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HBNC

Creating Connected Communities

State of Employment Report 2025

Hinkler



The State of Employment Report 2025: Hinkler is an initiative of the Social Shift Institute, the community development, research & innovation arm of the HBNC.

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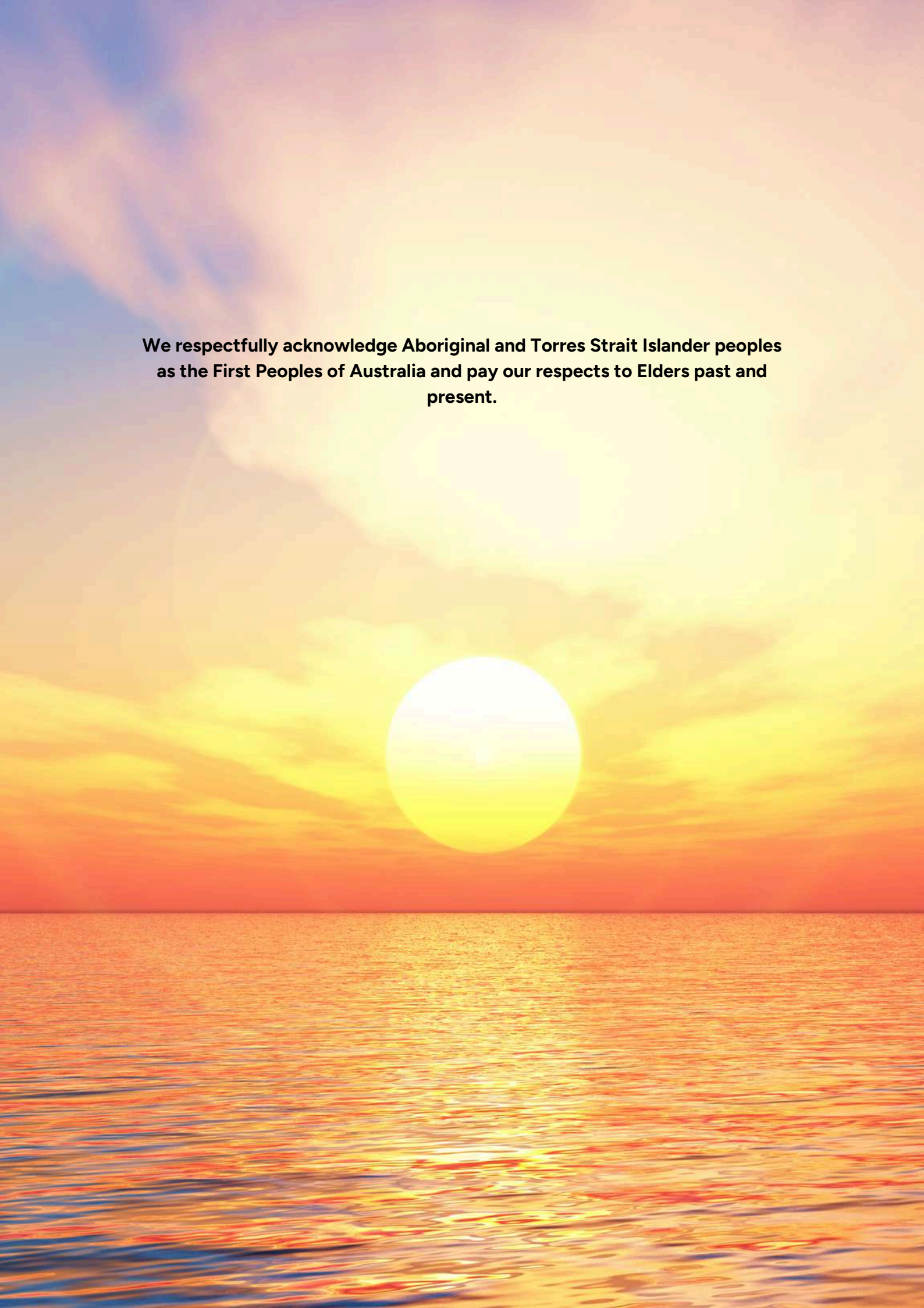
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A vibrant sunset over the ocean. The sun is a large, bright yellow circle positioned slightly below the center of the horizon. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds in shades of yellow, orange, and light blue. The water in the foreground is dark blue with shimmering reflections of the sun and sky, creating a colorful, rippling effect.

**We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
as the First Peoples of Australia and pay our respects to Elders past and
present.**

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WHERE ARE PEOPLE WORKING?

The top 3 industries in Bundaberg & Fraser Coast are health care & social assistance, retail trade, & construction.

- In Fraser Coast 24% work in health care & social assistance, 11.2% in retail and 9.4% in construction
- In Bundaberg 21.6% work in health care & social assistance, 10% in retail and 9.7% in construction
- In QLD 16.4% work in health care & social assistance, 9% in retail and 9.1% in construction.
- In Australia 14.5% work in health care & social assistance, 9.1% in retail and 8.9% in construction.

1

2



WHAT SKILLS & EDUCATION DO PEOPLE HAVE?

Hinkler has an approx. 10% lower rate of higher education than QLD & 15% lower than Australia.

- In Bundaberg 19.3% have a degree or higher. The top 3 quals. were management & commerce (11%), engineering & related tech (9.6%) and health (9.6%).
- In Fraser Coast 19.6% have a degree or higher. Top 3 quals. were management & commerce (11.4%), health (10.5%) and society & culture (10.4%).
- In QLD, 29.3% have a degree or higher, & in Australia 35.4% have a degree or higher.

3

4



BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

Like many regional areas, Hinkler employment is challenged by transport, housing and education barriers.

