



**Local Jobs
Program**

Local Jobs Plan

**North West Country
South Australia**

October 2020

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The Department of Education, Skills and Employment acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians across the different lands of the North West Country SA Employment Region. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

Introduction

The Local Jobs Program (LJP) brings together expertise, resources and access to funding at the local level to focus on the reskilling, upskilling and employment pathways for job seekers in 25 Employment Regions, as part of supporting Australia's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This plan identifies the key priorities for the North West Country SA region, with a focus on creating employment opportunities, meeting local employer demands and better skilling local job seekers. Attachment A details, strategies and actions of the Employment Facilitator.

This plan will be reviewed and updated when the North West Country Jobs and Skills Taskforce is in place, and whenever the priorities change (or at least every six months).

Local Jobs Program Key Priorities: North West Country

- Priority 1:** Work with industry and employers to understand their workforce needs and develop industry-driven training and employment initiatives to maximise opportunities and outcomes for local job seekers and those impacted by COVID-19.
- Priority 2:** Increase engagement of Indigenous people and communities in employment and training initiatives to improve workforce participation.
- Priority 3:** Improve opportunities for young people to engage or remain engaged in learning or earning.
- Priority 4:** Targeted initiatives that address non-vocational barriers to employment.
- Priority 5:** Raise awareness of Government programs and services and pursue opportunities to leverage additional financial and in-kind support to maximise regional investment in training and employment.
- Priority 6:** Develop collaborative approaches to build region and stakeholder capacity and capability to respond to employment and skill needs.

North West Country SA Snapshot

Port Augusta

Port Lincoln

Whyalla



49,700

Population

\$14.32b

Investment Pipeline
in growth sectors

Across the Far North and Eyre Peninsula
RDA Regions



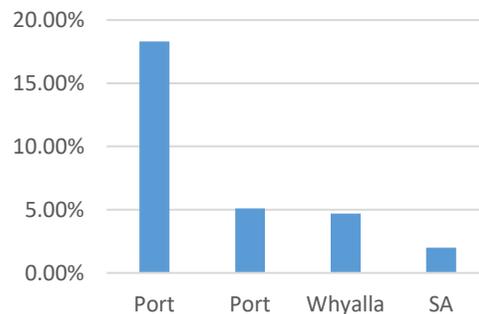
Demand for Trade
and Professional
Workers

Ageing Workforce

Recruitment
Difficulties

Structural
Adjustment

8.6%



	Year 12 or equivalent (%)	Certificate III or above (%)
Port Augusta	39.0	45.3
Port Lincoln	35.1	47.7
Whyalla	44.4	47.3
SA	60.3	55.8
Australia	65.2	59.7

26.4%

North West Country

19.2%

SA

High
Unemployment

High Aboriginal
Population

Low
Education Attainment

High Levels of Income
Support

Region Overview

The North West Country SA region incorporates the three major cities of Port Augusta, Port Lincoln and Whyalla, and partially covers two State Government regions (Far North, Eyre and Western) and two Regional Development Australia boundaries (Far North, Eyre Peninsula).



The North West Country region incorporates the following suburbs:

BLANCHE HARBOR	PORT LINCOLN
COMMISSARIAT POINT	PORT PATERSON
CULTANA	STIRLING NORTH
DAVENPORT	WAMI KATA
MIDDLEBACK RANGE (SA)	WHYALLA
MIRANDA (SA)	WHYALLA JENKINS
MULLAQUANA	WHYALLA NORRIE
POINT LOWLY	WHYALLA PLAYFORD
PORT AUGUSTA	WHYALLA STUART
PORT AUGUSTA WEST	WINNINOWIE
PORT BONYTHON	

Attachment B provides an overview of the labour market profile of the North West Country region.

Regional Context

The North West Country SA region is part of a significant economic region in South Australia with an investment pipeline into industries including renewable energy, mining and processing, defence, value-added agriculture and tourism, with growth also projected in industries such as health care and social assistance and construction. Across the Far North and Eyre Peninsula Regional Development Australia boundaries that North West Country sits within, there is an estimated \$14 billion investment pipeline providing a strong foundation to support economic growth and recovery from COVID-19.

Prior to COVID-19, the region faced significant challenges in terms of key labour market indicators, high levels of unemployment, low education and skills attainment and difficulty attracting professional and skilled workers. Parts of the region have experienced persistently high unemployment, particularly disengaged youth and has a history of labour market disadvantage. Port Augusta's pre-pandemic unemployment rate stood at 10.4 per cent and Whyalla 9.6 per cent, compared to a State average of 6.2 per cent.

While the region has traditionally experienced difficulties in attracting skilled and professional labour, there is also an increasing occurrence of difficulties in attracting suitable workers for entry-level job opportunities. These range from positions in retail, aged and disability care, cleaning, labouring and operator roles and span a number of industry sectors.

Over a quarter of the working age population in the region are on income support, the highest proportion of any South Australian region and third highest in the country and the region has experienced a 50 per cent increase in the jobactive (employment service) caseload since the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the biggest challenges will be getting people back into work as well as adjusting to the changing labour market conditions. The longer people are unemployed, the more their paid work prospects diminish. The *Faces of Australia Report* from the Australian Council of Social Services (September 2018) found in a 2015 study that among Newstart (now Job Seeker) and Youth Allowance recipients that the average probability of being off benefits 12 months later was 55 per cent for those unemployed for less than three months, compared with 30 per cent for people unemployed for 12 to 24 months, and 22 per cent for those unemployed over 5 years.

The immediate response to support people back to work and subsequently the level of intervention, particularly over the next twelve months, will therefore have a major impact on the future labour market. Targeted intervention and support for employment, skill development and labour force engagement will be crucial in positioning the region to simultaneously benefit from the economic and growth opportunities into the future and help curb an increase in long term, entrenched unemployment.

Further to this, the region needs a longer-term vision and commitment to developing a strong and sustainable workforce with the skills needed for the future. A strong commitment across all levels of Government, with industry, regional development organisations, training and education providers and the community is needed to achieve the best possible skills and employment outcomes so that people, employers and the region can reach its potential and thrive.

'The future of work in regional Australia is a multifaceted challenge, but one within which systemic responses at the state and national level can lead to significant improvements when well designed and targeted. Beneath the need for systemic responses, examples from communities around Australia show the scale of impact that well-structured local initiatives can have in helping regional residents get the most from the opportunities that the future labour market will present.'

The Future of Regional Jobs, Regional Australia Institute, April 2019

The barriers to employment faced by regional job seekers are often enhanced because of their geographical location—whether that be access to transport, narrow industry base, lack of entry level job opportunities, social isolation in rural areas, lack of face-to-face services and access to internet and quality facilities, to name a few. In recent times, there has been limited options in terms of skills, training programs, and holistic support services that address the current and future needs of both individuals and industry, and in some cases a lack of locally based organisations and capability to deliver them. There is little incentive for organisations outside of the region to deliver due to the cost, the difficulties in delivering in thin markets and the lack of knowledge and connections to the region.

In addition to supporting the labour supply chain and workforce pipeline, there needs to be a focus on supporting local businesses to employ people. The majority of businesses in the region are small business with limited capability to invest the time and resources to develop and train new staff and to navigate the myriad of programs, services and funding that may be available to assist them.

There is no one-size-fits all approach to addressing regional employment challenges, however solutions that are developed and driven by the local community are more likely to have a greater impact and better outcomes, which represents a greater return on investment and value proposition for public investment. This community-driven approach, in partnership with government, industry and the community will be crucial in supporting a strong local labour market and workforce in the North West Country.

Port Augusta

Port Augusta is located at the northern end of the North West Country region and the upper reaches of the Spencer Gulf. Port Augusta is known as the gateway to the outback connecting the west via the Eyre Highway and the North via the Stuart Highway with an estimated population of 13,808. Port Augusta also has a significant Indigenous population of 18.6 per cent compared to a State average of 2 per cent.

