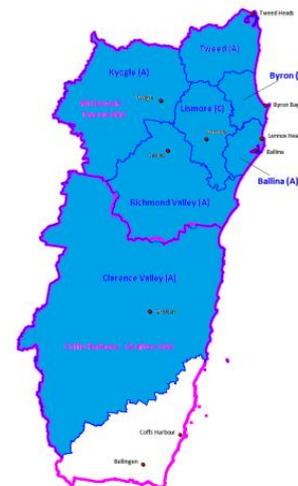




## Labour Market Conditions in the Tweed, North Coast, Richmond and Clarence Valley region

Overall, labour market conditions in the Tweed, North Coast, Richmond and Clarence Valley region remain soft.

- Employment fell by 2 per cent, or 3,200 jobs, in the 12 months to September 2014.<sup>1</sup>
- In September 2014, the unemployment rate in the region was 7.1 per cent<sup>1</sup>, unchanged from 12 months ago and considerably higher than the rate for New South Wales (5.7 per cent)<sup>2</sup>.
  - Over the same period, the participation rate fell by 2.3 percentage points to 55 per cent.<sup>2</sup> The low participation rate is likely to be having a dampening impact on the unemployment rate.
- The region has an older population with 42 per cent aged 55 years and over, compared with 31 per cent nationally.<sup>3</sup>
  - Those aged 55 years and over are less likely to participate in the labour market (28.8 per cent compared with 34.9 per cent nationally) and are more likely to be unemployed (5.7 per cent compared with 3.6 per cent).<sup>1</sup>
- Some 21 per cent of young people aged 20 to 24 years were not working, looking for work or studying at the time of the 2011 Census, compared with 14 per cent for New South Wales as a whole.<sup>4</sup>
- In the five years to August 2014, the three largest employing industries in the region recorded an increase in employment.<sup>5</sup>
  - The largest employing industries all recorded strong growth with the Health Care and Social Assistance (16 per cent of total employment) increasing by 27 per cent, Retail (14 per cent of total employment) by 17 per cent and Construction (10 per cent of total employment) by 15 per cent.



### What employers are telling us

The survey results confirm the softness in the labour market, however, there are tentative signs of some improvement.<sup>6</sup>

- A larger proportion of employers had recruited in the previous 12 months (73 per cent) when compared with all regions surveyed (61 per cent)<sup>7</sup>.
- One third of employers surveyed experienced difficulty filling their vacancies compared with 26 per cent when the region was last surveyed in 2013.
- The average number of applicants for each vacancy (6.8 applicants per vacancy) is lower than the all regions surveyed figure of 10.1 applicants, however, there is significant variation across occupations.
  - Vacancies for Machinery Operators and Drivers attracted an average of 10.4 applicants whereas vacancies for Labourers only attracted 1.5 applicants per vacancy.
- On average, 2.9 applicants per vacancy were interviewed with an average of 1.1 applicants found suitable.
  - A large proportion (88 per cent) of employers recruiting for lower skilled vacancies stated that the applicant did not require experience to be suitable. Further, around 25 per cent of employers reported that a lack of soft skills such as teamwork, communication and motivation was the reason applicants were not interviewed. Accordingly, by improving and demonstrating their soft skills, job seekers with minimal experience are likely to increase their chances of employment in lower skilled jobs.
- Some 43 per cent of employers expect to recruit in the next 12 months, compared with 30 per cent in the previous survey. Additionally, 23 per cent of employers expect to increase staff compared with 18 per cent in 2013.

### Where are the opportunities?

- Opportunities exist in growth industries such as Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail and Construction with employers expecting to recruit for occupations across all skill levels such as Personal Care Workers, Aged and Disabled Carers, Registered Nurses, Sales Assistants, Checkout Operators, Truck Drivers and Electricians.

<sup>1</sup> ABS Labour Force, Australia, September 2014 (12 month average)

<sup>2</sup> ABS Labour Force, Australia, Seasonally Adjusted, October 2014

<sup>3</sup> ABS, Estimated Residential Population, 2012

<sup>4</sup> ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2011

<sup>5</sup> ABS Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, August 2014 (4 quarter average)

<sup>6</sup> This report is based on a Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences of 328 employers undertaken in August 2014

<sup>7</sup> Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences, all regions surveyed in the 12 months to June 2014