GROW YOUR OWN WORKFORCE

Region and industry environmental scan

Wide Bay Food and Beverage Manufacturing

Jobs Queensland
Future **skills.** Future **work.** Future **Queensland.**

Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetable Growers

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Introduction

1.1 Good People, Good Jobs: *Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022–2032*

The Queensland Government released *Queensland's Workforce Strategy 2022–32* (QWS) to drive Queensland towards a strong and diverse workforce ready to seize today's jobs and adapt to future opportunities.

The QWS delivers innovative and practical solutions that are needed now to ensure Queensland has a ready workforce to support growth, strengthen communities and keep Queensland at the forefront of new economic opportunities. The actions in the QWS provide a range of ways for regions, industries and employers to address workforce shortages and take new and innovative approaches to growing, skilling and retaining their workforce.

Industry, community and government are committed to tackling skills and labour shortages together by addressing the different needs of diverse populations, businesses and regions. Each region in Queensland is unique, resulting in varied demand for workers and the need to develop local solutions.

The QWS emphasises the importance of local solutions to address these varied workforce challenges and opportunities.

One of the QWS actions is for the Queensland Government, through Jobs Queensland (JQ), to partner with regions to develop workforce plans and initiatives to support 'Grow Your Own' workforces and cross-sector skills development through locally led solutions.

1.2 Why a Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry environmental scan

This report supports the 'Grow Your Own' Regional Workforce Program by identifying workforce challenges in the Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry. This will provide an evidence base to implement action-based, locally focused and led workforce planning and initiatives.

Specifically, it provides an analysis of employment and training data trends within the Wide Bay region and relevant food and beverage manufacturing industries and identifies workforce challenges and opportunities.

1.3 Project scope

This project aims to:

- understand the current local business structure and workforce skills to identify gaps
- identify opportunities, challenges and anticipated cross-sector skilling needs following the completion of the Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry environmental scan
- identify retention and upskilling opportunities for the existing workforce
- recommend ways to attract and skill new workers to the food and beverage manufacturing industry.

This Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry environmental scan provides an historical and in-time point of reference to support industry consultation activities for the development of an industry-endorsed workforce plan.

Food and beverage manufacturing covers businesses undertaking various stages of processing to transform agricultural produce into food and drink products. This includes processes ranging from basic preparation, preservation and packaging of raw ingredients, through to elaborately transformed foods and beverages. However, food and beverage manufacturing excludes food service retailing businesses and unprocessed food commodities.[1]

Effective workforce planning has four stages:

The development of this environmental scan encompasses stages 1 and 2 as explained below.

1.4 Governance and methodology

Stage 1: Get started

During Stage 1, a Project Champion Group (PCG) was established to support delivery of the project across the four workforce planning stages and provide guidance to Jobs Queensland to ensure alignment with industry needs and expectations. The PCG continues to collaborate with JQ to deliver an industry-driven workforce plan, serving as a pathway to address future workforce challenges and enhance sustainability.

The PCG is comprised of representatives from:

- Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers Limited
- Marquis Macadamias
- Farm Fresh Fine Foods
- Bundaberg Brewed Drinks.

The PCG endorsed Wide Bay Statistical Area 4 (SA4) as the focus region and endorsed the food and beverage manufacturing industry (Figure 1). This set the research

parameters to determine the current profile and future workforce needs for the food and beverage manufacturing industry.

Stage 2 Gather information

During Stage 2, research using established and recognised information sources was undertaken to support development of a profile for the food and beverage manufacturing industry in the Wide Bay SA4 region and to understand the current regional workforce and identify possible challenges and opportunities for future workforce development.

The research also highlighted gaps within the available data on the industry and identified challenges facing the industry in terms of workforce attraction and development. Broad industry consultation with key stakeholders will be undertaken during Stage 3 to gain on-the-ground intelligence to identify the actions to be developed in the Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry workforce plan.

1. Australian Government, 2021. *Food and Beverage National Manufacturing Priority Roadmap*. Australian Government: Canberra.

1.5 Region and industry of focus

Wide Bay SA4 encompasses the Statistical Area 3s (SA3s) of:

- Bundaberg
- Burnett
- Gympie – Cooloola
- Hervey Bay
- Maryborough.

Wide Bay region's Gross Regional Product (GRP) was $14.89 billion in the year ending June 2022, growing 6.4 per cent since the previous year. It represents 3.8 per cent of the Queensland Gross State Product (GSP). Employment within the region contributed 4.4 per cent of Queensland's employment.[2]

The region has a diverse economy with a range of well-established industries alongside with new and emerging industries. The region has a strong history in primary production and allied manufacturing supporting a diversity of products, a high degree of specialisation and nationally and internationally recognised companies and brands. These traditional industries have more recently been supported by a growing service economy supporting population growth. The region is favourably positioned for access to international and domestic markets.[3]

Figure 1 Map of Wide Bay Area Statistical Area 4 (SA4) (ASGS2021)
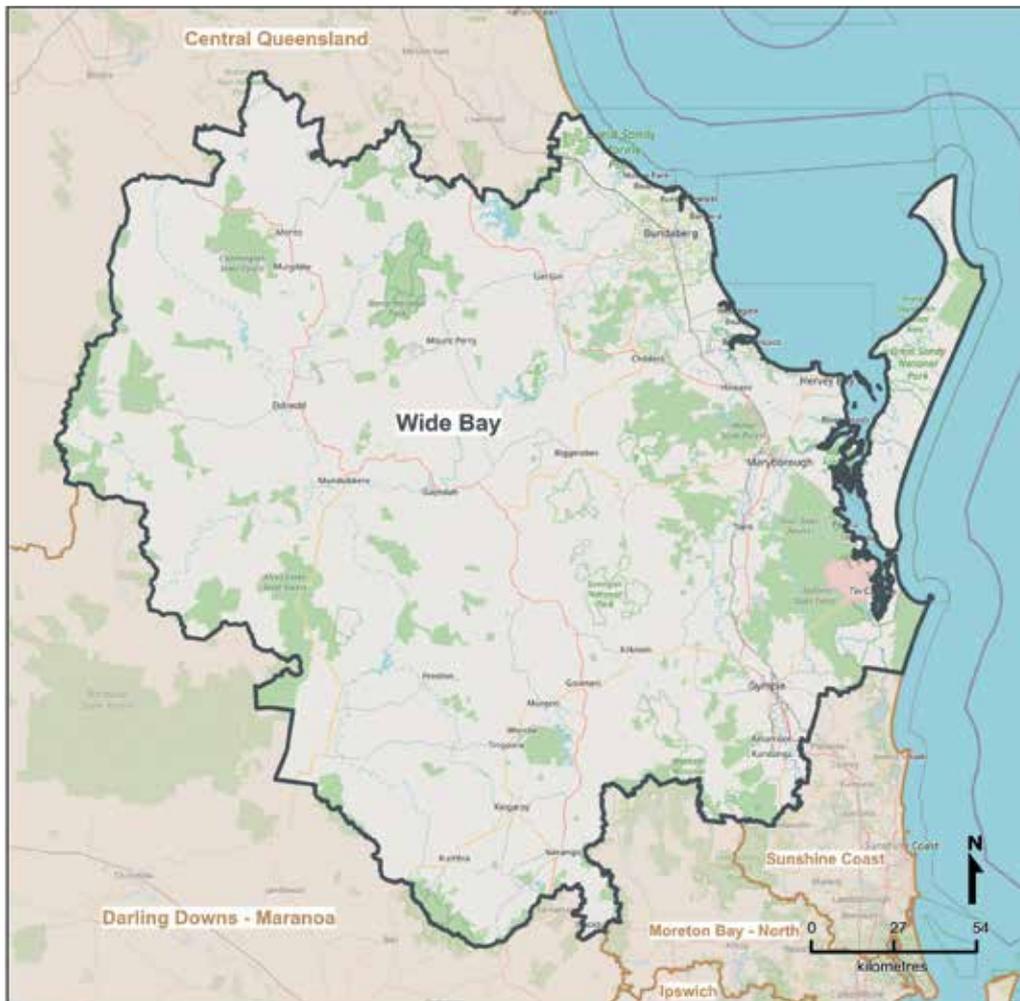
Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 11 September 2023, Queensland Statistical Areas, Level 4 (SA4), 2021 – Wide Bay (ASGS Code 319) https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/issues/10706/qld-sa4-asgs-2021-wide-bay.pdf

2. Regional Development Australia, 2023. *RDA Wide Bay Burnett Region Economic Profile, 2023*. RDA: Wide Bay. https://economy.id.com.au/rda-wide-bay-burnett/gross-regional-product
3. State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, 2023, *Strengthening Wide Bay Burnett*. Queensland Government: Brisbane. https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/regions/queensland/wide-bay-burnett

The manufacturing sector is diverse, with strong specialisations in agricultural processing, food and beverage production, rail and rollingstock, transport equipment, primary metal and metal manufacturing and timber industries. In the year to June 2022, manufacturing represented 27.7 per cent of the region's total exports, and a value added of $1.09 billion. The largest sub-sector by output was food product manufacturing at $1.23 billion, being 33 per cent of the total manufacturing product, while the beverage and tobacco product manufacturing had an output of $186.4 million or 5 per cent.[4] This reflects the region's primary production strengths and the diversity of its locally sourced products, driven by fruit and vegetable processors, beef and pork producers, oil manufacturers and nut processors, all of which have significant export markets and growth potential. The region has also made a name for itself in beverage manufacturing, specifically brewed soft drinks, spirits, craft beer, juice and wine.[5]

1.6 The food and beverage manufacturing industry ecosystem

The specific industry sectors under consideration are:

- Food Product Manufacturing (ANZSIC 11) which encompasses the following subsectors:

  - Meat Processing (ANZSIC 1111)
  - Poultry Processing (ANZSIC 1112)
  - Cured Meat and Small Goods Manufacturing (ANZSIC 1113)
  - Seafood Processing (ANZSIC 1120)
  - Fruit and Vegetable Processing (ANZSIC 1140)
  - Oil and Fat Manufacturing (ANZSIC 1150)
  - Potato, Corn and Other Crisp Manufacturing (ANZSIC 1191)
  - Prepared Animal and Bird Feed Manufacturing (ANZSIC 1192)
  - Other Food Product Manufacturing n.e.c. (ANZSIC 1199).

- Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing (ANZSIC 12):

  - Soft Drink, Cordial and Syrup Manufacturing (ANZSIC 1211)
  - Beer Manufacturing (ANZSIC 1212)
  - Spirit Manufacturing (ANZSIC 1213)
  - Wine and Other Alcoholic Beverage Manufacturing (ANZSIC 1214).[6]

4. Regional Development Australia, 2023. *RDA Wide Bay Burnett Region Economic Profile, 2023*. RDA: Wide Bay. https://economy.id.com.au/rda-wide-bay-burnett/gross-regional-product
5. State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, 2023, *Strengthening Wide Bay Burnett*. Queensland Government: Brisbane. https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/regions/queensland/wide-bay-burnett
6. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013. *Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification Latest release*. Australian Government: Canberra. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/australian-and-new-zealand-standard-industrial-classification-anzsic/latest-release

2
Summary highlights and findings

2.1 Wide Bay region overview

Overview of the region

The Wide Bay region has a stunning mix of landscapes, cities and towns. With an ageing population and elevated unemployment rates (5.6 per cent) compared to the state average (3.7 per cent), the region is seeking new ways to address workforce challenges and support new entrants. Around 35,562 individuals in the 15–24 and 55–64 age brackets are not engaged in the labour force, exacerbating market constraints. Strategies that focus on targeted employment programs, skill development initiatives and efforts to engage the 15–24 and 55–64 age groups to diversify the workforce may enhance the region's economic resilience.

Ageing workforce challenges

The region's median age of 49.2 surpasses the state average by more than 10 years and is expected to climb to 50.4 by June 2026. Furthermore, the forecast indicates a rise in the population of individuals aged 65 and above to 97,047 by 2026, making up 29.8 per cent of the region's residents. With participation rates across most age groups dipping below state levels (except for the youth bracket aged 15-24, where participation rates slightly exceed the state average), the region is

anticipated to face a decline in its workforce without intervention. This situation may lead to potential labour shortages across various industries, increasing competition between employers. Strategies to address labour demands may involve upskilling and retraining the existing workforce as they age, while simultaneously attracting new entrants.

Fostering inclusivity

Over 5.5 per cent of the Wide Bay region's population identify as Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This demographic could potentially contribute to the workforce as it boasts a significant youth presence, with 52.5 per cent under the age of 24.

The region's diverse community which also includes individuals born overseas and residents receiving disability support, underscores the significance of inclusive engagement strategies. These strategies should acknowledge and respect the valuable skills and cultural contributions from these diverse groups.

Business environment

The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry had the most registered businesses (5875) in the region followed by construction with 3828. Manufacturing had 953 registered businesses with the majority located in Bundaberg. Most businesses fall into the non-employing category, such as sole traders, or small employers with fewer than 20 employees. The absence of large businesses in the region could hinder its capacity to attract and retain skilled workers who are seeking areas with more varied employment opportunities and career progression.

Educational attainment

In the 2021 census, 45.7 per cent of Wide Bay's population aged 15 and over completed year 11 or 12, which is well below the state average of 63.6 per cent. This represents an opportunity for enhanced collaboration between businesses, industries and educational providers to realign their strategies to cultivate new workforce entrants to fill existing gaps. Additionally, post-school education data reveals a lower proportion of residents with qualifications (54.6 per cent) compared to Queensland (62.5 per cent). This poses challenges for employers aiming to attract highly skilled workers but is also an opportunity to fill entry-level positions with lower skilled workers and build local capability.

Workforce strategies

The Wide Bay region struggles with labour challenges stemming from shifting demographics, education and technological advancements necessitating individuals with specific skill sets. The primary focus is on bolstering the capabilities of existing employees and attracting fresh talent, particularly in areas requiring specialised skills. Coordinated efforts between businesses, industries and educational systems are critical to closing skill gaps and cultivating a skilled workforce.

To fortify the industry's appeal and diversify the local workforce, the implementation of on-the-job training and practical vocational programs is crucial. These initiatives not only enhance the industry's attractiveness but also contribute to skill development. Additionally, adopting flexible employment models becomes imperative to leverage the wealth of experience held by seasoned workers, ensuring their continued contribution to the industry. This multifaceted approach aims to create a dynamic, skilled workforce capable of meeting the evolving demands of the food and beverage manufacturing sector in Wide Bay.

2.2 Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry overview

Industry outlook

Wide Bay's food and beverage manufacturing industry is set for substantial growth and opportunities. The Australian food and agribusiness sector is aiming to hit $200 billion by 2030 with Queensland contributing $43 billion in value and creating 176,000 jobs. Manufacturing contributes significantly to the region's exports, with food product manufacturing leading at 33 per cent. Key growth areas include sustainable practices, direct-to-consumer strategies and leveraging precision agriculture. Craft brewing, valued at $62 million annually in Queensland, further adds to the promising landscape of Wide Bay's food and beverage manufacturing industry.

Industry workforce dynamics

Locally, the food and beverage manufacturing industry employs 1883 individuals (2.8 per cent of the local workforce) primarily comprising factory process workers and food trade workers. With a median age of 46, a substantial proportion of the workforce (21.2 per cent) may transition into retirement within the next decade. To address potential skill gaps, strategies such as targeted training programs, knowledge transfer initiatives and recruitment efforts for younger talent could be implemented. Conversely, the industry leans toward younger employment (15–34 age groups), constituting 45.7 per cent and exhibits higher part-time employment for individuals aged 15–24 and those over 65 compared to other age groups. Flexible work arrangements could serve as a catalyst for addressing the impending retirement wave and retaining the invaluable experience of the ageing workforce. This adaptability not only aids in bridging potential skill gaps through targeted training programs but also facilitates knowledge-transfer initiatives. Enhanced flexibility may empower these individuals to contribute more substantially, potentially allowing some employees to extend their working hours, thereby fostering a dynamic and responsive workforce.

Diversity

The industry is male dominated (66.8 per cent), especially in the meat and meat processing subsector, where 74.8 per cent of employees are male. Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples comprise a healthy 4.9 per cent of the industry workforce. Of the individuals working in the industry, 1.2 per cent reported requiring assistance with core activities and 22.6 per cent were born in countries other than Australia. This is also encouraging given 13 per cent of Wide Bay's population were born overseas. Within this demographic, the highest percentages of workers came from New Zealand (13.4 per cent), the Philippines (13.4 per cent), and Taiwan (12 per cent). Identifying and addressing potential barriers faced by individuals from diverse backgrounds within the industry, such as assistance with core activities, language proficiency or cultural integration challenges, could not only foster a more inclusive work environment but also unlock a valuable pool of talent.

Education attainment and training

In 2021, a significant portion of the industry (52.1 per cent) had completed only secondary school, which is below the state average of 63.6 per cent. A higher proportion of individuals had attained a certificate III and IV (28.2 per cent) in comparison to those with a bachelor's degree or higher qualification (8.7 per cent). This scenario not only underscores the importance of targeted upskilling initiatives but also presents a unique opportunity to empower the workforce. By bridging education gaps through strategic partnerships with education providers, employers can tap into the potential of individuals who may not have pursued higher education initially. These initiatives have the potential to enhance skills, boost productivity, and foster innovation within the industry.

3
Region overview

3.1 Population profile

Estimated population 30 June 2022

317,500 people

This is an increase of 22,008 people from June 2017. By 2026, the population is projected to grow by another 7675 people, a growth rate of 2.4 per cent which is below the projected growth rate of 8.4 per cent for Queensland. Bundaberg had the largest estimated resident population (96,528 persons) in June 2022.

The region has experienced steady population growth (Figure 2) although this has been slower than state population growth (Table 1).

Figure 2 Estimated resident population, Wide Bay SA4 2012-2022
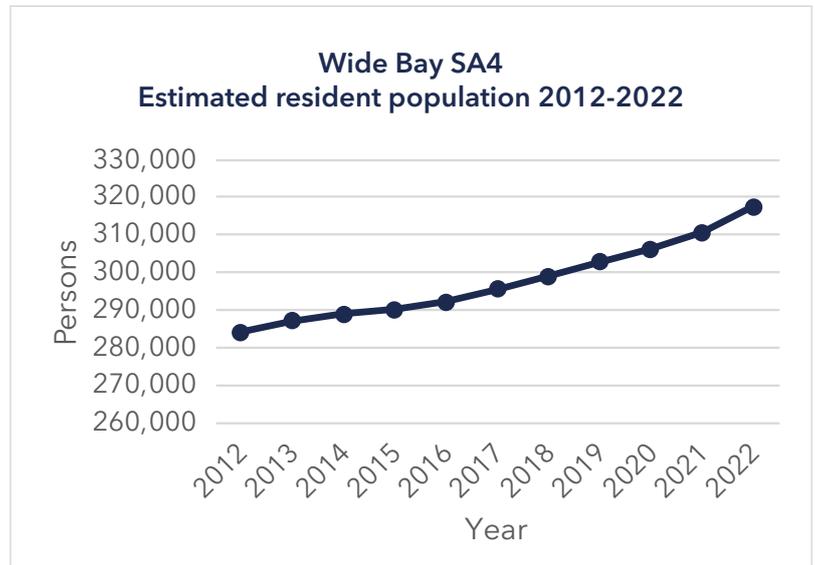
Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023, *Collection: Population (ERP) persons only*

Table 1 Estimated resident population by SA3, Wide Bay SA4 and Queensland

SA4 / SA3 / State	As at 30 June			Average annual growth rate	
	2012	**2017**	**2022r**	**2012-2022r**	**2017-2022r**
	– number –			– % –	
Wide Bay SA4	**284,131**	**295,492**	**317,500**	**1.1**	**1.4**
Bundaberg	88,033	90,113	96,528	0.9	1.4
Burnett	49,300	49,768	50,790	0.3	0.4
Gympie - Cooloola	47,713	51,030	55,015	1.4	1.5
Hervey Bay	54,973	58,854	66,032	1.8	2.3
Maryborough	44,112	45,727	49,135	1.1	1.4
Queensland	**4,568,687**	**4,926,380**	**5,320,496**	**1.5**	**1.6**

Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023. *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021)*
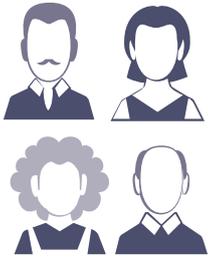
Median age
49.2 years

The region's median age is more than 10 years higher than the state median and is projected to increase to 50.4 years by June 2026. An ageing population will see increased demand for workers in the services industries and result in greater competition for skills and labour.

In 2022, there were an estimated 86,755 people aged 65 and older, accounting for 27.3 per cent of the population.[7] The proportion of people aged over 65 years is projected to continue to increase to 97,047 (29.8 per cent) by 2026. An ageing population will increase demand for services, increasing pressure on food and beverage manufacturing employers who will be drawing from the same labour pool. Retaining existing workers as they age will be key to maintaining an appropriately skilled workforce. This may require investment in reskilling and upskilling as well as job redesign.

Working-age population
56.5 per cent
179,416
people of the region's population

The region has a lower working-age population by proportion to Queensland (56.5 per cent to 64.4 per cent respectively) and a larger demographic aged 64 and over (27.3 per cent to 16.9 percent respectively). The large proportion of the working-age population in the 45–64 age group (30.8 per cent) is concerning as over the next five years, many of these people will be looking to transition out of the workforce. The small proportion of people in the 15–24 age group (14.1 per cent) means that there will be a shortfall of people entering the labour force to replace those retiring.

