



Preparing for the jobs of the future

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The Hunter's workforce, like that of the nation, is rapidly changing as jobs decline in the high value-add manufacturing and mining sectors, and grow in the service sector and knowledge-based industries. What does this mean for the future of work in the Hunter? New research by the Hunter Research Foundation (HRF) looks at where our opportunities for jobs growth lie, some of the challenges we face and strategies to overcome them.

In the ***Future of Hunter Jobs*** project, supported by Keolis Downer, HRF examines the future of our six largest employment sectors, some of the drivers of employment growth, the skills that will be required and where they will be located.

The major drivers of our changing economic and workforce structure include population ageing, the impact of new technologies and digital disruption, globalisation and the Asian century, and servitisation of industry.

Growth to 2020 in the number of jobs in the region (at 8.1% or 24,500 jobs) is projected to outstrip the Hunter's slow population growth (at 5.1%) and particularly the growth in residents of workforce age (at 2.6% or 10,600 persons). This highlights the trend to part-time and casual work, increasing workforce participation by women, and pressure for older workers to continue beyond age 65.

The Hunter is well placed to benefit from jobs growth in health and social assistance, business and other services, education, hospitality, and food and agribusiness. This will come through the development of new capabilities and increasingly applying these capabilities to serve markets outside the region.

Our future workforce will require increased skill levels, with growth in jobs requiring professional and technological skills, especially in the health care, business services, and education sectors. Skills development will need to occur with an increasingly part-time or 'portfolio' workforce.

The ***Future of Hunter Jobs*** also maps the current (2011 Census) dispersion of major industries throughout the Hunter region. It highlights the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie industry concentrations, and concentrations of population in urbanised areas, generating travel between home and work, education, health and retail outlets.

The nature of service delivery in the future will challenge the link between place of work and place of residence. Residential development in urban-fringe greenfield areas, along with higher-density redevelopment in the inner city of Newcastle and Charlestown, mean people and work opportunities may not be close together. Distributed service delivery (eg. aged care), connecting services to international visitors (eg. tourism) and the export of services (eg. eHealth care) will all require a future-oriented polycentric design for transport infrastructure, both residential and business developments, and roll-out of high-speed internet.

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To secure growth opportunities, the Hunter must connect to new markets – inside and outside the region and internationally. We need faster technology connections and more efficient transport links – both intra-region to facilitate growth in key sectors including hospitality, retail, health and education; and to key markets (eg. Sydney and Asia). We must improve our lagging higher education levels.

The Hunter needs a strong growth plan backed by government, industry and community that will:

- Deliver transport and technology infrastructure to enable service delivery within the region and competitive access to markets;
- Improve links between business and education providers to encourage innovation and commercialisation, and support work-ready graduates;
- Encourage government to provide clear market signals on innovation, new service-delivery models, and openness to risk investors.

HRF will present the ***Future of Hunter Jobs*** results at a lunch in Newcastle next week, which also features expert speakers including Sue Beitz (Australia's Future Workforce author), Prof. Bill Mitchell (University of Newcastle) and Geoff Crews (Forsythes Recruitment).

Find out more at www.hrf.com.au

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