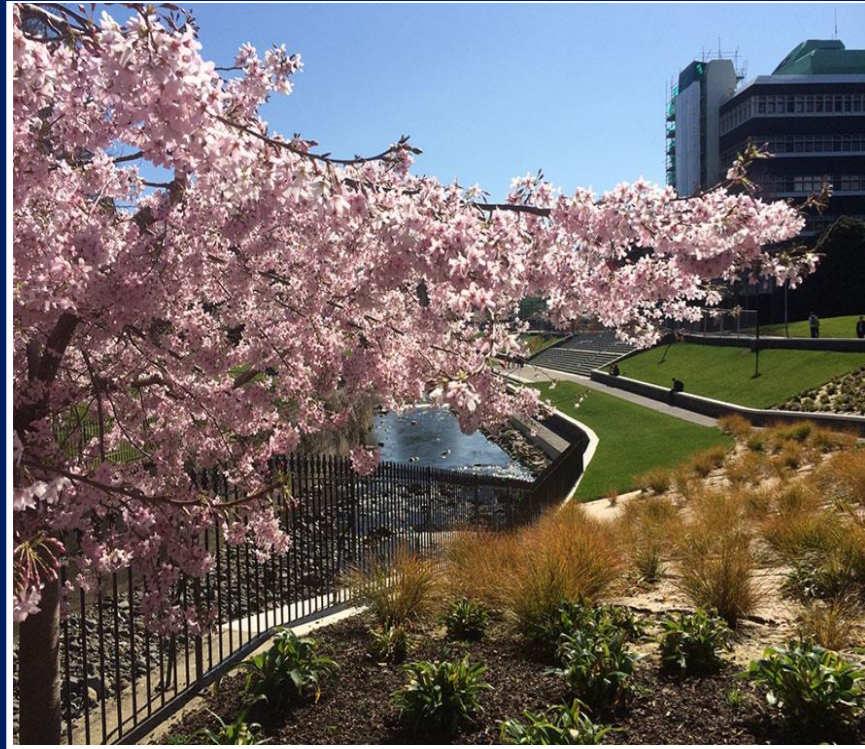


## TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



**The inaugural Otago Wellbeing Baseline Report was released in June.** The Otago Regional Council is working towards developing a better understanding of the environmental, cultural, social, and economic wellbeing of the Otago community. They have developed a Wellbeing Framework to help gain a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing in the region, and a regional programme to monitor it. The Framework centres around seven dimensions of wellbeing and includes thirty-three indicators to measure outcomes across the region. This provides entities such as the Otago Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG) with an outcomes framework to guide our thinking on the intervention logic and measurement of our Regional Force Plan (RWP) actions and their wider impact. The initial report released in June provided insight and data down to community level, providing a source of insight for the Otago RSLG.

**The Strategic Doing initiative is being rolled out in Otago.** Otago is geographically large, with a wide variety of organisations and industries, so establishing common viewpoints to drive collaboration can be a challenge. Building collaborative capability has been identified by ORED (a collective of Otago regional economic development agencies) as a key initiative, and they are utilising a structured process that helps people find common ground. 'Strategic Doing' is a US based programme designed to build confidence that change is possible by focussing on projects using the resources that those around the table can offer. By getting traction on simpler projects, it creates the impetus to collaborate more. Facilitated by ORED, three cohorts of regional leaders (including some Otago and Southland Murihiku RSLG secretariat staff and members) have now completed Strategic Doing practitioner training courses. RSLG secretariat staff reported strong alignment of the Strategic Doing approach with the core functions of RSLG's - to inform, shape and influence the region's labour market - and their intention is to apply the methodology to upcoming RSLG mahi.

## NUMBERS AT A GLANCE



**Employment growth across Otago remained at a high level, with job numbers rising by 5.1% in June.**

*Source: Household Labour Force Survey, Statistics New Zealand, June 2023 quarter*



**Wage growth in Otago continues to track ahead of national figures with 6.7% growth in average wages recorded in June, against 5.8% nationally.**

*Source: Statistics NZ, Monthly Employment Indicators*



**Queenstown-Lakes continues to lead employment growth in the region, with 12.2% job growth in the district. All districts in Otago experienced employment growth in the June quarter.**

*Source: Statistics NZ, Monthly Employment Indicators*

## TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

**Entrepreneurial skills are being applied broadly in Otago.** Startup Dunedin, a not-for-profit that supports ideas and businesses of all industries and stages has worked with 60+ businesses in the past six months, and report that 66% of startups they have worked with will be continuing with their existing employment in full-time or part time work, as they build out their new business. Many also indicate that they will continue with 'gig' work instead of full-time work as it better suits their entrepreneurial traits and preferences. This is encouraging as transferable entrepreneurial skills are key to lifting productivity in the Otago workforce.

