



# Draft Toowoomba Labour Market Profile



## Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of Country

The Queensland Government respectfully acknowledges the First Nations peoples in the state of Queensland and acknowledges the cultural and spiritual connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and sea. We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as two unique and diverse peoples with their own rich and distinct cultures, resilience and strengths. We specifically acknowledge the unique history and cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We are dedicated to the inclusion of cultural knowledge and values as critical factors in the development, implementation and evaluation of strategies and actions to support First Nations peoples.

## Further enquiries

For enquiries or further information about this report:

Telephone: 07 3294 4706

Email: [info@jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au)

## Copyright

This publication is protected by the *Copyright Act 1968*. © The State of Queensland (Jobs Queensland) October 2024 .

Excerpts may be reproduced with acknowledgement of The State of Queensland (Jobs Queensland).

## Licence



This work is licensed by Jobs Queensland under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) 4.0 Australia licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit: <https://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en>

## Other languages and formats

The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds. If you have difficulty understanding this publication and need a translator, please call Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS National) on 131 450 and ask them to contact Jobs Queensland on (07) 3294 4706. Alternative formats (including large print) are available on request. If you would like this in another format, please contact us (calls from mobile phones are charged at applicable rates).

If you are Deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech communication difficulty, contact us through the National Relay Service. Choose your access option (<https://www.accesshub.gov.au/about-the-nrs>) and provide 07 3294 4706 when asked by the relay officer.

## Disclaimer

While every care has been taken in preparing this publication, the State of Queensland accepts no responsibility for decisions or actions taken due to any data, information, statement or advice, expressed or implied, contained within. To the best of our knowledge, the content was correct when published

## Image credits

Cover: Photos courtesy of Employ Toowoomba - I STOCK - Purchased 31 Jan 2019.

Contents: Photos courtesy of Natalie Fogerty - Vigour Design & Employ Toowoomba.

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Your region</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Regional snapshot</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Industries of interest</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Your labour markets - Key SA4 indicators</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Challenges and opportunities</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The local ecosystem</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Vacancies</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Your future workforce</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Travel to work</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Schooling and non-school qualifications</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Vocational education and training and employment pathways</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Queensland Training Summary</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Apprenticeships and Traineeships - SA4 region</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Your businesses</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Future opportunities for the Toowoomba region</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Government initiatives to support</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Strategies to support</b>	<b>34</b>

# Introduction

---

Regional Jobs Committees (RJC) are a part of the Queensland Government's plan to work within the community and local industry to create more jobs, improve training pathways and drive economic activity across the state. They are collaboratively supported by the Department of Trade, Employment and Training and Jobs Queensland (JQ).

The Toowoomba Labour Market Profile provides a snapshot of the region as of 16 October 2024, including key indicators such as workforce composition, employment and unemployment, business figures, and education and training pathways.

The data contained in this report focuses on the Toowoomba Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4). This data can offer valuable insights into current supply and demand challenges, supporting more informed future planning.

Much of the information stems from the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data (2021), however, to provide the most up-to-date statistics, where available, data has been provided from other sources including the ABS quarterly Labour Force Survey. It is important to note that this document should not be read in isolation. Rather, it should be considered jointly, and in the context of, other economic research, publications and previous consultation hosted by Employ Toowoomba (Toowoomba Regional Jobs Committee).

This report also contains an overview of the region's anticipated growth industries that will drive future jobs demand and skills needs locally.

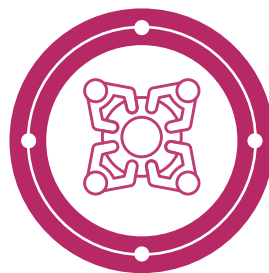
Key observations and potential future opportunities have emerged from the data and align to four common themes:



**Build workforce  
capability**



**Enhance  
pathways for  
work readiness**



**Promote  
workplace  
diversity**



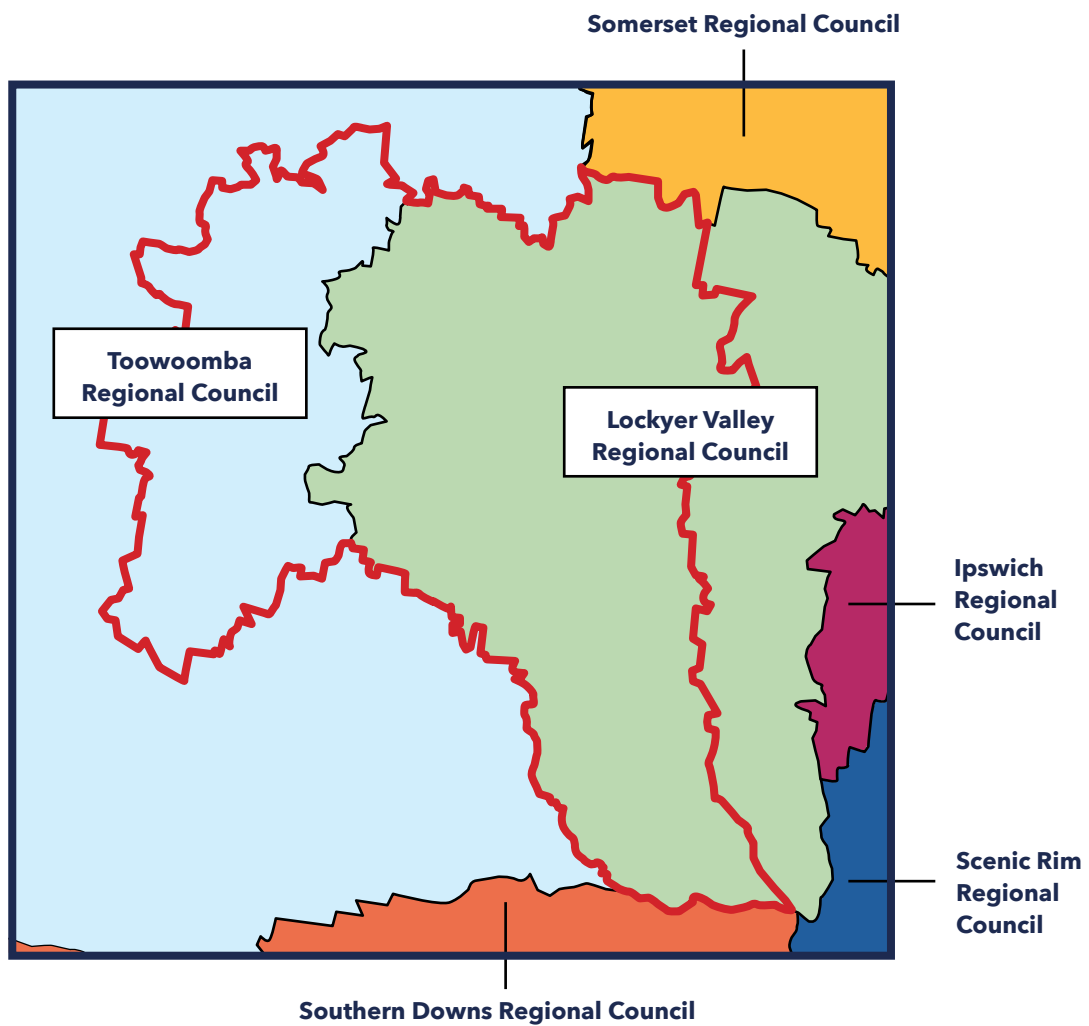
**Support region  
and industry  
transition**

The information contained in this draft report is provided for the purpose of driving conversation locally with the aim to finalise and publish the final report in coming months with consideration of the region's recent Future of Jobs, All Shook Up Forum and Employ Toowoomba and Jobs Queensland's co-hosted in-region consultation activities during November 2024.

# Your region

## Toowoomba SA4

The region covers an area of 2258 km<sup>2</sup> and extends from Gatton in the east to Glen Rock State Forest in the south. It includes the city of Toowoomba and other regional centres including Helidon, Withcott, Kingsthorpe and Grantham.



