

Local Jobs Plan

Townsville (includes Mt Isa) Employment Region | QLD | May 2026

Workforce Australia Local Jobs (Local Jobs) is a program that creates partnerships between business and communities to meet local workforce needs, thereby improving employment outcomes.

Local Jobs operates in all 51 Employment Regions in Australia.

Local Jobs Overview

Local Jobs Plan

Each Employment Region has a Local Jobs Plan which outlines the labour market challenges in the region and the strategies to address these challenges.

Job Coordinators

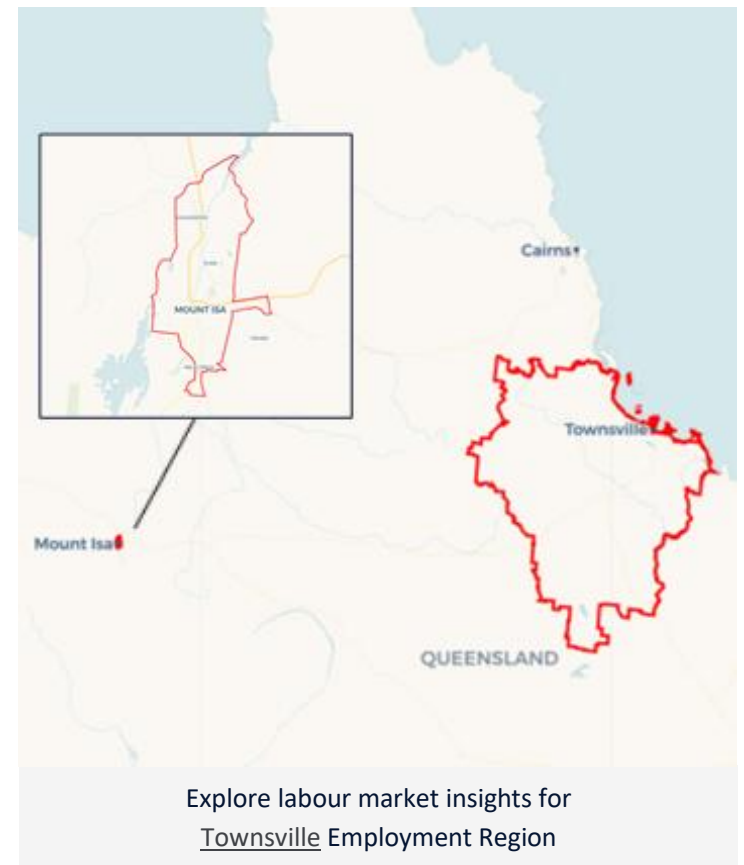
Each Employment Region has a dedicated Job Coordinator who leverages existing resources, supports local labour markets through structural adjustments and retrenchments, and creates opportunities for collaboration between business and communities.

Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce

Each Employment Region has its own taskforce that meets regularly with the Job Coordinator to develop an understanding of challenges in the region and implement solutions. The taskforce is comprised of representatives from the region.

Local Jobs, Local People Grant

The Local Jobs, Local People grant funds activities that help people into ongoing employment or training. Activities must support local labour market needs.



Local labour market challenges

- Participation in employment and training is constrained by limited public transport, barriers to obtaining driver licensing and identification, and a shortage of available services. These issues are pronounced in regional areas like Burdekin, Hinchinbrook, Charters Towers, and Mount Isa. Workforce readiness is further affected for some cohorts by contact with the justice system and associated employment restrictions.
- Rising fuel costs are increasing operating expenses for businesses— in transport, logistics and service industries—placing pressure on profitability and constraining hiring. For individuals, fuel prices are reducing affordability of travel and limiting access to employment, especially in regional areas where private transport can be essential.
- Workforce participation for parents and carers—particularly women returning to work—is constrained by access to affordable childcare, inflexible work arrangements, and gender-specific barriers. Parents make up a proportion of the Workforce Australia caseload in the Townsville region, contributing to challenges in securing and sustaining employment.
- Unreliable internet, cost pressures, lower literacy, numeracy and digital skills, makes it harder to access training, remote work and job services. Many jobseekers have not finished secondary school, with challenges pronounced outside major centres. Youth disengagement, movement to cities, unclear pathways from school to work, limited awareness of options, and high youth unemployment affect the regional workforce.
- The region continues to experience workforce constraints across small and medium-sized enterprises. Gaps in trades, healthcare, and community services, with declining apprenticeship commencements and high attrition, are weakening the pipeline of skilled workers and reducing entry-level opportunities. Despite unemployment, employers report recruitment difficulties, reflecting skills and capacity constraints.
- Mental health, wellbeing, and social barriers—including anxiety, trauma, low confidence, complex social needs, and neurodivergence—further limit workforce participation.
- A large share of the Workforce Australia caseload has remained for extended periods, indicating entrenched disadvantage. First Nations economic and cultural barriers, lower qualification attainment, and limited exposure to employment reduce participation and engagement, highlighting the need for culturally safe and targeted programs.
- Concentrations of programs in some areas alongside gaps in others, combined with limited workforce data, reduce the effectiveness of initiatives, making it difficult to align training with employer demand and inform responses to regional labour market challenges.
- Increases to wage rates may improve income and job quality for young workers but also lead to higher labour costs for employers. This may reduce entry-level job opportunities or increase competition for roles, particularly in industries such as retail and hospitality.

Local priorities

Priority 1 – Reduce structural barriers to employment

What are our challenges?

