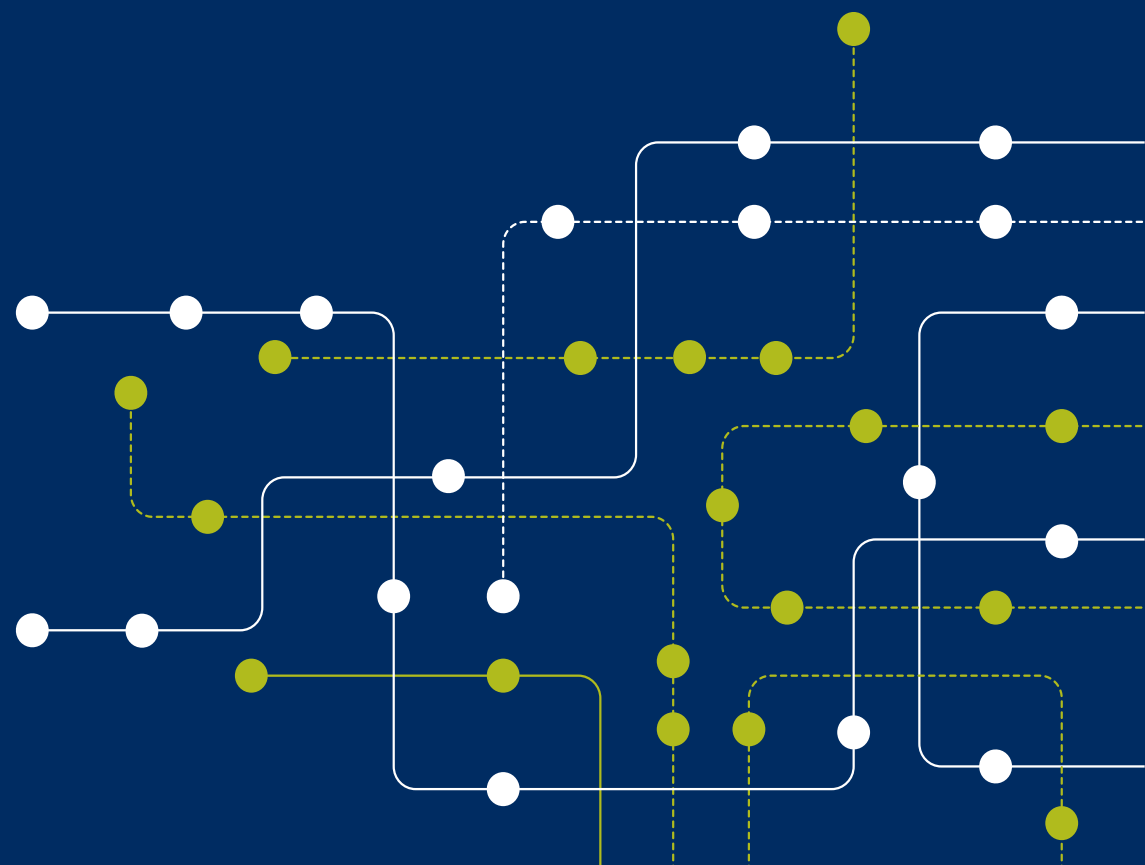


# Local Jobs Insights Research

Research report

October 2023

Prepared for:  
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations



**Social Ventures Australia acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present, and emerging. We also accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart to walk together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.**

### **This report has been prepared by Social Ventures Australia (SVA) Consulting**

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SVA Consulting is Australia's leading not-for-profit consultancy. We focus solely on social impact and work with partners to increase their capacity to create positive change. Thanks to more than 10 years of working with not-for-profits, government and funders, we have developed a deep understanding of the sector and 'what works'.

Our team is passionate about what they do and use their diverse experience to work together to solve Australia's most pressing challenges.

This report has been authored by the SVA Consulting team (Natalie Klenner, Mandy Ferguson, Jonathan Finighan and Simon Faivel).

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# Executive summary

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# About the Local Jobs Insights Research

This research aims to generate insights into what the Local Jobs Program can achieve when it is implemented effectively. The primary audience of the research report is the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (the department) staff and executives, and government ministers. The purpose of the research is to help senior decision-makers understand how the program can develop effective solutions to local labour market challenges, support employment outcomes, and identify lessons for the future of the program. This research was not an evaluation of the Local Jobs Program and does not aim to provide a representative sample of program outcomes.

The research was conducted during May to October 2023, and involved conducting case studies of the program in four Employment Regions:

- Mid North South Australia (SA)
- Illawarra South Coast (NSW)
- Western Melbourne (VIC)
- New England and North West (NSW)

Each case study focused on 1-2 labour market issues that the Local Jobs Program was responding to in each region. The research team spent 2-3 days visiting each region to conduct workshops, visit businesses and consult with stakeholders. About 15 stakeholders were consulted in each case study region. Page 50 provides further detail on the intended audience, purpose and approach of the research.

Case studies in the report used projects, processes and examples up to October 2023. There may have been changes since the report. Labour market data included is at June 2023 and more contemporary data is available, for example, through the [Employment Region Dashboards and Profiles | Jobs and Skills Australia](#).

# Executive summary

- 1 The Local Jobs Program brings together local leaders to solve the labour market challenges affecting their community.
- 2 The program is flexible and responsive to each community's needs.
- 3 Successful Employment Facilitators share common behaviours but also bring their own experiences and skills.
- 4 Taskforces that have stable membership and structures that support collaboration can take on more responsibility.
- 5 The Local Jobs Program creates valuable outcomes that respond to regional labour market challenges and gaps in local service systems.
- 6 Many of these outcomes would be unlikely without the Local Jobs Program.
- 7 The research highlights four lessons for the department:
  1. **Protect Employment Facilitators' flexibility** because it is critical to the success of the program.
  2. **Support continuity and transition planning** to sustain momentum when Employment Facilitators or Taskforce members leave.
  3. **Build the capacity of Employment Facilitators** to adopt behaviours that enable collaboration and achieve greater outcomes.
  4. **Support Employment Facilitators to get the most out of their Taskforce** by adapting good practices observed in the case study regions.

# Bringing local leaders together

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# The Local Jobs Program brings together local leaders to solve the labour market challenges affecting their community



## **Every community faces its own labour market challenges**

Many communities face similar challenges related to worker shortages and the underutilisation of the local workforce. However, these challenges are shaped by local conditions and intersect in different ways in every region. Regional diversity is reflected in the varying rates of unemployment and underemployment, workforce participation and labour and skills shortages. Many labour market challenges faced by communities are complex and need a coordinated response. Examples include structural barriers to employment or sudden labour market shocks.



## **Every community has its own assets and resources**

These assets and resources include local education and training providers, employers, public infrastructure, and community and government services. When these assets and resources are not coordinated or effectively used, it can undermine efforts to respond to local labour market challenges.



## **Every community has local leaders who are committed to improving their region**

Local leaders are invested in the future of their community and deeply understand local challenges and opportunities – often better than decision-makers in capital cities or Canberra. As the Australian Government’s 2023 White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities states, “those on the ground, and especially communities themselves, are often best placed to identify and develop targeted solutions based on their specific needs.” Local leaders can work together more effectively and make their voices heard when they have support and resources.

**The Local Jobs Program provides a framework to build the capacity of local leaders to leverage community assets and resources and respond to local labour market challenges.**

# The program has several components in each Employment Region



## **Employment Facilitator and Support Officer**

The program is implemented by a locally-based Employment Facilitator and Support Officer.



## **Jobs and Skills Taskforce**

A Taskforce is made up of local leaders who are committed to improving their region. The Taskforce meets regularly to set priorities, develop solutions and support implementation.



## **Jobs and Skills Plan**

The Employment Facilitator and Taskforce develop a plan that sets out their region's needs and priorities.