Port Augusta's economy was historically established and sustained by sea and rail industry. In more recent times the economy and local employment has been characterised by energy generation as well as providing a range of support for mining industry exploration. Since the closure of the Port Augusta Power Station the community has had to re-define its workforce and become less reliant on single industry investment for employment. There has since been an increase in people undertaking Fly In Fly Out (FIFO) employment predominantly in mining and construction. Port Augusta's vast road networks connecting west and north has also enabled local employment opportunities through road transport. An emergence in horticulture has also occurred which generated a number of jobs; however, engagement of locals for employment has proved challenging due to nature of work. But by far the most significant realignment for the economy has been as a result of Port Augusta's semi-arid climate coupled with its unique daily wind cycles, positioning the town as an idyllic location for renewable energy developments. As the move away from fossil fuel generated energies increase, Port Augusta's value as an economic commodity does too. There are a large number of planned renewable energy projects in the pipeline for the Port Augusta region, including DP Energy's \$500 million integrated wind and solar project, Port Augusta Renewable Energy Hub, Stage 3 of the Lincoln Gap Windfarm and SIMEC Energy's planned Playford Utility Battery.

Corrections and Detention Services are identified as the largest employing sector with the Port Augusta Prison South Australia's largest regional prison, accommodating male and female high, medium, and low security prisoners. Other major employing industries include Hospitals at 4.1 per cent and Primary Education at 4.0 per cent.

Port Augusta's main employment group is Community and Personal Service Workers accounting for 17.3 per cent of the working population with the top response for this category being Correctional and Detention Services. This percentage is considerably higher than the state average of 12.0 per cent and the national average of 10.8 per cent. This is followed by Professionals who account for 14.6 per cent (compared to 20.3 per cent State and 22.2 per cent nationally) of the workforce and Technicians and Trades Workers at 13.5 per cent. Trades, Technicians, Machine Operators and Drivers were all above both state and national averages which is unsurprising given the towns heavy industry history.

There are several industry developments in various stages of planning, development and implementation in Port Augusta. The PW2PA Alliance (CPB Contractors Pty Ltd, Aurecon Pty Ltd and GHD Pty Ltd, and DPTI) have been awarded the contract to design and construct the Joy Baluch AM Bridge Duplication and Port Wakefield Overpass and Highway Duplication projects, a \$200 million infrastructure project due to commence in the region in late 2020.

In addition, Port Augusta Operations' proposed \$40 million transformation of the former Port Augusta power station site – one of South Australia's most historically significant industrial sites – which will see the return of commercial shipping to Port Augusta for the first time in 50 years. The Development Application, which was submitted in July 2020, involves the development of a new iron ore export port featuring upgraded and new infrastructure and facilities designed to receive, store and handle iron ore which is expected to generate over 100 jobs in construction and 80 ongoing positions. At this stage, it is anticipated the port will be operational by late 2022.

Port Lincoln

Port Lincoln is a regional city located at the southern end of the North West Country region, approximately 650km west of Adelaide with a population of 14,064 people. Port Lincoln is a major service centre for the Southern Eyre Peninsula communities, supported by the busiest regional airport and only a 45-minute flight from Adelaide. The City, recognised as the 'Seafood Capital of Australia', continues to experience moderate economic and urban growth.

Regional primary production including 50 per cent of South Australia's total production of wheat, barley and oil seeds - supported by the deepest natural harbour and largest commercial fishing fleet in Australia - makes Port Lincoln perhaps the nation's biggest combined agricultural and fishing centre. As extensive mining exploration continues and moves into production, as well as the South Australian Government's Hydrogen Action Plan and potential space launch facility on the Eyre Peninsula, there will be a continuing requirement to upgrade and develop community facilities and infrastructure that will support this new investment and the growing workforce and population. Port Lincoln is expected to continue to experience growth in commercial and residential development, led by both tourism and industry activity, including exploration and development of the region's mineral deposits and renewable energy resources. Significant growth in residential and business development directly adjacent to the City's boundaries, located in District Council of Lower Eyre Peninsula, will also generate additional demand for facilities and infrastructure.

The 2016 Census data shows that 3.9 per cent worked in Supermarket and Grocery Stores. Other major industries of employment included Seafood Processing 2.6 per cent, Aged Care Residential Services 2.5 per cent and Hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals) 2.5 per cent. The most common occupations in Port Lincoln include Professionals 15.7 per cent, Technicians and Trades Workers 15.3 per cent, Labourers 14.8 per cent, Community and Personal Service Workers 12.0 per cent, and Sales Workers 12.0 per cent.

Whyalla

Whyalla is located between Port Augusta and Port Lincoln approximately 385 kilometres northwest of Adelaide by road, and 40 minutes by air. Whyalla has an estimated population of 21,828 and major industries include the steelworks, producing a range of products including rail line and steel sleepers; production crude oil and LPG; industrial fabrication companies; national contractors to heavy engineering industries; commercial salt production as well as tourism and major events.

The Whyalla Steelworks is the major employing industry, with ABS showing Iron Smelting and Steel Manufacturing as the largest industry of employment at 12.3 per cent followed by Iron Ore Mining at 7.3 per cent. Following the collapse of the Arrium Group in 2016, the future of Whyalla was a major concern until the purchase of the steelworks and a nearby iron ore mine in the Middleback Ranges by GFG Alliance. The buyout of the Whyalla steelworks and other Arrium assets saved about 3,000 jobs. GFG has since invested approximately \$60 million in engineering and design work to replace the ageing blast furnace with a \$1 billion-plus electric arc furnace and modern steel facility by 2024. However, the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in financial losses in a weaker economy and GFG are now embarking on a process to identify cost reductions and efficiencies.

SIMEC Energy, part of GFG Alliance, is also set to commence construction on a 280MW solar farm on vacant land near the Whyalla Steelworks, expected to generate 650 positions during the 12-month construction period.

Other major industry developments in the region include plans to develop a \$100 million, 180 room hotel in Whyalla by 2022. If the project eventuates, it is anticipated the development would provide up to 400 ongoing jobs.

Ferretti International has recently secured funding to undertake an \$8 million upgrade to a steel processing centre in Whyalla, further enhancing the Spencer Gulf region as a manufacturing hub in South Australia and securing up to 160 jobs.

Construction is also underway on a \$100 million secondary school in Whyalla, expected to open in 2022. The construction is expected to provide up to 1,200 jobs and an additional 240 ongoing positions.

Behind Iron Smelting and Steel Manufacturing and Iron Ore Mining, Hospitals are the next largest employing industry with 4.2 per cent. The main occupations in Whyalla include Technicians and Trades Workers at 17.9 per cent, Machinery Operators and Drivers at 15 per cent (both above State and National levels) and Professionals at 14.7 per cent (below State and National levels).

Regional Challenges

Each of the three major towns of Port Augusta, Port Lincoln and Whyalla and their surrounding regions have their own unique characteristics, however there are some common themes across the North West Country region that impact on employment, workforce development and the ability of people to enter the workforce or undertake training or skills development.

Thin markets

While collectively the population of the North West Country region is almost 50,000, the geographical spread of the region and the lack of transport between towns can be a limiting factor for cross-regional collaboration in the delivery of employment and skills initiatives, and in facilitating a shared workforce across the region. It has historically been challenging to attract a critical mass needed to deliver training and employment programs, particularly where training courses require

minimum numbers to enable viability. The thin markets make attracting outside providers into the region difficult (due to increased travel, accommodation and facility hire costs).

Centralisation of Government (funding, resources, and staff)

The ongoing centralisation of the public service to Adelaide has meant a direct loss of jobs and residents living and working in regional South Australia and the region. In addition, the number of agencies without any ongoing local presence in the regional centres, or with senior policy or decision makers has also declined, resulting in a disconnect that is often reflected in state-wide policy and decision making.

Not only does this impact on rural jobs and population, but the more the public service is centralised into Adelaide, the more policy decisions are formed through a 'city' lens and the more connection with the country is lost.

Capacity and Capability of Regional Organisations

Many local organisations have been deterred from applying for 'short term' funding as they have limited capacity, or lack the capabilities needed to actively pursue opportunities. There is also a very small number of registered training organisations that are based in the region with often little incentive for providers to travel from outside the region due to the costs associated with travel and accommodation, and difficulties in attracting critical mass in small markets. Access to quality trainers with industry currency has also presented a challenge for many training organisations.

Level of disadvantage

There are pockets of significant disadvantage across the region, including long term unemployment and intergenerational unemployment, high levels of income support dependency, high levels of youth unemployment across most of the region, combined with mental health conditions, drug and alcohol issues and limited or no access to the internet in some households. There is a high proportion of jobless families in the region, including 26 per cent of households with children in Whyalla not having both parents working.