- **Transport:** Transport patterns in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg reflect highly car-dependent labour markets, with limited public transport & lower rates of remote work.
- **Housing:** Low rental vacancy rates & rising housing costs are placing pressure on both local residents and potential new workers, with flow-on effects for labour market participation & workforce attraction.
- **Education access:** The availability, diversity and accessibility of tertiary education options influence not only individual career pathways but also the types of industries that can sustainably operate and grow within a region, with very limited options particularly in Fraser Coast

5

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WHO ARE OUR LOCAL WORKERS?

Fraser Coast & Bundaberg have more women in the labour force, which is affected by ageing population demographics & associated employment barriers.

- 30% of Fraser Coast population is working (54% female/ 46% male)
- 36% of Bundaberg population is working (52% female/ 48% male)
- 44% of Queensland & Aus population is working (49% female/ 51% male) respectively



LABOUR MARKET TRENDS

Wide Bay has very high levels of youth unemployment

- General unemployment is at 5.7% in Fraser Coast & 4.7% in Bundaberg compared to 4.2% for QLD and 4.3% in Australia.
- Youth unemployment is very high at 13.2% in Wide Bay compared to 9.5% in QLD & 10.2% in Australia.
- The most advertised jobs are sales assistants, general clerks and registered nurses.



HOW MUCH ARE PEOPLE MAKING?

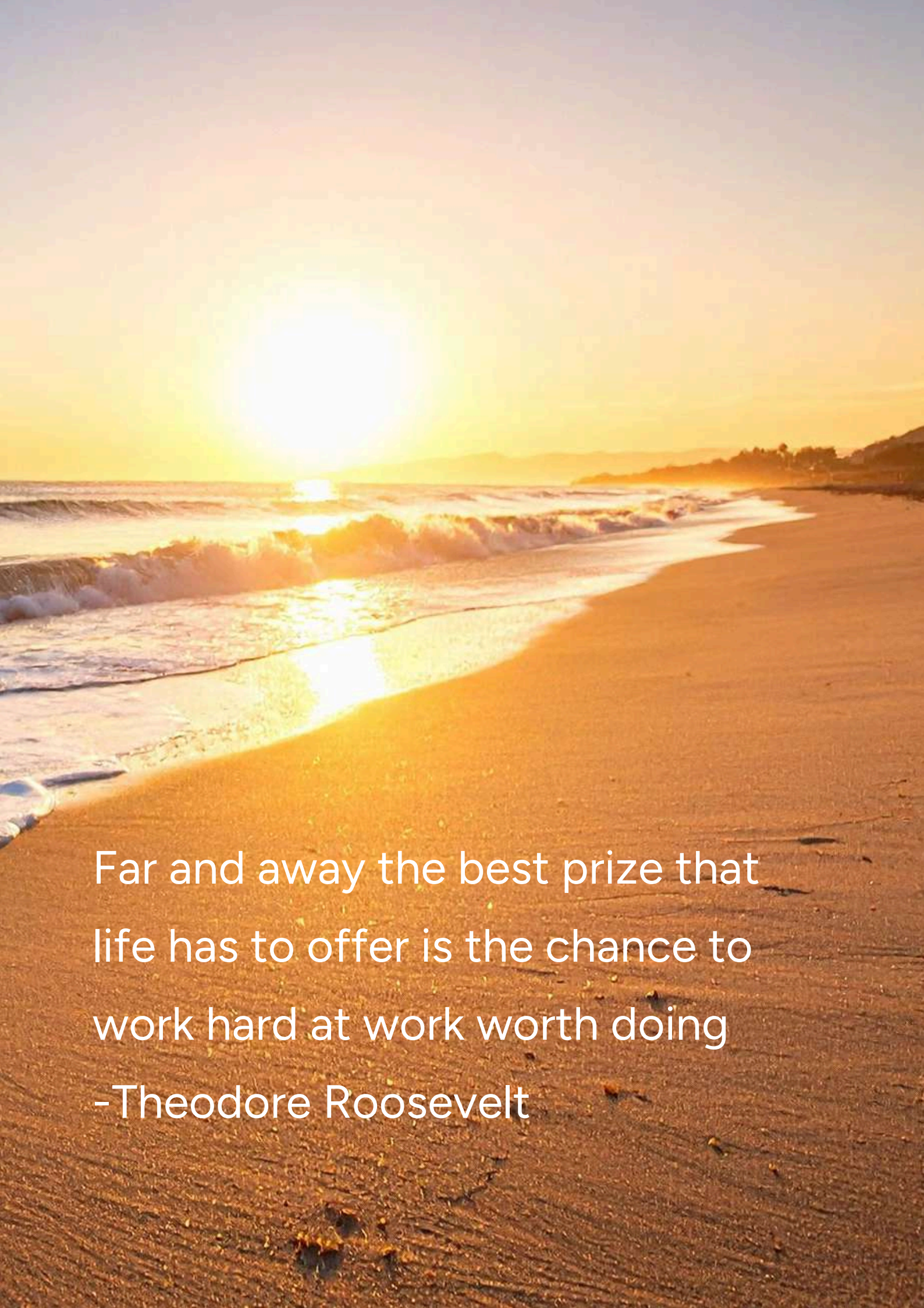
Hinkler has a clear income gap between compared to state and national economies.

- In Bundaberg 14.3% of workers earn a high income (\$1750 or more per week). 15.2% are low income earners.
- In Fraser Coast 15% earn a high income. 16% are low income earners.
- In Queensland, 21.6% earn a high income. 13.2% are low income earners.
- Across Australia, 23.3% earn a high income. 12.7% are low income earners.



Employment Snapshot

Fraser Coast & Bundaberg 2025

A photograph of a beach at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, golden glow that reflects on the water and the sand. Waves are breaking onto the shore, and the sky is a mix of orange and yellow. The overall mood is peaceful and inspiring.

