

Ovens Murray 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 Taungurung, Yorta Yorta and Gunaikurnai Nations, as well as other Traditional Owner groups who are not formally recognised and its people, 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.

Ovens Murray Regional Skills Taskforce

The VSA acknowledges the time, contribution, and insights of the Ovens Murray 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 Ovens Murray regional economy and community.

Member	Organisation
Amanda Vogt	Mt Buller and Mt Stirling Resort Management Board
Bobbi McKibbin	Solar Integrity Albury Wodonga
Corina Wendnagel	Tallangatta Meat Processors (Smiths TMP)
Eliza Brown	All Saints Winery
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John Dodson	HVP Plantations
Leigh Rhode	Gateway Health
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Mark Parry	Ron Finemore Transport
Matt Nelson	Regional Development Victoria
Mick Clewes	North East Water
Robert Hawkings	Indigo Vineyard
Rupert Shaw	Bright Brewery
Serene Gray	Zauner Construction
Stuart Crosthwaite	Hermitage Dairy (also Alpine Valley Dairy Committee)
Tracy McCrohan	Albury Wodonga Health

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 brings together the key stakeholders of the skills sector – industry, employers, providers, unions, communities, and learners – to provide skills-led solutions, drive reform and work together to build a better Victoria.

The VSA has a critical role to play in understanding and communicating the skills needed to ensure Victoria can meet the current, emerging, and future skills and industry demands that enable inclusive growth and prosperity for all Victorians.

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 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 Ovens Murray region

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

The Ovens Murray region is in the north-east of Victoria and has more than 134,500 residents. It encompasses the local government areas of Benalla Rural City, Mansfield Shire, Wangaratta Rural City, Alpine Shire, Indigo Shire, Wodonga City and Towong Shire. The region is home to Taungurung, Yorta Yorta and Gunaikurnai Nations, as well as other Traditional Owner groups who are not formally recognised, who have lived, worked, and cared for their Country and resources for many thousands of years.

Population growth between 2021 and 2036 is expected to vary significantly between LGAs across the Ovens Murray. Major growth will be focused in Wodonga, at 33.4%.