 Toowoomba Statistical Area Level 4

 Toowoomba Regional Council

 Lockyer Valley Regional Council

 Somerset Regional Council

 Ipswich Regional Council

 Scenic Rim Regional Council

 Southern Downs Regional Council

# Regional snapshot

## SA4 Population Demographics<sup>1</sup>

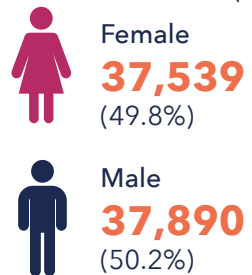
**170,792**  
(June 2023)



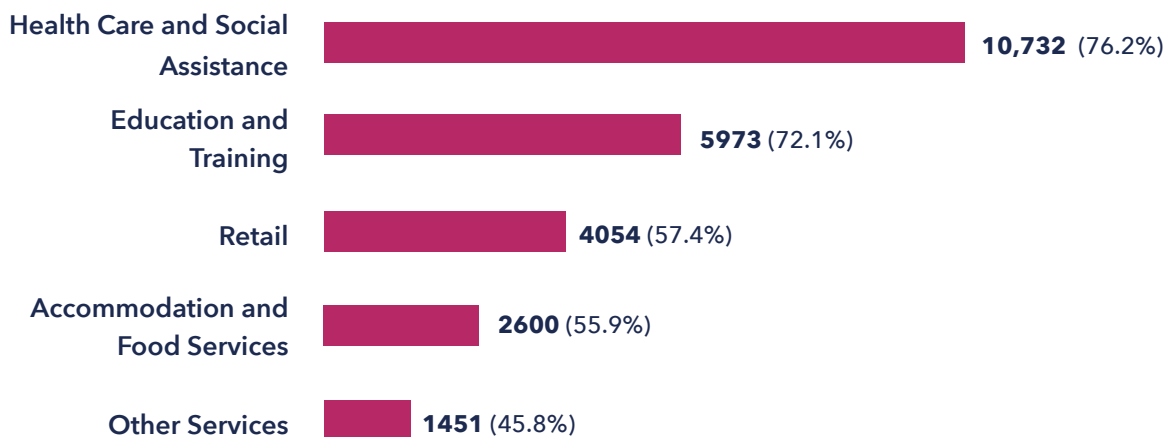
## SA4 workforce and labour market composition<sup>2</sup>



### Job held by gender (2021)

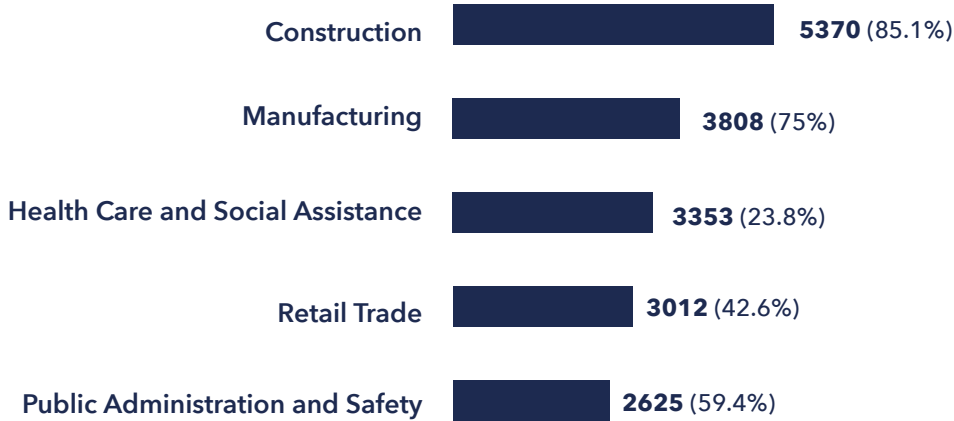


## Top five employing industries (Female)

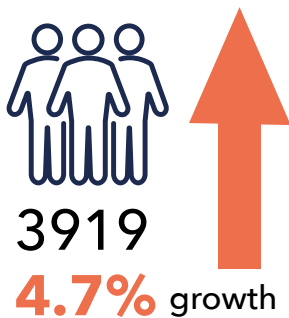


1. Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2024). *Queensland Regional Profiles* (Various reports). Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://statistics.qgso.qld.gov.au/qld-regional-profiles>  
 2. Ibid  
 3. Ibid  
 4. Ibid

## Top five employing industries (Male)



## New jobs by 2027-2028<sup>5</sup>



## Top five growth industries

(% change in new jobs by 2027-2028)<sup>6</sup>



Public Administration and Safety  
**17.6%**



Arts and Recreation Services  
**10.7%**



Health Care and Social Assistance  
**9%**



Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services  
**7%**



Education and Training  
**6%**



## Total registered businesses

**14,514<sup>7</sup>**

June 2023

### Small



Non-employing **8771 (60.4%)**

1-4 employees **3698 (25.5%)**

5-19 employees **1563 (10.8%)**

### Medium



20-199 employees  
**439 (3%)**

### Large



200+ employees  
**21 (0.1%)**

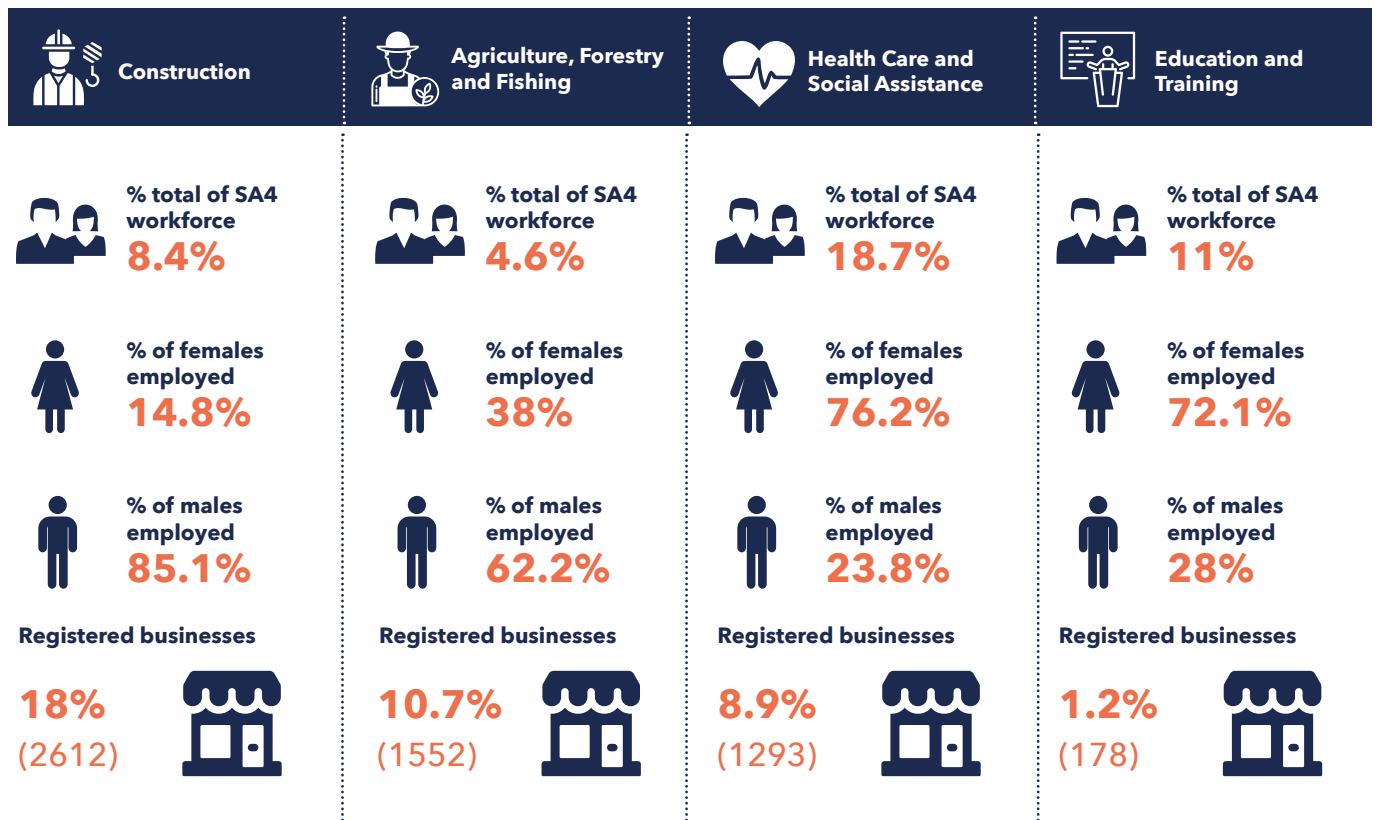
5. Jobs Queensland. (2024). Anticipating Future Skills. *Data Portal*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal>

6. Ibid

7. Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2024). *Queensland Regional Profiles* (Various reports). Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://statistics.qgso.qld.gov.au/qld-regional-profiles>

# Industries of interest

The industries below were identified as focus for the development of this Labour Market Profile Report. These industries align to those identified in the *Toowoomba Employment Landscape*.<sup>8</sup> Note that the data below is based on the Toowoomba SA4 which has slightly different boundaries to the Toowoomba LGA.