Table 2 Estimated resident population by age and SA3, Wide Bay SA4 and Queensland, 30 June 2022

SA4 / SA3 / State	Age group									
	0–14		15–24		25–44		45–64		65+	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Wide Bay SA4	**51,329**	**16.2**	**31.472**	**9.9**	**61,096**	**19.2**	**86,848**	**27.4**	**86,755**	**27.3**
Bundaberg	15,967	16.5	10,170	10.5	19,861	20.6	25,495	26.4	25,035	25.9
Burnett	8,648	17.0	5,205	10.2	9,680	19.1	14,039	27.6	13,218	26.0
Gympie - Cooloola	9,263	16.8	5,387	9.8	10,779	19.6	15,705	28.5	13,881	25.2
Hervey Bay	10,182	15.4	6,011	9.1	11,958	18.1	17,489	26.5	20,392	30.9
Maryborough	7,269	14.8	4,699	9.6	8,818	17.9	14,120	28.7	14,229	29.0
Queensland	**998,992**	**18.8**	**667,015**	**12.5**	**1,445,041**	**27.2**	**1,312,624**	**24.7**	**896,824**	**16.9**

Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023. *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level*

Over the years to 2046, the mature aged (45–64 years) workforce will remain a key contributor to the regional labour force as it will make up a quarter of the region's population.[8] Technology, including collaborative robotics and automation, may be part of future workforce planning. Strategies will be needed to support existing workers through transitions to new technology.

7. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023. *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021).* Queensland Government: Brisbane.
8. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023 *Collection: Projected Population by Age and Sex, (Medium Series), 2023ed*. Queensland Government: Brisbane.

Diversity: Indigenous peoples and overseas-born population

7.1%
of Queensland's Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples reside in the Wide Bay region

Approximately 7.1 per cent of Queensland's Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples reside within the Wide Bay SA4 region, making up 5.5 per cent of the region's total population. The largest number of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples (4721 people) lived in Bundaberg in June 2021.[9]

The region's Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples had a higher proportion (17.6 per cent) of young people 24 years and under than the non-Indigenous population (9.4 per cent) (Table 3).

This population group could potentially be a source of new entrants to the industry. Employers will need to consider how best to engage with and include these young people into their existing workforce.

Table 3 Persons by age and Indigenous status (selected age groups), Wide Bay SA4 and Queensland 2021

Sex/age group	Wide Bay SA4				Queensland			
	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Indigenous		Non-Indigenous	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
15-24	2968	17.6	25,412	9.4	44,195	18.6	557,462	12.0
25-44	3494	20.8	51,488	19.0	58,835	24.8	1,246,021	26.9

Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023. *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021)*

13%
of the population were born overseas

In the Wide Bay area, 13 per cent of the population were born overseas, which is a lower percentage compared to Queensland's overall population of 22.7 per cent. Among those born overseas, the majority (7.6 per cent) come from English-speaking backgrounds.[10]

Persons with disabilities support

10%
of people reported requiring assistance with core activities

A proportion of the region's population (10 per cent) reported requiring assistance with core activities. Within this group, 52.6 per cent are over 65 years of age and 23.2 per cent fall between the ages of 45–64 years. Given the high proportion of people with disabilities in the mature aged grouping, this group provides employers with both a challenge and an opportunity in diversifying their workforces.[11]

9. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023. *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021)*. Queensland Government: Brisbane.
10. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023. *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021)*. Queensland Government: Brisbane
11. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023. *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021)*. Queensland Government: Brisbane

Population projections

Expected to grow by a further
7675 people to 325,175 in 2026

The population is expected to grow by a further 7675 people to 325,175 in 2026.[12] The average annual growth rate is estimated to be 0.6 per cent, which is lower than the state growth of 1.4 per cent. Within the region, Bundaberg SA3 is projected to continue to have the largest population reaching 108,283 persons in 2046. Hervey Bay SA3 is projected to have the fastest population growth across the region.

Table 4 Projected population by age, Wide Bay SA4

	25-44		45-64	
Year	number	%	number	%
2021	60,431	19.4	85,293	27.4
2026	62,704	19.3	84,166	25.9
2031	63,293	18.8	83,268	24.7
2036	64,460	18.6	84,242	24.4
2041	64,971	18.4	85,909	24.3
2046	65,240	18.2	88,360	24.6

Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023 *Collection: Projected Population by Age and Sex, (Medium Series), 2023ed*

12. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023, *Collection: Projected Population, Region Queensland and Wide Bay 2021-2026.* Queensland Government: Brisbane.

3.2 Workforce and labour market profile

143,568 was the total number of people employed in the Wide Bay region in September 2023.[13]

Unemployment rate

5.7%
Total unemployment rate, September 2023

7.6%
Youth unemployment rate, September 2023

Jobs held by gender[14]

72,523
Female (50.6 per cent)

71,045
Male (49.4 per cent)

The distribution of jobs is similar to the population distribution between genders

Employment to population ratio[15]

The Wide Bay region had an employment to population ratio of 51.2 per cent in September 2023. This was an increase from July 2023 which was 49.9 per cent. This is significantly lower than the rate for Queensland (63.5 per cent) and may be reflective of the large mature age (45–64) population the region has.[16] Analysing some of the different age groups provides insight into where there may be capacity in the labour market.

- **Youth (15-24 years):** The participation rate for this age group in Wide Bay is slightly higher when compared to the state rate (74.3 per cent) indicating that young people in Wide Bay are keen to work. Further analysis of employment type shows that while young people have a high participation rate, almost half of them are only working part time (47.1 per cent). There may be several reasons for such a high proportion of part-time employment such as study commitments, lack of full-time positions in the industry of choice or area in which the young person lives and seasonality of employment. This presents an opportunity for food and beverage manufacturers to attract a younger workforce by offering well-paid, stable employment opportunities including apprenticeships and traineeships.

- **Prime age adults (25-44 years):** The participation rate for the prime age group is well below the state rate (88.5 per cent 25-34 years and 68 per cent 35-44 years for the Wide Bay to 84.6 per cent 25-34 years and 87.1 per cent 35-44 years for the state). This low participation rate indicates that this age group may be facing significant barriers to engagement in the labour force. Identifying and addressing such barriers will enable greater participation for this group.

- **Mature adults (45-54 years):** The participation rate for this age group is 84.5 per cent. This is higher than prime age adults, but below the state rate of 84.8 per cent. The unemployment rate for this age group is 6.5 per cent.

- **Older adults (55-64 years):** Less than half (48.8 per cent) of adults in this age group participate in the labour force. Over a third (37.3 per cent) of those that are employed are employed part time. Given the skills and experience that this group can bring to the workplace, this age group represents untapped workforce potential.

- **Seniors (65+ years):** The seniors age group represents the largest group of the population in Wide Bay (28.8 per cent of the population). Strategies that encourage and support people within this age group to return to the workplace may yield many benefits to the industry.

13. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023. *6291.0.55.001 Labour Force, Australia, Detailed. Table 16. Labour force status by Labour market region (ASGS) and Sex.* Australian Government: Canberra.
14. Ibid
15. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023, *6291.0.55.001 - RM1 - Labour force status by Age, Labour market region (ASGS) and Sex, October 1998 onwards (12 month average).* Australian Government: Canberra.
16. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023. *6291.0.55.001 Labour Force, Australia, Detailed. Table 16. Labour force status by Labour market region (ASGS) and Sex.* Australian Government: Canberra.

Table 5 Labour force status by age, September 2023

Sept-23	Age Group (years)						TOTAL REGION
WIDE BAY SA4	**15-24 years**	**25-34 years**	**35-44 years**	**45-54 years**	**55-64 years**	**65 years +**	
Employed total ('000)	22.3	38.4	19.4	35.5	21.2	6.8	143.6
Employed full-time ('000)	11.8	30.7	13.2	24.4	13.3	2.0	95.4
Employed part-time ('000)	10.5	7.7	6.1	11.2	7.9	4.8	48.2
Employed part-time (%)	47.1	19.3	31.4	31.5	37.3	70.6	33.6
Employment to population rate (%)	70.0	86.1	65.9	79.0	43.1	8.4	51.2
Unemployed total ('000)	1.8	1.1	0.6	2.5	2.8	0.0	8.8
Unemployment rate (%)	7.6	2.7	3.0	6.5	11.7	0.0	5.7
Labour force total ('000)	24.1	39.4	20.0	38.0	24.0	6.8	152.3
Not in the labour force (NILF) ('000)	7.7	5.1	9.4	7.0	25.2	73.9	128.3
Civilian population aged 15 years and over	31.9	44.6	29.4	45.0	49.1	80.8	280.8
Participation rate (%) Wide Bay (SA4)	75.8	88.5	68.0	84.5	48.8	8.4	54.3
Queensland	74.3	84.6	87.1	84.8	65.5	14.0	66.0

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023, *6291.0.55.001 - RM1 - Labour force status by Age, Labour market region (ASGS) and Sex, October 1998 onwards (12 month average)*

Unemployment rate

The region had an unemployment rate of 5.7 per cent, a slight decrease from May 2023 (7.5 per cent). Youth unemployment was at 7.6 per cent, down from 11.3 per cent in the same month.[17] The decrease in unemployment rates indicates that the economy within the region is strengthening. While this is positive, it also indicates that the labour market is tightening, making it more difficult for employers to attract appropriately skilled staff. Innovative attraction and retention strategies and targeted interventions to support workers entering or returning to the workplace after a break, may be of benefit and considering job redesign may be needed.

Employment by industry

Health care and social assistance and retail trade were the two largest employing industries in the Wide Bay region in 2021, accounting for 28.6 per cent of all employment. Manufacturing accounted for 6.7 per cent of employment and agriculture, forestry and fishing which is a primary contributor to the food and beverage manufacturing industry was the fifth largest employer in the region (9275 people).[18]

Part-time work accounted for 33.6 per cent of employment in the Wide Bay region in September 2023. However, some industries had higher part-time employment rates including retail trade, accommodation and food services. In May 2023, females represented the majority of part-time employment in most industries and represent 65.9 per cent of the total employed part-time. Manufacturing has the lowest rate of part-time employment with only 1.2 per cent of the workforce employed part-time.[19] The stability of employment that the industry offers can be a strong attraction incentive in a region with a high rate of part-time employment.

17. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023. *6291.0.55.001 Labour Force, Australia, Detailed. Table 16. Labour force status by Labour market region (ASGS) and Sex.* Australian Government: Canberra.
18. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023. *Queensland Regional Profiles. Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021).* Queensland Government: Brisbane.
19. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023, *6291.0.55.001 - RQI – Employed persons by Industry division of main jobs (ANZSIC), Labour market region (ASGS) and Sex, Annual averages of the preceding four quarters, Year to August 1998 onwards.* Australian Government: Canberra.

The largest employing industry in the region for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples is the health care and social assistance industry, employing 805 people. Manufacturing employed 256 people from Indigenous backgrounds, 5.7 per cent of the Aboriginal and the Torres Strait Islander workforce.[20]

Employment by occupation

In May 2023, the top four occupations by employment size were:

- professionals (23,232)
- community and personal service workers (19,564)
- labourers (19,428)
- managers (18,560).