Major Project Workforce Needs

The region has a large number of major projects planned, particularly in the renewable energy sector. While these projects often require a significant workforce during construction, the ongoing employment opportunities, and therefore benefit to the region, is often much smaller. For major projects especially in large-scale renewable energy, policy uncertainty, the project-based nature of construction and installation jobs, remote site locations, and salary competition with other industries are proving obstacles to attracting and retaining quality workers. The Clean Energy Council's '*Clean Energy at Work*' report identified that renewable energy developers face difficulties recruiting workers with relevant experience in certain activities, and existing training systems are not meeting industry needs. This results in the need to invest in the training of new workers.

The report also identified that an important focus for the renewable energy sector is to ensure that both the industry and the workforce can be supported through a transition from high levels of construction activity to a range of activities across both project development and then operation and maintenance of installations. This is relevant for all major project work in the North West Country.

The challenges for major projects, particularly those that require a significant construction workforce for a limited time, are common in regional areas where projects often need trained and job ready workers for an immediate start. Historically, some major projects have reverted to bringing a

workforce from outside of the region, which then presents further challenges in terms of accommodation (and lack of affordable long-term accommodation) and increased costs. This approach can also dilute the local economic benefits to the local community who miss out on employment opportunities.

Transport and Drivers Licence

There is no regular public transport service available throughout most of the region or between the three cities. This creates an additional barrier for job seekers who do not have a licence or access to a vehicle. Drivers licences and access to reliable private transport has consistently been one of the most common barriers for people wanting to enter the workforce, both with obtaining and retaining a licence, and having adequate support within the family unit and community to undertake the 75 hours of supervised training required to gain a provisional licence.

Lack of experience

A common issue in job seekers progressing through recruitment processes or gaining employment is a lack of experience. This is a particular barrier for young people, and for industries that require specific tickets or licences such as the heavy industry sector. Individuals can be supported to gain the qualifications, skills, tickets or licences needed, but without practical experience, these are often not sufficient to meet employer and industry needs.

Lack of employment and training activity and resources

There is a shortage of locally offered employment and training programs, particularly for job seekers and those facing disadvantage. There is also a need for more industry driven programs, as opposed to programs that are driven by providers or Government-led. There is also a reduced number of locally based resources to support the development and implementation of these programs, and the region has experienced a reduction in Government representatives based in the region to support employment and skill needs of the region. This has had a significant impact and the lack of locally driven activity is a reflection of these resourcing changes.

Fitness for Work

A key requirement for employers in many sectors is the ability to pass a fitness for work test. It is well known that the inability for job seekers to pass a drug test is a major barrier for even entry level-unskilled jobs, yet drug and alcohol support services in the region are focused heavily on individual intervention and not education for young people and job seekers. Industries and employers who require drug and alcohol testing have observed a significant decline in the number of interested job seekers, creating significant recruitment difficulties to fill positions in industries and areas where there is demand for workers and growth potential, such as manufacturing, mining and construction (including major projects).

Challenges facing small business

Small businesses are collectively the region's largest employer; however, they lack dedicated human resource personnel or capability and find it difficult to navigate the myriad of programs and services available. It is also difficult to align their needs as small business often have different skill needs at different times, making project-based responses challenging. Additional support for small business in employing staff is likely to increase their ability to employ more people and increase the uptake of existing Government programs and services in the region.

Ageing Population

The ageing population presents a challenge, particularly succession planning for businesses and industries with an ageing workforce who will lose vital skills and experience over the coming years. A major issue for the future is the possibility of labour shortages due to an ageing population, which makes supporting, attracting, and retaining residents and a quality workforce an ongoing challenge for the region.

An ageing population presents further challenges given people over 55 participate less than those younger than 55 and this has an economic impact – both in terms of their contribution to the local economy and also the cost to provide services to older people, such as health and aged care. There is also a workforce implication for the health, aged and community care sectors who have a largely part-time workforce and experience difficulties attracting people to the sector.

Trade shortages

Apprenticeship commencements have been declining, particularly in traditional trades. The cost of travel and accommodation is a prohibiting factor following the consolidation of some trade training through TAFE SA to metropolitan campuses. Small businesses have reported uncertainty in long term planning with an increase in short-term work. This combined with supervision requirements, training, travel, and cost has resulted in many small businesses reconsidering or deferring employment of apprentices. In addition, the job opportunities linked to construction work in major projects is often short term, and therefore apprenticeships (and even traineeships) are rarely considered. Industry are already experiencing difficulties in finding trades people such as metal fabricators, mechanical fitters, and chefs and this is expected to intensify as major projects planned for the region start to come online.

North West Country SA Priorities

Priority 1: Work with industry and employers to understand their workforce needs and develop industry-driven training and employment initiatives to maximise opportunities and outcomes for local job seekers and those impacted by COVID-19.

Understanding the local jobs market and working in partnership with employers is crucial to supporting people to prepare for and commence work. Communicating this information across the region to employment providers, training organisations, education providers, job seekers and the broader community will result in improved knowledge and targeting of investment and resources. Early engagement and partnerships with employers and industry in designing placed-based initiatives will be fundamental to the success of regional employment projects and activity.

Strategies:

1. Industry Engagement Framework to support the collection, recording and dissemination of local intel relating to the region's employment and skill needs and to better understand the local jobs market and the skills or attributes required.
2. Industry Advisory Network to champion a local jobs recovery and growth effort.
3. Increased local employment associated with major projects including increased local workforce procurements targets and accountability.
4. Adopt a co-design approach with industry to develop initiatives that support job seekers into work.
5. Target skill development on sectors that have future growth potential such as agriculture, manufacturing, construction, health care and social assistance.
6. Deliver events or activities that showcase local jobs and career pathways.

Priority 2: Increase engagement of Aboriginal people and communities in employment and training initiatives to improve workforce participation.

Aboriginal job seekers are disproportionately represented in the region, accounting for 30 per cent of the employment service caseload in the North West Country, compared to a State average of 8 per cent and rising to over 50 per cent of the caseload in Port Augusta. Over 40 per cent of the Aboriginal population are aged between 15 and 44 years of age, with a large number of young Aboriginal people either entering or about to enter the labour market in coming years.

Strategies:

1. Partnerships with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations to co-design initiatives that will improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal people.
2. Develop strategies to increase Aboriginal engagement, participation and outcomes in training and employment initiatives.
3. Whole of life and whole of family support to improve outcomes for Aboriginal job seekers and to improve participation and retention in training and employment.
4. Culturally supportive training and education environments and workplaces, including through employer education and support systems.

Priority 3: Improve opportunities for young people to engage or remain engaged in learning or earning.

Young people are experiencing some of the most significant challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only are young people working in industries that have experienced some of the more significant job losses, but they are now competing for jobs in an uncertain economy with a larger number of people (some with more skills and experience) and are having to navigate new approaches to learning and education. With youth unemployment and disengagement already an issue across the region, the ability to support young people to engage or re-engage in education, training or employment will be critical.

Strategies:

1. Engage with young people directly to understand their challenges and involve them in designing and implementing solutions.
2. Support for young people to navigate the labour market, employers, and job opportunities.
3. Training and support to assist young people to develop life and work skills, including support to address non-vocational barriers to employment.
4. Work exposure initiatives such as work experience, internships, industry visits or other workplace initiatives that improve skills, provide experience, or improves employer networks.
5. Initiatives that will help increase apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities, including support for business (particularly small business).

Priority 4: Targeted initiatives that address non-vocational barriers to employment.

There are a range of barriers that can prevent a person from obtaining and sustaining employment or education or from undertaking further skills development, including homelessness, mental illness, drug or alcohol addiction, sexual abuse or violence and physical or mental abuse. Experience in the delivery of regional employment initiatives is that support to address non-vocational barriers is critical to supporting job seekers to gain and maintain employment.

Strategies:

1. Identify barriers for job seekers (including those who face disadvantaged) to access training and employment, and advocate for practical and innovative solutions to address these needs.
2. Drug and alcohol support and education for job seekers, in partnership with local drug and alcohol service or relevant local stakeholders.
3. Improved job seeker mobility and independence, such as driver training and transport initiatives.
4. Local models of support to assist people undertaking external, online or distance education, particularly where training delivery methods have been impacted by COVID-19.

Priority 5: Raise awareness of Government programs and services and pursue opportunities to leverage additional financial and in-kind support to maximise regional investment in training and employment.