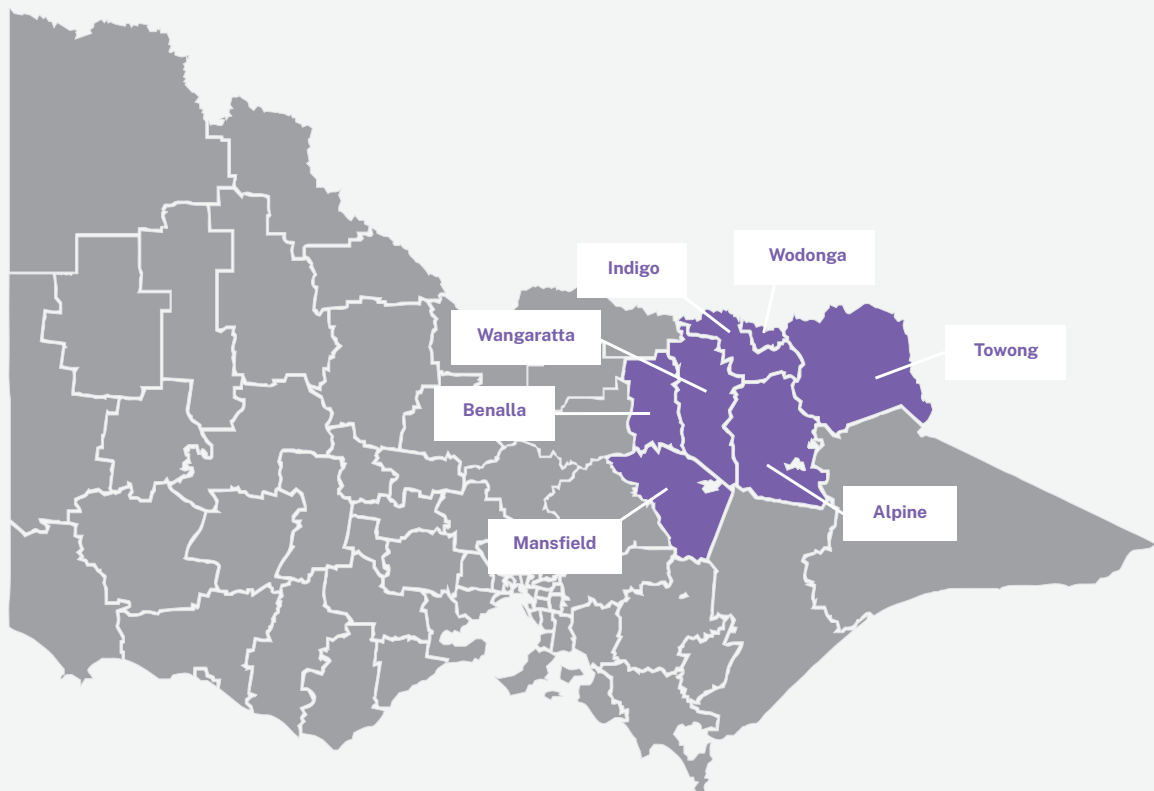


Figure 1 | Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the Ovens Murray region



Industries in the region

The economy of Ovens Murray is diverse and highly interconnected. The region's natural assets – including mountains, waterways, and pastures – support strong agriculture and tourism industries that serve national and international markets.

A large manufacturing industry, dominated by food processing, builds on the region's agricultural strengths. Large national and multinational companies operate in the region such as MARS, Asahi, and Uncle Tobys. Other key sectors include metal and machinery manufacturing, which makes up 17% of manufacturing industry economic output, and wood product manufacturing, which makes up 6.5%.

The region's strategic location between Sydney and Melbourne supports a significant transport and logistics industry. The region is home to substantial transport and logistics hubs including LOGIC in Wodonga, which has the ability to transport goods to 75% of Australia's population within 24 hours. Transport is also a critical enabler of tourism, with local bus lines supporting movement of tourists across the region.

This diversification of industry has changed the nature of skills and training required in the region.

Outlook on jobs growth

The VSA's 3-year employment projections show significant demand for workers in the region – with 3,850 to 5,300 additional new workers required in the 3 years between 2022 and 2025.

At least 7,000 workers will also be needed to replace retirements. The type of skills required by industry are becoming more complex. This highlights the need to ensure workers have the skills to meet industry's evolving needs.

Estimates of total new workers for 2022–2025 across the 7 key industries in Ovens Murray are as follows:

- agriculture and forestry – 0 to 100
- health and community services – 850 to 1,400
- construction – 500 to 700
- manufacturing – 400 to 650
- retail – 200 to 300
- accommodation and food services – 500 to 650
- transport and logistics – 200 to 300



Ovens Murray challenges and opportunities

Challenges

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

Like other parts of Victoria, the Ovens Murray region is affected by cost-of-living pressures, significant labour shortages and continued recovery from the pandemic.

These are exacerbated by underlying challenges in the region such as housing accessibility, access to childcare and teacher and trainer shortages.

The region has an ageing population and a low proportion of people of working age compared with the Victorian average which presents a challenge for the Ovens Murray.

Ovens Murray is also experiencing some challenges that are resulting in barriers to education, training and workforce participation, attraction, and retention.

Feedback from the Ovens Murray Regional Skills Taskforce indicates that the education and skills system and industry will need to transform to meet the changing needs of students, workers, industry, and community.

The Ovens Murray Regional Skills Taskforce and industry roundtables raised a number of common challenges related to workforce skills and training in Ovens Murray along with opportunities to address cross-cutting workforce and skills needs.

Table 1 | Workforce challenges and opportunities in Ovens Murray

Challenge	Opportunity
Barriers to attracting domestic labour	Work across local government areas to identify and address critical infrastructure and service gaps that create barriers to domestic migration
Limited relationships between employers, education providers, and intermediaries	Promote better connections across the region and support local employers to utilise local community based networks to attract jobseekers
Attracting labour to meet seasonal workforce demands	Explore opportunities for collaboration between employers to collectively train and employ a pool of workers
Limited knowledge of career pathways in the region	Build on government investment in careers education to raise awareness of the range of career options available within the region and different models of career progression
Training not meeting the needs of employers	Establish agreements between providers and employers to utilise employers' existing infrastructure and equipment to support industry-wide and tailored training initiatives in key sectors
Limited recruitment to managerial and senior roles	Support upskilling with targeted skillsets to address specific upskilling needs, including management.