These four occupation groups accounted for 60.9 per cent of employment in the region. There were clear differences in occupations between men and women. Nearly 60 per cent of males were employed as technicians and trades workers (13,364), labourers (13,167) and managers (10,863). For females, just over 60 per cent were employed as professionals (16,258), community and personal service workers (13,103) and clerical and administrative workers (11,497).[21]

Employment projections and jobs growth

Wide Bay is projected to be the fastest growing region in Queensland, in part, due to population growth and driven by jobs growth in sectors such as health care and social assistance; accommodation and food services; education; and retail trade (Table 6). The top four occupations account for 69 per cent of all new jobs by 2025–26 with health care and social assistance having the largest increase.

Table 6 Top five industries - new jobs growth by 2025–26

Industries	New jobs by 2025-26	Change since 2021-22 (%)
Health Care and Social Assistance	5383	23.5
Retail Trade	1350	9.9
Education and Training	1518	14.9
Construction	1273	13.7
Accommodation and Food Services	1535	18.3

Jobs Queensland, 2023. *Anticipating Future Skills Series 4* (publicly available) https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal/

Given that health care and social assistance will see the largest number of new jobs, it is not surprising that professionals and community and personal service workers are the top two occupations. These two occupations will account for 50.2 per cent of all new jobs by 2025–26.[22]

Comparison of the projected population growth to 2026 (14,447) to the projected number of new jobs (15,926 new jobs by 2026) shows there potentially will be significant tightening in the regional labour market. The working age population is estimated to only increase by 3528 persons from 2021 to 2026.[23] This could leave a shortfall of more than 12,398 workers.

20. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census 2021, Table Builder*. Australian Government: Canberra.
21. Australian Bureau of Statistics. *6291.0.55.001 - RQ2 – Employed persons by Labour market region (ASGS), Occupation major group (ANZSCO) and Sex, Annual averages by the preceding four quarters, Year to August 1999 onwards*. Australian Government: Canberra.
22. Jobs Queensland, 2023. *Anticipating Future Skills Series 4.* Queensland Government: Ipswich https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal/
23. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023, *Collection: Projected Population by Age and Sex, (Medium Series), 2023ed*. Queensland Government: Brisbane.

3.3 Business profile

The business profile in the Wide Bay closely mirrors that of many other regional areas, with most businesses falling into the non-employing category, such as sole traders or small employers with fewer than 20 employees.[24]

Most industries have experienced a growth in the number of businesses in the last five years. The exception is financial and insurance services which had a significant decline. This decline follows the trend shown at the state level, which is a result from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Business size and distribution

In June 2023, there were

23,815 businesses trading in the Wide Bay region.

At the end of June 2022, the highest concentration of businesses was located in Bundaberg (28.3 per cent), Burnett (23.1 per cent) and Gympie-Cooloola (20.8 per cent).[25]

The highest proportion of non-employing businesses were concentrated in Bundaberg (28 per cent) and Burnett (27.1 per cent), while Bundaberg (28.5 per cent), and Gympie-Cooloola (20.6 per cent) had the highest proportion of micro-businesses employing between one and four employees. Over half (54.5 per cent) of the small number of large employers in the region were located in Bundaberg.[26]

Table 7 Registered businesses by employment size and SA3, Wide Bay SA4 and Queensland, 30 June 2022

	Non-employing		1–4 employees		5–19 employees		20–199 employees		200+ employees		Total
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number
Wide Bay SA4	14,268	61.1	6013	25.8	2509	10.7	532	2.3	33	0.1	23,341
Queensland	289,401	59.5	137,569	28.3	46,117	9.5	12,223	2.5	756	0.2	486,093

Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023, Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGA 2021)

Business industry sector.

The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry had the most registered businesses (5875) in the region followed by construction with 3828. Manufacturing had 953 registered businesses. Most manufacturing businesses are located in Bundaberg (305) followed by Gympie (204).[27] The Burnett area had the greatest number of registered businesses in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry (2778), highlighting its importance to Wide Bay's food and beverage manufacturers.[28]

24. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023, Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGA 2021). Queensland Government: Brisbane.
25. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023, Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021).
26. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023, Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) ASGS 2021). Queensland Government: Brisbane.
27. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023, Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4). Queensland Government: Brisbane.
28. Ibid

3.4 Job vacancies

Vacancies are an indication of labour market demand. The Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) data provides a real-time insight into employer demand for certain skills and occupations. Regional data is developed by best fit regional analysis. The best fit regions may not fully correlate to the Australian Statistical Geographical Standard (ASGS). For Wide Bay, the region that most closely correlates is Central Queensland.

The top five occupations with the highest average online vacancies to May 2023 in Central Queensland were: automotive and engineering trades workers; medical practitioners and nurses; general-inquiry clerks, call centre workers and receptionists; carers and aides; and sales assistants and salespersons (Table 8). This reflects the largest five occupations within the Wide Bay region.

Table 8 Internet Vacancy Index – top five online vacancies by occupation (12-month trend) Central Region

Occupations - Central Queensland	Vacancies
Automotive and engineering trades workers	369
Medical practitioners and nurses	323
General-inquiry clerks, call centre workers, and receptionists	281
Carers and aides	273
Sales assistants and salespersons	227

Jobs and Skills Australia, 2023, *Internet Vacancies, ANZSCO occupations, IVI Regions – May 2023** based on 12 month average to May 2023

The ongoing demand for skilled workers reflects the continuing growth in skilled employment within the region. Engineering trades workers are integral to the manufacturing industry and the ongoing demand for these workers indicates a shortfall in supply. The vocational education and training system provides a pipeline for skilled workers to enter the industry.

3.5 Education level profile

The education and training profile of a region provides a snapshot of the skills available in the workforce.

a) School level

The lower the level of schooling completed, the lower the skill base may be. In 2021, 45.7 per cent of the region's population aged 15 years and over had completed year 11 or 12. This was below the state average of 63.6 per cent. Almost the same proportion of people did not complete beyond year 10 (45.8 per cent).[29] This may present an opportunity for employers to work with education providers to re-engage these people in learning and employment.

b) Higher education and vocational training

Another aspect that reflects the region's skill levels is post-school education. Non-school qualifications indicate the number of individuals who have pursued additional education and training beyond their school studies.

In 2021, Wide Bay had a lower proportion of residents with a post-school qualification (54.6 per cent) compared to Queensland as a whole (62.5 per cent). This may indicate difficulty in accessing education and training opportunities for residents. For employers it makes attracting workers with the appropriate skills and experience more difficult.

Table 9 Non-school qualifications by level of education, Wide Bay and Queensland 2021

	Level of education						Persons with a qualification (d)		Total persons
	Bachelor degree or higher (b)		Advanced diploma or diploma		Certificate (c)				
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number
Wide Bay SA4	27,987	10.8	19,489	7.5	66,293	25.7	141,122	54.6	258,256
Queensland	918,468	21.9	395,615	9.4	927,894	22.1	2,618,666	62.5	4,191,812

Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023, *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGA 2021)*

Across the region, Bundaberg had the greatest number of people with a non-school qualification (42,455) although Hervey Bay had the highest proportion (57.3 per cent). Hervey Bay also had the highest proportion of people who had completed a bachelor degree or higher (13 per cent). There are two possible considerations for this – the attractiveness of the area to retirees and the high number of registered businesses in the health care and social assistance industry.

c) Gender differences

Sex and age data may indicate where underutilised skills exist within the labour market. In 2021, within the Wide Bay region, slightly more males than females held a non-school qualification. In the older age groups, the difference was more obvious with a larger proportion of males holding non-school qualifications (66.5 per cent to 61.2 per cent). This trend was reversed in the younger age groups where females were more likely to have a non-school qualification (38.8 per cent to 33.6 per cent).[30]

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29. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023, *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGS 2021)*. Queensland Government: Brisbane.
30. Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2023, *Queensland Regional Profiles, Wide Bay Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) (ASGA 2021)*. Queensland Government: Brisbane.

3.6 VET training activity

The VET system provides employers with access to new entrants with the necessary skills and qualifications required for their industry. For the manufacturing industry, VET is recognised as the most appropriate pathway into the industry for new entrants. Wide Bay is part of the North Coast region for Queensland Government statistical purposes.

a) Total VET program enrolments

The commencement and completion data for 2022 reflects the labour market demand and industry profile within the Wide Bay region. The industry trade groups with the highest commencements include community services, construction, engineering and business.[31] These commencements reflect the demand for workers within relevant industries.

Across both TAFE and other government and non-government providers, enrolments were up for certificate I and II (18 per cent), certificate III (30 per cent), certificate IV (129 per cent) and diplomas (7 per cent) in the North Coast region from 2020–21 to 2021–22.[32]

b) Proportion of VET program completions for specific cohorts

In the five years to 2021–22, qualification completions for 15–19-year-old students, Indigenous students and students with disabilities in the North Coast region have been mixed. Completions increased slightly for all these groups prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, then decreased in the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The last year of analysis shows an improvement of completions particularly for the 15–19 age group and has slightly increased for the Indigenous students, however it has continued to decrease for students with disabilities (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Apprenticeships and traineeships completions for selected cohorts North Coast 2017-2022
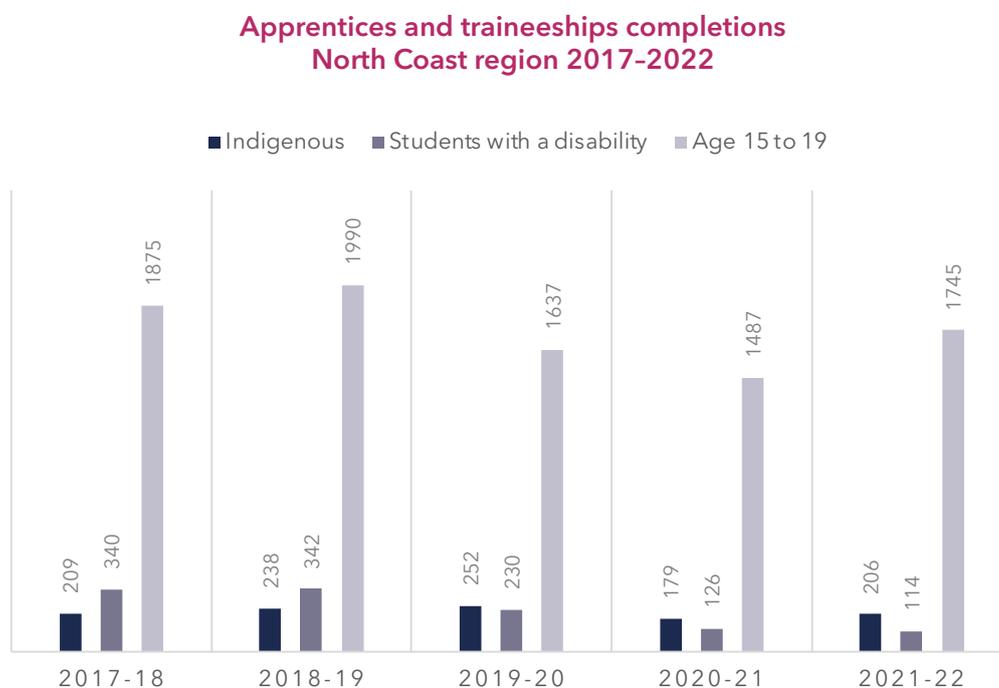
**Apprentices and traineeships completions
North Coast region 2017–2022**

■ Indigenous ■ Students with a disability ■ Age 15 to 19

Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT), 2023. *VET Annual Summary - Data Slicer - Apprentices and Trainees*

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31. Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT), 2023. VET Annual Summary - Data Slicer - Apprentices and Trainees
32. Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT), 2023, *Queensland Training Dashboards, July 2023*. Queensland Government: Brisbane.

c) Apprentices and trainees in training

Apprenticeships and traineeships are important pathways into manufacturing, providing employers with job-ready graduates. For the year 2021-22, there were 10,959 apprentices and 8146 trainees in the North Coast region. This represents 20.1 per cent of all apprentices and 16.3 per cent of trainees in Queensland.