Far and away the best prize that
life has to offer is the chance to
work hard at work worth doing
-Theodore Roosevelt



Executive Summary

Welcome to the State of Employment 2025 Report for the Hinkler region. Prepared by the Social Shift Institute, this report provides a snapshot of the labour market across the Fraser Coast and Bundaberg regions, highlighting workforce participation, industry trends, education levels, income outcomes and structural barriers affecting employment. Drawing on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Jobs and Skills Australia, the Queensland Government Statistician's Office and other datasets, the report compares local conditions with broader benchmarks across Queensland and Australia.

Employment plays a critical role in supporting economic stability, community wellbeing and individual purpose. Understanding the current state of the regional labour market is therefore essential to identifying opportunities to strengthen workforce participation, support local industries and improve long-term economic resilience in the Hinkler region.

Workforce Participation and Demographics

Workforce participation across the Hinkler region remains below state and national averages, reflecting demographic and structural characteristics of the region. In Fraser Coast, around 30% of the population is employed, while Bundaberg records a slightly higher rate of 36%, compared with 44% across both Queensland and Australia. The regional workforce also has a higher proportion of women, representing 54% of workers in Fraser Coast and 52% in Bundaberg, compared with 49% across Queensland and nationally. These patterns are influenced in part by population ageing, caregiving responsibilities and regional labour market conditions.

Key Employment Industries

Employment in the region is concentrated in health care and social assistance, retail trade, and construction, reflecting both demographic demand and regional economic activity. Health care and social assistance is the largest employer in both areas, accounting for 24% of jobs in Fraser Coast and 21.6% in Bundaberg, considerably higher than the 16.4% share across Queensland. Retail and construction also remain significant contributors to employment across both local government areas.

Labour Market Conditions

Unemployment in the region is slightly higher than state and national benchmarks. As of 2025, Fraser Coast recorded an unemployment rate of 5.7% and Bundaberg 4.7%, compared with 4.2% across Queensland and 4.3% nationally. Youth unemployment presents a particular challenge, with the Wide Bay region recording a rate of 13.2%, significantly higher than Queensland (9.5%) and Australia (10.2%). Addressing youth employment pathways will be critical to strengthening the region's long-term workforce capacity.

Skills and Education

Educational attainment in the Hinkler region is notably lower than broader benchmarks. Only 19.6% of Fraser Coast workers and 19.3% of Bundaberg workers hold a bachelor degree or higher, compared with 29.3% across Queensland and 35.4% nationally. The most common qualification fields include management and commerce, health, and engineering-related technologies, reflecting both the region's workforce composition and industry demand. Lower qualification levels can limit access to higher-skilled occupations and affect the ability to attract new industries to the region.

Income Profile

Income data indicates a clear earnings gap between the Hinkler region and broader economies. In Bundaberg, 14.3% of workers earn high incomes (\$1,750+ per week), while 15.2% are classified as low-income earners. Fraser Coast shows similar patterns, with 15% of workers in the high-income category and 16% in low-income brackets. By comparison, 21.6% of Queensland workers and 23.3% of Australian workers earn high incomes, highlighting the economic disparity faced by many regional communities.