Opportunities

The Ovens Murray region has unique strengths and future opportunities.

Across the region, employers and education providers share similar challenges and are all seeking to achieve the same goal of connecting jobseekers to the right jobs.

Ovens Murray has high movement of workers between regions, particularly across the border between Victoria and New South Wales. In March 2022, the Commonwealth Government, Albury City, and the City of Wodonga committed over \$128 million towards a regional deal for Albury Wodonga. This deal will support further cross-border collaboration and joint projects across the community and will lead to access to a greater workforce for the region.

With significant labour shortages being felt by industry in Ovens Murray, there are opportunities to engage under-represented cohorts and increase workforce participation across major industries.

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

- health and community services
- manufacturing
- tourism, accommodation and food and retail
- agriculture and forestry
- transport and logistics
- construction

Together, these 6 industries have been identified as having both current and potential growth opportunities across the region.

Health and community services is the largest employing sector in the region, accounting for 16% of total jobs, closely followed by manufacturing at 14%, construction, and retail trade at 9% and public administration and safety, education and training and agriculture, forestry, and fishing all at 8%.

Consultation identified a range of potential education and training responses to address the current and emerging challenges facing major industries.

There are also specific opportunities for growth in the region.



Opportunities for growth

State Electricity Commission

The Victorian Government is bringing back the SEC to help drive down power bills and create thousands of jobs to enhance use of renewable energy 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.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing is the largest industry in the Ovens Murray region by economic output, with an annual economic output of \$876 million, making up 15% of the region's total output. Food, beverage, and tobacco manufacturing dominate regional manufacturing, drawing to some extent on local agricultural production. The region's transport and logistics capability also enables large national and multinational companies to manufacture in the region and transport products to market.

The government is also supporting investment in advanced manufacturing capability to position the region as a centre of excellence and innovation in manufacturing. More than \$100 million in funding has been awarded by the Commonwealth Government through the Australian Renewable Energy Agency's (ARENA) Renewable Hydrogen Deployment Funding Round. New skills will be needed to support the development of this advanced manufacturing capability.

Clean economy

The Ovens Murray's expansive natural assets and sustainability priorities will drive the continued expansion of newer industries related to renewable energy and waste management. 4 solar farms are either in development or in the pipeline across the region, including Winton Solar Farms, Kennedys Creek, Goombarat and Glenrowan West.

In addition, Infrastructure Victoria's Advice on Recycling and Resource Recovery recommends that between 5 and 10 of 87 sites for infrastructure investment be developed in Ovens Murray. New infrastructure is likely to include paper separation plants, plastic processing plants, glass sand or aggregate plants, and organic composting facilities.

Visitor economy

The Ovens Murray region's natural assets include waterways, parklands, and alpine regions with the tallest peaks in Victoria. Most notably, the snow is a major driver of tourism, accounting for approximately 25% of all visitations.

Ovens Murray is being increasingly viewed as a 4-season destination, with visitors attracted by cycling, water-based recreation and gourmet food and wine experiences. Year-round tourism is being supported by projects such as the development of a 57 km walk through the Alpine Region from Falls Creek to Mount Hotham, following a \$15 million investment by the Victorian Government.



Most notably, wineries and the snow fields are major drivers of tourism, across the Ovens Murray.

Next steps

The Ovens Murray 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.

While many labour supply and skilling challenges will take time to address, there are a number of cross-sector initiatives that can be implemented over the next 6 to 12 months to address the urgent labour and skilling challenges in the post pandemic recovery period. These quick wins include:

1. Raising awareness among local employers about local community-based networks that can be used to attract unemployed jobseekers.
2. Identifying short-term opportunities to leverage existing infrastructure for accommodation.
3. Advocacy to the Federal Government on the Skills Priority List to reflect critical skills gaps in the region, for example truck drivers.
4. Promoting local career opportunities within schools and expanding on promising programs that link school students with work experience.
5. Establishing delivery partnerships between employers and vocational education and training providers to utilise employers' existing infrastructure and equipment to support industry-wide and tailored training initiatives.
6. Developing a recruitment campaign for apprentices in the region.





Published by the Victorian Skills Authority
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June 2023

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