## **Funding**

The program establishes several funds to support local initiatives:

- Local Recovery Fund: A fund for local projects aligned to local priorities
- Local Initiatives Fund: A flexible funding pool that Employment Facilitators can access for small scale local activities
- National Priority Fund: A larger fund to address structural and other barriers to employment (not Employment Region based)



# A flexible and responsive program

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# The program is flexible and responsive to each community's needs

**The program can adapt to very different community contexts to achieve outcomes.** The four regions included in the research project are all very different: they all have different industries, workforce profiles, labour market challenges, local services, geography and job seeker cohorts. The research found that the program has successfully adapted to these differences to respond to the specific needs of each community and create important outcomes. Examples of how the program has adapted to regional conditions in the case study regions are presented below. See the case studies for further detail.

Labour market challenges	Industry profile	Local services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Mid-North South Australia</b> has areas with 'thin' labour markets and limited resources and providers to upskill the local workforce to respond to industry demand. The Employment Facilitator has responded by leading networks and sector-wide events to develop new solutions and promote local jobs, and influence government policy to improve access to local training.</li><li>• Public transport networks in <b>Illawarra South Coast</b> do not always meet the needs of job seekers and workers in the region. The program has successfully advocated to introduce new bus routes and schedules that improve connections between residential areas and workplaces.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two regions are experiencing significant growth in heavy industries: <b>Illawarra South Coast</b> (manufacturing, defence) and <b>Mid North South Australia</b> (natural resources). Both regions struggle to meet growing workforce demands from the local labour market. The program has responded by increasing access to training and increasing awareness of job opportunities.</li><li>• <b>Western Melbourne</b> has a large local economy with a range of small and large employers. The program has responded to the diverse needs of the region by connecting local Employment Services Providers to build more coordinated responses to employer needs.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communities in <b>Mid North South Australia</b> and <b>New England and North West</b> lack access to important services, such as training, which presents significant barriers to employment. In these regions the program has stepped in to develop new programs that fill key gaps, or advocated for government to increase investment.</li><li>• By contrast, <b>Western Melbourne</b> has a large labour market and a 'busy' services system with many services, programs and initiatives. The program has responded by focusing on improving the coordination and effectiveness in the services system to deliver better outcomes for employers.</li></ul>



The following slides present findings on how successful Employment Facilitators have used this flexibility to take different approaches and achieve local outcomes across the case study regions

# Successful Employment Facilitators

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# Successful Employment Facilitators share common behaviours, but also bring their own experiences and skills

Employment Facilitators in the case study regions demonstrate several common behaviours that underpin their success.

- 1. Building trusted relationships:** They build trusted relationships with local stakeholders to improve service coordination and collaboration.
- 2. Being a 'source of truth':** They have their 'finger on the pulse' of the region. They actively share information and insights with all local stakeholders.
- 3. Creating ownership:** They create structures and opportunities for Taskforce members to take ownership and collaborate. They 'sell' the program to local stakeholders.
- 4. Maintaining impartiality:** They represent the interests of the region as a whole and ensure the Taskforce is a competitively neutral space for collaboration.
- 5. Seeing the big picture:** They approach labour market challenges from multiple angles. They are not constrained to a specific program or job seeker cohort.
- 6. Responding quickly:** They follow through on commitments and respond quickly to requests for help or information.

At the same time, the Employment Facilitators in the case study regions are all very different. Their different experiences and skills are reflected in how they have implemented the program. These differences are summarised below. See the case studies for further detail.

## Mid North South Australia

Lisa is a born and bred local with 20 years' experience in workforce development. She has held similar roles in the region including with State Government. She leverages her long-term relationships with local leaders and her understanding of policy issues to collaborate with others, develop valuable new programs and advocate to government.

## Illawarra South Coast

Sandra was the Support Officer before becoming the Employment Facilitator in early 2023. This enabled her to sustain relationships and continue supporting the Taskforce to operate effectively. Her background in TAFE, business, and developing proposals and tenders have lent themselves to the diverse requirements of the role.

## Western Melbourne

David and the Support Officer Kylie have backgrounds in business and employment services. They are employed by an Employment Services Provider to implement the program. They have used their professional experience and skills to build a wide network across the region and improve coordination between Employment Services Providers.

## New England and North West

Kate and Rechelle (the outgoing Employment Facilitator) and their team have backgrounds in community development and project management in regional communities. Their approach to building relationships with Indigenous organisations and community has focused on cultural competence and investing the time to build trust over the long term.

# Effective Taskforces

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# Taskforces that have stable membership and structures that support collaboration can take on more responsibility

**Some Taskforces are getting more involved in developing initiatives and implementing the program.** All Taskforces in the case study regions are sharing information on local challenges and opportunities and expanding the Employment Facilitator’s network. Some Taskforces are also collaborating on projects or taking on greater responsibility to implement activities under the program. Taskforces appear to take on greater responsibility where members have had more time to build trusted relationships, and where Employment Facilitators provide structures and support for collaborative activities. These findings are based on Taskforce activities observed within the priority areas that were in focus for each case study (refer to slide 21). Findings may therefore exclude other collaborative activity occurring outside the priority areas in focus.

## Levels of Taskforce responsibility and collaboration



# The program's outcomes

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# The Local Jobs Program creates valuable outcomes that respond to regional labour market challenges and gaps in local service systems

**Employment Facilitators create outcomes in collaboration with other people.** In place-based approaches like the Local Jobs Program, all outcomes are a collaborative effort. Change happens when people work together towards shared goals. Employment Facilitators are playing a pivotal role in all case study regions to support and lead groups of local leaders to work together to create outcomes. The case studies document examples of these outcomes, which can be grouped into four categories:



**1. Improving coordination between existing services, programs and employers.** This helps employment and other services work more effectively to meet industry needs and support more job seekers to access training, employment and other supports. The **Western Melbourne** region's work to improve relationships between major employers and Workforce Australia providers is a prominent example of this outcome.



**2. Developing new initiatives to address gaps in the local services system.** In some regions the Employment Facilitator and Taskforce have worked with local leaders to develop new programs that directly respond to gaps in the local services system. Some of these have been funded through the Local Recovery Fund but others have been funded externally. Examples include new training courses, a local industry tours program, and a pre-employment program for Indigenous women (see the **Mid North South Australia, Illawarra South Coast** and **New England and North West** case studies).



**3. Advocating to remove local barriers.** In two regions the program is collaborating with local leaders to influence state government policy to address labour market challenges. **Illawarra South Coast** influenced the NSW Government to add new local bus routes and schedules for workers and students. **Mid North South Australia's** Employment Facilitator is leading a group of stakeholders to advocate to the SA Government to invest in training the local workforce to meet growing industry needs.



**4. Connecting, navigating and promoting.** The above are examples of Employment Facilitators working closely with others on joint initiatives over time. Employment Facilitators in **all four case study regions** also spend a lot of their time sharing information, providing advice, helping people navigate complex service systems, and building relationships between local stakeholders with shared interests. These are small-scale, low-cost activities that can indirectly create valuable outcomes. They help people find the resources they need, connect with potential collaborators, or promote their program or service. Stakeholders in all case study regions described their Employment Facilitator as a trusted advisor and 'first port of call' when people needed help to understand their region or solve a workforce-related problem.



# The program's unique role

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# Many of these outcomes would be unlikely without the Local Jobs Program

**Employment Facilitators occupy a unique role that others are unlikely to fill.** Employment Facilitators have the flexibility to work with stakeholders across boundaries between sectors, businesses, funding streams or levels of government. These boundaries constrain many other programs. They have the remit to consider the needs of their region as a whole, rather than focus on a single stakeholder's interests. Employment Facilitators also have resources and support from the Commonwealth Government coupled with a distinctive set of skills and attributes. It is unlikely that other programs or organisations could step into this role in the case study regions, in the absence of the Local Jobs Program.

