



Gippsland Regional Skills Demand Profile

Snapshot 2023



**Victorian
Skills Authority**



Jobs, Skills,
Industry
and Regions



Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) acknowledges and recognises the Traditional Owners of the land within the regional area of the Gunaikurnai, Bunurong, Wurundjeri and Taungurung Nations and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Gippsland Regional Skills Taskforce

The VSA acknowledges the time, contribution, and insights of the Gippsland Regional Skills Taskforce (and additional representatives from industry, local government, training providers, and related agencies) who contributed to the development of this profile.

The findings in this profile would not be possible without their openness, generosity, expertise, and commitment to the Gippsland regional economy and community.

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Leigh Kennedy	Federation University
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Steve Dodd	Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and Gippsland Trades and Labour Council
Stewart Carson	Burra Foods
Sue Geals	Community College Gippsland
Therese Tierney	Gippsland Regional Partnership
Tony Britton	Radial Timbers



About the Victorian Skills Authority

The Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) was established by the Victorian Government in July 2021 in response to the recommendations of the Skills for Victoria's Growing Economy Review.

The VSA has a critical role to play in understanding and communicating the skills needed to ensure Victoria can meet current, emerging, and future skills and industry demands that enable inclusive growth and prosperity for all Victorians. Working together with key stakeholders across industry, employers, providers, unions, communities, and learners – the VSA seeks to deliver skills-led solutions, drive reform, and collaborate to improve skills and employment outcomes.

Regional Skills Demand Profiles

Regional Victoria is at the forefront of key priorities for the Victorian Government. This includes the establishment of the State Electricity Commission (SEC), which will help deliver more than 59,000 new jobs. These new opportunities, along with increasing regional populations, and existing and emerging industries, highlight the critical need to grow and advance skills in the regions so that the people, businesses, and communities of regional Victoria can thrive.

The VSA worked with Regional Skills Taskforces and industry roundtables over 2022 and early 2023 to develop Regional Skills Demand Profiles that identify current, emerging, and future skills needs across Victoria's regions. The profiles have been prepared with support from Regional Development Victoria (RDV) in the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR). The profiles are a valuable resource for regional Victoria and the Victorian Government. The VSA is working closely with stakeholders to address the opportunities and issues identified in the profiles.

This document is a summary of key findings. The profiles are available on the VSA website at: skillsauthority.vic.gov.au

To access the latest data, readers are directed to the VSA employment forecast dashboard at: www.vic.gov.au/victorian-skills-plan and the Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) interactive data dashboards at: <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/resources/regional-economic-development-strategies>



About the Gippsland region

This profile provides a 3 year outlook for Gippsland, and the education and training opportunities that can help develop the workforce required for the region.