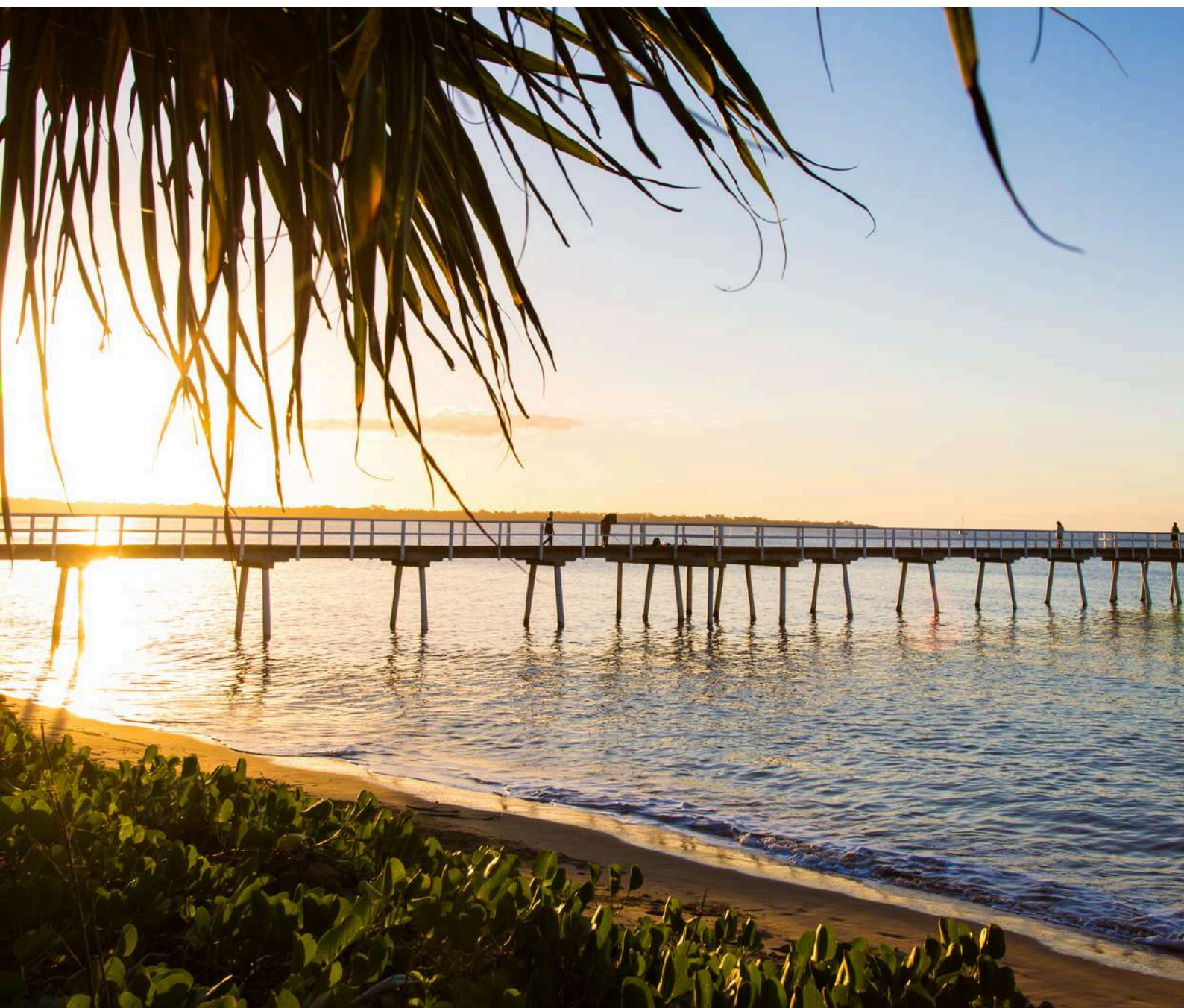
Structural Barriers

Like many regional areas, the Hinkler region faces structural barriers that influence workforce participation and economic growth. Limited public transport contributes to highly car-dependent labour markets, which can restrict access to employment. Housing affordability and low rental vacancy rates are placing pressure on both existing residents and potential new workers. In addition, limited local access to tertiary education and training opportunities, particularly in the Fraser Coast, can constrain workforce development and industry diversification.

Future Outlook

The future of employment in the region will be shaped by technological change, digital transformation and evolving workforce needs. While these changes present challenges, they also offer opportunities to expand new industries, support flexible forms of employment and strengthen workforce capability. Continued collaboration between governments, employers, education providers and community organisations will be essential to addressing structural barriers and creating inclusive employment pathways.

Supporting **youth employment transitions, reskilling mature workers, expanding access to education and training**, and addressing transport and housing barriers will be critical priorities. By aligning workforce development with regional economic opportunities, the Hinkler region can build a more resilient labour market and enable more residents to access meaningful and sustainable employment.





About the Social Shift Institute

The Social Shift Institute is committed to driving meaningful, community-led change through innovation. As the research and community development arm of HBNC, our focus is on empowering local communities by providing the tools, strategies, and support they need to address some of the most pressing social challenges.

In partnership with the Department of Social Services, we serve as a designated Brokerage Organisation for the Community-led Support Fund (CLSF). Through this fund, we help communities secure funding for impactful projects focused on mental health, family support, job readiness, and employment.

But we don't stop there. Together with local communities, we're building momentum with our Social Shifters workshops and activities—designed to build local capacity to solve real-world problems using the latest, evidence-backed strategies.

We're also always in motion, gathering data and conducting ongoing research. Our State of Reports and other publications help us track the evolving needs of our communities and spotlight key opportunities for action and collective impact.

And here's where things get even more exciting: We're currently developing the Social Vault—a cutting-edge library of innovative programs and resources, packed with ready-to-use toolkits that can be customized for any community. Get ready to tap into a host of resources that will accelerate your community's growth and success!

Join us in shaping our community's future, one social shift at a time!

Find out more:
www.socialshift.com.au



01. Overview of the Hinkler Region



1.1 Demographic Overview

Employment participation in the Hinkler region remains lower than that of Queensland and Australia overall, indicating that a smaller proportion of the local population is engaged in work. This lower participation rate suggests underlying demographic and socio-economic factors influencing workforce engagement, including age structure, caregiving responsibilities, and potential barriers to employment.

According to the 2021 Census, approximately 30% of the Fraser Coast population is engaged in local employment. The workforce is predominantly female, with women accounting for 54% of workers compared to 46% male. The majority of workers (59.5%) fall within the prime working-age group of 25–54 years, indicating that employment participation is concentrated among core working-age residents. However, the relatively low overall employment rate suggests that a significant share of the population sits outside this cohort, reflecting the region's older population profile and higher proportion of retirees.

The Bundaberg region shows moderately higher workforce participation, with 36% of the population engaged in local employment. Similar demographic patterns are evident, with females representing 52% of workers and males 48%. Around 59% of workers are aged 25–54 years, reinforcing the importance of this age group to the local labour market. While participation is stronger than in Fraser Coast, it remains below state and national benchmarks, indicating persistent demographic constraints on labour supply.

By comparison, 44% of both Queenslanders and Australians are engaged in local employment, highlighting a notable participation gap between the Hinkler region and broader jurisdictions. Queensland’s workforce has a slightly higher proportion of male workers (51%), suggesting differences in labour force composition and employment patterns. The lower participation rates in the Hinkler region, combined with a higher proportion of female workers and a concentration of employment within the core working-age population, point to potential challenges around workforce availability, succession planning, and the need to attract and retain younger workers to support long-term economic sustainability.

NOTE: 2021 data has been used for comparison as current data is not available for all regions.

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111,041

Total population of Fraser Coast



56,686

Of Fraser Coast total population are female (51%)



54,330

Of Fraser Coast total population are male (49%)



30%

Of Fraser Coast population are working/employed (33,480 people)



54%

Of Fraser Coast total workers are female (18,041 people)



46%

Of Fraser Coast total workers are male (15,436 people)



5.3%

Of Fraser Coast total workers speak a language other than English



54%

Of Fraser Coast total workers are employed full time



43%

Of Fraser Coast total workers are employed part time



99,216

Total population of Bundaberg



50,420

Of Bundaberg total population are female (51%)



48,791

Of Bundaberg total population are male (49%)



36%

Of Bundaberg population are working/employed (35,888 people)



52%

Of Bundaberg total workers are female (18,641 people)



48%

Of Bundaberg total workers are male (17,243 people)



8%

Of Bundaberg total workers speak a language other than English



58%

Of Bundaberg total workers are employed full time



40%

Of Bundaberg total workers are employed part time



5.5M

Total population of Queensland



2.6M

Of Queensland total population are female (51%)



2.5M

Of Queensland total population are male (49%)



44%

Of Queensland population are working/employed (2.4M people)



49%

Of Queensland total workers are female (1.20M people)



51%

Of Queensland total workers are male (1.24M people)



?