Source: Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2024). *Queensland Regional Profiles*. Region of Interest report. Findings based on use of QGSO report data.

## Anticipating Future Skills Needs<sup>9</sup>

Change percentage between 2023-2024 to 2027-2028



8. Employ Toowoomba. (2022). *Toowoomba Employment Landscape*. Toowoomba: Toowoomba Regional Jobs Committee. <https://employtoowoomba.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Toowoombas-Employment-Landscape-August-2022.pdf>

9. Jobs Queensland. (2024). *Anticipating Future Skills*. *Data Portal*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal>



# Your labour markets - Key SA4 indicators<sup>10</sup>

- In August 2024, the total labour force in the Toowoomba SA4 was 84,800 people, an increase of 10.4 per cent (8000 employed persons) over the year.
- The unemployment rate decreased to 4 per cent, a decrease of 0.6 per cent from the previous year. This rate is slightly lower than the Queensland state average of 4.1 per cent.
- Toowoomba SA4 youth unemployment rate stands at 12.1 per cent (August 2024), reflecting an increase of 4 per cent from the previous year.
- The number of **employed persons** has increased, marking a 4.9 per cent growth over the year.
- The participation rate in Toowoomba SA4 in August 2024 was 63.3 per cent, an increase of 4.1 per cent over the year.

## These figures highlight positive trends in employment and participation in the Toowoomba region.

Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the labour force by age group across key labour market indicators as at August 2024.

**Table 1** Labour force status by Age, Toowoomba SA4 region, August 2024

August 2024	Age Group (years)						
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
Employed Total ('000)	15.7	22.6	19.3	13.1	17.7	5.4	
Employed full-time ('000)	8.6	15.9	15.1	9.2	14.0	2.3	
Employed part-time ('000)	7.0	6.7	4.2	3.9	3.7	3.1	
Employment to population rate (%)	62.7	89.3	88	81.8	73.9	18.7	
Unemployment rate (%)	13	2.2	2.8	3.3	0.0	5.3	
Labour force total ('000)	18.0	23.1	19.8	13.5	17.7	5.7	
Not in the labour force (NILF) ('000)	7.0	2.2	2.1	2.5	6.3	23.2	
Civilian population aged 15 years and over ('000)	25.0	25.3	21.9	16.0	24.0	28.9	
Participation rate (%)	Toowoomba SA4	72.1	91.4	90.5	84.6	73.9	19.7
	Queensland	72.4	86.1	88.4	84.6	67.4	16.2

Source: ABS, *Labour force status by age, labour market regions (ASGS) and sex, October 1998 onwards (pivot table)* - RM1

10. Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2024). Queensland Regional Profiles (Various reports). Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://statistics.qgso.qld.gov.au/qld-regional-profiles>

# Challenges and opportunities

---

We live in a world of constant change. Global trends, policy and economic shifts can impact the skills needs requirements across all industries, even at the region level. The jobs of the future will not be the same as those held today and Toowoomba aims to support the region's industry to its future state, to provide a pathway forward in uncertain times.

Through a proactive and progressive approach, the region is looking at global megatrends that impact their local economy as well as engaging with local employers to discuss their local workforce challenges and opportunities.

## Megatrends

---

### Megatrend

### Impact on Toowoomba

---



#### Climate change

- By investing in sustainable water management, renewable energy, and eco-friendly urban design, the region can build resilience against extreme weather events while minimising its carbon footprint. These initiatives not only protect local communities and ecosystems but also position Toowoomba as a forward-thinking leader in sustainable regional development.
- Climate change is one of the most pressing issues, posing risks such as extreme weather events and shifting agricultural conditions. These changes can disrupt supply chains and exports from the region, necessitating the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and resilient infrastructure.
- The construction industry feels the immediate impact of severe weather conditions, closing down and delaying building sites. Workers and employers alike are seeking new and innovative ways to increase production and reduce the impact of delays.
- All industries are impacted by net zero targets, driving the need to incorporate policy changes into business practices requires strategic management and ongoing business planning capabilities.



#### Environmental and social governance

- Consumers are increasingly demanding ethical and sustainable products, compelling the building and construction industry to source eco-friendly materials, reduce waste, utilise renewable energy sources, establish and maintain social licence.
- The agriculture industry has an opportunity to expand into new markets to leverage from changing consumer trends such as alternative proteins.
- As the region transitions to net zero targets and socially conscious consumer needs, the education and training system will need to adapt to meet the needs of industry.

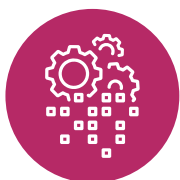
---

## Megatrend

## Impact on Toowoomba

---

- By supporting sustainable agriculture, local food production and resilient supply chains, the region can address community needs, reduce dependence on imports and ensure long-term food security. This will strengthen Toowoomba's role in Queensland's food supply network while fostering economic stability and environmental sustainability.
- 



### Transformative technology

- Transformative technology is revolutionising industry, with digital technologies like automation and AI enhancing efficiency, accuracy and scalability. Technologies such as 3D printing concrete homes and pre-fabrication can be transformative for the construction industry and provides opportunity to accelerate housing supply in the region, while the rapid uptake in telehealth is supporting and evolving the health industry and supports outreach service delivery.
  - To leverage these advancements, the region must have access to digital infrastructure and training programs to develop skills in robotics, AI and data analytics, digital skills for SMEs, optimising production processes and exploring cost reduction methods for the small business community to remain globally competitive.
- 



### Geopolitical impacts

- Geopolitical impacts also play a significant role, as global political dynamics and trade policies affect market access, supply chain stability and regulatory compliance. Trade tensions and changing regulations can pose challenges in importing and exporting products and sourcing materials. To navigate these complexities, the region should continue to diversify its markets and stay updated on international regulations.
- 



### Rising care economy

- As demand for care services rises, Toowoomba will need more skilled workers, including nurses, aged care professionals, disability support workers and allied health practitioners. This increase in employment opportunities has the potential to boost the regional economy and retain younger residents, who often leave for employment in larger cities. However, addressing workforce shortages, enhancing digital healthcare capabilities and providing continuous professional training will be crucial to support and sustain the care economy in Toowoomba. Collaboration between local government, educational institutions and healthcare providers will be essential to ensure that Toowoomba meets the rising care demands and builds a resilient and well-prepared workforce.
- 

Through targeted investments in education, training and technological infrastructure, the region can harness the opportunities presented by these megatrends to foster sustainable economic growth and workforce development. This proactive approach will ensure the region's competitiveness in a dynamic and evolving global landscape.


# The local ecosystem

---

Through extensive research, Jobs Queensland has found that connection to community and family is important to Queenslanders. A strong connection to a community or region often motivates an individual to remain living and working locally. When people, especially families, are established with local services, have partners employed nearby, they are generally hesitant to relocate to a different area.<sup>11</sup> Opportunities to support locals to live and work locally were highlighted through recent consultation and has emphasised the need for a connected approach to addressing workforce challenges. The Toowoomba labor market will support the implementation of government place-based decision-making frameworks, thanks to its diverse workforce, strong agricultural foundation and growing industries in health care, education and emerging industries. With a high concentration of skilled workers in both traditional and modern industries, Toowoomba can leverage local expertise and resources to address region-specific needs effectively. The region's active commitment to inclusivity and workforce diversity, further strengthens its capacity to implement policies that are equitable and tailored to community priorities.