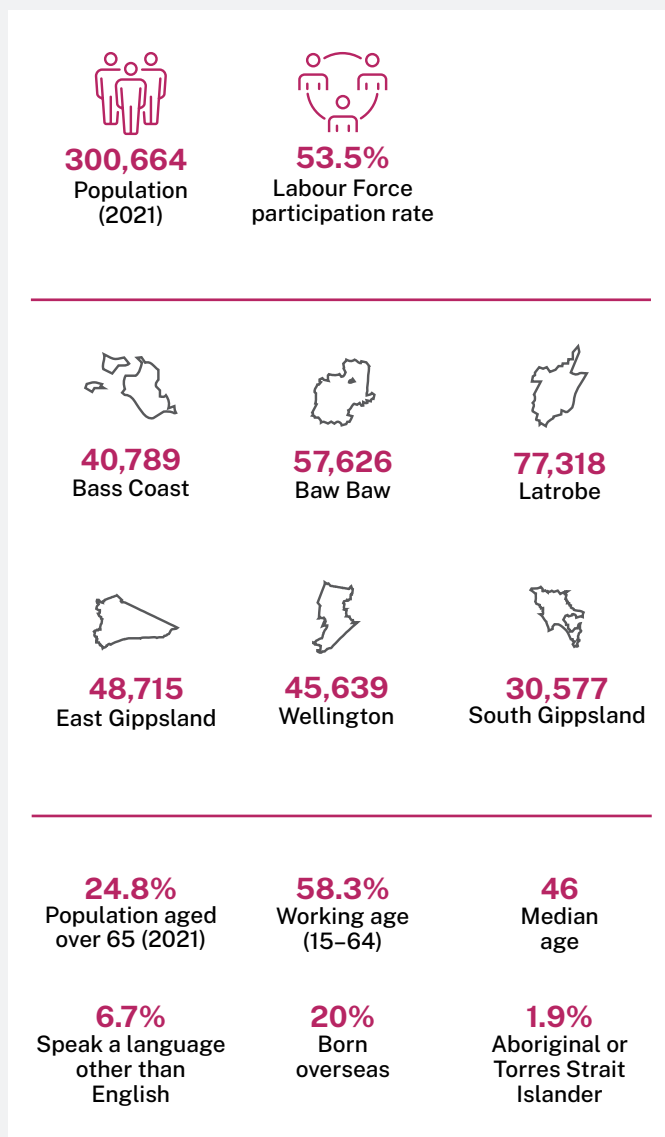


Figure 1 | Overview of the Gippsland region

Gippsland covers a vast area from outer eastern Melbourne to the eastern-most point in Victoria. It encompasses the local government areas of Latrobe City and the Shires of Bass Coast, Baw Baw, East Gippsland, South Gippsland and Wellington. The region is home to the Gunaikurnai, Bunurong, Wurundjeri and Taungurung Nations, who have lived, worked and cared for their Country and resources for many thousands of years.

Gippsland had a resident population of 300,664 at the time of the 2021 census with recent growth exceeding population projections at 1.6% in 2020-21. Major towns include Traralgon, Moe and Morwell in the Latrobe area and Bairnsdale, Cowes, Drouin, Leongatha, Sale, Wonthaggi and Warragul. The region also includes many smaller communities, with 40% of the population living in towns and settlements of less than 1,000 people.

After a turbulent period of natural disasters, the pandemic, and rapid and anticipated transitioning of the energy and resources industries, Gippsland is poised for growth. It is well positioned to reap the benefits of the State Electricity Commission and clean energy, a growing population, the return of tourists, infrastructure investment, and increasing consumer demand for food and fibre products.



Figure 2 | Map of the Gippsland region



Industries in the region

Historically, Gippsland has been Victoria's fossil-fuel based energy production powerhouse creating a skilled workforce and significant infrastructure. This makes it an ideal location to lead the transition to clean and renewable energy sources. The region has an abundance of natural resources, which underpins the energy and mining industry and nature-based tourism. Demand for service-based industries is across the sectors of food, retail, health care and community services, and utilities. An expansive land base supports a competitive advantage in food and fibre industries, which supply the local manufacturing industry to meet domestic and export demand.


Outlook on jobs growth

The VSA's 3 year employment projections show significant demand for workers in the region – with more than 7,750–10,500 additional new workers required in the 3 years between 2022 and 2025.

At least 6,000 workers will also be needed to replace retirements. The type of skills required by industry are becoming more complex. Workers will need to have the skills to meet industry's evolving needs.

Estimates of total new workers for 2022–2025 across the 6 key industries in Gippsland are as follows:

- construction – 1,350 to 1,950
- health and community services – 2,750 to 3,450
- energy and mining – 50 to 300
- agriculture and forestry – up to 150
- manufacturing – 500 to 750
- visitor economy – 950 to 1,650



Transitioning industries, emerging clean economy jobs, growing technology and demand for skilled workers across all Gippsland's industries requires adaptable and responsive skills solutions.


Gippsland challenges and opportunities

Challenges

Like other parts of Victoria, Gippsland is affected by cost-of-living pressures, significant labour shortages and continued recovery from the pandemic. Gippsland is also experiencing some challenges resulting in barriers to education, training and workforce participation, attraction and retention, such as housing accessibility, access to childcare, and teacher and trainer shortages.

Compared to other Victorian regions, Gippsland has a larger population of people who are not currently in the labour force or who are not fully participating.

The Gippsland Regional Skills Taskforce and industry roundtables raised a number of challenges for workforce skills and training in the Gippsland region along with opportunities to address these.



Current worker shortages in the Gippsland region highlight a need to engage and upskill the existing population, while looking to grow the emerging and future workforce.



Opportunities

Gippsland has had an increase in demand for workers in the last 2 years, driven by industry growth and high rates of vacancies due to constrained labour supply. With significant labour shortages being felt by industry in Gippsland, there are opportunities to engage under-represented cohorts and increase workforce participation across major industries.

The Gippsland Regional Skills Taskforce identified 6 industries of focus within the Gippsland region:

- construction
- health and community services
- energy and mining, including the mining and electricity, gas, water and waste services sectors
- agriculture and forestry
- manufacturing
- visitor economy, including accommodation and food services, arts and recreation services, and retail trade sectors.

The Gippsland region has unique strengths and future opportunities. A connected, accessible, and responsive education and skilling system is central to Gippsland's economic prosperity.

The visitor economy industry comprises retail trade, accommodation and food services and arts and recreation industries and collectively represents 16.8% of the region's workforce. Health and community services is the largest single employing industry, accounting for 14.9% of the total jobs.