**Employment Facilitators play a pivotal role in achieving outcomes.** As outlined above, the research found that Employment Facilitators have played a pivotal role in achieving many of the outcomes observed. Examples include bringing stakeholders together to collaborate, leading groups to work together on an initiative, or quickly and directly connecting stakeholders with others who can enact or influence change. These actions were necessary conditions for the outcomes to be achieved in the case study regions.

**Stakeholders consistently stated that the Local Jobs Program had made a unique and important contribution to outcomes in their region.** Some stakeholders said that the program filled a gap that other organisations had not been able to. They said it was difficult to imagine many other organisations being able to play the same roles in their region as the Local Jobs Program.

“Without the Local Jobs Program I don't know if there's one specific group that would be able to do it. I think that you couldn't give it to current Employment Services Providers because they've got their own agendas. I think that it needs very specialised knowledge, and it needs to understand government guidelines and contracts, and rules and regulations, and also understand business.”

– **Kristie Dawe, Taskforce member and Project Manager, Matchworks**

“I don't believe there are other organisations that could step in to fill the Employment Facilitator's and Support Officer's shoes. During my time in economic development, I haven't come across any other similar service as proactive as the Local Jobs Program.”

– **Local council member**



# Lessons for the department

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# The research highlights several lessons for the department

**Comparing the case study regions provides lessons for how the department can support Employment Facilitators to deliver valuable outcomes.** The four case study regions included in the research show that the Local Jobs Program can create valuable outcomes for employers and job seekers. They show that the program has the flexibility to adapt to very different community contexts, and that successful Employment Facilitators are using their own experiences and skills to take their own approach to work with local stakeholders. The department can draw lessons from the research to continue supporting Employment Facilitators across the country. These are summarised below.

- 1. Protect Employment Facilitators' flexibility.** Employment Facilitators must have a degree of flexibility so they can respond to the challenges and opportunities of their region and build trusted relationships with local stakeholders. They need the autonomy to engage with the full range of relevant stakeholders in their region, and to be an impartial voice for the region. They need to be able to respond quickly to issues. And they need to be able to adapt their approach to local conditions. Protecting Employment Facilitators' flexibility is essential for the program's ongoing success, while maintaining appropriate accountability mechanisms.
- 2. Support continuity and transition planning.** Employment Facilitators' greatest assets include their relationships with local stakeholders and their knowledge of the region. Both take time to build. The research suggests that the program can achieve greater outcomes when Employment Facilitators and Taskforce members are in these roles for longer. Change is inevitable, but a structured approach to transition planning could help sustain momentum and outcomes in times of change.
- 3. Build the capacity of Employment Facilitators.** The research identifies a set of behaviours that are common to Employment Facilitators in the case study regions. These behaviours could inform the recruitment of new Employment Facilitators and ongoing learning and development. Recruitment could also prioritise individuals who bring established relationships with local leaders and deep knowledge of the region to the role (see point 2 above).
- 4. Support Employment Facilitators to get the most out of their Taskforce.** Employment Facilitators in the case study regions demonstrate several approaches to Taskforce facilitation. These could be adopted by others. This includes keeping Taskforce meetings action-oriented (not a 'talk fest'), creating ownership by giving members a chance to co-design priorities, and clearly defining Taskforce members' roles and responsibilities. Employment Facilitators in the case study regions also keep Taskforce members accountable by documenting actions and reporting back, and create 'competitively neutral' spaces for stakeholders to build trust and understand each other's businesses, interests and strengths.

# The following pages present the four case studies

The case studies focus on 1-2 of the priority issues that are identified in each region's Local Jobs and Skills Plan. Each case study:

- Provides a snapshot of the region, its labour market challenges and local responses to these challenges.
- Describes how the Employment Facilitator and Support Officer have approached implementation, facilitated their Taskforce, and worked with local leaders to create outcomes.
- Includes detailed examples of the outcomes that have been achieved in the four case study regions, called 'Outcome stories'.



**New England and North West, NSW (p.43)**  
Developing local solutions for Indigenous and CALD job seekers

**Illawarra South Coast, NSW (p.30)**  
Improving public transport and supporting the growing manufacturing and defence industries

**Mid North South Australia, SA (p.22)**  
Increasing investment in regional skills and training capability

**Western Melbourne, VIC (p.37)**  
Improving coordination between Employment Services Providers, training providers and employers

# Case studies

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# Mid North South Australia



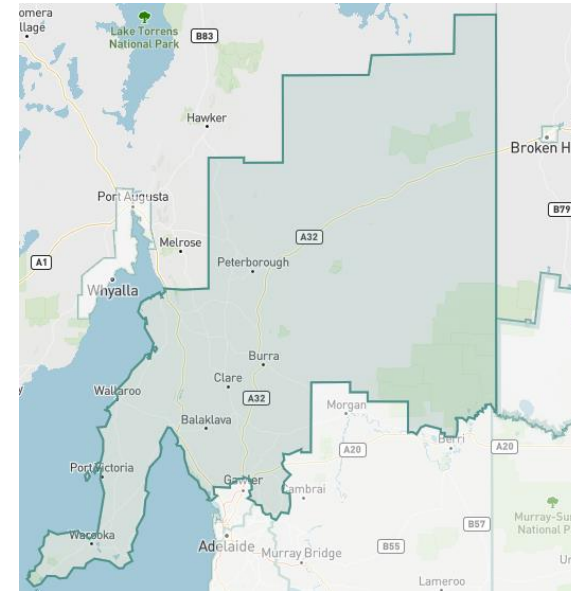
# Case study 1. Mid North South Australia. Increasing investment in regional skills and training capability

## Local labour market

Mid North South Australia is a large and diverse region with very different labour markets and local economies. The region includes the Barossa Valley and Yorke Peninsula, part of the Upper Spencer Gulf, and other rural communities.

The largest industries by workforce size are healthcare and social assistance, agriculture, forestry and fishing, and manufacturing. The workforce for health care and social assistance has almost doubled in size in the last decade, while agriculture, forestry and fishing and manufacturing have declined.

The Upper Spencer Gulf is receiving significant public and private investment in hydrogen, other renewable energy, mining and heavy industry. Total investments in the region have been estimated at \$20 billion, with the potential to create 24,000 jobs. This is expected to create significant local demand for workers over the coming years.



The Mid North South Australia case study focuses on the priority issue of skills investment and training capability.

Labour market summary	Mid North South Australia	Australia
Number of people employed	53,900	14,046,100
Unemployment rate	3.4%	3.5%
Participation rate	55.6%	66.8%
Youth unemployment rate	8.2%	7.8%

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, [Monthly Labour Market Dashboards](#), updated July 2023



# Context: Labour market challenges and local responses

## Labour market challenges

### Mid North South Australia faces several important labour market challenges:

- Some communities have very high unemployment (for example, above 10% in Port Pirie), and regional workforce participation is significantly below the national average.
- The region has an ageing population and workforce, which is driving growth in the healthcare and social assistance sector.
- Intergenerational joblessness presents a significant barrier to employment for some job seekers.

### The region also has areas with ‘thin’ labour markets – meaning a small pool of job seekers to fill roles – at a time when some industries are anticipating significant growth:

- Growing industries struggle to meet their workforce needs, such as heavy industry and health and social assistance.
- Limited capability to deliver training for job seekers to meet industry needs in Upper Spencer Gulf.
- High competition for skilled workers between employers – this means small businesses can struggle to retain valued workers.
- Challenges attracting and retaining professionals in the region.



## Local responses

**Stakeholders reported that the region has been overlooked by government, but local leaders are working together to develop solutions.** They stated that government has reduced its investment in skills and workforce development across regional South Australia in the past two decades. Decisions are perceived as being made by policy-makers from outside the region, in Adelaide and Canberra, with limited local input.

Several other organisations are working alongside the Local Jobs Program to respond to local labour market challenges. These include Regional Development Australia, Spencer Gulf Cities, Uni Hub Spencer Gulf and the Resources and Engineering Skills Alliance. The Local Jobs Program is collaborating with each of these organisations through different initiatives.