Employ Toowoomba has undertaken previous research and hosted numerous forums and consultation activities throughout 2021-2024, including Careers to Net Zero Roadshow, Future of Jobs Forum – All Shook Up, Emerging Leaders program, Future of Jobs – Youth Forum and Roundtable discussions. A summary of research and consultation is below:

---

Local themes	Challenges	Opportunities
 <p><b>Build workforce capability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workforce provides services to regional communities</li><li>• Scepticism of impact of technology on the workforce</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build skills and capability in transformative technology options to service regional communities (e.g. Telehealth) for local workforce</li><li>• Research impact of working in regional communities on workforce mental health</li><li>• Highlight the value of technology to 'myth bust' negative impacts</li><li>• Instil a life-long-learning mindset</li></ul>

---

11. Jobs Queensland. (2023). *Supporting individuals in the transition to future work framework*. Ipswich: Queensland Government. <https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/supporting-individual-transition.pdf>

Local themes	Challenges	Opportunities
 <p><b>Enhance pathways for work readiness</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited workforce planning capability occurring at an organisation level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-host a webinar to promote Workforce Planning Connect, Industry Workforce Advisors and relevant micro-credentials</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sourcing part-time employment to build capability via entry level roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local promotion of part-time opportunities and where to source them through migrant and youth service providers</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding limitations and eligibility criteria a barrier for participation in VET offerings for some</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather examples of barriers to support local advocacy for change to eligibility criteria</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jobseekers lacking essential employability skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RJC to advocate with education and employment providers what essential skills are needed to be successful in the workplace</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local students reporting uncertainty about future career decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase and enhance career guidance beyond tertiary pathway options with students and educators.</li> <li>Local schools to be encouraged to participate in the Gateway to Industry Schools program</li> <li>Educational reforms for university can provide students with broader, more accessible pathways</li> <li>Strengthening trade-based pathways will further ensure that students have diverse, hands-on training options</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educators require upskilling on career pathways and employers' expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host round table for parents, educators and students in Toowoomba to increase awareness of local pathway opportunities</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited access to work experience to inform career opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the benefits of work experience with local employers</li> </ul>

Local themes	Challenges	Opportunities
 <p><b>Promote workplace diversity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty attracting a diverse workforce, particularly younger cohorts</li> <li>• Employers raised concerns around barriers to employing skilled migrants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage Link and Launch program to support youth transitions</li> <li>• Engage with Toowoomba TAFE Campus to discuss students participating in Adult Migrant English Program/Skills for Education and Employment</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Support region and industry transition</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic uncertainty creating hesitancy for local employers to employ new workers</li> <li>• Region is experiencing challenges to retain staff to support rural service delivery</li> <li>• Emergence of new occupations and technology changing the labour market landscape</li> <li>• Negative perceptions of the region leading to poor outcomes</li> <li>• Growth industry opportunities not well understood</li> <li>• Low youth workforce participation rate in region</li> <li>• Insufficient investment in long-term food security and sustainable infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight global megatrends with local employers and impacts on future skills needs</li> <li>• Research psychological factors influencing career decisions in rural areas</li> <li>• Instil a life-long learning mindset in all learning programs</li> <li>• Placemaking campaign to highlight the benefits of living and working locally</li> <li>• Promote JQ's Anticipating Future Skills projections locally with education and employment providers</li> <li>• Work with Link and Launch and employment providers to enhance awareness of local opportunities</li> <li>• A focus on sustainable agriculture and eco-friendly infrastructure projects to position the region as a leader in resilience and sustainability</li> </ul>

Overall, discussions have underscored the significance of networking, diversity, and continuous learning in creating a competitive and inclusive workforce for the future.

# Vacancies

The Internet Vacancy Index, compiled by Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), is based on a count of online job advertisements newly lodged on SEEK, CareerOne and Australian JobSearch during each month. JSA uses different regions to those of the Australian Bureau of Statistics to provide online vacancies data across the country.

The region's highest number of online vacancies in September 2024 was seen in Professionals (264), followed by Technician and Trade Workers (185), and Community and Personal Service Workers (153), Clerical and Administration Workers (133) and Labourers (131).

These figures reflect the current demand for various occupations in the region, highlighting the ongoing need for skilled professionals and essential service providers.

**Table 2** Top five online vacancies by occupation as at September 2024, Toowoomba SA4 region

	Professionals	Technician and Trade Workers	Community and Personal Service Workers	Clerical and Administration Workers	Labourers
August 2023	341	202	175	155	144
September 2023	349	204	182	153	110
October 2023	364	205	186	151	107
November 2023	349	203	165	147	111
December 2023	306	181	150	127	100
January 2024	287	174	146	126	101
February 2024	271	185	143	124	99
March 2024	279	202	157	144	108
April 2024	258	205	153	143	106
May 2024	250	195	168	143	109
June 2024	241	194	157	133	109
July 2024	242	193	156	129	117
August 2024	252	184	156	127	117
September 2024	<b>264</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>131</b>

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, Internet Vacancy Index, September 2024 data released on 16 October 2024

# Your future workforce

Jobs Queensland's Anticipating Future Skills Series provides employment projections through to 2027-2028 for the State's industries, regions (SA4-level), occupations and qualifications. For more detailed analysis and to access the interactive data tools, visit [www.jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/afs](http://www.jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/afs).

## Toowoomba SA4 by 2027-2028



3919 new jobs

**4.7%** growth



Industry	Toowoomba SA4			Queensland		
	2023-2024	2027-2028	Change	2023-2024	2027-2028	Change
Accommodation and Food Services	4077	4295	5.3%	204,810	212,484	3.7%
Administrative and Support Services	2771	2797	0.9%	94,129	96,960	3%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	4984	5207	4.5%	68,368	67,331	-1.5%
Arts and Recreation Services	1373	1520	10.7%	45,594	47,679	4.6%
Construction	6855	6864	0.1%	272,151	280,258	3%
Education and Training	9792	10,375	6%	249,636	266,972	6.9%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1250	1338	7%	37,951	39,738	4.7%
Financial and Insurance Services	1596	1583	-0.9%	73,748	75,566	2.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	15,513	16,911	9%	464,591	522,446	12.5%
Information Media and Tele-communications	504	508	0.8%	27,773	28,487	2.6%
Mining	1833	1879	2.5%	72,410	72,958	0.8%
Other Services	3764	3775	0.3%	113,939	116,235	2%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	3455	3615	4.6%	228,090	246,699	8.2%
Public Administration and Safety	3366	3957	17.6%	200,201	216,574	8.2%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	721	688	-4.6%	48,685	50,737	4.2%
Retail Trade	7375	7334	-0.6%	280,647	289,839	3.3%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	4306	4545	5.6%	156,561	162,645	3.9%
Wholesale Trade	2629	2700	2.7%	71,326	74,069	3.8%
	<b>82,866</b>	<b>86,785</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>2,893,679</b>	<b>3,049,919</b>	<b>5.4%</b>



# Travel to work

During the 2021 Census, 76.3 per cent of workers within the Toowoomba SA4 reported travelling by car as their only form of transport to work in comparison to 64.4 per cent of the Queensland. This figure highlights Queensland and the Toowoomba regions' decentralised population and limited public transport options to cover the larger geographical footprint.

This is exacerbated by reduced housing options in the region, resulting in individuals travelling further to their place of employment. It is worth noting that 17.2 per cent reported they either worked at home or did not go to work while 2.3 per cent walked (see Table 3 below).

There are a number of reasons why people use different modes of transport to travel to work including the availability of affordable and effective public transport options, the number of motor vehicles available in the household and the travel distance to work, which for example, can allow people to walk or bicycle to their place of work.

Further investigation into the local public transport infrastructure, as well as the workforce and industry composition, may be warranted to understand if there any inhibitors and/or influences impacting workforce participation from disadvantaged or underutilised job seekers.

**Table 3** Method of travel to work, Toowoomba SA4, 2021

	Percentage
<b>Public transport</b>	<b>0.3</b>
Taxi or ride share service	0.4
<b>Car</b>	<b>76.3</b>
Walk	2.3
Bicycle	0.5
Other	1.6
Worked at home or did not work	17.2

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, Working Population Profile - W22





Method of travel to work data should be viewed in conjunction with workers' place of residence. This will help to provide a clearer picture of where people come from to work within the Toowoomba SA4. At the time of the 2021 census, 13.5 per cent (7503) of the region's workforce resided outside of the Toowoomba SA3, 4 per cent (2970) lived in the Darling Downs - East area and 3.3 per cent (2424) travelled from the Ipswich Hinterland region. This data highlights the significant number of workers who travel from neighbouring areas, emphasising the importance of regional connectivity and infrastructure in supporting the local workforce.

**Table 4** Top five usual resident SA3s, Toowoomba SA4, 2021

SA3s	Toowoomba SA4	
	Number	Percentage
Toowoomba	63,763	86.5
Darling Downs - East	2970	4
Ipswich Hinterland	2424	3.3
Granite Belt	1265	1.7
Ipswich Inner	428	0.6
Other (a)	2840	3.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>73,684</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021, Working Population Profile, unpublished data and Queensland Treasury estimates

(a) Includes other SA3s within Australia as well as inadequately described and not stated responses. The sum of components may not add to total due to confidentiality.

# Schooling and non-school qualifications

At the time of the 2021 Census, 54.7 per cent of persons within the Toowoomba SA4 had year 11 or 12 (or equivalent) as their highest level of schooling, which is lower than the Queensland average. Table 5 below provides a breakdown of other school level year attainments for the Toowoomba SA4 compared to Queensland.