The Certificate III in Carpentry and Certificate III of Electrotechnology Electrician had the greatest number of apprentices, while there were 955 trainees undertaking the Certificate III in Business and 765 undertaking Certificate III in Hospitality.[31] This reflects the occupational mix of the region and the employment demand.

The number of apprentices and trainees in training has increased in the five years to 2022, especially with non-government providers. The increase is particularly noticeable in the 2020–21 financial year (post-COVID-19) (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Apprentices and trainees in training by provider type North Coast Region 2017–2022

Apprentices and Trainees in Training by Provider Type - North Coast Region 2017–2022

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Non-Government Providers 2	7181	7246	6190	9363	13,417
TAFE and other government providers 1	4004	3882	3621	4683	5688
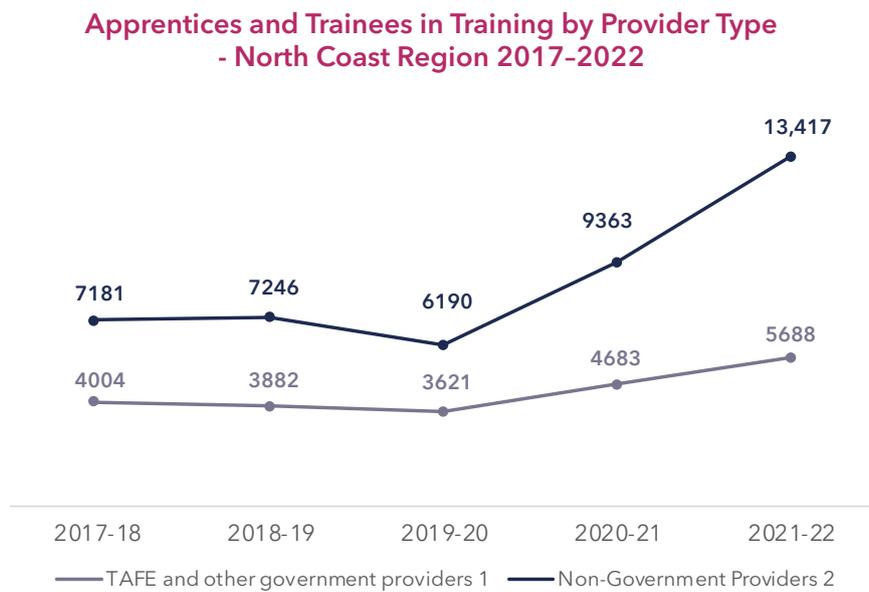
1   Includes Queensland TAFE institutes, Queensland Agricultural colleges and Queensland State Government entities
2   Includes private providers, schools, universities, non-Queensland TAFE institutes, non-Queensland Agricultural colleges and non-Queensland State Government entities
Note: Schools are excluded from all counts
Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT), 2023, VET Annual Summary -Data Slicer-Apprentices and Trainees

3.7 VET and employment pathways

Top five training packages by commencements[33]

The training packages with the most enrolments in 2022 for Wide Bay included:

1. Construction, Plumbing and Services Integrated Framework (BCF, BCG, BCP, CPC)
2. Business Services (BSA, BSB)
3. Community Services (CHC)
4. Tourism, Travel and Hospitality (SIT, THH, THT)
5. Metal and Engineering (MEM).

This reflects the industry profile of the region.

Top five qualifications by commencements[34]

1. BSB30120 - Certificate III in Business
2. SIT30616 - Certificate III in Hospitality
3. CPC30220 - Certificate III in Carpentry
4. CHC30121 - Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
5. CHC33015 - Certificate III in Individual Support and MEM30319 - Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade.

The top qualifications relate to occupations in demand. The high number of commencements in the Certificate II Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways may reflect Wide Bay's engagement in Queensland Government programs such as Skilling Queenslanders for Work.

Top five occupations (ANZSCO 2-digit) by commencements[35]

1. 32 - Automotive and Engineering Trades Workers
2. 33 - Construction Trades Workers
3. 42 - Carers and Aides
4. 53 - General Clerical Workers
5. 43 - Hospitality Workers.

Top five training packages by completions[36]

1. Construction, Plumbing and Services Integrated Framework (BCF, BCG, BCP, CPC)
2. Metal and Engineering (MEM)
3. Business Services (BSA, BSB)
4. Tourism, Travel and Hospitality (SIT, THH, THT)
5. Automotive Industry Retail, Service and Repair (AUR).

33.   NCVER 2023, Apprentices and trainees 2022 - December quarter DataBuilder, Contract status, Client statistical area 4, Training package by 12 month series
34.   NCVER 2023, Apprentices and trainees 2022 - December quarter DataBuilder, Contract status, Client statistical area 4, Qualification name by 12 month series
35.   NCVER 2023, Apprentices and trainees 2022 - December quarter DataBuilder, Contract status, Client statistical area 4, Occupation 2-digit by 12 month series
36.   NCVER 2023, Apprentices and trainees 2022 - December quarter DataBuilder, Contract status, Client statistical area 4, Training package by 12 month series

Top five qualifications by completions[37]

1. CPC10120 - Certificate I in Construction
2. SIT30616 - Certificate III in Hospitality
3. UEE30811 - Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician
4. MEM30205 - Certificate III in Engineering - Mechanical Trade
5. MEM30305 - Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade.

Top five occupations (ANZSCO 2-digit) by completions[38]

1. 32 - Automotive and Engineering Trades Workers
2. 53 - General Clerical Workers
3. 33 - Construction Trades Workers
4. 43 - Hospitality Workers
5. 34 - Electrotechnology and Telecommunications Trades Workers.

37. NCVER 2023, Apprentices and trainees 2022 - December quarter DataBuilder, Contract status, Client statistical area 4, Qualification name by 12 month series
38. NCVER 2023, Apprentices and trainees 2022 - December quarter DataBuilder, Contract status, Client statistical area 4, Occupation 2-digit by 12 month series

4

An overview of the
food and beverage
manufacturing industry

4.1 Food and beverage manufacturing industry employment snapshot

Employed persons

1797 Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Median age

46

Employed requiring assistance with core activities

1.2%

Indigenous employment

4.9%

Employed born overseas

22.6%

Jobs by gender

1257
Male: 66.8%

626
Female: 33.2%

Jobs by type of employment

353
Part time: 21.9%

1448
Full time: 78.1%
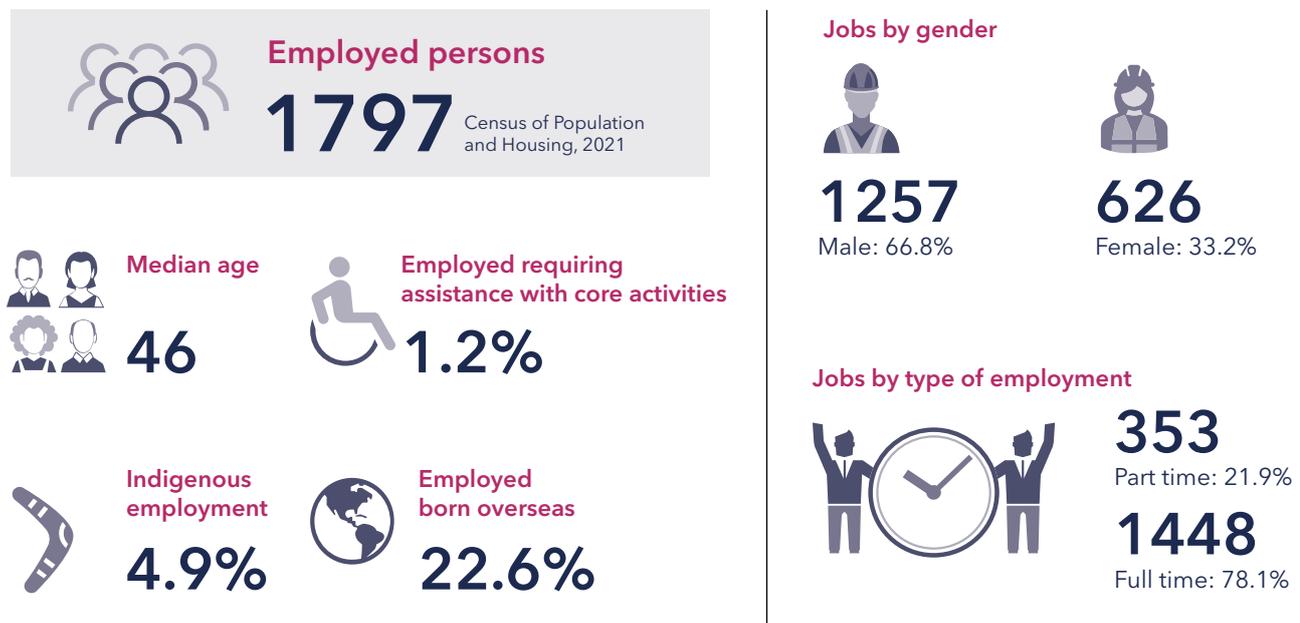
Note: The Australian Bureau of Statistics randomly adjust table cells to avoid the release of confidential data. This can result in differing totals.

Employment by subindustry	Male %	Female %	Total subindustry	% of total industry
Meat and meat product manufacturing	74.8	25.2	998	53
Other food product manufacturing	58.7	41.3	329	17.5
Beverage manufacturing	62	38	271	14.4
Fruit and vegetable processing	47.1	52.9	155	8.2
Food product manufacturing, nfd	60.2	39.8	98	5.2
Seafood processing	35.7	64.3	28	1.5

Note: rounding can result in slightly lower figures.