“Workforce is the biggest issue that we have in regional South Australia, other than water. Fifteen years ago, there was quite a strong representation here of State Government offices. That doesn't exist anymore. If it wasn't for this program and some short-term funding to RDAs, we would have effectively zero local resourcing from state or federal government.”

– **Leonie Boothby, previous CEO, Regional Development Australia Barossa, Gawler, Light, Adelaide Plains**



# Implementation: How the Local Jobs Program was implemented in this region

## Employment Facilitator and Support Officer

- The Employment Facilitator, Lisa Brock, is a born and bred local with 20 years' experience in supporting job seekers and retrenched workers. She previously delivered both the Regional Employment Trials and Structural Adjustment Program in the region and worked for the SA Government. This has given her deep knowledge of the region and its labour market challenges, long-term relationships with local leaders including industry, and continuity in the region.
- The Support Officer Hayley Bishop provides administrative support across all aspects of the program and complements Lisa's skills.

## Local stakeholder engagement

- Lisa has played a leading role in a collaboration between local leaders to increase public investment in local workforce development in Mid North South Australia and the Upper Spencer Gulf.
- She is leading two regional networks that include over 400 stakeholders from the employment, education and training sectors.

## Taskforce

- Lisa worked closely with her Taskforce to develop and agree the priorities in the Jobs and Skills Plan. The plan identified Skills Investment and Training Capability as the number one strategic priority.
- The Taskforce splits its time evenly between strategy (planning) and operations (progressing activities).
- Taskforce members described the group as a 'competitively neutral' space to share information and resources and collaborate on new initiatives to address labour market needs.

## Implementation approach

- Lisa has leveraged her strong relationships with industry to bring employers to the table to support initiatives to upskill the local workforce.
- Lisa's experience in the SA Government has given her an awareness of funding and policy levers at state level.
- She has used her collaborative approach, long-term relationships and understanding of local workforce issues to enable her to lead local collaboration around a shared strategy on regional workforce investment.

"When you've got somebody who has worked in this sector over a long period of time, focused on connecting people to opportunities and developing the skills and training strategies that go into that, all that doesn't change with governments or election cycles. To have the continuity in Lisa, combined with the fact that the program is more open and less restrictive than others, is highly valuable."

– Jodie Badcock, CEO, Resources and Engineering Skills Alliance



# Outcome story #1



Advocating to remove local barriers

Developed shared strategy to increase local training capability in the Upper Spencer Gulf

## **Problem: What labour market challenge was the Local Jobs Program responding to?**

The Upper Spencer Gulf is an economically important region that overlaps with Mid North South Australia. Government and industry are investing an estimated \$20 billion in the region, with potential to create 24,000 jobs in natural resources and renewable energy. However local job seekers and workers risk missing out on these jobs because many do not have the required skills or qualifications, and there is a lack of providers and infrastructure in the region to provide training.

## **Activities: How did the Local Jobs Program respond?**

Lisa has collaborated with local education and training organisations and local government to develop a shared strategy to increase local training capability. A key feature of this is the Upper Spencer Gulf Jobs and Skills Hub – a facility that would broker vocational education and training into the region based on industry needs. Specifically, the Local Jobs Program team:

- *Built industry support:* Leveraged relationships with industry to contribute to roundtable discussions with government to define the problem and build support for action.
- *Advocated to state government:* Played a key role in meetings with the SA Government to influence policy-makers.
- *Drafted a concept paper:* Led the drafting of a concept paper that described the hub concept and made the case for funding.

- *Led funding application:* Led the submission of a funding application to the SA Government for the hub.

## **Outcomes: What outcomes did this lead to?**

Lisa has played a pivotal role in delivering these outcomes and highlighting the need for regional workforce investment to the SA Government. While a recent funding application to state government for the Jobs and Skills Hub was unsuccessful, the Local Jobs Program has continued advocacy efforts. This included delivering the inaugural Upper Spencer Gulf Workforce Summit in August this year. This event brought over 100 industry, government and community stakeholders together to understand emerging workforce needs and develop actions to increase long-term economic benefits for the region.

“Lisa’s experience, regional knowledge, and trusted relationships helped us get more attention and ministerial focus. The Local Jobs Program and Spencer Gulf Cities worked together on a pitch to the Premier for some additional resources for the Upper Spencer Gulf, understanding that there was some significant growth happening in the region. I believe that has directly resulted in the state funding a jobs plan specific to the region.”

– Leonie Boothby, previous CEO, Regional Development Australia Barossa, Gawler, Light, Adelaide Plains



# Outcome story #2



Developed accredited training courses to meet to local industry demand

## **Problem: What labour market challenge was the Local Jobs Program responding to?**

Local employers in the growing heavy industry, mining and renewables industries needed workers with specific skills and qualifications. Local job seekers and students had limited opportunity to gain these skills and qualifications because the required training was not available.

## **Activities: How did the Local Jobs Program respond?**

The Local Jobs Program team supported collaborative efforts to respond to this issue. They:

- *Helped define the need:* Identified a gap in training courses through regional networks, industry leaders and workforce data.
- *Collaborated with technical experts:* Worked closely with Resources and Engineering Skills Alliance, Uni Hub Spencer Gulf and Central Queensland University to develop the Associate Degree of Engineering.
- *Built industry support:* Leveraged relationships to build industry support for training courses and get written letters of support for an application to get a Certificate II on the funded training list.

## **Outcomes: What outcomes did this lead to?**

Through the above activities, the Local Jobs Program supported local providers and organisations to develop and deliver two new training and education pathways that are aligned with local industry needs:

- An Associate Degree of Engineering delivered by Central Queensland University in partnership with Uni Hub Spencer Gulf. This degree is the first of its kind in Australia.
- A Certificate II in Resources and Infrastructure, in collaboration with the Resources and Engineering Skills Alliance. This was successfully recognised as a traineeship that provides entry level pathways for school and TAFE students into resources and infrastructure.

These new courses will help more local job seekers and students to access and benefit from the significant economic growth and job creation that is expected in the Upper Spencer Gulf.

“Lisa has been able to make it work and that comes from a real commitment to making it work, rather than implementing a policy or a program that is really clearly defined.”

– Robin O’Dea, General Manager Training Partnerships,  
Career Employment Group Inc



# Outcome story #3



Improving coordination

Led sector-wide collaboration to respond to regional care sector workforce challenges

## **Problem: What labour market challenge was the Local Jobs Program responding to?**

The care sector faces a workforce shortage challenge nationally. Workforce shortages in Mid North South Australia are exacerbated by aging populations and thin labour markets.

## **Activities: How did the Local Jobs Program respond?**

The Local Jobs Program led an initiative to bring together different parts of the care sector to discuss and respond to workforce challenges. Lisa and her team:

- *Organised a care sector forum:* Organised regional forum that brought together different parts of the care sector.
- *Facilitated sharing across industries:* Invited heavy industry employers (including natural resources and engineering) to the forum to share their own workforce strategies.
- *Convened stakeholders to collaborate:* Established new working groups with aged care, disability and allied health providers to work through specific issues.
- *Led new initiatives:* Implemented several initiatives that emerged from the forum to respond to workforce challenges.

## **Outcomes: What outcomes did this lead to?**

The Local Jobs Program has brought together previously isolated organisations to discuss sector-wide issues. This has resulted in stronger relationships and ongoing collaboration to develop new initiatives.

This includes initiatives to address entry level workforce needs, build skills in the existing care workforce, and attract new workers into the sector (including piloting a community connector role to attract and retain professionals moving to the region).

“Lisa has been instrumental in pulling together a whole lot of employers in the care sector. This wouldn't have happened unless there was someone based in the community with the local connections and flexibility to do it. It is a local solution to what is arguably a national workforce issue.”