There is a vast suite of Government programs, services and funding opportunities available, but individuals, organisations and employers are often overwhelmed by the complexity and associated requirements, guidelines and eligibility. Better understanding, communication and promotion is needed to support an increased uptake and leverage these resources, identify the gaps, and proactively advocate for resources to address those gaps.

Strategies:

1. Regional platform to better connect job seekers and the community with employment, skills, and major project workforce opportunities in the region.
2. Increased promotion of Government programs, services, and funding opportunities in the region.
3. Establish a Jobs and Skills Network into the North West Country to increase collaboration and communicate information on programs, services, and opportunities.
4. Pursue opportunities to leverage other funding sources to support employment and training initiatives, such as Job Trainer (SA Government).
5. Identify gaps within existing programs and services and advocate for the allocation of resources or funding.

Priority 6: Develop collaborative approaches to build region and stakeholder capacity and capability to respond to employment and skill needs.

Strategies:

1. Support local organisations to increase their capacity and/or capability to deliver employment and training programs, including support to access and deliver on Government funding opportunities.
2. Identify industry required vocations or skills in need of more trainers (both currently and to meet anticipated future demand), and explore opportunities to upskill people into these roles.
3. Professional development of employment and training organisations to better understand and respond to the local market and industry needs.
4. Activities aimed at educating and developing business in the region, specifically around their capacity and capabilities in employment of staff.
5. Increase utilisation of regional education and training infrastructure and facilities.

Labour Market Profile

Labour market update September 2020¹

The North West Country region has a history of labour market and social disadvantage, with its unemployment rate averaging 6.6 per cent over the last five years (compared with 5.6 per cent for Australia). In the same period, annual employment change in the region has, on average, been negative, which has impacted on both the number and types of job opportunities available.

ABS Labour Force Survey regional estimates suggest that labour market conditions have stabilised somewhat in North West Country since March 2020, when Australia recorded its 100th case of COVID-19.

Table 1: Selected ABS Labour Force Survey indicators, August 2020

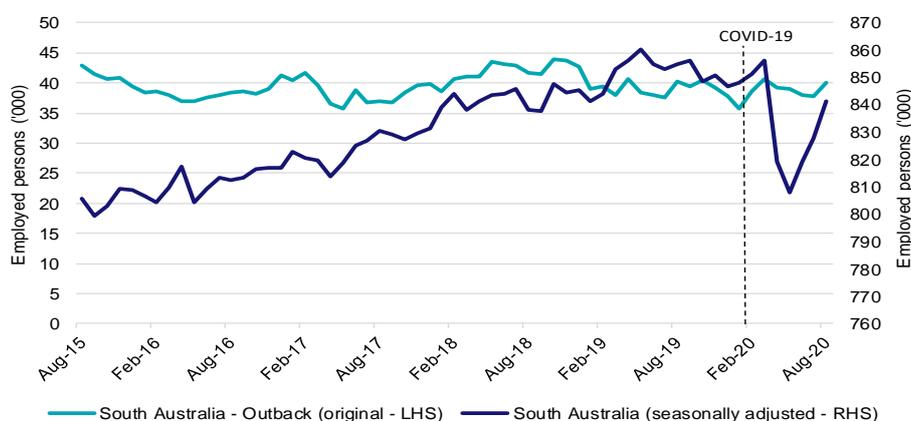
	Employment			Unemployment			Unemployment rate		Participation rate	
	Aug-20 (’000)	Change since Mar-20 (’000)	(%)	Aug-20 (’000)	Change since Mar-20 (’000)	(%)	Aug-20 (%)	Change since Mar-20 (% pts)	Aug-20 (%)	Change since Mar-20 (% pts)
South Australia - Outback	40.1	-0.5	-1.3	2.6	0.1	3.8	6.2	0.3	63.4	-0.4
South Australia	841.2	-15.2	-1.8	71.8	14.4	25.1	7.9	1.6	62.8	-0.1
Australia	12,583.4	-413.6	-3.2	921.8	206.0	28.8	6.8	1.6	64.8	-1.1

Source: Data for North West Country are from ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, August 2020, original estimates. Data for South Australia and Australia are from ABS, Labour Force, Australia, August 2020, seasonally adjusted estimates.

Employment

- There were 40,100 employed people in the North West Country region in August 2020
- The number of employed people has decreased by 540 (or 1.3 per cent) between March and August 2020
- Over the last five years, employment in North West Country has fallen at an annual average rate of 1.3 per cent, well below the rise of 0.9 per cent recorded for South Australia.

Graph 1: Employed persons aged 15 and over (five years to August 2020)



Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, August 2020

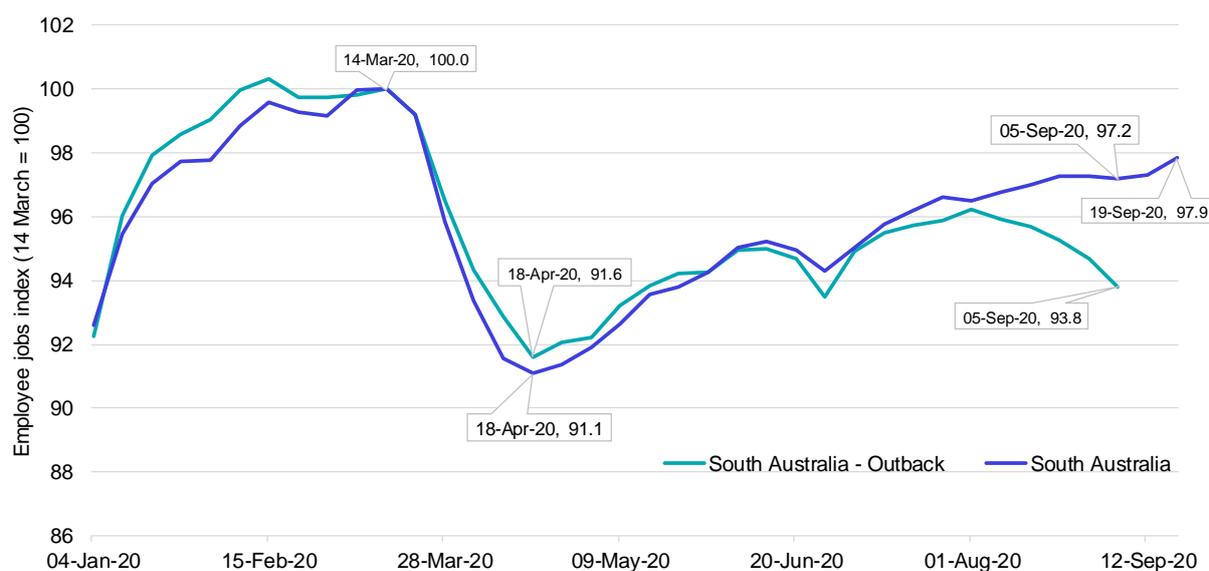
¹ Throughout this labour market update, unless otherwise stated, data are for the SA4 of South Australia - Outback which is only a fair proxy for the North West Country Employment Region. Data are the latest available at the time of writing. Please note that labour force data at the SA4 level exhibit considerable volatility and should be viewed with extreme caution.

ABS weekly payroll data

Following a steady rise at the beginning of the year, the ABS weekly payroll data show that between 14 March 2020 and 5 September 2020:

- The number of employee jobs in North West Country fell by 6.2 per cent, compared with a 2.8 per cent decline for South Australia.
- There has also been a decline over the four weeks to 5 September, with employee jobs decreasing by 2.1 per cent in North West Country, compared with a 0.4 per cent increase in South Australia.

Graph 2: Employee jobs 4 January to 19 September (14 March 2020 = 100)



Source: ABS, Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages, Week ending 19 September 2020. Latest available data at the SA4 level are for the week ending 5 September 2020.