Employment by SA3

- **36** Hervey Bay — 1.9%
- **51** Maryborough — 2.7%
- **386** Gympie - Cooloola — 20.5%
- **917** Burnett — 48.6%
- **494** Bundaberg — 26.2%

Occupations (Top 5 occupations)

- **880** Factory process workers
- **177** Specialist managers
- **39** Sales assistants and salespersons
- **34** Food trades workers
- **46** Automotive and engineering trades workers
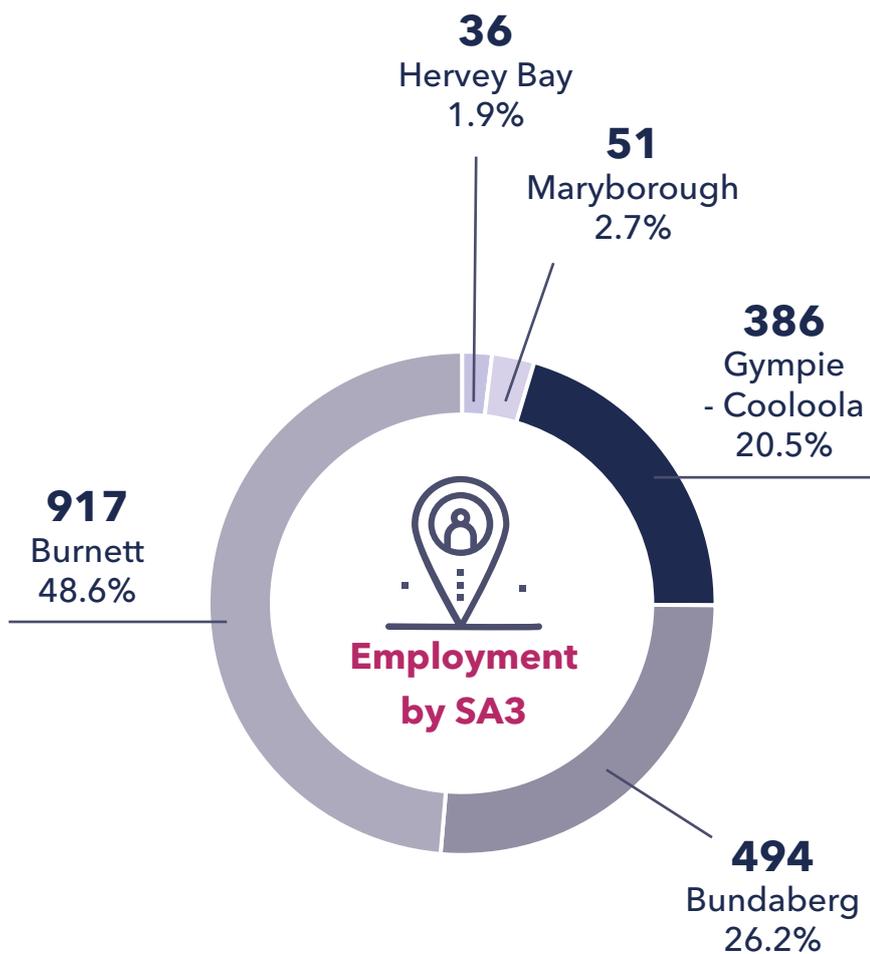
New jobs by sub-industry (change to 2026).

New Jobs by 2025-26

103 (5%)

- **Beverage manufacturing** — 20.8%
- **Other food product manufacturing** — 7.3%
- **Meat and meat product manufacturing** — 0.2%
- **Fruit and vegetable processing** — -4.1%

4.2 Industry sectors and regional operations

Wide Bay is a state and national leader in the production of numerous agricultural commodities and supplies high quality raw and manufactured agricultural products to local, national and international markets.

a) Industry sectors

The food and beverage manufacturing industry has three main sectors:

- food processing and manufacturing
- beverage manufacturing
- wholesaling and retailing.

b) Functions and processes

The diversity of products facilitates strong sectoral synergies within the industry and supports supply chain and value add interconnections. This is particularly evident in food and beverage manufacturing, livestock processing, plant extractives and timber manufacturing.[39]

c) Economic contribution

In the year to June 2022, manufacturing represented 27.7 per cent of the region's total exports, with the largest sub-sector by output being food product manufacturing (33 per cent) while beverage and tobacco product manufacturing accounted for 5 per cent.[40] This reflects the region's primary production strengths and diversity of its locally sourced products, driven by fruit and vegetable processors, beef and pork producers, oil manufacturers and nut processors, all of whom have significant export markets and growth potential. The region has also made a name for itself in beverage manufacturing, specifically brewed soft drinks, spirits, craft beer, juice and wine.[41]

4.3 Workforce profile

The food and beverage manufacturing industry employs 1797 people in the Wide Bay region.[42] That is 2.8 per cent of the people employed in Wide Bay. A significant proportion of the workforce are factory process workers, such as food and beverage process workers, packers, product assemblers and product quality controllers, or food trade workers, such as bakers and pastry cooks. The top employment occupation is factory process workers.

a) Gender distribution

It is a male dominated industry, males having 66.8 per cent of the employment in the industry. This is particularly the case in the top food subindustry in the region, which is meat and meat product manufacturing.

b) Regions

Bundaberg and Burnett have the largest share of employment in the region accounting for 73 per cent of the employment in the industry in the Wide Bay region.

c) Diversity

A total of 4.9 per cent of those employed in the Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry were Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Among those employed in the industry, 22.6 per cent were born outside Australia. Within this group, the largest proportions of employees originated from New Zealand (13.4 per cent), Philippines (13.4 per cent) and Taiwan (12 per cent).[43]

d) Age distribution

In terms of age, the Wide Bay food and beverage manufacturing industry had a median age of 46, which is slightly lower than that of the region. Approximately 21.2 per cent of individuals employed in the industry are aged over 55 years and are expected to retire in the next five to ten years.

39. Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, 2022, *Draft Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan*, Queensland Government: Brisbane. https://planning.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/77263/draft-wide-bay-burnett-regional-plan-2022.pdf
40. Regional Development Australia, 2023. *RDA Wide Bay Burnett Region Economic Profile, 2023*, RDA Wide Bay: Wide Bay. https://economy.id.com.au/rda-wide-bay-burnett/gross-regional-product
41. State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, 2023, *Strengthening Wide Bay Burnett*. Queensland Government: Brisbane. https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/regions/queensland/wide-bay-burnett
42. Jobs Queensland. 2023. *Anticipating Future Skills Series 4*. Beverage and Food Manufacturing Industries, Wide Bay. Queensland Government: Ipswich. https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/anticipating-future-skills/portal/
43. Australian Bureau of Statistics,2023. *Census 2021*, Table Builder. Australian Government: Canberra.

The industry employs a slightly higher proportion of those in the 15–24 and 25–34 age groups. Together these younger groups represent 45.7 per cent of the people employed in the industry. The percentage of people employed in part-time positions is higher for those in the 15–24 age group and those aged over 65 than for the other groups.[44]

4.4 Education profile

In the food and beverage manufacturing industry in the Wide Bay region, more people had completed a certificate III and IV (28.2 per cent) compared to those who had completed a bachelor or higher qualification (8.7 per cent). A large percentage of the industry (52.1 per cent) had completed only secondary school – years 10 and above.

4.5 Training pathways

Entry to the industry can be direct (school to work) or via a non-school qualification.

a) Entry-level pathways

As of April 2023, the Wide Bay region has 165 schools with TAFE Queensland – Wide Bay Burnett having six campuses in the region:

- Bundaberg
- Gympie
- Hervey Bay
- Maryborough
- Kingaroy
- Nurunderi (Cherbourg).

b) Apprenticeships and traineeships

In the period 2018–2022, apprenticeships and traineeships commencements in the food and beverage related industries have increased significantly and more than doubled in the last year (from 2021 to 2022). Completions have remained consistent since 2019 with the majority in the Australian Meat Processing package.

Many commencements and completions in the food and beverage manufacturing industry have been in meat and meat product manufacturing reflecting the importance of the meat industry for the region (Figure 5).[45]

Figure 5 Apprentices and trainees commencements – Food and Beverage Wide Bay 2018–2022
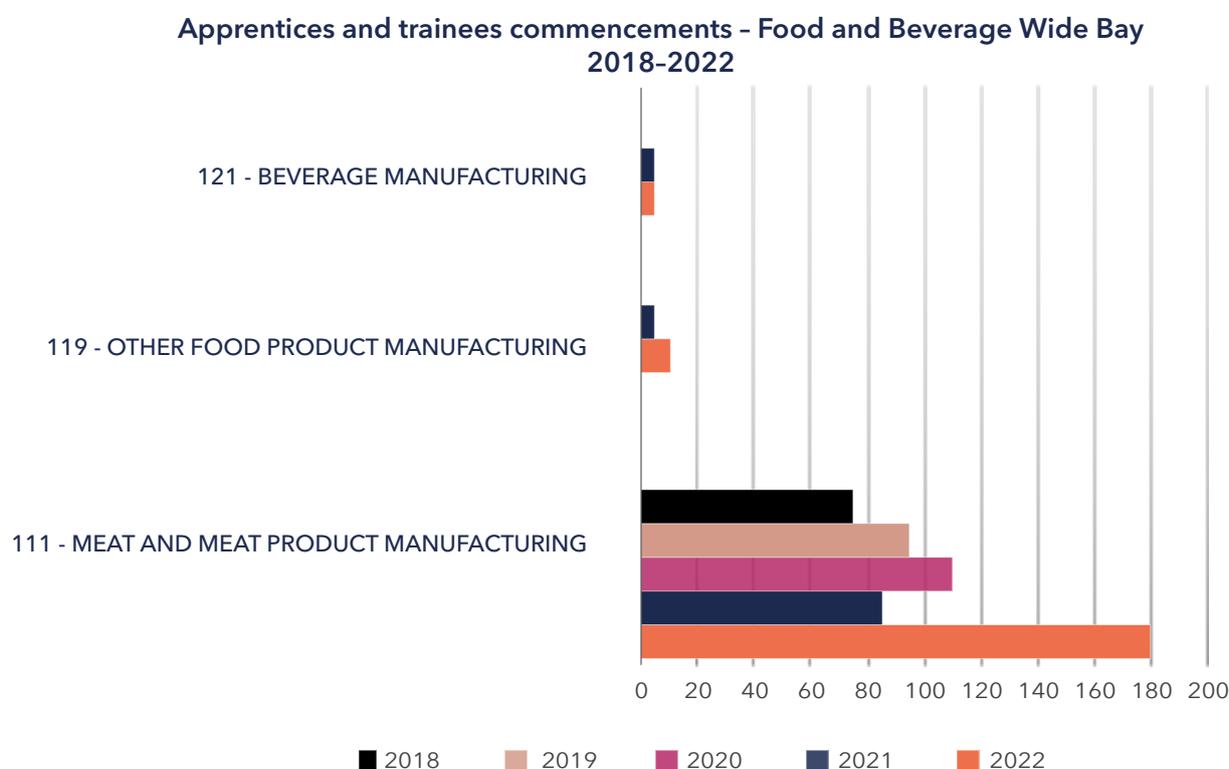
Apprentices and trainees commencements – Food and Beverage Wide Bay 2018–2022

Legend: ■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020 ■ 2021 ■ 2022

NCVER 2023, *Apprentices and trainees 2022 – December quarter DataBuilder,* Contract status, Client statistical area 4, Employer industry 3-digit by 12 month series

44.   Australian Bureau of Statistics,2023. *Census 2021,* Table Builder. Australian Government: Canberra.
45.   National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2023. *VOCTSTATS database, Apprentices and trainees – December 2022.* Adelaide: NCVER.

c) VET pathways

Two training packages are designed to closely align to employer and employee needs of the food and beverage industries, AMP – Australian Meat Processing Training Package and the FBP – Food, Beverage, and Pharmaceutical Training Package. A list of these qualifications is provided in Appendix B.