– Anita Kuss, CEO, Uni Hub Spencer Gulf



# Illawarra South Coast



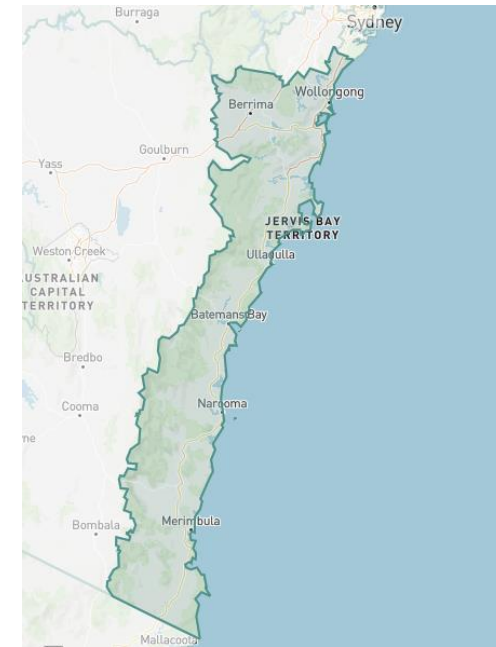
# Case study 2: Illawarra South Coast. Improving public transport and supporting the growing manufacturing and defence industries

## Regional snapshot

Illawarra South Coast is a diverse region spanning from southern Sydney down to the Victorian border. The region includes the city of Wollongong, which is the third largest city in NSW, small towns along the coast, and rural communities with limited urban connections.


A lot of workers in the cities of Wollongong and Shoalhaven regularly commute to Sydney or work for Sydney-based employers from home. There is also a large and growing workforce employed locally, particularly with recent investments into local defence, manufacturing industries and the NSW Government's Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone.

The region's largest industries by workforce size are health care and social assistance, education and training, retail trade, and construction. Manufacturing and energy industries are expected to grow significantly over the next two years.



Labour market summary	Illawarra South Coast	Australia
Number of people employed	246,000	14,046,100
Unemployment rate	2.9%	3.5%
Participation rate	61.6%	66.8%
Youth unemployment rate	5.6%	7.8%

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, [Monthly Labour Market Dashboards](#), updated June 2023; and [Employment Region Industry profile](#), accessed August 2023

 The Illawarra South Coast case study focuses on how the Local Jobs Program has worked on two local priorities: local transport issues, and the manufacturing and defence industries.

# Context: Labour market challenges and local responses

## Labour market challenges

**The region faces a range of local labour market challenges.** Major challenges identified in the research include: youth disengagement from education, training and employment; limited public transport connections; and high rates of long-term unemployment particularly for First Nations, mature aged and young people. The region also faces workforce shortages across the aged care, disability and early childhood sectors.

**The region faces several distinctive labour market challenges that reflect its industry mix and geographic spread:**

- Meeting workforce needs for small businesses and the hospitality and tourism sectors in a large region where many areas are only accessible by car.
- Meeting expected demand for skilled workers in the growing manufacturing and energy industries from the local workforce. This will require a response from registered training organisations to upskill locals or attract new residents to study and work in the region.



## Local responses

**The region has several other organisations and programs that are responding to local labour market challenges.** Many of these are based around the larger cities and towns in the north of the region. The Local Jobs Program has direct connections to some of these organisations and programs:

- The National Youth Employment Body (NYEB) is a nationwide place-based program of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. It focuses on addressing young peoples' barriers to employment. The NYEB has a Community Investment Committee based in Shoalhaven, and includes council, TAFE NSW, employers and employment services. The Local Jobs Program has been collaborating with the NYEB on a youth employment strategy.
- Illawarra Innovative Industry Network (I3NET) is a network of 80+ businesses with over 20,000 employees. Members are involved in the mining, minerals processing, infrastructure, energy and defence industries. The CEO of I3NET is on the Local Jobs Program Taskforce.
- Several regional business chambers run employer networks across the region, including Shellharbour City, the Illawarra Connection, Business Illawarra, Shoalhaven Business and Kiama Small Business Forum.
- Business Illawarra supports affiliated chambers of commerce across NSW through advocacy and initiatives.



# Implementation: How the Local Jobs Program was implemented in this region

## Employment Facilitator and Support Officers

- The Employment Facilitator, Sandra Gray, has more than 35 years' experience in employment and training.
- Sandra stepped into the role in September 2022 after working as the Support Officer with the previous Employment Facilitator.
- Stakeholders trust and value Sandra because of her experience, her highly organised and action-oriented approach, and continuity in the program.
- Sandra is supported by two Support Officers. Michelle Bobbin plays some of the Employment Facilitator roles in the southern part of the Employment Region. The other Support Officer, Renee Madge, provides administrative support.

## Local stakeholder engagement

- The working group structure significantly increases the number of local stakeholders who are directly involved in the program. More than 300 stakeholders are engaged across the six working groups, including observers connected to the working groups.
- Sandra also increases the reach of the program by delegating greater responsibility to one of the Support Officers in the southern part of the region.
- The public transport working group has brought together a diverse group of local stakeholders to successfully influence state government decision-making about local public transport routes (see next page).

## The Taskforce

- The Taskforce supports six working groups, each leading on one of the priority issues identified in the Local Jobs Plan. This structure expands the program's reach, involves a wider network of stakeholders, and delegates responsibility to implement activities.
- Supporting and maintaining the working group structure effectively requires the team to be highly organised, clarify Taskforce and working group member's roles, and ensure consistent two-way communication.

## Implementation approach

- The Local Jobs Program manage the Taskforce and working group structure by clearly documenting action items, keeping members accountable, and sharing achievements to build momentum and celebrate progress.
- Highly structured working groups are often chaired by Taskforce members, allowing the team to 'share the load', build support for key issues, bring in local expertise and delegate elements of program delivery.

"What the program does isn't new, but it 'turbo charges' existing work through linkages. This makes action happen."

– Bianca Perry, I3Net CEO, Taskforce member

"The Taskforce is well placed to leverage information provided by the community about what's happening and what's needed."

– Kaye Morris, TAFE NSW, Taskforce member



# Outcome story #1



## Improving regional public transport connections to get people to work

### **Problem: What labour market challenge was the Local Jobs Program responding to?**

Like many regional areas, public transport in Illawarra South Coast is very limited, particularly outside urban centres. The Sydney South Coast trainline finishes at Bomaderry, less than halfway down the region's coastline. Private bus companies operate across the region but are subject to local funding agreements and commercial decision-making, and schedules are not aligned to local workforce needs. Limited transport options disproportionately affect community members experiencing disadvantage and make it even harder to access education, training or employment.

**Activities: How did the Local Jobs Program respond?** The team and the transport working group leveraged existing relationships to advocate for the expansion and improvement of local bus routes around Nowra. The transport working group:

- *Identified collaborators:* Collaborated with stakeholders including TAFE NSW, bus companies, employers and community service organisations to influence local planning and delivery of 16 Regional Cities, a Transport for NSW program to improve regional bus services across NSW.
- *Broadened the consultation process:* Convinced Transport for NSW to conduct additional focus groups with workers and TAFE students to explore more varied perspectives and needs.

- *Engaged private bus company to pilot new routes:* Advocated for funding to support the pilot and demonstrate need through the collection of bus route user data.

### **Outcomes: What outcomes did this lead to?**

A total of 126 new bus routes were added in the greater Nowra region, including improved routes and schedules for people who use public transport to commute to work, university and TAFE. The transport working group influenced the process so that new bus routes and schedules reflected the needs of workers and students.

This has established the transport working group as a credible local representative body that is now consulted by other stakeholders regarding regional transport issues.

“Bus company routes tend to reflect the time and frequency needs of the ‘shopping public’, rather than residents who require transportation to attend work, school and training commitments. Having NSW services engagement and active links into our region through the Local Jobs Program is a big step. The ability to collaborate across sectors means that as Taskforce members, we hear more about where the barriers lie.”

