, Labour Force Survey, Mar-22. Employment Region data are 6-month averages of original estimates, except for the youth unemployment rate, which is a 12-month average of original estimates. State youth unemployment rates are 12-month averages of original estimates. Remaining data are seasonally adjusted.

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

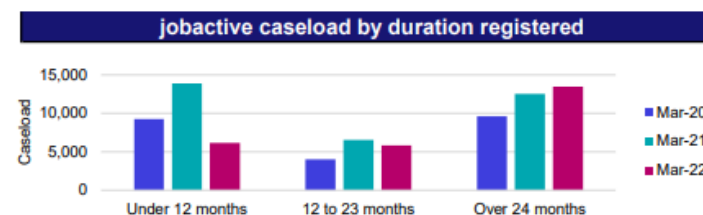


Source: National Skills Commission, Internet Vacancy Index, seasonally adjusted, Mar-22

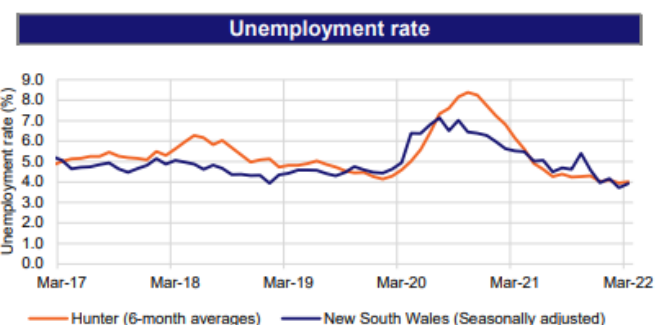


Change in jobactive services caseload

	Hunter	New South Wales
Caseload - Feb 2020	19,513	169,325
Caseload - Mar 2022	25,417	251,206
Change from Feb 2020 to Mar 2022	5,904 30%	81,881 48%



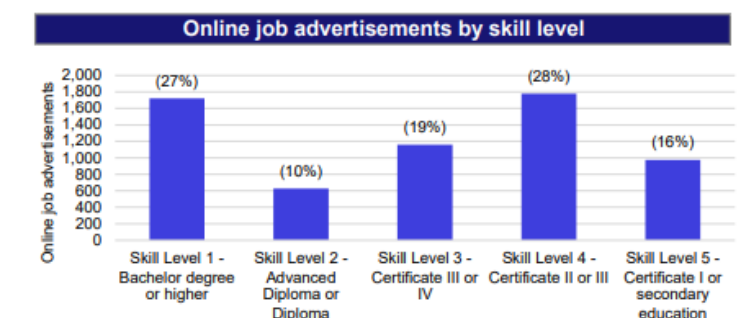
Source: National Skills Commission, Internet Vacancy Index, 3 month average of original data, Mar-22



LGAs with highest unemployment rates (%)

Local Government Area (LGA)	Dec-21	Dec-20
Cessnock	5.3	7.7
Muswellbrook	4.9	7.1
Newcastle	4.6	8.0
Lake Macquarie	4.4	7.6
Port Stephens	4.4	6.6

For more insights, access SALM data via lmp.gov.au. Source: National Skills Commission, Small Area Labour Markets, four quarter averages, Dec-21 quarter



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

Note: Data are not readily available for all sources by Employment Region. ABS Labour Force Survey data are based on the combined SA4s of Hunter Valley exc Newcastle; and Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. The Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) uses a unique geographical approach. For this region, the IVI Newcastle & Hunter 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.

Appendix B: Other Regional Information and Data

The Hunter Employment Region is made up of nine Local Government Areas (LGA).²

Newcastle City Council LGA

Home to 167,363 people, Newcastle supports **102,800 jobs** and has an annual economic output of **\$36.460 billion**. Newcastle's largest employing sector is Healthcare and Social Assistance, and over 40% of total workforce over the age of forty-five. The most impacted sector in the Newcastle City Council LGA as a result of the global pandemic by decrease in number of people employed is the Education and Training Sector.

Port Stephens City Council LGA

Home to 74,506 people, Port Stephens supports **27,346 jobs** and has an annual economic output of **\$12.772 billion**. Port Stephen's largest employing industries are Public Administration and Safety, and Manufacturing. Over 42% of the total workforce over the age of forty-five. The most impacted sector in the Port Stephens Council LGA as a result of the global pandemic by decrease in number of people employed is the Accommodation and Food Services sector.

Lake Macquarie City Council LGA

Home to 207,775 people, Lake Macquarie supports **61,601 jobs** and has an annual economic output of **\$21.093 billion**. Lake Macquarie's largest employing industry is Health Care and Social Assistance, and 40% of the total workforce over the age of forty-five years. The most impacted sector in the Lake Macquarie City Council LGA as a result of the global pandemic by decrease in number of people employed is the Education and Training Sector.

Maitland City Council LGA

Home to 87,395 people, Maitland supports **28,318 jobs** and has an annual economic output of **\$9.930 billion**. The Maitland LGA is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia with an average annual growth rate above 2%. Maitland's largest employing sectors are Health Care Social Assistance, Retail, and Construction. Over 38% of the total workforce over the age of forty-five years. The most impacted sector in the Maitland City Council LGA as a result of the global pandemic by decrease in number of people employed is the Transport, Postal and Warehousing Sector.