**Table 5** Highest level of schooling completed, Toowoomba SA4 and Queensland, 2021

	Did not go to school or Year 8 or below (%)	Year 9 or 10 or Equivalent (%)	Year 11 or 12 or Equivalent (%)
<b>Toowoomba SA4</b>	6.7	28	59.2
<b>Queensland</b>	4.4	24.6	63.6

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, General Community Profile – G16

**Table 6** Non-school qualifications by level of education, Toowoomba SA4 and Queensland, 2021

	Bachelor degree or higher (%)	Advanced diploma or diploma (%)	Certificate (%)	Persons with a qualification (%)
<b>Toowoomba SA4</b>	20.1	8.8	23.4	59.9
<b>Queensland</b>	21.9	9.4	22.1	62.5

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, General Community Profile – G43 and G49

Table 6 above provides a breakdown of the largest non-school qualification by level of education for the Toowoomba SA4 compared to Queensland.

As of 2024, the largest non-school qualification field of study in the Toowoomba SA4 was management and commerce at 16.6 per cent. This is lower than the Queensland average for the same field, which is 18.4 per cent.

Table 7 below provides a breakdown of the five highest non-school qualifications for the Toowoomba SA4 as of 2024. These fields continue to represent the most common areas of study for non-school qualifications in Toowoomba SA4, reflecting the region’s evolving educational and professional landscape.

**Table 7** Non-school qualifications by field of study, Toowoomba SA4 and Queensland, 2021

Field of study	Toowoomba SA4		Queensland	
	Number	%	Number	%
Natural and physical sciences	1545	2	63,861	2.4
Information technology	1479	1.9	64,750	2.5
Engineering and related technologies	11,225	14.4	380,136	14.5
Architecture and building	4125	5.3	151,067	5.8
Agriculture environment and related studies	2421	3.1	49,434	1.9
Health	10,136	13	285,611	10.9
Education	7727	9.9	205,309	7.8
Management and commerce	12,950	16.6	480,526	18.4
Society and culture	9435	12.1	309,683	11.8
Creative arts	1878	2.4	86,519	3.3
Food hospitality and personal services	4543	5.8	146,167	5.6
Mixed field programmes	155	0.2	4427	0.2
Total	78,019	100	2,618,666	100

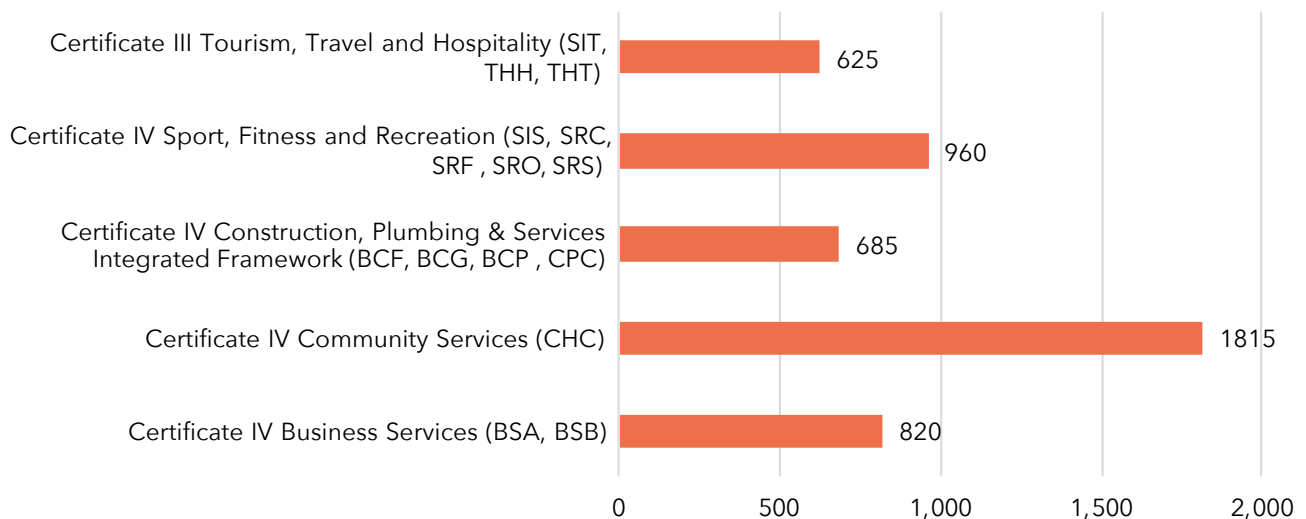


# Vocational education and training and employment pathways<sup>13</sup>

For the year 2023 there was a total of 21,380 program enrolments (training package qualifications) in the Toowoomba SA4 region.

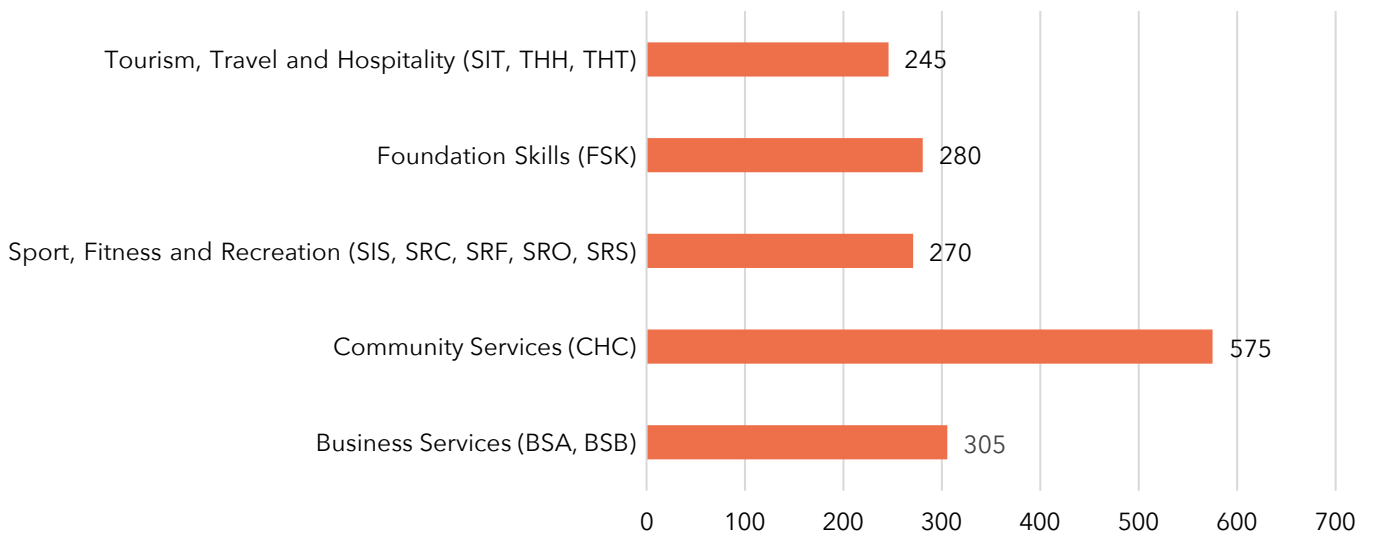
The tables below represent the top five enrolments, completions, and completions by level of qualification for the same period.