– Brooke Gould, Transport working group Chair



# Outcome story #2



Making it easier for local people to get their Learners

## **Problem: What labour market challenge was the Local Jobs Program responding to?**

Limited public transport connections in Illawarra South Coast mean that it is difficult to get around without a car. However, many young people do not have a driver's licence because they cannot access a car or lessons. This presents a barrier for many young people to get to training, education or work. The local TAFE runs an eight-week 'L plates' course. Community feedback provided to the Taskforce revealed that young people were not engaging in this training due to the length of the program.

## **Activities: How did the Local Jobs Program respond?**

The Local Jobs Program team and working group members in the southern Bega Valley region undertook several activities:

- *Designed a new course:* Collaborated with TAFE NSW to design a new short course that was better suited to young people's needs.
- *Advocated for policy change:* Met with several NSW Government representatives to advocate for a reduction in the number of hours of driving practice that learner drivers must complete to get their probationary licence.
- *Engaged community volunteers:* Sought funding to purchase a vehicle for local Rotary volunteers to help learner drivers increase their driving hours.

## **Outcomes: What outcomes did this lead to?**

The new delivery model for the TAFE 'L plates' course had around 20 participants, with most participants passing.

The transport working group are now turning their attention to advocating for the NSW Government to change policies around driver licensing. These changes include reducing the hours of practice driving that are required to be eligible for a probationary licence, improving access to the Driver Licensing Access Program (DLAP), and extension of the remote/regional restricted license to include the Bega Valley.

The working group have met with the NSW Transport Minister, senior managers of Transport for NSW, and NSW local members for South Coast and Bega Valley.

“Young Learner Drivers often end up driving illegally because they are unable to get their driving hours, and may often drive out of necessity for work. This then becomes a justice issue.”

– **Kaye Morris, TAFE NSW, Taskforce member**

“The number one barrier for our students is access to transport and the ability to attain a licence, particularly if they're hoping to leave early and undertake a trade. Without the working group, the voices of those young people wouldn't be heard.”

– **Holly Pastor, DET Schools, working group member**



# Outcome story #3



## Industry tours initiative for job seekers and students

### **Problem: What labour market challenge was the Local Jobs Program responding to?**

Many job seekers and students have limited awareness of the employment and career opportunities that are available in the Illawarra South Coast region. This means that many people believe that they need to leave the region to find work or start their career, even though local employers in many sectors urgently need staff.

### **Activities: How did the Local Jobs Program respond?**

The Local Jobs Program team and the manufacturing and defence working group worked with local employers, Employment Services Providers and job seekers to understand the reasons behind this limited awareness and develop solutions. The working group:

- *Developed a pilot program:* Developed a pilot industry tours program which involved taking groups of job seekers and students on a bus to visit several local employers. The tours gave job seekers a chance to meet employers and understand entry-level roles. Students on the tours could understand the range of opportunities available and where further study would be required.
- *Sourced funding:* Accessed the Local Recovery Fund to fund three trial tours and hire a bus (the driver is now a member of the transport working group).

- *Supported implementation:* Attended all tours on the bus, providing introductions to employers and chaperoning job seekers and students.
- *Planned for the future:* Developed a plan that maps out employer visits, key dates and ongoing stakeholder involvement.

### **Outcomes: What outcomes did this lead to?**

About 20 job seekers have been matched with local employers through the industry tours. The tours help job seekers understand what roles are available, and the range of local industries and businesses seeking staff.

“As an employer, the tours are an opportunity to showcase the range of roles available and to model a flexible and inclusive workplace.”  
– John Lamont, CEO and owner of NowChem



# Western Melbourne



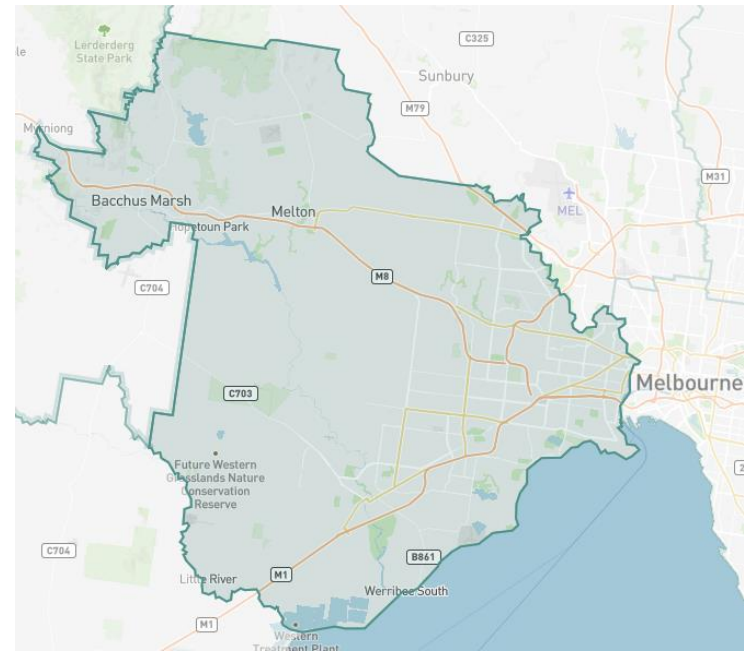
# Case study 3: Western Melbourne. Improving coordination between Employment Services Providers, training providers and employers

## Regional snapshot

The Western Melbourne Employment Region begins about five kilometres from the Melbourne CBD and stretches to the border of regional Victoria. It covers inner city suburbs such as Footscray and Altona, a large swathe of Melbourne’s expansive heavy industry and warehousing districts, and growth corridor outer suburbs including Melton, Werribee and Truganina.

The region’s population, workforce and industry base has grown significantly over the past decade. However, stakeholders consulted in the research shared the view that Western Melbourne has not received as much public investment in infrastructure compared to the Eastern and Southern suburbs.

Industries that have grown the fastest in the past decade are professional, scientific and technical services, and health care and social assistance. The workforce of these industries have almost doubled over this time.



Labour market summary	Western Melbourne	Australia
Number of people employed	492,600	14,046,100
Unemployment rate	5.4%	3.5%
Participation rate	73.2%	66.8%
Youth unemployment rate	10.8%	7.8%

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, [Monthly Labour Market Dashboards](#), updated June 2023



The Western Melbourne case study focuses on how the Local Jobs Program has worked on improving coordination with Employment Services Providers.

# Context: Labour market challenges and local responses

## Labour market challenges

**Western Melbourne is the only metro case study region in this research project.** While geographically much smaller than the other case study regions, it is still highly diverse given that it includes inner city suburbs, industrial zones and outer suburb growth corridors.

**The research identified several major labour market challenges in the region:**

- One of the largest job seeker caseloads in Australia.
- Poor public transport infrastructure, particularly connecting residential areas to industrial zones.
- One of the most culturally diverse job seeker caseloads in the country and largest First Nations job seeker caseload in metro Melbourne, meaning a need for culturally safe and appropriate employment and other support services.



## Local responses

**Western Melbourne has a very busy services system compared to some of the rural areas included in this research.** There are many government and non-government programs and initiatives in the region responding to labour market challenges, some of which the Local Jobs Program is directly involved in:

- The Wyndham Employment Trial run by the Centre for Policy Development (CPD) helps humanitarian migrants access employment. The CPD is represented on the Taskforce.
- A Victorian Government Skills and Jobs Centre is located in Footscray, which aims to help workers find work in new industries. This initiative is also represented on the Taskforce.
- The West of Melbourne Economic Development Alliance (WoMEDA) of Victoria University aims to support job creation in Western Melbourne.
- Wyndham City Council runs Opportunity Wyndham, an initiative with local employers to increase access to jobs.

While these initiatives share the Local Jobs Program's focus on helping job seekers and employers overcome labour market challenges, they tend to focus on only part of the Western Melbourne region or a specific job seeker cohort (such as young people or humanitarian migrants).

