

TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



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The Manawatū-Whanganui RSLG and the Central Economic Development Agency (CEDA) are exploring ways to support the Ministry of Education's two regional initiatives: **Accelerate Academy and Education to Enterprise**. Accelerate Academy is designed for learners to experience specific businesses and industries, and potentially be exposed to employees of the business for learning and mentoring. It will be a 10-week journey regionally designed to suit key sector needs, with a keynote event and graduation at the end of the Academy. Education to Enterprise is designed for high school teachers to grow their understanding of regional businesses, including the skills and knowledge required to work in them. Additionally, the Manawatū-Whanganui RSLG are looking to convene a hui between CEDA and other interested stakeholders to identify the workforce and skills requirements for the Te Utanganui – Central Distribution Hub project.

Initial discussions have begun amongst stakeholders around the potential re-distribution of the workforce from the major Tararua infrastructure projects once they start winding up in the next two years. Particular attention may be given to how these skilled workers can be used to help with the recovery efforts of Cyclone Gabrielle as well as future weather events. It is hoped Cyclone Recovery Funding can be maximised to not only fix roads and provide preventative measures for future events but also to use the activity to train locals.

Focus is being given to transitioning smaller contractors across from Te Ahu a Turanga – Manawatū Tararua Highway to Ōtaki to North of Levin State Highway Project (O2NL); as contract parcels on Te Ahu a Turanga are finishing, and work is emerging on O2NL there is a desire to ensure continuity of business and skills retention.

MĀORI LABOUR MARKET SNAPSHOT



Manawatū-Whanganui (MW) total Māori population was **63,790 in 2023, up 1.1% from 2022**. Total Māori population grew by 1.5% in New Zealand over the same period



MW Māori working age population was **48,200 in September 2023, up from 45,200 in the same period in 2022**. The total growth in the Māori working age population in MW was higher than the national growth, 6.6% in MW versus 1.9% nationally.



The Māori unemployment rate in MW was **9.7% in September 2023, up from 5.2% from the previous year**. The national Māori unemployment rate was 8.7% in September 2023, up from 6.8% the previous year.

Sources:
Infometrics Regional Economic Profile – Māori – Manawatū-Whanganui
Household labour force Survey

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES

Whitecliffe and Whanganui & Partners are offering two full fees paid scholarships for eligible applicants enrolling in the Master of Creative Enterprise and Innovation 2024. The programme prepares creative graduates from any field to confidently become start-up founders and entrepreneurs, or to operationalise their creativity in existing organisations.

Talent Central found that employers stopped taking on new staff in late September before the election. The situation has not changed, causing low placement numbers for Talent Central in the later months of 2023.

A national survey of hospitality workers conducted by Unite Union and AUT found that 50 percent of respondents in the region earn less than \$23.65 an hour compared with 41 percent nationally. The survey, which received over 2,800 responses, also found that 64 percent of regional respondents have experienced or witnessed workplace bullying, compared to 56 percent nationally.

Unions are increasingly hearing of people needing to work two or three jobs because of inflationary and other economic pressures. Consequently, these workers have no time for additional training or studies, and certainly no way to finance any studies not covered by their employer.

The regional retail sector is reportedly quiet for what is usually their busy Christmas period. The regional hospitality sector is also reported to be similarly quiet.

EVENTS and UPDATES

Tararua District Council's Economic Development Team are actively engaging with local businesses to identify what priority services they should be focusing on to help the business community and support the local economy. Workshops took place on the 6th and 7th of December asking businesses 'What does council do now and what should our future focus be?'

Cumulative job losses at Massey University are continuing to be felt within the region, with a "Preliminary Decision" released on 28 November proposing to cut 71 jobs from Natural Sciences as well as Food and Advanced Technology. This includes cutting Massey's provision of all engineering teaching and research. Unions are fearing that many hundreds of jobs would have been lost by the time the change management process is complete.

As of 30 November 2023, **285 clients have been supported into fulltime jobs under the Flexi Wage programme and 97 under the Mana in Mahi programme** so far for F24 (F24 covers 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024). These outcomes achieved by the Ministry of Social Development predominantly saw clients entering roles in Construction, Agriculture, Hospitality, Healthcare and Social Services, and Manufacturing.

Procurement for the civil construction involved with Te Tirohanga Project has begun with the Whanganui District Council. This project will see 132 new residential houses being built in Carson Street, Castlecliff, Whanganui.

ADVICE TO THE TEC

In early November the Manawatū-Whanganui RSLG submitted advice to the Tertiary Education Commission to inform their Supplementary Plan Guidance for 2025. It was purposed to advise on the necessary level of tertiary education needed to meet regional demand for critical skills needs. The advice identified critical skills and occupation shortages and the relevant qualifications and credentials that could be delivered in Manawatū-Whanganui to meet future labour market demand.

In alignment with the Regional Workforce Plans the Manawatū-Whanganui RSLG has published to date, much of the advice relates to our focus areas of:

- **Kaiāwhina Health**
- **Seasonal Horticulture**
- **Freight, Logistics and Warehousing.**

The advice also identifies upcoming regional projects that will require substantial workforces for their completion.

The Manawatū-Whanganui RSLG would like to thank everyone who contributed and shaped this advice to reflect the needs of the region most accurately. It was developed through extensive stakeholder engagement with local actors, including tertiary providers, employers, kaimahi (workers), and is supplemented by quantitative labour market statistics and projections.

For more information, or if you would like a copy of the report, please contact ManawatuWhanganuiRSLG@mbie.govt.nz