Dungog Shire Council LGA

Home to 9,664 people, Dungog supports **2,202 jobs** and has an annual economic output of **\$698.934 million**. Dungog's largest employing sector is Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing, and 62% of the total workforce over the age of forty-five. The most impacted sector in the Dungog Shire Council LGA as a result of the global pandemic by decrease in number of people employed is the Accommodation and Food Services sector.

Cessnock City Council LGA

Home to 61,256 people, Cessnock supports **15,494 jobs** and has an annual economic output of **\$5.292 billion**. Cessnock's largest employing sector is Accommodation and Food Services, and 41% of total workforce over the age of forty-five years. The most impacted sector in the Cessnock City Council LGA as a result of the global pandemic by decrease in number of people employed is the Accommodation and Food Services sector.

Singleton City Council LGA

Home to 23,380 people, Singleton supports **16,325 jobs** and has an annual economic output of **\$12.769 billion**. Singleton's largest employing sector is Mining, and 37% of the total workforce

² Economic data for each of the LGA's listed originates from REMPLAN, <https://app.remplan.com.au>, as at 06/09/2021

over the age of forty-five. The most impacted sector in Singleton City LGA as a result of the global pandemic by decrease in number of people employed is the Accommodation and Food Services sector.

Muswellbrook Shire Council LGA

Home to 16,355 people, Muswellbrook supports **10,017 jobs** and has an annual economic output of **\$7.335 billion**. Muswellbrook Shire Council LGA's largest employing sectors is Mining with 40% of the total workforce over the age of forty-five. The most impacted sector in Muswellbrook Shire Council LGA as a result of the global pandemic by decrease in number of people employed is the Accommodation and Food Services sector.

Upper Hunter Shire Council LGA

Home to 14,167 people, **5,260 jobs** and annual economic output of **\$1.678 billion**. Upper Hunter Shire LGA's largest employing sectors are Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing with 48% of the total workforce aged over forty-five. The most impacted sector in Upper Hunter Shire Council LGA as a result of the global pandemic by decrease in number of people employed is the Accommodation and Food Services sector.

Large Employers

Major employers in the Employment Region include: the Hunter New England Local Health District (NSW Health), TAFE NSW, University of Newcastle, Ramsay Health (Warners Bay Private Hospital and Lake Macquarie Private Hospital), Healthscope (Hunter Valley Private Hospital), Health Care Australia (Toronto Private Hospital), Varley Group (Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing), Tomago Aluminium, Molycop (supplier of mining consumables and associated services), AGL, Origin, Glencore, Yancoal, BHP, JBS, Multiplex, Wests Group, Newcastle Permanent Building Society and the NIB Health Fund.

There are 37 aged care providers in the region including Calvary, Uniting, Opal, Anglican Care, Royal Freemasons' Benevolent Institution and HammondCare. Major providers of disability services include Life Without Barriers and the Samaritans.

Selected Major Projects

In response to the pandemic the New South Wales Government announced the fast tracking of assessments of some projects which has occurred in several tranches. The projects or modifications approved include:

- Stage 1A of the University of Newcastle Honeysuckle Campus (785 jobs)
- The Honeysuckle Horizon multi-storey commercial and residential (105 apartments) development (250 jobs)
- A modification to the Bulga Open Cut Coal Mine to extend its life for approximately four years until 31 December 2039 (1000 jobs)
- Expansion of Hanson Construction's Brandy Hill quarry at Port Stephens to increase production and continue operations for a further 30 years (31 jobs)
- The Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation's request for rezoning of land at Cockle Creek and Lake Macquarie to provide 15 hectares of extra employment land (270 jobs). The Business Park will complement the nearby Bunnings Warehouse and support the nearby Cardiff Glendale Strategic Centre.

Other major projects underway or in prospect in the region include:

- The government has confirmed it is dedicating unallocated funding in the budget to the publicly owned Snowy Hydro Ltd plan to build a 660 megawatt gas plant at Kurri Kurri. The government will spend up to \$600M building the new gas-fired power station. It is expected that the Hunter Power Project will create 600 jobs in the region at the peak of its construction phase.
- The Federal Government has committed \$66M towards Newcastle Airport's runway upgrade. It is expected to create 4,500 jobs and generate an estimated \$12.7B in economic benefits through international airfreight, industrial expansion and stimulation of the visitor economy. It has been added to the 2021 priority list.
- Energy Renaissance battery manufacturing facility moving to Tomago which will generate approximately 720 jobs.
- A 169ha site north of Glendale (owned by Eden Estates) will create up to 1,000 new homes and housing for up to 2,000 more people. Following rezoning of the site, a development application will be submitted to create up to 540 jobs.
- In March 2021, the RSPCA announced a \$1 million upgrade to their Rutherford facility.
- The ongoing Honeysuckle urban waterfront transformation in Newcastle, with the master developer being the Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation (HCCDC). Four private sector projects have generated \$250 million in construction activity and providing more than 3,500 construction jobs and 250 ongoing jobs including the:
 - 154-apartment Lume at 21 Honeysuckle Drive where HCCDC completed the waterfront public domain which is now selling.
 - 179-room Little National Hotel at 42 Honeysuckle Drive due for completion in 2022.
 - 88-apartment Huntington plus retail space at 35 Honeysuckle Drive which is now selling.
 - 105-apartment Horizon on the Harbour and public domain works at 45 Honeysuckle Drive which is now selling. HCCDC has completed seawall works.
- The NSW Government's \$780 million John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct though this is at the design state, with it being envisaged that construction will begin in 2022. Works commenced in April 2020 on an interim expansion of the Emergency Department (www.hinfra.health.nsw.gov.au).
- Main works by Multiplex on the \$470 million new Maitland Hospital began in late 2019 and as of January 2021 entered the final stages of construction with the hospital scheduled to open in early 2022.
- Following the completion of the new Maitland Hospital by Hutchinson Builders in November 2020, the redevelopment project has been progressing with the second stage of works. The commencement of complete relocation from the old Maitland Hospital facility is set to take place prior to Christmas 2021 with plans for the new hospital to be fully operational in January 2022. (www.hinfra.health.nsw.gov.au).
- In February 2020, the construction contract for the \$25 million Stage 1A of the University of Newcastle's Honeysuckle City Campus was awarded to Hansen Yuncken. The Stage 1A building will house the region's new Integrated Innovation Network (I2N) Hub and additional facilities for the School of Creative Industries and is scheduled for completion in mid-2021. The project

is expected to generate 785 jobs (www.newcastle.edu.au; www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au and www.planning.nsw.gov.au).

- In April 2020, the NSW Government announced that \$6.6 million will be invested in the Cessnock Airport which will allow a wider array of aircraft to land as well as the establishment of an aviation museum. The project has the potential to create nearly 60 jobs.
- In June 2020, the Australian Government announced funding for 61 access and safety upgrade projects across Regional Australia as part of the Regional Airports Program. These include \$3 million for Scone for runway reconstruction and resealing and taxiway and apron extensions and upgrades.
- On 22 May 2020, the Australian Government announced a new \$500 million Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program (LRCI Program). Each LGA in the Employment Region will receive funding with the amounts ranging from \$575,000 for Scone to \$1.8 million for Lake Macquarie; the Upper Hunter Shire, Cessnock and Maitland will each receive over \$1 million.
- The Astra Aerolab Defence and Aerospace precinct being developed on 76 hectares of land in Port Stephens directly adjoins Newcastle Airport and the RAAF Base Williamtown; which is home to the country's new fleet of F-35 Joint Strike Fighters. Stage 1 civil infrastructure works now complete and future development stages underway. As one of NSW's five Special Activation Precincts, Williamtown will benefit from significant infrastructure investment, bringing more than 5,000 jobs into the region (www.astraerolab.com.au/about/, accessed 24/06/2021).
- The Liverpool Range Wind Farm in the Upper Hunter will consist of up to 267 turbines producing up to 1000 MW of electricity. While planning and environmental approvals have been received; Tilt Renewables intends to prepare a Modification Application.
- A new 106-room QT Hotel will be established in Newcastle after Iris Capital's \$700 million redevelopment of the former David Jones building on Hunter Street was approved by the Joint Regional Planning Panel in April 2020. The hotel is to be part of the first stage of the four-city block development, which also features three separate residential buildings comprising 212 luxury apartments above a Woolworths-anchored retail precinct and forum, comprising another 20 specialty retailers; being delivered by builder Richard Crookes Constructions. Stage One of the project was officially opened in April 2021 (www.thehotelconversation.com.au/news/, 20-4-2021).
- The University of Newcastle has received SSDA approval through the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and the Environment for a \$200 million facility at its Callaghan campus leading to demolition works in the second half of 2020. Building will commence in the first quarter of 2021 with the facility being used for the study of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM).
- The NSW Government will fund a \$266 million, 9-kilometre New England Highway Bypass at Muswellbrook; Construction may commence as soon as 2022.
- In June 2020 the Port of Newcastle unveiled its vision for the \$1.8 billion development of a multi-purpose Deepwater Terminal at the former BHP Steelworks site. The terminal will create cost efficiencies for NSW importers and exporters and underpin the diversification of the Hunter economy.

A Note on Comparing Data

It is important to note that unemployment statistics collected as part of the Labour Force Survey can vary considerably from income support statistics and jobactive caseload numbers.

A person is considered employed by the ABS if they are aged 15 years and over and work for an hour or more during the Labour Force Survey reference week. The ABS also classify someone as employed if they have taken any kind of leave or were paid for some or all of the previous four weeks (including via the JobKeeper Payment).

In addition, employees who were away from their jobs for less than four weeks without pay but still believed they had a job (e.g. were temporarily stood down) would also be classified as employed. A person is considered unemployed by the ABS if they are not employed, have actively looked for work at some time in the last four weeks and are currently available for work.