Of Queensland total workers speak a language other than English- no data found



59%

Of Queensland total workers are employed full time



32%

Of Queensland total workers are employed part time



27.1M

Total population of Australia



12.8M

Of Australia total population are female (51%)



12.5M

Of Australia total population are male (49%)



44%

Of Australian population are working/employed (12M people)



49%

Of Australian total workers are female (5.8M people)



51%

Of Australian total workers are male (6.2M people)



?

Of Australian total workers speak a language other than English- no data found



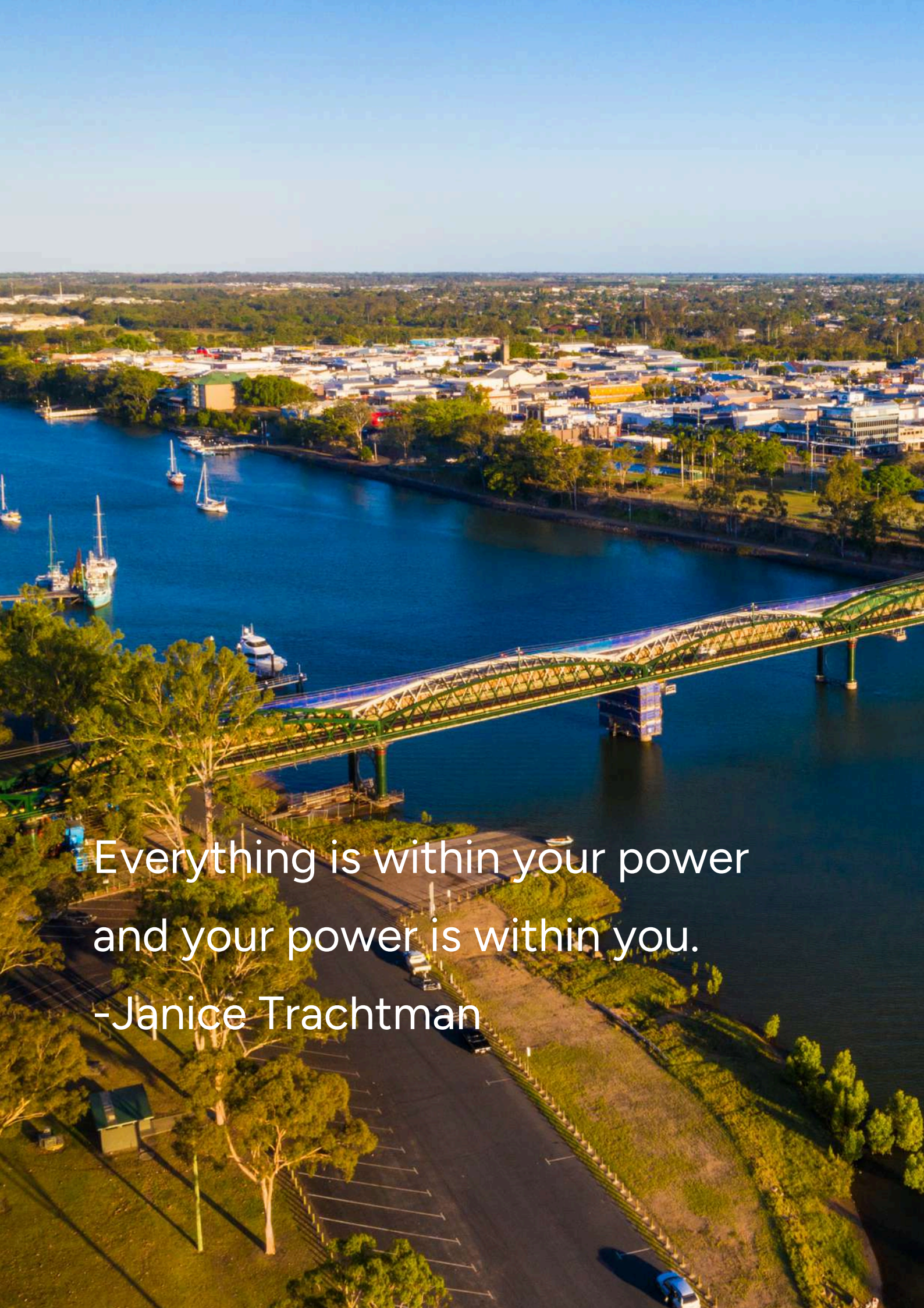
56%

Of Australian total workers are employed full time



31%

Of Australian total workers are employed part time



Everything is within your power
and your power is within you.
-Janice Trachtman

Showcase- LIFT

LIFT (Local Industry Futures Training) Program is a job-readiness training program, but it's so much more than that. It's a chance for Hervey Bay residents to find their purpose and take meaningful steps towards the job or career of their dreams. Through a network of events, training and coaching opportunities, LIFT aims to break the cycle of long-term unemployment in our community. LIFT is funded by the federal Department of Social Services and delivered by the HBNC.

LIFT supports include:

- YAP- Youth Assistance Program: supporting Fraser Coast young people aged 15-18 who are seeking employment or further education and training opportunities. YAP provides support tailored to each young person's unique needs. The process begins with an in-depth conversation and "getting to know you" process, to understand the individual situation and aspirations. A personalised case plan is then developed that includes ongoing partnering and referrals to relevant services. YAP's goal is to empower young people to successfully gain and maintain employment, education, or training, setting them on a path to a brighter future.
- IRT-Industry Ready Training: supports community members aged 18 and older to find their purpose while improving employability and life skills through a 10-week program that covers essential aspects of personal and professional development.
- TEC- Training & Employment Coaches: support community members aged 18 and older to enhance their employability and build essential life skills. TEC offers case management support, skills workshops (e.g. resume writing, dress for success), and business/ employer networking.