# Implementation: How the Local Jobs Program was implemented in this region

## Employment Facilitator and Support Officer

- The Employment Facilitator David Turnbull, and Support Officer Kylie Olsen, started their roles in July 2022. Their first year has focused on building a new Taskforce, understanding their region, increasing their presence in the region, and forming relationships with local stakeholders.
- Both have worked in Western Melbourne and have built on existing relationships in the region. Stakeholders reported they are highly visible, trusted and well connected.
- The team are employed by an Employment Services Provider that holds the contract for the Local Jobs Program in this region and several other Employment Regions across the country. This provides David and Kylie with administrative support and resources and the opportunity to share insights with other Local Jobs Program teams.

## Taskforce

- The Taskforce only had two members when David and Kylie commenced their roles in July 2022 as there had recently been a lot of turnover. The team have therefore focused on recruiting new members with a shared commitment to the region and strengthening relationships between members.
- Members reported that being on the Taskforce is beneficial for sharing knowledge and building local relationships.
- The team stated that the next 12 months for the Taskforce will focus on more collaborative initiatives and addressing policy-related barriers to employment such as public transport issues.

## Local stakeholder engagement

- The Support Officer curates a Trello board to share events, job vacancies, training opportunities and programs with a network of over 400 stakeholders. It is consistently reported as being highly valued.
- External observers are invited to attend Taskforce meetings to support broader engagement.
- The Employment Facilitator and Support Officer also regularly attend related events to maintain a high level of visibility in the region.

## Implementation approach

- The team have to date focused on improving relationships and coordination between employment, training and community services, so they can better support job seekers and employers – rather than developing new programs and services. This appears to respond well to the needs of a region that already has a lot of different services and programs in place, and leverages the Employment Facilitator and Support Officer's prior experience in employment services.
- They have built relationships by spending time with stakeholders to understand their business and needs, organising and attending in-person meetings and site visits, following up to maintain relationships and being widely connected across the region and sectors.

“It's so important for Kowanj to be a member of the Local Jobs Program Taskforce, it enables us to share labour market information with our community to stay informed and knowledgeable. A lack of information is a major challenge for migrant communities when first arriving in Australia.”

– Ash Atar, CEO, Kowanj





# Outcome story #1



## Engaging employment services to address workforce shortages for a major multinational food company

### **Problem: What labour market challenge was the Local Jobs Program responding to?**

Diamond Valley Pork (DVP) is a pork processor and wholesaler with a large meatpacking facility in Laverton. DVP is a subsidiary of JBS Foods, a global meat and food processing company. DVP faced ongoing challenges in recruiting for its Laverton facility from the local workforce, including through Workforce Australia. The company urgently needed to find a solution because the Laverton facility was not eligible to access migrant labour through the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme.

### **Activities: How did the Local Jobs Program respond?**

DVP contacted the Commonwealth Government to raise concerns about not being able to access the PALM scheme, who connected them with the local Employment Facilitator. David met the DVP team, visited the Laverton facility and brought Workforce Australia providers to the facility for a tour. This tour helped the providers to understand the industry needs, day to day operations of the roles available, meet the HR staff and build relationships. Over time, David continued to send providers to the site. The tours grew to include job seekers from the providers. The Local Jobs Program team:

- *Identified the need:* Connected with DVP to understand business, workforce needs and how the Local Jobs Program could help.
- *Brokered connections:* Brought Workforce Australia providers to the facility.

- *Communicated opportunities:* Shared DVP vacancies with Workforce Australia providers and other organisations.
- *Maintained engagement:* Continued to meet with DVP and Workforce Australia providers to reinforce engagement and establish a pipeline for ongoing recruitment.

### **Outcomes: What outcomes did this lead to?**

DVP have employed 103 people through the connections made through the Local Jobs Program and subsequent tours. After listening to their challenges, David facilitated the development of sustainable relationships between DVP and Workforce Australia providers, resulting in higher quality referrals and placements of job seekers into the company. DVP now conduct tours for both Employment Services Providers and job seekers, enabling them to see the industry work firsthand and get a sense of the roles available.

Following this work, David and Kylie are planning to meet with JBS Foods to support efforts to recruit 60-70 new staff from local labour markets into the business.

“The success of the program is down to David knowing business well. He’s in touch, he checks how providers are going, and the service we have been getting from providers has been fantastic. David feels like a part of our team.”

– **Michael Doyle, consultant to Diamond Valley Pork**



# Outcome story #2



Helping employment and training providers support more job seekers by strengthening their local relationships

## **Problem: What labour market challenge was the Local Jobs Program responding to?**

The Taskforce shared that local stakeholders are disconnected and not sharing information across the Western Melbourne region. This means that job seekers were not being placed as efficiently or effectively into employment.

## **Activities: How did the Local Jobs Program respond?**

To address this, the Local Jobs Program team have:

- *Built local relationships:* Connected with Employment Services Providers and encouraged them to share knowledge, opportunities, vacancies and training.
- *Brokered connections:* Connected organisations with senior staff within Employment Services Providers to improve relationships and engagement.
- *Promoted programs:* Promoted organisations and programs via the curated Trello board, expos and other local avenues.
- *Provided advice:* Used local knowledge to give organisations advice on plans and strategies.

## **Outcomes: What outcomes did this lead to?**

Through the work of David and Kylie, Workforce Australia providers, employers and other service providers are more connected and equipped to collaborate to help job seekers upskill and/or find meaningful employment. For example:

- Fruit2Work train ex-offenders to help them reintegrate into mainstream employment. David and Kylie have helped Fruit2Work to build new relationships with businesses and employment services so they can help more people into employment. These connections have saved Fruit2Work significant time and resources.
- The Skills and Jobs Centre based at Victoria University partnered with the Local Jobs Program to run industry-specific job fairs designed to engage prospective/current learners and assist job seekers into employment. These activities demonstrated the effectiveness of a collaborative approach to increase job seeker engagement, improve employer involvement and promote service delivery within the local community.
- Serve It Up is a registered training organisation in the hospitality sector. The program has helped Serve It Up form connections that have increased the number and quality of referrals into training courses, and increased the number of employers that participants can be referred into after completing their training. Serve It Up estimates that a substantial number of current referrals come from Local Jobs Program connections.

“The work that David has done has been very beneficial. In fact at one stage, it was a matter of us being able to keep operating.”

– **Simon Fenech, General Manager, Fruit2Work**



# New England and North West



# Case study 4: New England and North West. Developing local solutions for First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse job seekers


## Regional snapshot

The New England and North West region of NSW covers a large area of rural and remote communities near the QLD border. The region has experienced a series of natural disasters in recent years including drought, bushfires and floods which significantly affected local communities and economic activity.

The largest cities in the region are Tamworth and Armidale with populations of approximately 78,000 and 29,000 respectively, both of which were visited during this research. The largest industries in the region by workforce size are agriculture, forestry and fishing, and healthcare and social assistance.

The region has a large First Nations community and a growing migrant population, particularly in Armidale. There is also a wide socio-economic wealth gap between residents.



 The New England and North West case study focuses on how the program is supporting First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) job seekers into training and employment.

Labour market summary	New England and North West	Australia
Number of people employed	93,400	14,046,100
Unemployment rate	1.7%	3.5%
Participation rate	63.3%	66.8%
Youth unemployment rate	3.7%	7.8%

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, [Monthly Labour Market Dashboards](#), updated June 2023

# Context: Labour market challenges and local responses

## Labour market challenges

**New England and North West faces several labour market challenges that reflect its location in regional and remote NSW.** These include:

- A large proportion of First Nations job seekers on the caseload. Forty three percent of job seekers on the employment services caseload identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This means there is a need for culturally responsive employment and support services.
- High staff turnover. With a 'thin' labour market, there is strong competition between employers for workers, which makes it difficult for employers to retain staff and fill some skilled vacancies. This also causes a greater reliance on FIFO workers.
- Housing shortages and high costs. These challenges mean that many job seekers and workers have to travel a long way to access services or get to work.