Certificate III in Hospitality and Certificate III in Meat Processing (General) were the most used qualifications in the Wide Bay region.

Table 10 Top apprenticeships and traineeships qualifications (by in-training data) related to food and beverage manufacturing in the Wide Bay region.

Apprentices and Trainees in Training	as at 31 December 2022
Qualification name	
SIT30616 - Certificate III in Hospitality	165
AMP30616 - Certificate III in Meat Processing (General)	90
SIT30816 - Certificate III in Commercial Cookery	85
SIR30216 - Certificate III in Retail	70
AMP20316 - Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)	50
AMP30815 - Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)	40
MEM30219 - Certificate III in Engineering - Mechanical Trade	15
MEM30319 - Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	15
BSB30120 - Certificate III in Business	15
SIT30622 - Certificate III in Hospitality	15

NCVER 2023, *Apprentices and trainees 2022 - December quarter Data Builder,* Contract status, Employer industry 2-digit, Qualification name by 12 month series, Workplace statistical area 4

d) Tertiary education pathways

The region has three university campuses:

- University of Sunshine Coast – Fraser Coast
- University of Sunshine Coast – Gympie
- Central Queensland University – Bundaberg.

These universities offer courses in engineering, information technology and business, and micro-credentials in a range of areas. There are also online options for many courses that are not offered on campus.

The more specific and relevant to food courses in the region are provided by University of Sunshine Coast at the Sippy Downs campus:

- Bachelor of Dietetics (Honours)
- Undergraduate Certificate in Nutrition.

Central Queensland University will be offering micro-credential courses in food science – fermentation for food and beverage product development from 2024.

4.6 Employment outlook

a) Industry outlook

Employment in the food product and the beverage manufacturing industries is expected to grow 5 per cent (103 new jobs) to 2184. A substantial portion (49.9 per cent) of these employees will be working within the meat and meat product manufacturing sector.

It is expected that beverage manufacturing will have the biggest increase in number of employed of 20.8 per cent. Fruit and vegetable is expected to decrease their employment numbers.

b) Occupation outlook

Packers are the largest occupation in the industry and is expected to increase by 4.8 per cent. Food and drink factory workers is expected to decrease by 7.3 per cent by 2025–26. This is a similar trend for meat, poultry and seafood process workers and meat boners, slicers, and slaughterers, which are projected to decrease by 2025–26 by 12.7 and 18.1 per cent respectively.

Most professional and technical roles like production managers, metal fitters and machinists are projected to increase.

It is projected that the majority of these occupations will hold non-school qualifications, the majority will hold a certificate III and IV level (24 per cent) or bachelor degree level (22.4 per cent).

Figure 6 Selected Occupation by Qualification Level - Food and Beverage Manufacturing Industry - Wide Bay 2025-26

Selected Occupation by Qualification Level - Food and Beverage Manufacturing Industry - Wide Bay 2025-26

Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level 3.4%

Certificate I & II Level 0.8%

Postgraduate Degree Level 8.9%

No Post School 28.6%

Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level 11.9%

Bachelor Degree Level 22.4%

Certificate III & IV Level 24%
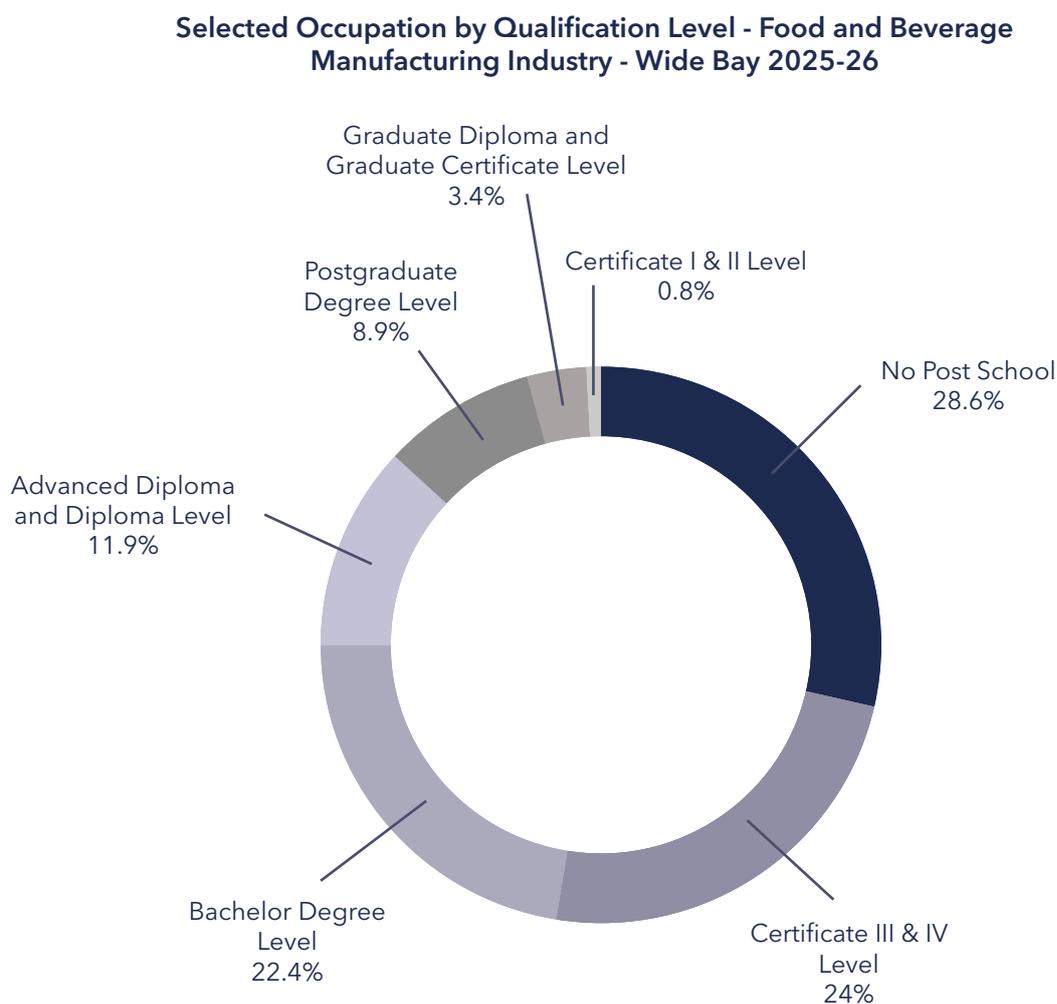
4.7 Future opportunities for the industry in Wide Bay

The Wide Bay region contributes 3.8 per cent of Queensland's gross state value of food and beverage manufactured goods, a value predicted to exceed $1.6 billion. Being a major supplier of diverse fresh, natural and manufactured goods. The region's strengths lie in its agriculture, manufacturing, skilled workforce and supporting industries. Key areas of growth for the sector include sustainable packaging, improved land management, direct-to-consumer marketing and leveraging advancements in precision agriculture.[46]

The evolving global consumer demands present the following opportunities for the Wide Bay region:[47]

1. **Health and wellness:** Catering to the health-conscious consumer by producing vitamins, pharmaceuticals and nutraceuticals.

2. **Targeted eating:** Tapping into the market of reformed, functional and fortified foods. This includes value addition like producing alternative flours for intolerances and allergens and oils like macadamia oil.

3. **Traditional proteins:** Promoting the consumption of proteins like meat, egg and dairy. Notably, a portion of Queensland's pigs and dairy cattle are from the area.

4. **Food security and sustainability:** The region supports sustainable farming, from using organic and microbial fertilisers to improved land management that benefits the ecosystem, including the Great Barrier Reef. They champion the production of eco-friendly agrifoods and drinks.

5. **Enhanced production and value addition:** The region actively pursues minimising food loss and waste across supply chains while also transitioning towards sustainable packaging within the agrifood and beverage sector. Embracing cutting-edge technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and precision tools, is integral to enhancing farming productivity, with the Bundaberg AgTech Hub supporting AgTech initiatives and integration. Moreover, there are investment opportunities in protected cropping systems, with crops like vegetables and berries.

6. **Global marketplace:** Leveraging the growing demand in Asia. The demand in Asia is projected to double by 2050, providing substantial opportunities for producers.

7. **Direct-to-consumer models:** There's a growing trend of using digital channels, supported by Trade and Investment Queensland, to reach consumers directly through e-commerce platforms.

8. **Supply chain transformation:** Embracing technology to enhance logistics, maintain product freshness and improve traceability. This not only ensures efficient supply chains but also swift responses to biosecurity and food safety challenges.

Incremental and value adding opportunities identified in food and beverage manufacturing and other agricultural activities include:[48]

- Strengthening supply chain links for beverage and distilling manufacturing, such as glass and/or recycled bottling manufacturing plants, into the region.

- Enhancing regional commodities by identifying and integrating additional secondary manufacturing components for products like sugar, pork, beef, avocados, macadamias and citrus fruits.

- Investing in modern technology for manufacturing.

It is also important to highlight that craft brewing, a burgeoning industry in Queensland, finds its home in the Wide Bay region. This sector, currently valued at $62 million annually in Queensland, holds promise for further growth.[49]

46. Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Trade and Investment Queensland, Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water, Regional Development Australia and Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers, 2022, *Wide Bay Burnett Region Agrifood and Beverage Capabilities - 2022 Snapshot*.
47. Ibid
48. Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, 2022, *Draft Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan*. Queensland Government: Brisbane https://planning.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/77263/draft-wide-bay-burnett-regional-plan-2022.pdf
49. The Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, *Queensland Craft Brewing Strategy, 2018*. Queensland Government: Brisbane. https://www.rdmw.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1531129/craft-beer-strategy.pdf

4.8 The region's key infrastructure and resources

The Wide Bay region consists of five local government areas: Bundaberg, Fraser Coast, Gympie, North Burnett and South Burnett. All tiers of government are actively working together to enhance the agrifood and beverage sector through infrastructure investment and supportive services.

a) Transport and logistics

Wide Bay is strategically crucial for trade and investment in Queensland due to its connectivity to major transport routes such as the Bruce, Isis and Burnett highways, the North Coast Rail line and the Port of Bundaberg. While road freight dominates, there is potential for more import and export activity via the Port of Bundaberg and the North Coast Rail. The Port of Bundaberg has seen a growing product trade, with the throughput showing positive trends.

b) Education, skills and workforce

The region's university sector focuses on innovation and global partnerships, fostering collaborations for research and development to support workforce growth. The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) operates research facilities, boosting the local agriculture sector.

c) Agricultural technology and connectivity

The Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers regional representative body and the Bundaberg AgTech Hub promotes collaboration among AgTech stakeholders, while the expansion of the National Broadband Network offers more opportunities for tech adoption in the agrifood and beverages sector.

d) Natural resources

The region's diverse environment allows for year-round cultivation of a wide range of crops, benefiting from accommodating climates for both temperate and subtropical varieties. High-value crops thrive due to multiple irrigation schemes and robust water supplies, supported by governmental investments in water infrastructure. Furthermore, the region is actively pursuing a bioeconomy with initiatives like the Utilitas Bundaberg bioHub and the Bundaberg Regional Council's pledge to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2030, reflecting a strong commitment to sustainable practices and environmental custodianship.