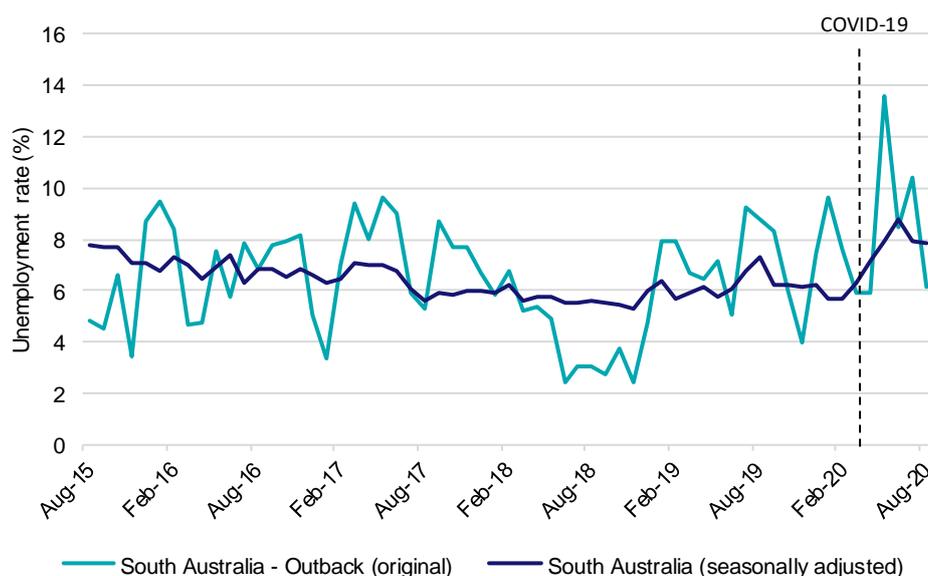
Participation rate

- The North West Country participation rate decreased by 0.4 percentage points between March and August 2020, to stand at 63.4 per cent, above the 62.8 per cent recorded for South Australia.
- The population in the region is comparatively older: 41.3 per cent of the population are aged 55 and over, compared to 38.6 per cent for the state.

Unemployment

- The North West Country unemployment rate was 6.2 per cent in August 2020, up by 0.3 percentage points since March 2020 and well below the 7.9 per cent recorded for South Australia.

Graph 3: Unemployment rate time series (five years to August 2020)



Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, August 2020

Considerable labour market disparity exists within the North West Country Employment Region. Latest available Small Area Labour Markets Data (Table 2) show that, in the March quarter 2020 (latest available data), the unemployment rate in North West Country ranged from 5.3 per cent in the Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) of Port Lincoln, to 10.5 per cent in the SA2 of Port Augusta.²

Table 2: Unemployment Rates by Local Government Area (LGA)

LGA/Region	Mar-20 (%)
Port Augusta	10.4
Port Lincoln	5.3
Whyalla	9.9
South Australia	6.3
Australia	5.2

Source: Data for the LGAs are from Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Small Area Labour Markets, March quarter 2020. Data for South Australia and Australia are from ABS, Labour Force, Australia, June 2020 (Cat. no. 6202.0), seasonally adjusted data

Employment services caseload characteristics

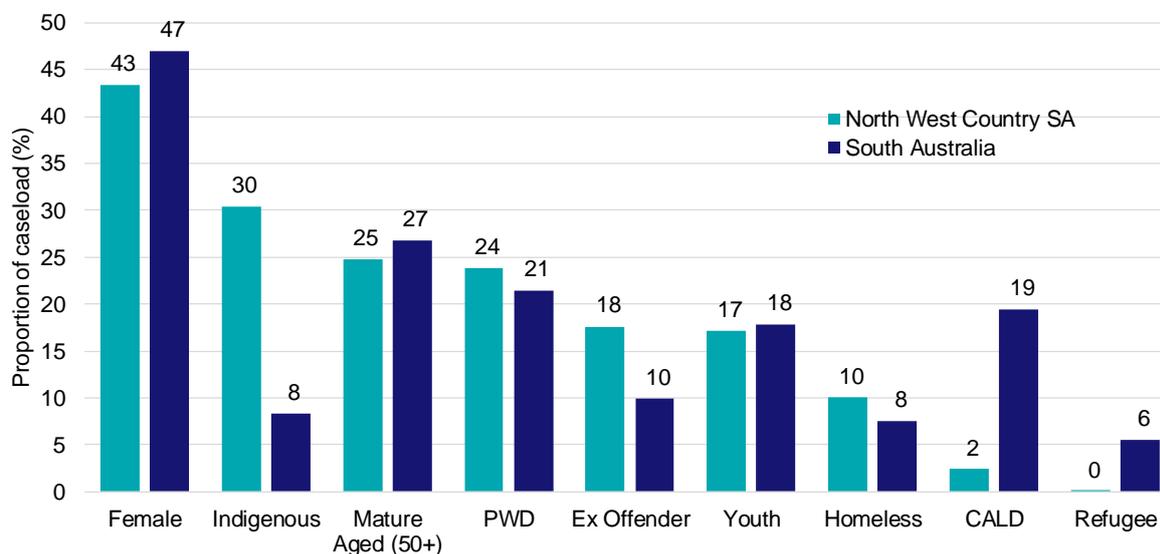
As at 30 September 2020,

- The caseload in the North West Country Employment Region increased from 3,192 people in March 2020 to 4,773 in September 2020, a rise of 50 per cent
- This compares with an increase of 79 per cent for South Australia and 97 per cent for Australia

² Data for SA2s are sourced from the National Skills Commission, *Small Area Labour Markets*, March quarter 2020, smoothed estimates. Labour market data at the regional level can display significant variability and should be viewed with caution.

- Compared with the state, the caseload in the region as shown in Graph 4, has substantially higher proportions of Indigenous persons, ex-offenders and substantially lower proportions of culturally and linguistically diverse persons and refugees.

Graph 4: Employment services caseload for selected cohorts (September 2020)



Source: Department of Education, Skills and Employment, administrative data, September 2020. PWD = Persons with disability. CALD = Culturally and Linguistically Diverse. Note that data for SA excludes participants in the New Employment Services Trial (NEST) in the Adelaide South Employment Region.

Table 3: Caseload by Local Government Area

LGA Name	Total Caseload		Change	Change
	31/01/2020	23/09/2020	#	%
Port Augusta	1,067	1,507	440	41%
Port Lincoln	656	1,149	493	75%
Whyalla	1,407	2,060	653	46%
TOTAL	3,130	4,716	1,586	50%

Source: Labour Market Information Portal

Table 4 provides a further breakdown of the jobactive, New Employment Services Trial and Transition to Work caseloads as at 23 September 2020.

The data shows that 43 per cent of the jobactive and New Employment Services caseload are women, 30 per cent Indigenous, 24 per cent have a disability and 10 per cent are homeless. Indigenous people are over-represented in jobactive caseloads with 53 per cent of the jobactive, New Employment Services Trial and Transition to Work caseload in Port Augusta Indigenous (despite only 18.6 per cent of the overall population identifying as Indigenous), 20 per cent in Whyalla (Indigenous population of 4.7 per cent) and 23 per cent in Port Lincoln (Indigenous population of 5.1 per cent).

Table 4: Caseload by Local Government Area by job seeker characteristics

	Caseload Total	Female	Youth (Under 25)	Indigenous	People with Disability	Refugee	Homeless	Ex-offender	Mental Health
Jobactive + New Employment Services Trial									
Port Lincoln	1,149	534	186	247	222	<5	91	177	97
Port Augusta	1,507	623	267	784	378	<5	164	324	167
Whyalla	2,060	888	359	399	524	n.p.	206	323	321
Total North West Country	4,716	2045	812	1,430	1,124	<10	461	824	585
Percentage of Jobactive Caseload		43%	17.00%	30%	24%		10%	17%	12%
Transition to Work (Youth)									
Port Lincoln	76	37		37	57	25			
Port Augusta	140	51		93	14	0			
Whyalla	101	51		28	8	0			
Total Transition to Work	317	139		158	79	25			
Percentage of Transition to Work Caseload		44%		50%	25%	8%			

Source: Labour Market Information Portal

Income Support

In August 2020, the proportion of the working age (15-64 years) population on income support in the North West Country region stood at 26.4 per cent (highest proportion in the state and third highest in the country), well above the 19.2 per cent recorded in South Australia and the 16.3 per cent recorded nationally.

Jobless Families

The North West Country cities have a large number of jobless families where both parents are not working. Whyalla has the highest number of jobless families at 26.2 per cent, compared to a State average of 23.1 per cent and National average of 20.1 per cent.