## Local responses

**There are limited initiatives to encourage collaborative responses to local labour market challenges.** The region's towns were described as isolated from one another and lacking government and non-government services. Stakeholders also reflected that recent natural disasters have forced the community to focus on recovery.

In this context, the Local Jobs Program has focused on building relationships with community and businesses, increasing information sharing and relationships across towns, and stepping in to provide some basic services in the absence of existing resources.

One new initiative is the Moree Special Activation Precinct, which will support agribusiness, logistics and food processing industries. It is expected to create thousands of jobs in the region. Businesses, council and community groups are thinking about how to address the workforce needs and best prepare locals for local opportunities.

# Implementation: How the Local Jobs Program was implemented in this region

## Employment Facilitator and Support Officer

- Kate McGrath stepped into the Employment Facilitator role during the research project in July 2023, taking over from Rechelle Leahy. Sarah Thurn is the Support Officer. Both Rechelle and Sarah are supporting Kate to transition into the role while Rechelle steps away to work on Construction on Country (see Outcome story #2, on page 48).
- Community members reported that the team have built trusted relationships particularly with the First Nations community and organisations.
- There is a particular focus on building cultural awareness and competency within the Taskforce and local stakeholders.

## Local stakeholder engagement

- The Local Jobs Program team have dedicated significant time to build relationships with community organisations. These include Guda Birgingira Aboriginal Corporation and Mosaic, a migrant and refugee organisation.
- They build trust by building their own cultural competence, spending time with organisations and communities, and collaborating on initiatives.
- The Local Jobs Program team also approached local stakeholder engagement sensitively following recent natural disasters. They shared that it was important to be patient and 'not rush in' following the recent floods when communities were busy recovering.

## Taskforce

- The Taskforce is composed of stakeholders from across key sectors including local council, TAFE, the health sector, an Employment Services Provider and Regional Development Australia.
- Members come from towns and cities across the region, and Taskforce meetings are held at different locations, which helps to increase connections across isolated communities.
- The Taskforce has seen high turnover because a lot of members changed professional roles.

## Implementation approach

- The team have stepped in to directly deliver essential services to help meet job seekers' basic needs when they thought this was needed. For example, they have helped First Nations residents to get their birth certificates so they can access employment and other services.
- They are recognised by local stakeholders as demonstrating strong cultural competence in their work with First Nations organisations.

“Our involvement with the Local Jobs Program has increased our exposure and understanding of working with young people, particularly First Nations young people. Three projects have come out of working with Rechelle and being involved in Construction on Country.”

– **Annie Harris, Executive Manager People and Culture, Armidale Regional Council**



# Outcome story #1



Delivered industry-led employment pilot for First Nations women

## **Problem: What labour market challenge was the Local Jobs Program responding to?**

First Nations community members were struggling with employment. In 2022 the NSW Government Roads to Home program funded construction works to maintain roads in the local Aboriginal mission outside Armidale. Aliethea Cutmore, a local First Nations community leader, asked the manager of the project why there were no First Nations workers on site. At the mission, many women were unemployed, struggling financially, single parents and victim/survivors of domestic violence. Seeing the opportunity to create a training program for local women to participate, Aliethea reached out to Rechelle to seek support brokering connections with training organisations.

## **Activities: How did the Local Jobs Program respond?**

The Local Jobs Program team:

- *Brokered relationship*: Brought together three organisations to develop a pilot program – a construction company, a training organisation and Guda Birgingira Aboriginal Corporation.
- *Connected stakeholders*: Helped procure appropriate training equipment for the program.
- *Built trusted relationships*: Supported First Nations stakeholders to engage and work together for the first time with other community members.

## **Outcomes: What outcomes did this lead to?**

Rechelle helped Aliethea to establish a traineeship with the Roads to Home program. Nineteen First Nations women were trained and employed, and the program provided the inspiration for Construction on Country. For many of these women, employment has helped them to financially support their families or escape domestic violence.

“She could see that there was a need here. She could see that there was a demand here for jobs, but also bringing us in to these jobs.”

– **Aliethea Cutmore, CEO, Guda Birgingira Aboriginal Corporation**

“They all felt comfortable. They were working with each other. They were in a safe space as Aboriginal women. Aliethea was running it alongside Joblink Plus, who are also the Aboriginal specialist Employment Services Providers for our region, and now 19 of the women have work.”

– **Rechelle Leahy, previous Employment Facilitator**



# Outcome story #2



Led development of pre-employment program for First Nations and CALD women in construction

## **Problem: What labour market challenge was the Local Jobs Program responding to?**

About 43% of job seekers on the employment services caseload in New England and North West identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. The area is also experiencing an increase in migrant and refugee populations, who typically require greater support to find long-term sustainable employment. With wide socio-economic gaps in the region, many First Nations and CALD community members fall through the employment cracks. Women were identified as missing out on job opportunities the most, especially in male dominated industries like construction.

## **Activities: How did the Local Jobs Program respond?**

Construction on Country was created as a pre-employment program to support women looking for a career in trades with mentorship, skills and opportunities. To make this possible, the Local Jobs Program team:

- *Identified target cohort needs and demands:* Built on the lessons of the pilot program with the Roads to Home program (see previous page) and expanded the program to include CALD communities.
- *Led the co-development process:* Worked with First Nations community members, CALD community members and cultural training advisory groups to develop the program model.

- *Led the funding application:* Successfully secured \$300k through the Connecting Women to Trades grant program of the NSW Department of Education.

Without the Local Jobs Program’s commitment to building long-term relationships with the local leaders in the First Nations and CALD communities, it is unlikely that this program would have had the trust and support required to get it off the ground.

## **Outcomes: What outcomes did this lead to?**

Construction on Country fills a gap in skills and training services for a group of women who were not able to access other programs to get into the construction industry. It is culturally sensitive and trauma informed. Over 70 women have registered to take part in the program since it commenced mid-2023.

“Construction on Country is something that would never have been pulled off previously and that is only through the connections and networks and the support of everyone in the Taskforce and in the region that we’ve developed over that last couple of years.”

– **Rechelle Leahy, previous Employment Facilitator**





# Appendix

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# This research generates insights into what the Local Jobs Program can achieve and how it does it

## Research purpose and audience

The purpose of this research is to generate insights into how the Local Jobs Program is being implemented and what outcomes it is achieving where it is understood to be demonstrating good practice. The primary intended audience of the research report is departmental staff and executives and government ministers.

Measuring and communicating the value of place-based programs, like the Local Jobs Program, is challenging. There is no 'one size fits all' definition of success. Implementation and intended outcomes vary across regions. And many of the intended outcomes of place-based programs are intangible and difficult to measure.

The research aims to improve understanding of the value of the Local Job Program by gathering concrete, tangible examples from a small sample of Employment Regions. Key questions the research aims to answer are: How has the program been implemented in different good practice regions? What impact can the program have, when it's working well? What factors help the program to achieve outcomes?

## Research approach

The research used a case study approach. Four case study regions were selected with the department. The sampling approach was informed by two criteria. First, a shortlist of regions was selected by the department that were understood to be demonstrating good practice in implementing the Local Jobs Program. Second, the final sample aimed to represent the diversity of conditions across Employment Regions, including a mix of regional labour market challenges, metro and rural regions, major industries and implementation approaches.

Each case study focuses on 1-2 of the priority issues that are identified in each region's Local Jobs Plan. Priority issues were selected by the research team, Social Ventures Australia (SVA), with input from the department and Employment Facilitators following consultations and desktop research.

The research team conducted field trips to each case study region over June and July 2023. They spent 2-3 days conducting workshops, visiting businesses, and consulting with Employment Facilitators, Support Officers, Taskforces, and external stakeholders who partnered on initiatives or activities under the program. Departmental staff from the Employment Evaluation Branch (Evidence and Assurance Division) also attended each field trip as observers.

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