For the region to elevate its stature and maintain its relevance, it must align with industry evolving needs. Identifying and developing large-scale industrial lands ready for future needs will be paramount. These lands should cater to the growth of complementary commercial and research and development functions, streamlining supply chains and luring additional investment.

In the next two decades, the primary industrial land demand in Wide Bay will likely emerge from its major centres. These areas, characterised by their sizable industrial spaces, will be concentrated around hubs of commerce and research. These industrial precincts have been broadly mapped as areas of regional industrial significance (Figure 7) and should be the focus for future planning, infrastructure provision and investment attraction.[50]

50. The Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, *Queensland Craft Brewing Strategy, 2018*. Queensland Government: Brisbane. https://www.rdmw.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1531129/craft-beer-strategy.pdf

Figure 7 Industrial precincts and freight hubs of regional significance

SOUTHERN BUNDABERG

Leveraging off the region's agricultural strengths:
- Food and beverage product: processing, manufacturing and packaging
- Plant extractives (nutraceuticals, vitamins)
- Bio-products and bioenergy
- Allied research and development

PORT OF BUNDABERG

Maximise regional supply chain opportunities (processing, storage, export) and capture overspill opportunities from Port of Brisbane and Gladstone:
- Domestic coastal and transhipping
- New international markets
- Over size over mass (OSOM) import and storage
- Agriculture, wood and mineral storage and export
- Marine servicing and provisioning
- Breakbulk

ISIS MILL PRECINCT

Co-locating allied agricultural industries to facilitate industry innovation and specialisations:
- Food and beverage product: processing, packaging and manufacturing
- Plant extractives (nutraceuticals, vitamins)
- Bio-products and bioenergy
- Allied research and development

NORTH BURNETT

Continue to support manufacturing development in appropriate locations, including on farm:
- Food and beverage product: processing, distribution, packaging and manufacturing
- Plant extractives (nutraceuticals and vitamins)
- Bio-products and bioenergy

MARYBOROUGH NORTH

Leveraging historical expertise to capture greater advanced manufacturing and innovation opportunities:
- Metal fabrication – Railway rollingstock, defence munitions and heavy equipment
- Wood product (including chemical extraction)
- Bio-products and bioenergy
- Allied research and development

SOUTHERN KINGAROY AND MURGON/CHERBOURG

Strengthen ties to Toowoomba Wellcamp and southern markets:
- Food and beverage product: processing, packaging and manufacturing
- Plant extractives (nutraceuticals and vitamins)
- Waste and materials recycling facility

GYMPIE NORTH

Capturing industry from SEQ and establishing itself as an incubator for new and expanding:
- Large format medium and high impact industry
- Freight and logistics
- Wood product (including chemical extraction)
- Food and beverage product: processing, manufacturing and packaging

Legend:
- Regionally significant industrial area
- Industrial precinct investigation
- Regional value chain
- Potential future link
- Northern rail line
- Mine/Quarry
- Abbattoir/feed lot/piggeries
- Food and beverage manufacturing
- Timber mill/manufacturing
- Sugar mill
- Material manufacturing (metal/plastic)

4.9 Identified challenges and shortages

Achieving the growth potential of the sector demands enhancing domestic spending by focusing on product innovation and superior quality, curtailing the rise of imported product market share and accelerating export growth.[51]

a) Industry challenges

The path to growth is not without hurdles. Increasing operational costs due to COVID-19, supply chain disruptions, escalated sea freight charges and surging commodity and packaging prices are all challenging industry growth. An average annual capital investment hike of 5.2 per cent falls short of what is needed to meet the ambitious 2030 turnover goal. There is a need to focus on long-term industry strategies, investment stimuli, workforce development, regulatory reforms, digital labelling and export strategies.[52]

Identified barriers to achieving growth include:[53]

- the high cost of adopting smart technologies
- lack of leadership and higher-level skills for technology adoption and innovation
- inconsistent availability of data and connectivity
- lack of data and information sharing
- underutilisation and cost of domestic inputs
- lack of collaboration due to integration gaps within industry and global supply chains
- low rates of industry collaboration and coordination.[54]

For the Wide Bay region, the key lies in human capital. While the region attracts retirees, future prosperity hinges on retaining the young and drawing working-age talent. Emphasising placemaking, education pathways and broader regional promotion is vital.

b) Labour challenges

The Wide Bay region is currently grappling with significant labour challenges, acting as a major impediment to its economic growth. While the COVID-19 pandemic has universally led to workforce shortages due to restrictions on mobility and international immigration, the region faces additional localised challenges, such as:

1. **Demographic shifts:** Local demographics exacerbate workforce gaps. This includes an ageing population, the outward migration of youth and prolonged workforce disengagement.

2. **Technological advancements:** As the region moves towards a technologically advanced economy, there is a rising demand for new skills and talents, potentially widening the workforce capacity gap.

3. **Specialisations and skill gaps:** The industry is steering towards specialties like AgTech, advanced manufacturing and agricultural value addition. Although the region boasts a rich talent pool in traditional industries, there is a foreseeable gap in specialised skills, especially those not currently addressed by local educational institutions.

To navigate these challenges, the industry must adopt a forward-looking approach:

1. **Upskilling and talent attraction:** There is an immediate need to foster and upskill the existing workforce while simultaneously attracting fresh talent, both novice and experienced, from within and outside the region.

2. **Strategic alignment:** Businesses, industries and educational systems in Wide Bay Burnett (WBB) need to realign their strategies. Enhanced collaboration can help in cultivating new workforce entrants, filling the anticipated skill gaps.

3. **Focus on regional competitiveness:** With dedicated efforts towards economic prosperity, the region has the potential to bridge the socio-economic disparity with the rest of the state, further solidifying its reputation as a liveable, affordable and opportunity-rich region.

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51. Australian Food and Grocery Council, 2021. *Sustaining Australia: Food and Grocery Manufacturing 2030*. Australian Food and Grocery Council: Canberra.
52. Ibid.
53. Australian Government, 2021. *Food and Beverage National Manufacturing Priority roadmap*. Australian Government: Canberra.
54. Ibid.

c) Skills supply challenges

Employers often express dissatisfaction with nationally recognised training in the industry due to its perceived lack of practical skills, relevance and accessibility, especially in regional areas. Many sectors, such as flour milling and brewing, prefer internationally recognised or industry-specific qualifications, seeing them as more pertinent to their needs. Challenges such as the casualisation of the workforce, reluctance to release workers for training and poor understanding of the formal traineeship model further complicate engagement with vocational education. Despite these hurdles, there is a need to attract young people to vocational training, to provide future pathways into the industry to support future growth. Despite labour shortages and efforts to make vocational education more accessible, there are challenges in attracting young people to VET training, especially in the food, beverage and pharmaceutical sectors.[55]

To capitalise on the growth potential in the food and beverage sector, the region must tackle these challenges head-on, focusing on talent attraction, skill development and closer industry-education collaboration.

4.10 Future skills and training requirements

The industry stands at a crucial point, where the right skills and training can determine the trajectory of the industry. Meeting the requisite skill needs becomes paramount to both respond to crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and shield against forthcoming vulnerabilities in supply chains. Addressing these challenges proactively ensures continued supply of manufactured products and strengthens our sovereign capabilities. This can be achieved by expanding manufacturing operations and enhancing the workforce's skill levels. Bolstering managerial capacities is a keystone to achieving innovation. This encompasses leadership training, strategic planning and embracing technical digital systems.

For the region, promoting lifelong learning, workforce diversity, skills transferability and skilled immigration is essential for sustained growth and innovation. In the coming decades, the region faces a demand for critical skills essential for adapting to the evolving landscape. These skills encompass digital literacy, involving proficiency in data interpretation, application usage, problem diagnosis and effective communication. Machinery and technology skills will also be important to ensure the ongoing operation, maintenance and design of new technologies.

Additionally, expertise in business and change management will be vital for adapting to global shifts and technological advancements. Recognising the ongoing impact of globalisation, technological change, and generational transition on industries, the WBB education system must be flexible, proactive and resilient. Prioritising the delivery of relevant higher-level technical and professional skills is key, enabling employers to compete through elevated skills, enhanced productivity and greater innovation.

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55.   Skills Impact,2022. *Food, Beverage and Pharmaceutical Industry Skills Report, 2022*. Skills Impact: Carlton.
       https://www.skillsimpact.com.au/getehap/2022/10/ISR.FBP_.IndustrySkillsReport.FINAL_.pdf?x57168

APPENDIX - Selected qualifications relevant to food and beverage manufacturing

FBP Food and Beverage Manufacturing

Code	Title
FBP10121	Certificate I in Food Processing
FBP20122	Certificate II in Food Processing
FBP20418	Certificate II in Pharmaceutical Manufacturing
FBP20521	Certificate II in Wine Industry Operations
FBP30121	Certificate III in Food Processing
FBP30721	Certificate III in Rice Processing
FBP30822	Certificate III in Pharmaceutical Manufacturing
FBP30921	Certificate III in Wine Industry Operations
FBP40321	Certificate IV in Food Processing
FBP40421	Certificate IV in Food Science and Technology
FBP40522	Certificate IV in Pharmaceutical Manufacturing
FBP40621	Certificate IV in Artisan Fermented Products
FBP50121	Diploma of Food Science and Technology
FBP50221	Diploma of Food Safety Auditing
FBP50321	Diploma of Artisan Cheesemaking

AMP - Australian Meat Processing Training Package

Code	Tittle
AMP20117	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Food Services)
AMP20316	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)
AMP20415	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Meat Retailing)
AMP30116	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Boning Room)
AMP30116	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Food Services)
AMP30322	Certificate III in Meat Safety Inspection
AMP30421	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Rendering)
AMP30516	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Slaughtering)
AMP30622	Certificate III in Meat Processing
AMP30815	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)
AMP30916	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - General)
AMP31016	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - Manufacture)
AMP31116	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Livestock Handling)
AMP31216	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Packing Operations)
AMP40222	Certificate IV in Meat Processing
AMP40522	Certificate IV in Meat Safety Inspection
AMP50221	Diploma of Meat Processing
AMP60122	Advanced Diploma of Meat Processing
AMP80115	Graduate Certificate in Agribusiness
AMP80215	Graduate Diploma of Agribusiness