The Gippsland Regional Skills Taskforce identified a range of potential education and training responses to address current and emerging challenges facing major industries.

Table 1 | Workforce challenges and opportunities in Gippsland

Challenge	Opportunity
Building a pipeline of workers	Build aspirations and confidence, promote local opportunities and career pathways for students, school leavers and those not currently in the workforce.
Some education and training not available locally	Collaboration between educational institutions for joint delivery and cluster models to build careers for workers and ensure critical skills in thin markets
Mobilising all potential workers	Promotion of careers advice and Skills and Jobs Centres, training pathways through Learn Locals, and support for diverse cohorts. Greater employer awareness to build diverse and inclusive workplaces.
Addressing systemic barriers preventing participation in education and training	Collaborations that support access and engagement in training for key cohorts, including CALD people, people with disability, and older workers.
Industry transitions and workforce disruption	Advice and support for transitioning workers and their families for career pathways and reskilling or upskilling
Training delivery that responds to local circumstances	Advocate for reform to give educational institutions the flexibility to respond to unique local circumstances and provide flexible training.

Opportunities for growth

There are also specific opportunities for growth and associated workforce needs that will need to shape future efforts for education and training delivery in the region.

State Electricity Commission

The Victorian Government is bringing back the State Electricity Commission (SEC) to help drive down power bills and create thousands of jobs to enhance use of new renewables like wind, hydro and solar, and to store it, such as with batteries. An SEC Centre of Training Excellence will be established to coordinate and accredit courses in clean energy, connecting with TAFEs, Registered Training Organisations, unions, and the industry, supporting 6,000 positions for trainees and apprentices.

Clean economy

Gippsland has a major opportunity to support Victoria's transition to a net zero economy and the education and skills system can play a key part. The establishment of the \$50 million Clean Energy Fund to train workers in critical skills will include the development of the \$5 million TAFE Gippsland Clean Energy Centre in Morwell to support the need to construct clean economy assets including wind, solar, hydrogen and battery-based operations. This construction will require appropriately skilled workers in the next 3 years including electricians, planners, earth movers, high voltage line workers and managers. Workers needed into the future will include electrical engineers, wind turbine technicians and a range of supporting supplier and contractor roles.

Agriculture and forestry

Gippsland's expansive land and infrastructure positions the region as one of Victoria's major food and fibre hubs. Around 28% of land in Gippsland is used for agricultural purposes, supporting an estimated 6,500 farming families who contribute to 250 Gippsland communities. National food companies have major operations in the region including Flavorite, Patties, Bega, Burra Food, Vegco, and Saputo. The region also makes a significant contribution to the state's timber production with 25% of Victoria's plantation timber estate.


The Victorian Government is stepping in to deliver certainty for timber workers, sawmill operators and their communities, with an expanded transition support package as part of the Victorian Budget 2023/24. The package removes the uncertainty that has been caused by ongoing court and litigation process and increasingly severe bushfires, with an additional \$200 million in support for workers and their families to transition away from native timber logging. This brings the Government's total support for the forestry transition to than \$875 million, including existing worker support services and investments to support the transition to plantation timber.

The Ellinbank SmartFarm, Australia's leading dairy innovation facility, funded as part of the Victoria Government's \$5 million investment in Smarter, Safer Farms initiative, is supporting farmers to become energy efficient and building skills for a cleaner and more technologically advanced agricultural industry.

Visitor economy

Gippsland is a well-renowned tourist destination, home to natural assets of Phillip Island, Lakes Entrance, Wilsons Promontory National Park and Croajingolong National Park. In the north, the region features Victoria's high country, home to Mt Baw Baw, one of the 5 major Victorian snowfields and part of the Alpine National Park. As well as natural assets the region has towns and villages that attract tourists, Aboriginal and colonial heritage, gourmet food and wine experiences and an increasing creative arts industry that attract tourists.

The Victorian Government is supporting the visitor economy in the region through projects such as the \$10 million investment in Phillip Island Hot Springs, set to open in 2023, the Regional Tourism Investment Fund which committed \$3.9 million to support epicurean and walking trail experiences and the Gippsland Tourism Recovery Package of \$18.5 million to build new accommodation, upgrade the East Gippsland Rail Trail and improve access to remote natural and man-made attractions. The Taskforce identified a number of opportunities to deliver education and training that will support industry growth.

A man with a beard and a black cap is shown from the side, reaching up to pick small purple berries from a dense green bush. He is holding a light-colored ceramic bowl in his other hand. The scene is set outdoors with natural lighting. The image is framed by a white background with a large orange shape on the left side.