Find out more

SCAN ME



Showcase- Jobs Fraser Coast

Jobs Fraser Coast supports the growth and development of a strong, capable and skilled workforce across industry sectors in the Fraser Coast region. Jobs Fraser Coast works with regional stakeholders to:

- Coordinate local resources and networks to develop solutions to the Fraser Coast's skilling and workforce needs.
- Plan for the future through proactive monitoring of industry trends and identifying upskilling and re-skilling opportunities through education and training pathways.
- Advocate for investment in training and skills that align to regional jobs and employment growth.
- Drive and build the footprint, skills and connection to local education and training pathways.
- Leverage the Queensland Government's [Good People. Good Jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022 – 2032](#). The strategy's vision, is for a strong and diverse workforce ready to seize today's jobs and adapt to future opportunities.



Find out more



Showcase- Jobs Bundaberg



The Bundaberg Regional Jobs Committee, also known as Jobs Bundaberg, is proudly supported and funded by the Queensland Government.

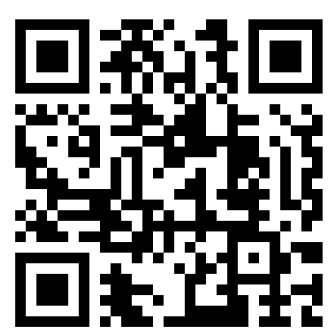
Jobs Bundaberg bring together local business, government, community leaders, training providers, industry representatives, high schools and unions to ensure training and employment solutions are more accurately aligned with local skills needs and economic activity to support regional jobs growth.



jobs
BUNDABERG

Find out more

SCAN ME



02. Key Employment Industries



2.1 Key Employment Industries

Employment across the Hinkler region is strongly concentrated in the health care and social assistance sector, which is the dominant industry locally and mirrors employment patterns observed across Queensland and Australia. This reflects the critical role of essential services in supporting regional populations.

In the Fraser Coast region, the three largest employment sectors are health care and social assistance, retail trade, and construction. Health care and social assistance accounts for nearly a quarter of all employment (24%), with social assistance services comprising the largest sub-sector (8.9%). Retail trade is the second largest employer, engaging 11.2% of workers, particularly in other store-based retailing (6.7%).

Construction employs a further 9.4% of the workforce. Major private employers in the Fraser Coast include Hyne Timber, Downer, Woolworths and Coles Group, which contribute significantly to local employment opportunities.

Similarly, Bundaberg's employment profile is dominated by health care and social assistance, retail trade, and construction. Approximately 22% of workers are employed in health care and social assistance, followed by retail trade (10%) and construction (9.7%). Notably, construction has overtaken agriculture, forestry and fishing as one of the region's top three employment sectors, signalling a shift in the local industry composition. Nolan Meats is among the largest private employers in the Bundaberg region, alongside majority companies including Woolworths, Coles Group and Wesfarmers.

At the state level, Queensland's employment distribution follows a comparable pattern, with health care and social assistance representing the largest sector (15%), followed by retail trade (9.3%) and construction (9.1%). While not reflected in the top three by workforce share, the mining sector remains a major contributor to employment and economic output, with mining companies such as BHP, Rio Tinto and Glencore among the state's largest employers, alongside retail giants Woolworths, Coles Group, Wesfarmers, and Ramsay Health Care (leading private hospital & health services employer).

Nationally, health care and social assistance is also the largest employment sector, accounting for 15.5% of jobs, followed by construction (9.5%) and retail trade (9%). Australia's largest private employers include Woolworths, Wesfarmers, Coles Group, Ramsay Health Care and Rio Tinto, underscoring the prominence of both service-based and resource-driven industries in the national labour market.

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Fraser Coast- Top 3 Industries 2023/24



Fraser Coast- Top 10 Industries 2023/24

Industry	Fraser Coast 2023/24		Queensland
	No. people	%	%
1. Health care & social assistance	10,707	24.1%	16.4%
2. Retail trade	4,993	11.2%	9%
3. Construction	4,172	9.4%	9.8%
4. Accommodation & food services	4,106	9.2%	6.9%
5. Education & training	4,103	9.2%	9.1%
6. Public administration & safety	2,548	5.7%	6.7%
7. Manufacturing	2,490	5.6%	6.3%
8. Transport, postal & warehousing	1,790	4%	5.5%
9. Other	1,761	4%	3.9%
10. Professional, scientific & technical	1,535	3.5%	7.5%

Bundaberg- Top 3 Industries 2023/24



Bundaberg- Top 10 Industries 2023/24

Industry	Bundaberg 2023/24		Queensland
	No. people	%	%
1. Health care & social assistance	9,809	21.6%	16.4%
2. Retail trade	4,583	10%	9%
3. Construction	4,402	9.7%	9.8%
4. Agriculture, forestry & fishing	4,024	8.9%	2.4%
5. Education & training	3,948	8.7%	9.1%
6. Manufacturing	3,451	7.6%	6.3%
7. Accommodation & food services	3,366	7.4%	6.9%
8. Public administration & safety	2,010	4.4%	6.7%
9. Transport, postal & warehousing	1,659	3.7%	5.5%
10. Other services	1,596	3.5%	3.9%