Table 5: Employment status of parents in couple families

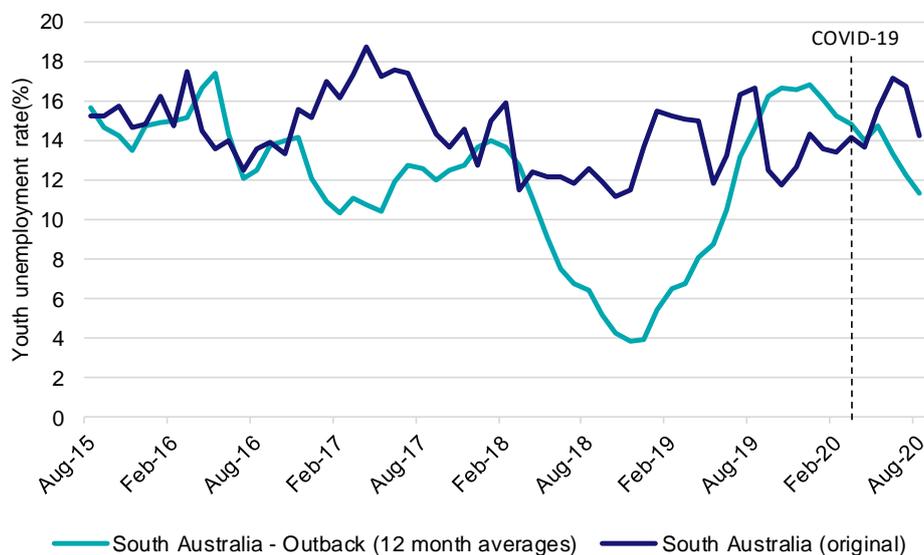
	Port Augusta	Port Lincoln	Whyalla
Both not working	614	645	1,141
	23.6%	22.5%	26.2%

Source: 2016 ABS Census

Youth

The youth unemployment rate in North West Country was 11.3 per cent in August 2020, compared with 14.2 per cent for the state. The youth unemployment rate has decreased by 3.5 percentage points since March 2020.

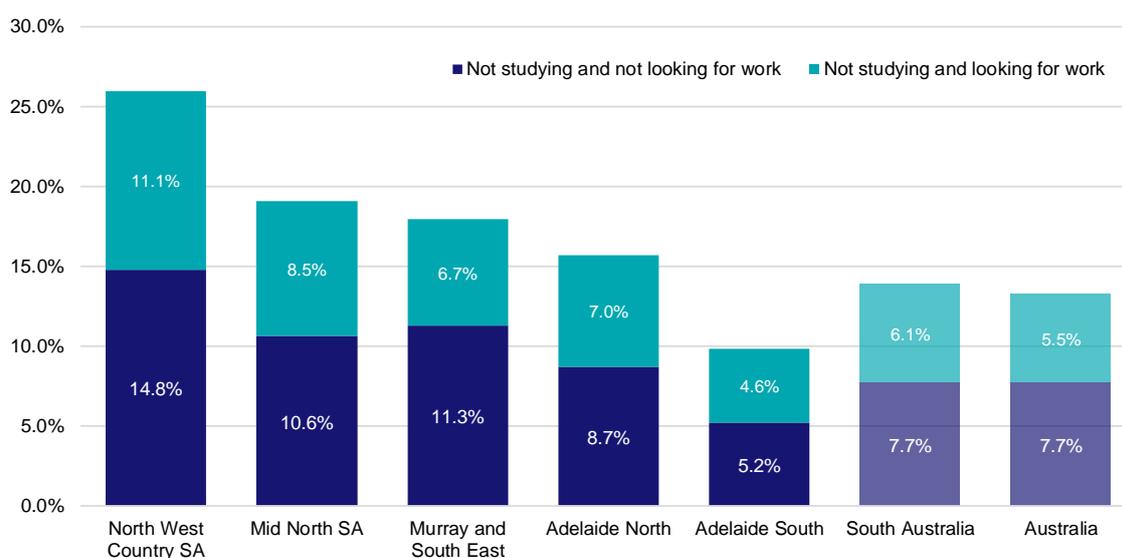
Graph 5: Youth unemployment (five years to August 2020)



Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, August 2020

The North West Country Employment Region has the highest rate of youth disengagement of all South Australian Employment Regions with approximately 25.9 per cent of young people aged 18-24 in the North West Country Employment Region being disengaged, compared with 13.8 per cent for South Australia and 13.2 per cent for Australia (as at 2016 Census).

Graph 6: Young people not studying nor working (18-24 years old)

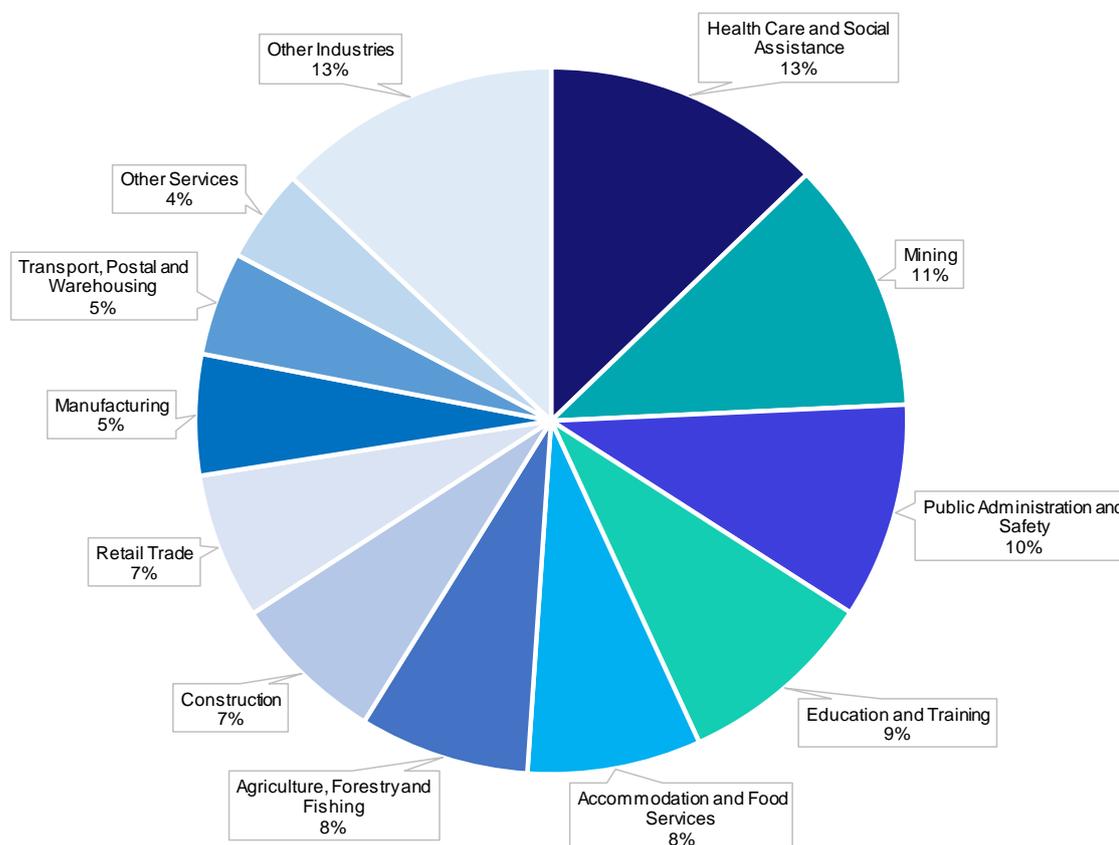


Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2016

Industry profile³

As at August 2020, the three largest employing industries in North West Country were Health Care and Social Assistance; Mining; and Public Administration and Safety.

Graph 7: Share of employment by industry in North West Country, August quarter 2020



Source: ABS Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, August 2020. "Other Industries" includes: Administrative and Support Services; Wholesale Trade; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Financial and Insurance; Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services; Information Media and Telecommunications; Rental, Hiring and Real Estate; and Arts and Recreation.