**Table 8** Top five VET program enrolments (program name), 2023, Toowoomba SA4

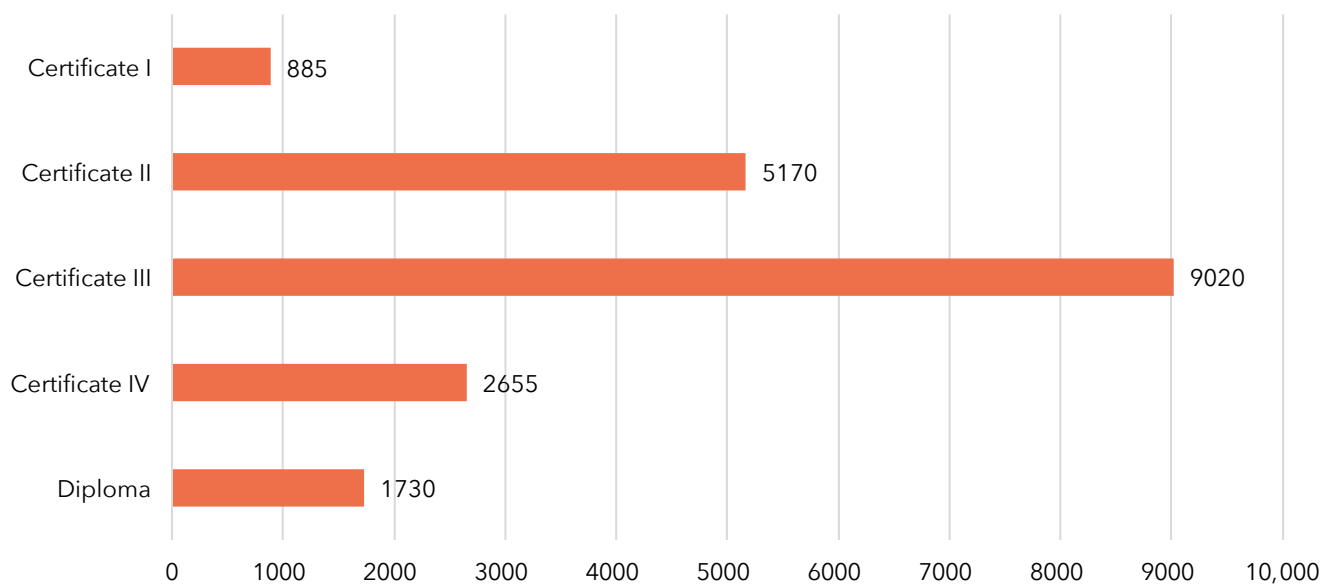


13. National Centre for Vocational Education Research. (2023). *VOCSTATS database, Total VET students and courses 2023*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research. <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/total-vet-students-and-courses-2023>

**Table 9** Top five VET program completions (parent training package), 2023, Toowoomba SA4

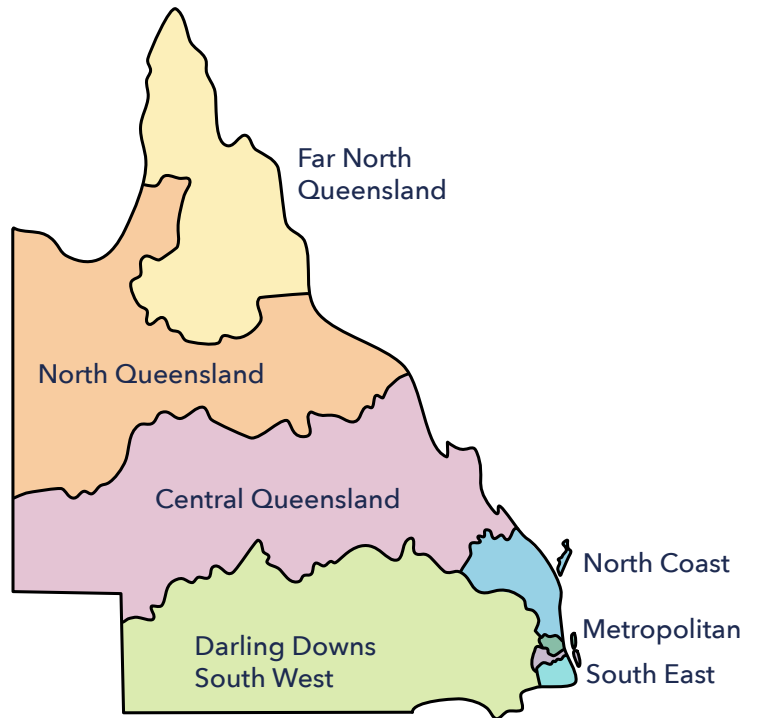


**Table 10** Top five program completions, level of qualification, 2023, Toowoomba SA4



# Queensland Training Summary<sup>14</sup>

As defined by the Department of Trade, Employment and Training (DTET), the state is divided into 7 training regions (see map below). The Darling Downs South West region comprises the Toowoomba SA4. DTET maintains a number of records that contain training data.



**Table 11** Government funded VET outcomes, DTET Darling Downs South West region, 2021-2022 to 2022-2023

	Darling Downs South West		
	2021-2022	2022-2023	Change
Certificate I and II	817	748	-8.45%
Certificate III	1242	1122	-9.66%
Certificate IV	234	232	-0.85%
Diploma and higher	204	214	4.9%
Completed qualifications	2497	2316	-7.25%
15-19 year-old students	863	845	-2.09%
Indigenous students	177	137	-22.6%
Students with a disability	184	232	26.09%

14. VET and Apprentice and Trainee participation statistics as at October 2023, Department of Trade, Employment and Training, data slicers, publicly available.

# Apprenticeships and Traineeships - SA4 region<sup>15</sup>

Apprenticeship and traineeship commencements for the 12 months ending 30 June 2023 totalled 1615 a 37.8 per cent decrease on the previous twelve-month period.

Completions of apprenticeships and traineeships for the year ending 30 June 2023 increased by 10 per cent compared to the previous year.

The top five industries for apprenticeship and traineeship commencements are pictured below.

The top five training commencements by occupation were Technicians and Trades Workers, Community and Personal Service Workers, Clerical and Administrative Workers, Machinery Operators and Drivers, and Sales Workers.

The top five training completions by occupation were Technicians and Trades Workers, Community and Personal Service Workers, Clerical and Administrative Workers, Sales Workers and Machinery Operators and Drivers.

## Top five industries - Apprenticeships and Traineeships commencements, year ending 30 June 2023



Health care and social assistance



Construction



Accommodation

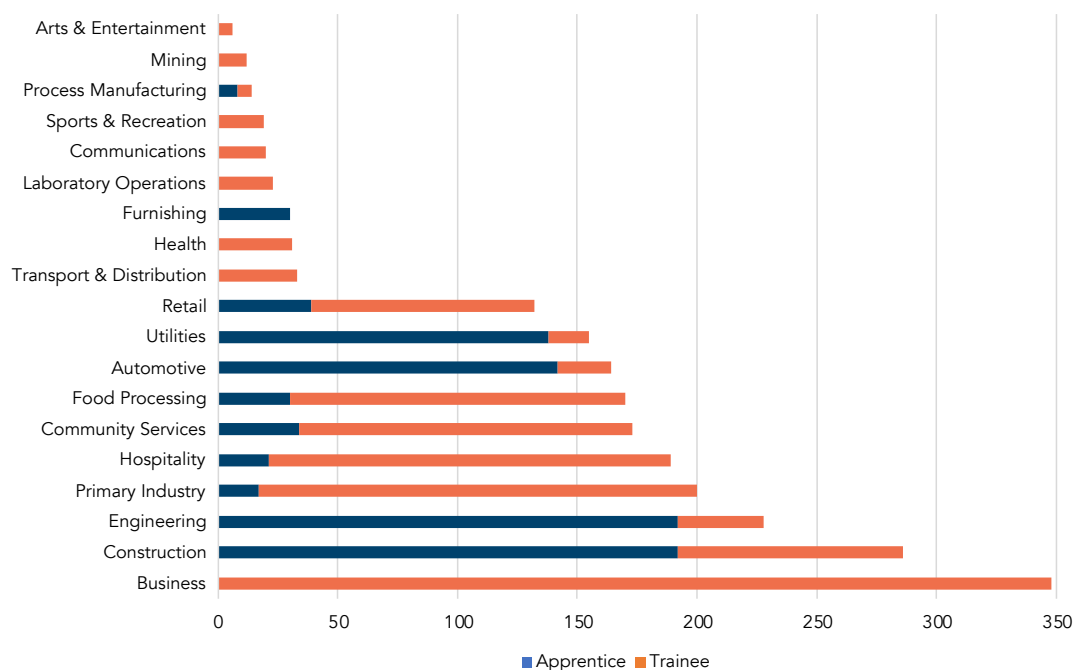


Manufacturing



Retail trade

**Table 12**  
Apprenticeship and traineeship completions by industry, Darling Downs South West, 12 months to 30 June 2023<sup>16</sup>



15. National Centre for Vocational Education Research. 2022, *Apprentices and trainees 2023 - June quarter* DataBuilder. <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/data/databuilder#>

16. VET and Apprentice and Trainee participation statistics as at October 2023. Department of Trade, Employment and Training, data slicers. publicly available.



# Your businesses

---



## Construction

The construction industry is characterised by a significant proportion of full-time employees (79.1 per cent).<sup>17</sup> Ongoing demand in this industry is anticipated, fuelled by requirements for new housing developments and key infrastructure projects within the region, such as the new Toowoomba Hospital. Construction represents 18 per cent (2612) of registered businesses in the Toowoomba SA4.

As the region expands, the need for residential, commercial and public infrastructure is creating strong demand for a skilled construction workforce. Toowoomba's role as a key service and transport hub for nearby rural areas also increases the demand for construction professionals with expertise across diverse areas, including project management, civil engineering and skilled trades.