Queensland- Top 3 Industries 2023/24



Queensland- Top 10 Industries 2023/24


Industry	Queensland 2023/24		Australia
	No. people	%	%
1. Health care & social assistance	375,511	15.4%	14.5%
2. Retail trade	226,468	9.3%	9.1%
3. Construction	222,234	9.1%	8.9%
4. Education & Training	216,015	8.8%	8.8%
5. Accommodation & food services	175,850	7.2%	6.5%
6. Professional, scientific & technical	164,129	6.7%	7.8%
7. Public administration & safety	150,358	6.2%	6.6%
8. Manufacturing	140,285	5.7%	5.9%
9. Transport, postal & warehousing	115,870	4.7%	4.5%
10. Other services	95,768	3.9%	3.6%

Australia- Top 3 Industries 2023/24



Australia- Top 10 Industries 2023/24

	Australia 2023/24	
Industry	No. people	%
1. Health care & social assistance	2,203,580	15.5%
2. Construction	1,349,152	9.5%
3. Retail trade	1,273,117	9%
4. Professional, scientific & technical services	1,260,867	8.9%
5. Education & training	1,238,885	8.7%
6. Public administration & safety	957,619	6.7%
7. Manufacturing	907,109	6.4%
8. Accommodation & food services	902,887	6.4%
9. Transport, postal & warehousing	722,890	5.1%
10. Financial & insurance services	539,156	3.8%



The real opportunity for success
lies within the person and not in
the job

-Zig Ziglar

Showcase- WORKfit

WORKFit is an employment program delivered by IMPACT Community Services. WORKFit's ultimate goal is to provide jobseekers with the tools to independently develop skills and improve employability. This flexible program enables you to enter at any stage, depending on your needs.

WORKFit provides one-on-one support and 12 months access to a range of external support for resilience, online learning and resume creation to give jobseekers the confidence to progress in their employment journey.

The model comprises of 4 stages, each designed to overcome barriers and help individuals achieve their goals

- Stage 1- Adaptable
- Stage 2- JobGym
- Stage 3- JobScan
- Stage 4- JobHelp



IMPACT
COMMUNITY SERVICES

Find out more



Showcase- SQW Hospitality

The COOK. BREW. CREATE Hospitality Training Program is a free program delivered by HBNC and funded by the QLD Government Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative.

SQW is designed to give people the skills and confidence they need to find meaningful employment, while gaining a Certificate II in Hospitality.

The hospitality training program focuses on equipping participants with real-world skills and practical experience to help them land a job in the hospitality industry. Whether you're just starting out or looking for a fresh start, this program offers:

- Hands-On Training: Learn essential hospitality skills, including food preparation, beverage service, and customer care.
- Individual Support: We tailor support to each participant, helping you overcome challenges and achieve your goals.
- Career Confidence: Gain the tools and knowledge to step into the workforce with self-assurance.



Find out more



03. Labour Market & Trends



3.1 Unemployment Rates

Unemployment rates across the Hinkler region remain higher than state and national averages, indicating ongoing labour market pressures. As at September 2025, the Fraser Coast recorded an unemployment rate of 5.5%, which is above both Queensland and Australian rates and higher than other parts of the broader employment region. This suggests comparatively weaker labour market conditions and potential challenges in job availability or workforce participation.

Bundaberg's unemployment rate was lower than Fraser Coast but still elevated relative to state and national benchmarks, sitting at 4.7% in September 2025. While this reflects a stronger labour market position within the Hinkler region, unemployment levels remain above optimal levels, indicating continued sensitivity to economic and industry fluctuations.

At the broader regional level, unemployment rates vary depending on the geographic definition used. The Wide Bay region recorded an unemployment rate of 5.5% in December 2025, while the combined Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast employment region reported a lower rate of 4.0% in November 2025. This variation highlights the stronger labour market performance of the Sunshine Coast relative to Wide Bay sub-regions, which moderates the overall employment region outcome.

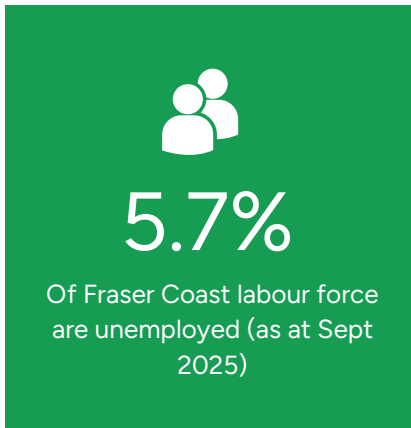
By comparison, Queensland's unemployment rate was 4.2% and Australia's 4.3% in November 2025. The higher unemployment rates observed in the Hinkler region relative to these benchmarks suggest ongoing structural and demographic influences on local labour markets, reinforcing the importance of targeted employment and workforce development initiatives.

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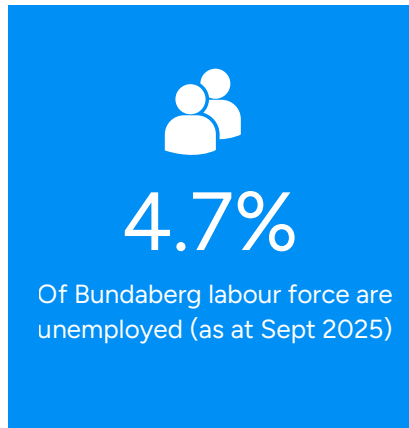
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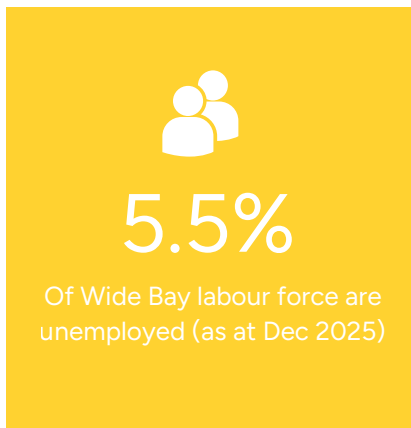
Fraser Coast- Unemployment Rates