Gippsland's expansive land and infrastructure positions the region as one of Victoria's major food and fibre hubs.

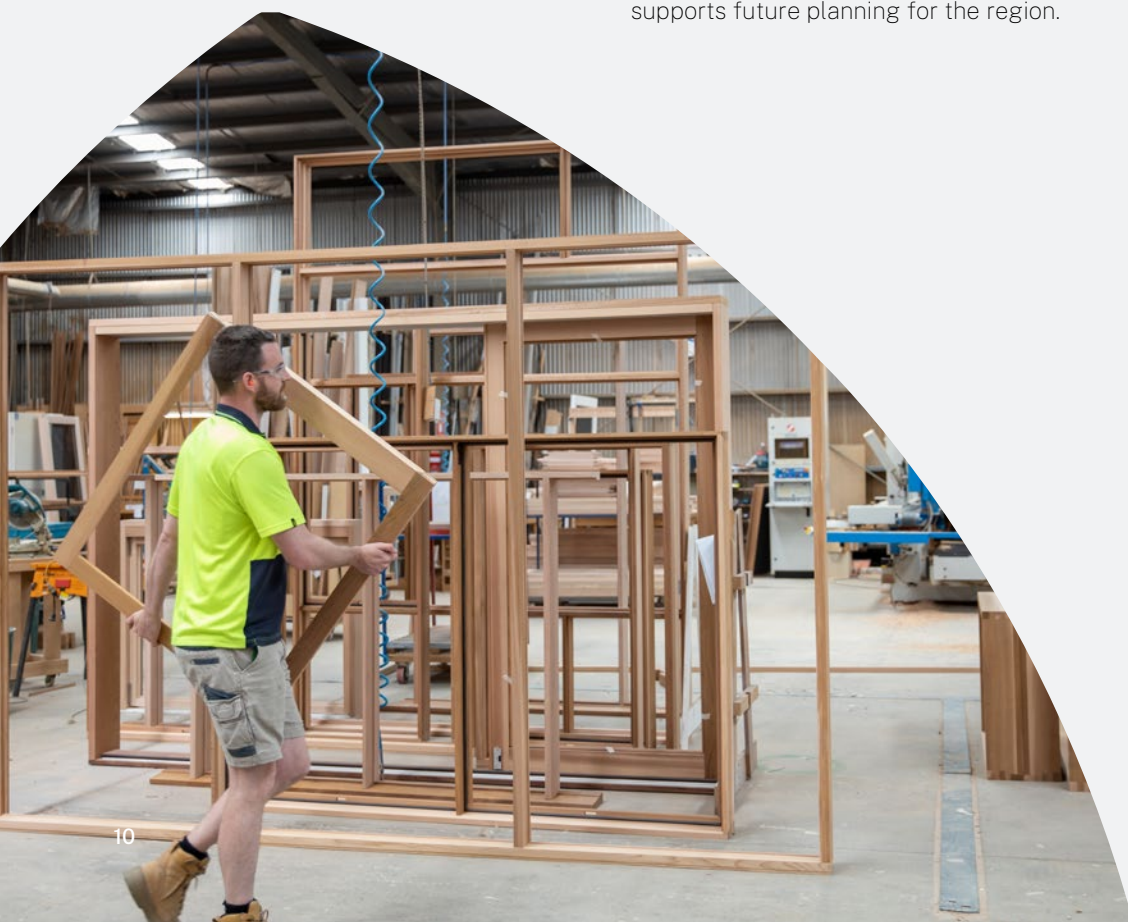
Next steps

The Gippsland Regional Skills Taskforce identified next steps to address regional skills and workforce needs.

The VSA will seek to address some of these over the coming year, while others require coordinated action by industry, government, and the education sector. An action plan will be developed in collaboration with the community.

Employers and educational institutions across Gippsland share similar challenges. A coordinated regional response is likely to achieve greater success. Collaboration and strong engagement will be required between all levels of government, industry, education and training institutions and the Gippsland community.

1. The profile complements the inaugural Victorian Skills Plan, which set out Victoria's skills needs and opportunities.
2. The Gippsland senior skills adviser will work collaboratively with local stakeholders to address opportunities identified in this profile. This includes 'quick wins' that can benefit the region and longer-term advocacy to support the skills need of emerging industries.
3. Gippsland Regional Skills Taskforce members can continue to advocate for the Gippsland region at all levels of government, to help ensure that the region's unique workforce challenges and education and training requirements are understood and supported.
4. The VSA will work with relevant departments and levels of government to address the broader workforce challenges identified in this report, in addition to supporting education and training responses.
5. The profile, in addition to the region's Regional Economic Development Strategy published by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, supports future planning for the region.





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