## Agriculture, forestry and fishing

The Toowoomba region has a rich agricultural heritage. Despite economic growth and diversification into various industries over the years, agriculture continues to be a significant contributor to the region's economy and a major source of employment. Agriculture, forestry and fishing currently employs 4984 people in the Toowoomba SA4 region and makes up 10.7 per cent (1552) of registered businesses. The demand for skills and qualifications in agriculture, forestry and fishing in the Toowoomba SA4 region is driven by the need for sustainable production practices, technological advancements and an evolving industry landscape.



## Health care and social assistance

As the population ages, the need for specialised healthcare, aged care and social support services continues to rise, requiring a workforce equipped with advanced skills and training. Additionally, advances in medical technology and a growing emphasis on preventative care are increasing the complexity of roles, calling for higher qualifications and specialised expertise. Serving as a healthcare hub for surrounding rural areas also means the region requires a diverse range of skilled professionals, from allied health workers to social care specialists, to meet the community's expanding needs effectively. There are currently 1293 (8.9 per cent) registered health care and social assistance businesses in the Toowoomba SA4, employing 15,513 persons.

---

17. Queensland Government Statistician's Office. (2024). *Queensland Regional Profiles* (Various reports). Brisbane: Queensland Government. <https://statistics.qgso.qld.gov.au/qld-regional-profiles>



## Education and training

The demand for skills and qualifications in education and training in the Toowoomba SA4 region is growing due to a range of influential factors. A rising population and an increasing emphasis on lifelong learning are driving the need for qualified educators across all levels, from early childhood through to vocational and higher education. Additionally, technological advancements and evolving industry needs are shaping a more dynamic curriculum, requiring educators with specialised knowledge and up-to-date skills. Toowoomba's role as an education hub for the broader region, serving both local and rural communities, further underscores the demand for skilled professionals in teaching, training, and support roles to help meet diverse learning needs and foster workforce readiness. There are currently 178 (1.2 per cent) registered education and training businesses in the Toowoomba SA4, employing 9792 persons.

The highlighted industries in Table 13 below are those in the Toowoomba Region that the Regional Jobs Committee (RJC) have identified as industries of focus. These figures represent the number of businesses and their respective percentages within the Toowoomba region.

**Table 13** Registered businesses by industry, Toowoomba SA4 and Queensland, 30 June 2023

Registered businesses by industry in Toowoomba (SA4)	Toowoomba		Queensland	
	Businesses	%	Businesses	%
Construction	2612	18	85,501	17.2
Rental, hiring and real estate services	1625	11.2	57,937	11.7
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1552	10.7	41,926	8.4
Professional, scientific and technical services	1326	9.1	61,508	12.4
Health care and social assistance	1293	8.9	37,240	7.5
Transport, postal and warehousing	1053	7.3	36,270	7.3
Other services	891	6.1	27,606	5.6
Retail trade	878	6	29,355	5.9
Administrative and support services	634	4.4	23,042	4.6
Manufacturing	597	4.1	18,285	3.7
Financial and insurance services	593	4.1	20,285	4.1

Source: ABS, *Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits*, various editions

# Future opportunities for the Toowoomba Region

---

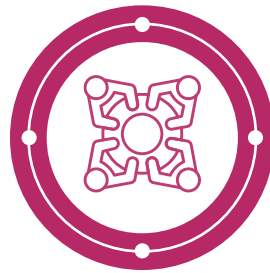
Future opportunities for Toowoomba align with four common themes:



Build workforce capability



Enhance pathways and work readiness



Promote workplace diversity



Support region and industry transition



## 1. Build workforce capability

---

Building skills and capability in the use of technology will become critical to the region's ability to remain globally competitive and meet the services of neighbouring regional communities Toowoomba supports.

As the region continues to operate as a hub to major services, workers may benefit from longitudinal research on the impacts on mental health while working remotely.

Local residents report scepticism regarding the impact of technology within the workplace. This may be addressed through a 'myth busting' campaign to highlight the benefits of technology on businesses and individuals.

Continuous learning and knowledge sharing is essential to the ongoing competitiveness of the labour market and broader business economic feasibility. Staff should be encouraged to seek and share knowledge across the region.

Building transferrable skills to support career transitioning through locally based contextualised and flexible training options may increase participation rates and progression through the broader labour market.

Workforce planning positions businesses to respond to workforce needs now and into the future. It helps businesses think ahead, manage change and leverage workforce opportunities as they emerge. Workforce Planning Connect is a suite of user-friendly resources designed to introduce small and medium-sized businesses to workforce planning and to enable them to undertake the process, regardless of their knowledge or experience. By building capability locally, businesses are best placed to respond to and manage change as it occurs. Upskilling RJC members and the local Chamber of Commerce in this area may support promotion and uptake rates of forward planning. JQ has supported capability building through delivery of a series of webinars and workshops, including workforce planning, and data sourcing and analysis.

## Future opportunity

Building skills and capability in the use of technology locally

Myth busting to highlight the benefits of transformative technology to both businesses and individuals

Promote a lifelong learning culture

Champion lifelong learning and encourage professional development discussions with local employers

Promote development of digital skills and capabilities

Promote benefits of workforce planning with local businesses and encourage them to engage in capability building, particularly those businesses in the agriculture, forestry and fishing, health care and social assistance, construction and education and training. This may include collaboration with:

- Chambers of Commerce
- Local Government
- DTET and Jobs Queensland

## Existing resources

- [Toowoomba Region Libraries free technology classes](#)

- [Lifelong Learning: The Foundation of Future Work](#)
- [Future work for small business | Jobs Queensland](#)
- [Digital Solutions - Australian Small Business Advisory Services | business.gov.au](#)

- [Workforce Planning Connect, Jobs Queensland](#)
- [Workforce Planning Connect Toolkit for the Disability Sector - Workability Qld](#)
- Queensland Small Business Commissioner - resources for small businesses





## 2. Enhance pathways and work readiness

Local advocacy to reduce barriers to engagement with the VET system is required for entrants that are deemed 'not eligible' but live locally and have skills required by employers and require or would benefit from a formal qualification to support entry and retention into the local workforce.

Soft skills development is highlighted as increasing imperative to employers locally. There is opportunity for education and employment providers to reach agreement on what these skills are and promote these consistently with jobseekers to support their entry.

The Toowoomba Future of Jobs - Youth Forum emphasised local students uncertainty about future career opportunities and the need to enhance career guidance beyond tertiary pathway options with students, parents and educators.

The Gateway to Industry Schools Program (GISP) builds partnerships between schools and industry to enable young people to acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes to pursue careers and employment in the Toowoomba economy. Students participating in the program are exposed to a range of learning experiences to assist them in their career choices and pathways to employment. With the RJC supporting industry and education connections, local schools may enhance their participation in the program and connect with local industry to provide targeted training solutions for workforce issues.

Linking students and parents with career pathway information through around table discussions provides an informal avenue to building knowledge relating to employers expectations, local opportunities available and the skills required to succeed in the workplace.

Increasing awareness of the benefits of workforce experience with local employers to accelerate their engagement levels will likely improve youth access to career opportunities.

Future opportunity	Existing resources
Gather examples of barriers to support local advocacy for changes to eligibility criteria	
Leverage Link and Launch programs to support youth transitions	• <a href="#">Strengthening transitions - Link and Launch</a>
Work with local education and employment providers to discuss and agree on essential skills needs (soft skills) to be successful in the workplace and promote these across the region	• Department of Trade, Employment and Training - Darling Downs South West Region: <a href="#">Bringing Employers and Schools Together (Chinchilla)</a> initiative.
Enhance career guidance beyond tertiary pathway options with students, parents and educators	• <a href="#">Link and Launch</a> • <a href="#">School to Work Transitions program</a>

## Future opportunity

Supporting more local high schools to participate in the [Gateway to Industry Schools Program](#) (GISP) may provide valuable linkages to industry and pathways for students. This is particularly relevant to programs connected to industries with high business representation across the region such as Health Care and Social Assistance, Agriculture and Building and Construction, as well as those projected to experience significant jobs growth in the region (accommodation and food services, and retail trade; both of which form a large portion of tourism as a composite industry).

Host round table for parents and students in Toowoomba to increase awareness of local pathway opportunities

Promote the benefits of work experience with local employers

## Existing resources

Gateway to Industry Schools Programs:

- [Health and Community Services](#)
- [Agribusiness](#)
- [Building and Construction](#)
- [Tourism and hospitality](#)

- Department of Trade, Employment and Training - Darling Downs South West Region: School and Industry events.