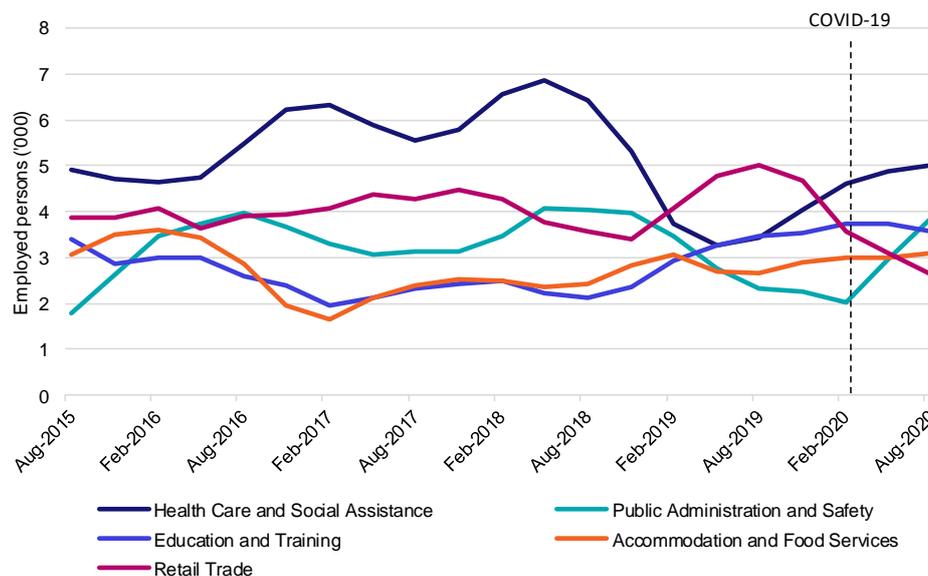
Employment trends (for selected industries)

Although COVID-19 has affected some industries more than others, it is important to consider longer term employment trends to understand where current and emerging opportunities may be in this region. In recent years, employment in North West Country has:

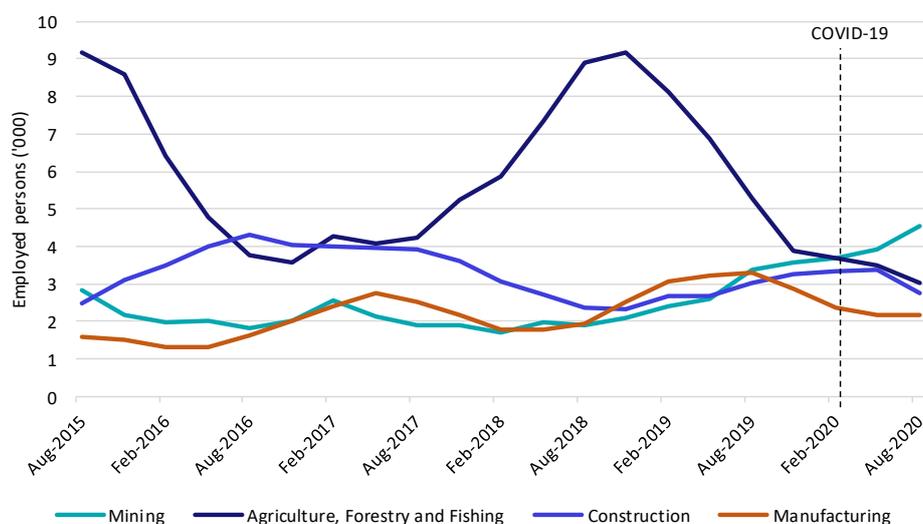
- increased in Health Care and Social Assistance and Public Administration and Safety, following a period of decline.
- declined in Retail Trade over the year to August 2020 following earlier increases.
- been volatile in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, most recently falling by around two-thirds from a high point in November 2018 – refer to Graph 9.

³ Regional industry employment data is in four quarter averaged terms, which means it is not responsive enough to pick up the impact of COVID-19. This section is intended to present the more medium-term trends in industry employment for the region.

Graph 8: Employed persons in select 'services' industries, five years to August 2020 ('000)



Graph 9: Employed persons in select 'producing' industries, five years to August 2020 ('000)

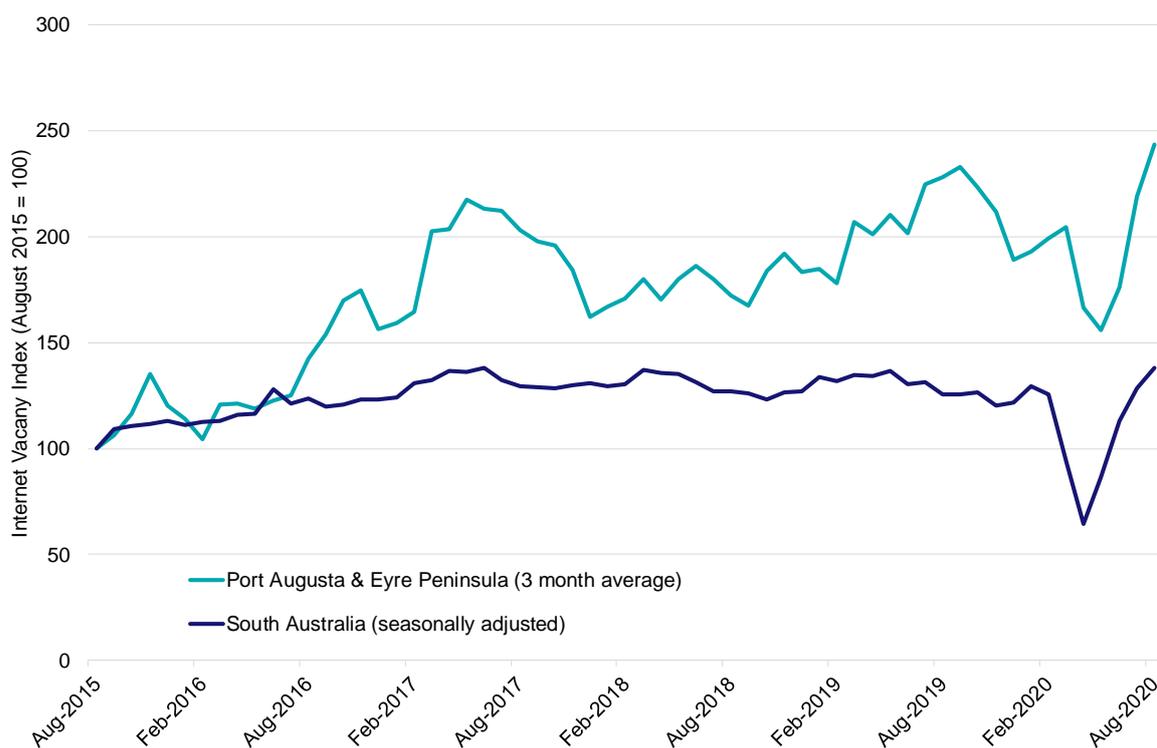


Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, August 2020

Vacancies and job advertisements

The level of vacancies in the Port Augusta and Eyre Peninsula Internet Vacancy Index region declined by 24 per cent over the two months to May 2020, before increasing in the period to August 2020 (up by 56 per cent from the lowest point May). With this recent increase, vacancies in the region are now 22 per cent higher than pre-COVID levels in February 2020.

Graph 10: Online job advertisement time series (five years to August 2020)



Source: National Skills Commission, Internet Vacancy Index, August 2020. Data for Port Augusta and Eyre Peninsula is a three-month moving average, and data for South Australia is seasonally adjusted; both have been indexed to August 2015.

Table 6: Top 10 advertised occupations (August 2020)

ANZSCO Occupation
Sales Assistant (General)
General Clerks
Other Miscellaneous Labourers
Aged and Disability Workers
Welfare, Recreation and Community Arts Worker
Earthmoving Plant Operators
Garden and Nursery Labourers
Structural Steel and Welding Trades
Welfare Support Workers
Motor Mechanics

Source: National Skills Commission, Internet Vacancy Index, Port Augusta and Eyre Peninsula, August 2020. Raw data are used for analysis. Note the Port Augusta and Eyre Peninsula region is the best fit from the regions available from the contributing job boards and does not precisely correspond to the North West Country Employment Region.

Stakeholders

The North West Country region incorporates three Local Government Areas represented by the Port Augusta City Council, City of Port Lincoln and City of Whyalla. Regional Development Australia (RDA) are a key stakeholder for economic development across the region, committed to activities or initiatives that will assist the region's economy to grow. RDA Far North and RDA Eyre Peninsula operate within the North West Country region and has strong and extensive links with local stakeholders and industry.

There are seven organisations contracted to deliver Australian Government employment services in the North West Country region. Madec and Workskil are the region's jobactive providers with sites in each of the three cities. Workskil also deliver the Transition to Work program supporting young people aged 15-24. Complete Personnel and KWY deliver the ParentsNext program and work with parents and carers to help build confidence, develop skills and access local support and services to plan for the future. WISE Employment, Community Bridging Services and APM Services deliver disability employment programs. WISE Employment also delivers the Time to Work Employment Service Program that assists adult, sentenced Indigenous prisoners to access the support they need to better prepare them to find employment and reintegrate into the community upon their release from prison.