**The Waitaki Pathways Breakfast brought together over seventy employers, education, and community leaders.** Held on 14 August in Oamaru, the event showcased initiatives designed to highlight pathways for rangatahi and tamariki into employment and further education and training. A highpoint was a presentation from Waitaki Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs (MTFJ), who are working towards a vision that all young people under 25 are engaged in appropriate education, training, work, or other positive activity in their communities. Since March 2021, over 145 young people have been placed into work experience with more than 90% still in employment and/or training. They have ongoing funding and are committed to continuing this mahi, however with additional funding they could support more young people into work in the region.

**RSLG is developing insights into the future of health work to assist regional workforce planning.** The Otago RSLG has engaged with global health sector consultancy Jacob's Consulting to develop a better understanding of the impact that mega-trends in health provision will have on health skills required in Otago. The region requires unique approaches to health workforce development given that the new Dunedin Hospital will be New Zealand's first digital hospital, and the geographic isolation of many Otago communities requires remote health care provision. The introduction of new care systems and technologies will require different skills for healthcare workers from previous. A report to the RSLG that identifies the key areas for development in Otago will be finalised in September.

## TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

**Migrant workers in several sectors in Otago report that ineligibility for domestic fees is inhibiting access to essential upskilling.** The Otago RSLG has received a report from the Southern Aged Residential Care Nursing Workforce Steering Group that health care assistants who came in on visas issued prior to the new Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) scheme are not eligible for domestic student fees for the courses they require to achieve residency. This may see some of these workers having to leave the country. The issue has been raised with TEC and MoE, but the steering group are concerned with the time it may take to address. Other examples of domestic fee ineligibility for essential training have also been reported to the RSLG from the snowsports and rural sectors.

**The workforce needs of Otago's three rūnaka are not well understood and require tailored training and development solutions.** Otago's three rūnaka are located in small coastal villages, some distance from main centres in Dunedin and Oamaru. They have substantial demands on their resources and capacity, arising from their economic development activity, Tiriti related partnership activity, and day-to-day requirements on marae. They are focused on building capacity and capability to address these challenges but require nuanced solutions for training and development given their relative isolation and smaller populations. The Otago RSLG is committed to support through the provision of and access to relevant data related to workforce development at a community level. We look forward to continuing this mahi with them.

**Lack of accommodation continues to cause issues for workers and employers in Central Otago.** MSD report that they are seeing accommodation previously available for Recognised Seasonal Employment visa holders and casual workers being re-purposed to house workers employed under the AEWV scheme, removing shorter term housing options for itinerant and seasonal domestic workers. Growers in the district have reported they are confident they have sufficient staff lined up for the upcoming season, but how and where to accommodate them remains their primary concern.

## Regional Workforce Plan Update

**The Otago RSLG published its Regional Workforce Plan (RWP) Update in July 2023. In this update, the RSLG decided to pivot and focus on issues that arise in all corners and sectors of the Otago labour market. These commonalities – or cross-cutting labour market 'themes' – are where the group will focus their future efforts and analysis. The three themes identified are summarised as follows:**

- **Vulnerable Otago Communities** – the RSLG will work with communities to better understand the nature of workforce vulnerability across the region – to seek out commonalities and amplify community voices – so they can better advocate for themselves. We also want to link communities together to share and learn from examples of economic diversification projects that already exist in our region.
- **Skills for Technological Change in Otago** - Tight labour market conditions and worker shortages are pushing businesses to turn to technology for automation and productivity gains. It is clear that increasing technological skills is vital for our workforce now and into the future. We need to develop the skills needed to respond to technology driven change so our region can maximise the opportunities that emerging technology will offer.
- **Untapped Potential in the Otago Labour Market** - With unemployment low, and labour force participation high, there is little spare capacity in the Otago labour market. Put simply, there are not enough people in the workforce for the number of jobs available in our region. How we can better support and utilise those groups who seek more work, but have difficulty obtaining it, is a critical element to optimising our workforce.

The RSLG is now developing a comprehensive programme of work to further explore these themes and progress the Actions in the RWP. To access the full RWP update click [here](#).

## OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT TWO MONTHS:

- Preparing advice to the Tertiary Education Commission on Otago's investment requirements.
- Progress and build on recent engagement with local rūnaka.
- Further research and analysis of the themes identified in the 2023 Regional Workforce Plan Update.