- Youth Employment Success program (YES)



## 3. Promote workplace diversity

As a designated Refugee Welcome Zone, Toowoomba is committed to fostering inclusivity and supporting new residents from diverse backgrounds, including refugees and migrants. This commitment is demonstrated by initiatives like the Toowoomba Chamber's Business Connect program, which creates opportunities for Toowoomba businesses to access the diverse skills offered by Toowoomba's migrant and refugee communities.

Toowoomba's commitment to diversity extends to other key community groups, including people with disability, parents returning to the workforce and mature-aged workers, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from the region's economic growth.

This rich diversity not only enriches workplace culture, but also fuels community engagement, productivity and sustainable growth. Through inclusive recruitment, supportive career development practices and flexible work arrangements, Toowoomba creates a welcoming environment where all workers can thrive.

## Future opportunity

Engage with Toowoomba TAFE Campus to discuss students participating in Adult Migrant English Program/Skills for Education and Employment.

Toowoomba Chamber Business Connect

## Existing resources

- [Adult Migrant English Program](#)
- [Skills for Education and Employment](#)

- [Cultural Awareness Handbook](#)
- [Skilled Migrants and Refugees video](#)

## Future opportunity

## Existing resources

Toowoomba Chamber Disability and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Information for Employers on Disability and Employment</a></li></ul>
Diverse Queensland Workforce program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Diverse Queensland Workforce program</a></li></ul>
Toowoomba Regional Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Multicultural services</a></li></ul>
Business Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Workforce diversity and inclusion</a></li></ul>
Queensland Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Workplace inclusion and diversity</a></li></ul>



## 4. Support region and industry transition

Toowoomba, like all of Queensland, participates in global trade. Importing and exporting items through Wellcamp Airport and an upgraded road freight network, the region currently navigates global impacts in a largely reactive state. Understanding global megatrends and how they impact regional economies may provide the local business community a competitive advantage, allowing them to implement contingency planning that complements existing business and workforce planning cycles.

Jobs Queensland has funded (through QCC program) research and training via the University of Southern Queensland who will roll out training in psychosocial hazards and support to health practitioners in hospital and health services throughout South West, Darling Downs, and West Moreton districts. Further to this, JQ's Grow Your Own Regional Workforce program is funding Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise (TSBE) to deliver a Health focussed workforce plan for the region. Connecting with these existing projects will enhance local outcomes.

A focus on lifelong learning across the entire community can be a critical source of competitive advantage for the region. It can position Toowoomba to respond to changes in economic circumstance and leverage global opportunities.

Australia's population is highly mobile, impacting regions who are in desperate need for skilled labour to live and work locally. Placemaking, housing, liveability and retention strategies are all live conversations for the region at the moment. Highlighting the benefits of living and working locally while concurrently looking to skills mobility options (moving skilled workers between industries locally) may assist in keeping workers in the region.

Local employers have expressed a need to understand what the future of work and employment landscape may look like to assist them with forward planning. Jobs Queensland's Anticipating Future Skills needs may assist in this area if it were promoted and discussed locally with employers.

Workforce participation rates may be boosted through an continued focus on engagement with program providers such as Link and Launch and with employment providers to increase outcomes for the region.

## Future opportunity

## Existing resources

Highlight global megatrends with local employers and impacts on future skills needs

- [Our Future World report: CSIRO](#)

Research psychological factors influencing career decisions in rural areas

- JQ funded research and training for Health in region.
- JQ funded workforce plan for Health in partnership with TSBE

Instil a life-long learning mindset in all learning programs

- [Lifelong learning: The foundation of future work report](#)

Placemaking campaign to highlight the benefits of living and working locally

- [Toowoomba Region Futures](#)
- [Regional Australia Institute: Liveability Toolkit](#)

Promote JQ's *Anticipating Future Skills* projections locally with education and employment providers

- Anticipating Future Skills

Work with Link and Launch and employment providers to enhance awareness of local opportunities

- Strengthening transitions - Link and Launch

### Other industry initiatives that align with identified regional focus

### Resources include (not an exhaustive list)

Education and training

- [Further education | Education and training | Queensland Government \(www.qld.gov.au\)](#)

Health care and social assistance

- [Workability Micro-Credentials](#)
- [Choose Your Own Health Career - Vocational Education \(cyohealthcareer.com.au\)](#)

Building and construction

- [Construction Skills Queensland](#)

Agriculture, forestry and fishing

- [Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network](#)

Other/general

- [Skilling Queenslanders for Work](#)
- [Back to Work](#)
- [Accelerating Female Founders Program](#)



# Government initiatives to support

---

## Mentoring for Growth

Mentoring for Growth (M4G) offers eligible businesses free access to volunteer business experts who provide insights, options and suggestions relating to challenges and opportunities they are experiencing in their business.

## VET investment programs

\$500 million annual funding for subsidies to support Queenslanders to access affordable training places in priority industries, including apprenticeships and traineeships.

## Skilling Queenslanders for Work

Skilling Queenslanders for Work funds training and support for unemployed or underemployed people, with a focus on young people (including those in and transitioned from out-of-home care), Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with disability, mature-age jobseekers, women re-entering the workforce, veterans and ex-service personnel, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## Gateway to Industry Schools program

Led by industry organisations which develop and implement tailored school engagement activities in line with their industry's key skills and workforce priorities.

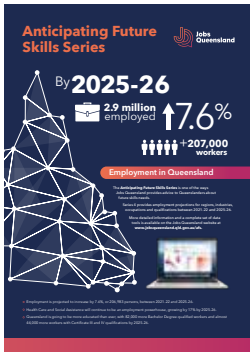
## Diverse Queensland Workforce program

The Diverse Queensland Workforce program will deliver \$8.5 million in funding, until 30 June 2025, to assist up to 2500 migrants, refugees and international students into employment. This program is funded under the Future Skills Fund and is being expanded as part of the *Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032*.

## Fee-free TAFE

Fee-free TAFE covers the cost of training for specific high priority qualifications at TAFE Queensland and CQUniversity.

# Strategies to support



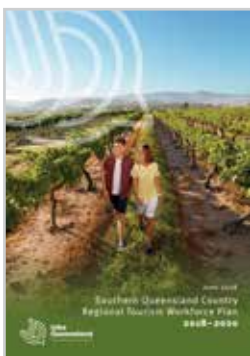
## **Anticipating Future Skills**

In consultation with stakeholders across the state, Jobs Queensland devised three future scenarios, which are useful tools for dealing with complexity and uncertainty. Grounded in existing data and trends, scenarios do not generate predictions but depict plausible futures.



## **Future work, future jobs**

While change to the composition of employment in Queensland has been happening for decades, the speed and extent of change is increasing. Opportunities for new and different work are emerging. Future work, future jobs examines this transition and provides a roadmap to the future. Collaboration and planning are essential.



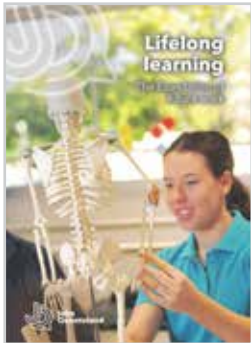
## **Regional Tourism Workforce Plans**

The Regional Tourism Workforce Plans provide more specific advice and actions at a regional level. They have been tailored to individual regional needs ensuring regional differences are adequately reflected, and that recommended actions provide practical solutions to local issues.



## **Supporting workforces during industry transition**

Transition is a continual event in an industry's life cycle and the impact of industry transitions can be challenging. However, transitions can also bring about positive change in situations where an industry grows rapidly or where there is industry renewal. Both of these experiences have been amplified as a result of recent economic disruption. This research identified eight key elements that can influence a successful transition strategy for industries and regions.



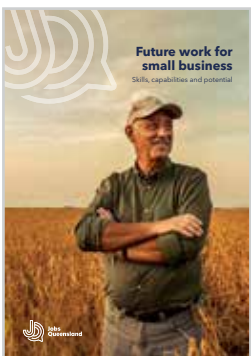
### **Lifelong Learning: The Foundation of Future Work**

This report describes a model for enabling and encouraging individuals to adopt a lifelong learning mindset and rationale for industries and businesses to roster a learning culture in the workplace.



### **Social Enterprise**

Jobs Queensland facilitated research to understand appropriate roles for government to help support social enterprise activity to deliver economic and social outcomes for Queensland. [Read the research overview](#). As discussed, Jobs Queensland's work informed the [Queensland Social Enterprise Strategy](#) that was released in September 2019.



### **Future Work for Small Business**

The research in this report identified small business skills and capability development as an important element to increasing small business productivity into the next decade.