Each of the three cities have high quality primary and secondary schools and facilities including public, Catholic, and independent schools from reception to Year 12. A number of schools throughout the region also have access to high quality science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) and trade training facilities, some of which are not fully utilised by the individual schools.

The South Australian Department for Education has recently released a VET in Schools Policy which sets out system-wide reform that improves completion of both VET qualification and SACE, drives transitions to skilled careers and better meets the needs of industry for underpinning strong economic growth. The Policy includes three key pillars of reform: clearly articulated pathways; enhanced career education; and improved student outcomes. Key success measures will include increasing the proportion of young people in post-school education, training, or employment, increasing SACE and VET qualification, and developing a pipeline of young skilled workers to meet employer needs. The renewed focus on VET in Schools and stronger linkages with industry will play a vital role in supporting the development of the region's future workforce, and contribute to greater engagement of young people in the labour market including work, post-school education and training.

TAFE SA has large campuses in each of the three cities and offer a range of certificate level qualifications, and a number of private training providers operate throughout the region offering both full qualifications, short courses and industry specific tickets and licences.

University of South Australia has a well-established campus in Whyalla, which has recently installed high-speed fibre optic cables making it one of the best-connected campus in any regional city in Australia. Uni Hub Spencer Gulf commenced operation with a campus in Port Pirie in 2019 and in Port Augusta in 2020 to improve locally supported university courses for the local community and to help meet the growing workforce needs of industry in the region. Uni Hub is not a university or training provider but rather a broker of university delivery in the Upper Spencer Gulf providing local facilities, marketing, student engagement and enrolment support, local tutorials and student mentors, work placement and industry/employer engagement.

The region is serviced by two Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers, MEGT and MAS National, and several Group Training Organisations operate within the region. There are multiple labour hire companies servicing industry in the region, with a large presence specifically in Whyalla.

Each of the three cities has a local business group or chamber of commerce, including Business Port Augusta, Port Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Whyalla Chamber of Commerce providing a voice for local business. Global Maintenance Upper Spencer Gulf is one of the key industry representative bodies, an industry cluster of 130 contractors across the mining and resources sector including those based in the cities of Whyalla and Port Augusta.

Support services play a vital role in supporting individuals and families, particularly people who are vulnerable and face disadvantage. The two larger organisations providing social services in the region include Centacare and Uniting Country SA.

Jobs and Skills Regional Networks had previously operated in every State Government region in South Australia, however many lapsed when funding support to continue the networks and provide executive support was withdrawn by the State Government. The Yorke and Mid North Jobs and Skills Network has recently been expanded to include the Upper Spencer Gulf (which provides coverage into Port Augusta and Whyalla). The Jobs and Skills Regional Network brings together representatives from government, industry, community, and the non-government sector to improve collaboration and communication, and to advise and act on regional skills and employment challenges and opportunities in the region.

Spencer Gulf Cities is a 20-year alliance between Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla, providing a forum for collaboration and advocacy on issues of strategic importance to the Upper Spencer Gulf. Spencer Gulf Cities has been proactive in establishing a new Upper Spencer Gulf Workforce and Skills Working Group, with resourcing for the group provided by the Upper Spencer Gulf Employment Facilitator. The Working Group includes representation from all levels of government, Regional Development Australia organisations, industry, and the education sector and will ensure a structured and strategic approach into the development and implementation of an Upper Spencer Gulf Workforce and Skills Strategy. The Strategy will consider the existing and planned workforce and skills needs and resources in the region with a focus on identifying and addressing key gaps in a partnership model across Government, industry, and community. A collective vision and strategy will assist in setting high level priorities, developing locally driven responses to current, emerging, and future employment challenges and leveraging current and planned resources and Government investment.

Data Notes

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 (LFS) 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 (i.e. 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.

References and Information Sources

- National Skills Commission
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census of Population and Housing
- Labour Market Information Portal
- City of Port Lincoln: Annual Business Plan 2020-2021
- City of Whyalla: Strategic Plan 2021 – 2030
- City of Whyalla: Annual Report 2018-19
- RDA Far North: Regional Roadmap
- Regional Development South Australia: The Regional Blueprint
- Uni Hub Spencer Gulf : Skills Survey 2019
- Regional Australia Institute: The Future of Regions Jobs
- Clean Energy Council: Clean Energy at Work

Local Jobs Program Information

COVID-19 is having an unprecedented impact on the Australian labour market. Together with longer-term trends throughout the economy that are changing skill requirements in many jobs and occupations, this means that there is a new urgency in assisting job seekers to navigate this change.

On 1 September 2020 the Australian Government, as part of the economic response to COVID-19, announced the \$62.8 million Local Jobs Program in 25 Employment Regions to support the recovery of local economies through identified place-based strategies that can respond rapidly to the region's training and employment needs, and importantly, connect job seekers to local jobs.

The program will bring together expertise, resources, and access to funding at the local level to support tailored approaches to accelerate reskilling, upskilling and employment in 25 regions across Australia, including the North West Country region in South Australia.

Recognising that regions have been impacted by COVID-19 in varying ways, the program will provide for the following in each of the 25 regions:

- an Employment Facilitator
- a Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce
- a Local Jobs Plan
- projects funded through a Local Recovery Fund

The North West Country region has been identified as a region with high labour market vulnerability and a strong reliance on industries vulnerable to economic change. The Local Jobs Program seeks to strengthen the ability of job seekers, workers, industries, and the region more generally to respond to employment related needs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and support the region's economic recovery. The Local Jobs Program will run to 30 June 2022.

Local Jobs Program Objectives

The objectives of the Local Jobs Program are to:

- Minimise the time out of work or training for job seekers.
- Support the greatest number of people to be connected in training and/or employment appropriate to the local labour market needs as quickly as possible.
- Support local decision makers to identify and drive recovery by leveraging existing employment and training services.
- Enhance coordination of the department's existing range of place-based initiatives including, Employer Liaison Officers, Entrepreneurship Facilitators and Industry Training Hubs.
- Enhance coordination and linkages with other Australian Government priorities and state government programs such as the work of the Regional Development Australia committees, the National Bushfire Recovery Agencies work in bush fire affected areas and business advisors under the Entrepreneurs' Program run by the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.

A Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce will be established in each of the regions to identify key employment priorities and strengthen linkages between stakeholders. Recognising that labour markets vary across Australia, local labour market data from the National Skills Commission and National Careers Institute will inform the work of the taskforce and priorities in this plan. This will

ensure each Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce understands shortages and predicted future trends to drive local training responses informed by evidence.

Guided by the Local Jobs Plans, Facilitators and Taskforces will bring together key local stakeholders including employers, employment services providers and higher education and training organisations to work collaboratively to design local responses including Local Jobs Activities.

A Local Recovery Fund will be available in each region for local stakeholders to develop projects in line with the employment needs of their region, as identified by their Taskforce and Local Jobs Plan. In the North West Country this funding equates to \$500,000 and will be specifically targeted to projects that support participants on a jobactive, ParentsNext, New Employment Services Trial or Transition to Work caseload.

Vision

The vision for delivery of the North West Country Local Jobs Program services is to build regional workforce capacity so the region can adapt, transition and thrive in changing circumstances and respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on local employment.

To meet this vision, the Local Jobs Program will:

- Facilitate a coordinated approach to service delivery based on structured engagement and evidence of regional needs.
- Work collaboratively with industry and stakeholders to develop and provide locally driven responses to current, emerging, and employment challenges and opportunities.
- Establish transparent, robust performance measures and reporting systems that capture the value and impact of regional employment and investment.

The Local Jobs Program service delivery and engagement will be:

- Informed by the strategic directions of government, National Skills Commission, National Careers Institute, Regional Development Australia, and up-to-date analysis of regional and industry needs.
- Coordinated across government and non-government agencies focusing on partnerships.
- Flexible and responsive to current and future challenges and opportunities.
- Engaged with regional stakeholders in deciding priorities, designing, and delivering local solutions.
- Tailored to the skills and employment needs of industry, employers, and individuals.
- Robust with transparent performance indicators subject to rigorous evaluation.
- Impactful in creating measurable change and positive, sustainable outcomes in the region.