There is potential to increase workforce participation by strengthening access to practical supports such as transport, driver licensing and identification, affordable childcare, stable housing, and reliable, affordable digital connectivity. Tailored, place-based approaches that consider justice system experience and gender specific needs can further enable participation, particularly for jobseekers in outer regional communities. With appropriate supports, jobseekers are positioned to engage meaningfully in opportunities and contribute to local workforce development.

How are we responding?

- Advocating for improved regional public transport by strengthening relationships with Transport and Main Roads, Translink, and other organisations.
- Expanding driving programs by increasing availability and raising awareness of licensing exemptions and pathways to overcome barriers.
- Promoting flexible and childcare-integrated employment models to support carers and individuals returning to the workforce.

- Facilitating community access events and strengthening referral pathways, connecting individuals with essential services, including identification, licences, Blue Cards, SPER support, homeless support services and housing assistance.
- Enhancing volunteer programs to build confidence and work skills while supporting organisational capacity to assist disadvantaged community members.
- Strengthening collaboration with employment, community and government stakeholders, including justice and community corrections, to address well-being and social barriers and support transitions into training and employment pathways.
- Advancing digital inclusion initiatives and embedding foundational literacy, numeracy, and digital skills development into training and workforce programs.
- Expanding locally delivered, place-based service delivery models to better meet community needs.
- Advising on workforce participation pathways for mature-age workers, people with disability, and other underutilised cohorts.

Priority 2 – Strengthen youth pathways, regional retention and future workforce pipelines

What are our challenges?

There is a strong opportunity to strengthen the regional workforce by supporting young people to remain engaged in education and employment, and by improving transitions from school to work. Strengthening school to work pathways and increasing awareness of local career opportunities can support informed early career decisions and improved retention of young people in the region. Greater exposure to emerging industries and major project career pathways can further encourage youth participation and contribute to a sustainable pipeline of skilled workers, supporting long-term workforce resilience.

How are we responding?

- Promoting entry-level employment aligned with regional demand through industry exposure and career mentoring programs.
- Supporting career navigation and workforce readiness by connecting individuals to relevant opportunities.
- Strengthening employer-led talent pipelines and promoting regional career awareness to support long-term workforce sustainability.
- Promoting flexible and childcare-integrated employment models to enable carers and individuals returning to the workforce to engage effectively.
- Engaging disengaged young people through employment services, programs, and community initiatives to support re-entry into education, training or employment pathways.
- Working with employers and youth service providers to promote accessible entry-level opportunities, including traineeships, apprenticeships and work experience pathways for disengaged young people.
- Promoting diverse career pathways to improve youth confidence in long-term regional employment opportunities despite economic fluctuations.

Priority 3 – Support vulnerable and disengaged cohorts

What are our challenges?

Many jobseekers bring strengths and experiences that can be supported through tailored pathways into training and employment. This includes people navigating mental health and wellbeing considerations, low confidence, trauma, neurodivergence, caring responsibilities, and varying levels of work readiness. Flexible training and employment models, supported by appropriate wraparound assistance, can better meet individual needs and strengthen participation outcomes.

How are we responding?

- Providing insights to inform tailored engagement approaches that build confidence, resilience, and work readiness.
- Providing guidance and linking where relevant to mentoring, coaching, and volunteering opportunities to support skills development before paid employment.
- Promoting inclusive hiring and supported employment practices with local employers.
- Strengthening cross-sector collaboration with organisations and government departments delivering health, housing, and social support services.
- Highlighting targeted pathways for long-term unemployed or disengaged adults.

Priority 4 – Advance First Nations economic participation

What are our challenges?

There is potential to support First Nations people to build on existing strengths by expanding access to education and training pathways, culturally safe employment opportunities, and locally relevant career exposure. Place based approaches that recognise cultural identity, community connection, and geographic context can strengthen participation in major projects, regional supply chains, and broader economic activity, creating increased employment and business opportunities for First Nations individuals and communities.

How are we responding?

- Supporting co-design of initiatives with First Nations communities, Traditional Owners, Elders, and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCO).
- Facilitating connections between First Nations businesses and employers, including opportunities to participate in local supply chains and major projects.
- Promoting culturally safe workplace practices and enhancing employer cultural capability.
- Informing place-based and mobile training delivery to overcome geographic and service access barriers.

Priority 5 – Strengthen regional workforce planning and coordination

What are our challenges?

There is a strong opportunity to improve regional workforce outcomes through better coordination of existing services, improved use of labour market data, and stronger alignment between training and employer needs. By strengthening collaboration between employers, training providers, and employment services, the region can better respond to skills shortages, improve recruitment outcomes for small and medium enterprises, and build a stronger pipeline of skilled workers. Enhanced data sharing and coordination will support more responsive, evidence-based workforce planning.

How are we responding?

- Supporting, and where gaps persist, convening workforce intelligence forums with employers, employment services, and stakeholders to share insights and identify opportunities, using this to inform coordinated responses that improve alignment with training, services, and employer demand.
- Mapping workforce and training service delivery to identify gaps, duplication, and alignment opportunities.
- Supporting stronger alignment between training supply, pre-employment programs, and real-time industry demand, particularly in priority sectors.
- Collaborating with major projects and employers to strengthen local workforce participation and improve access to job opportunities for regional jobseekers.
- Strengthening the use of data and early identification of skills shortages to support planning and responsive and coordinated training and employment.

Want to know more?

- Contact Steph Nicolaou, Townsville (includes Mt Isa) Job Coordinator at stephnicolaou@localjobsfnq.com.au
- Visit [Local Jobs](#) or [Workforce Australia](#)