Bundaberg- Unemployment Rates



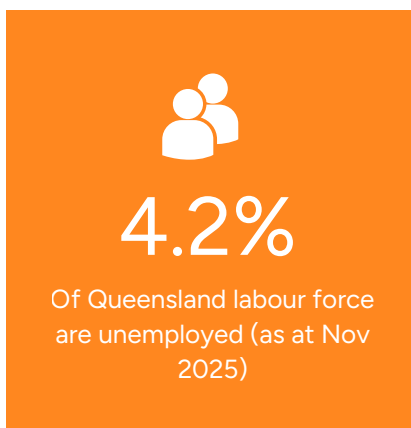
Wide Bay Region- Unemployment Rates



Wide Bay & Sunshine Coast Employment Region- Unemployment Rates



Queensland- Unemployment Rates



Australia- Unemployment Rates





3.2 Participation Rates

Workforce participation rates across the Wide Bay region and its sub-regions remain substantially lower than state and national benchmarks, indicating a structural disengagement from the labour market rather than a short-term economic fluctuation. Workforce participation is defined as the proportion of the working-age population that is either employed or actively seeking employment, making it a key indicator of labour market capacity and economic inclusion.

According to the 2021 ABS Census, the Fraser Coast recorded a particularly low participation rate of 43.5%, while Bundaberg's participation rate was 50.2%. Although more recent sub-regional data is unavailable, these figures suggest that fewer than half of working-age residents in Fraser Coast and only around half in Bundaberg were engaged in the labour market at the time of the Census. At a broader regional level, the Wide Bay participation rate stood at 53.2% as at December 2025, based on data from the Queensland Statistician's Office. While this represents an improvement on the 2021 Census figures for some local government areas, it remains markedly below neighbouring and higher-growth regions.

By contrast, participation rates in the Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast region are significantly higher, at 78.1% as at November 2025, closely aligning with the Queensland participation rate of 80.7% and the Australian rate of 80.5%. This divergence highlights a pronounced regional gap in labour force engagement, even within geographically adjacent areas. The contrast suggests that local demographic, economic and structural factors play a major role in shaping participation outcomes in Wide Bay and its sub-regions.

One of the primary drivers of low participation in Fraser Coast, Bundaberg and Wide Bay is population composition. These areas have a higher proportion of older residents and retirees compared to Queensland and national averages, particularly in Fraser Coast, which is a well-established retirement destination. A larger share of the population being above traditional working age naturally suppresses participation rates, even when employment opportunities are available.

Additionally, lower participation is influenced by limited employment diversity and the prevalence of seasonal, part-time, or physically demanding work in key local industries such as agriculture, tourism, and construction. These roles may not be suitable for all working-age residents, including people with caring responsibilities, health limitations, or limited access to transport. In regions where stable, full-time employment opportunities are scarce, individuals may become discouraged from actively seeking work, further reducing participation rates.

Lower educational attainment and restricted access to tertiary and vocational training pathways also contribute to weaker labour force engagement. Without clear pathways into skilled employment, some residents—particularly young people and long-term unemployed individuals—may disengage from the workforce altogether. This can be compounded by intergenerational unemployment and socio-economic disadvantage in parts of the region, creating long-term barriers to participation.

Overall, the significantly lower participation rates in Wide Bay, Fraser Coast and Bundaberg compared to Queensland and Australia reflect a combination of demographic trends, industry structure, education access, and local labour market conditions. Addressing these challenges will likely require targeted strategies focused on skills development, employment diversification, improved transport and support services, and initiatives designed to re-engage under-represented groups in the workforce.

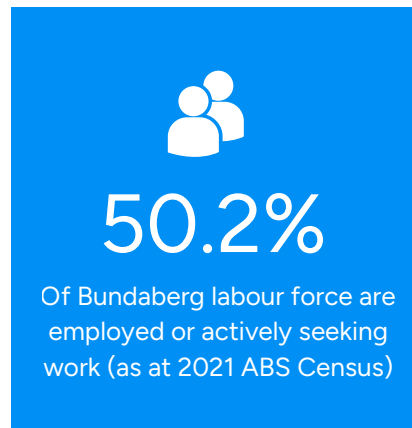
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Fraser Coast- Participation Rates



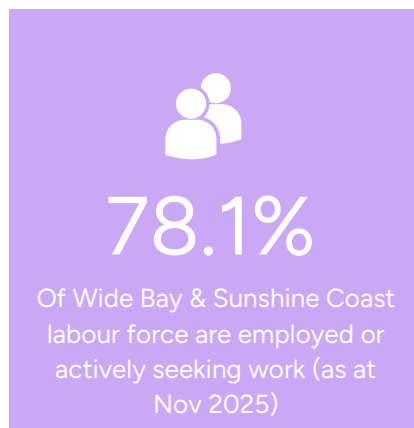
Bundaberg- Participation Rates



Wide Bay Region- Participation Rates



Wide Bay & Sunshine Coast Employment Region- Participation Rates



Queensland- Participation Rates



Australia- Participation Rates





3.3 Youth Unemployment Rates

Wide Bay records the second highest youth unemployment rate in Queensland at 13.2%, exceeded only by the outback region. This figure is significantly higher than comparable benchmarks, including the wider statistical Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast region (9.8%), the Queensland average (9.5%), and the national youth unemployment rate (10.2%). The gap between Wide Bay and these reference regions highlights a persistent and region-specific labour market challenge for young people, rather than a short-term fluctuation affecting the broader economy.

Several structural factors are believed to be contributing to this elevated unemployment rate. Media commentary has pointed to the limited availability of local tertiary education and training pathways, which may constrain young people's ability to develop skills aligned with emerging industries. As a result, many young residents may face a choice between leaving the region to pursue further education or remaining locally with fewer employment options, increasing the risk of unemployment or disengagement from the workforce.

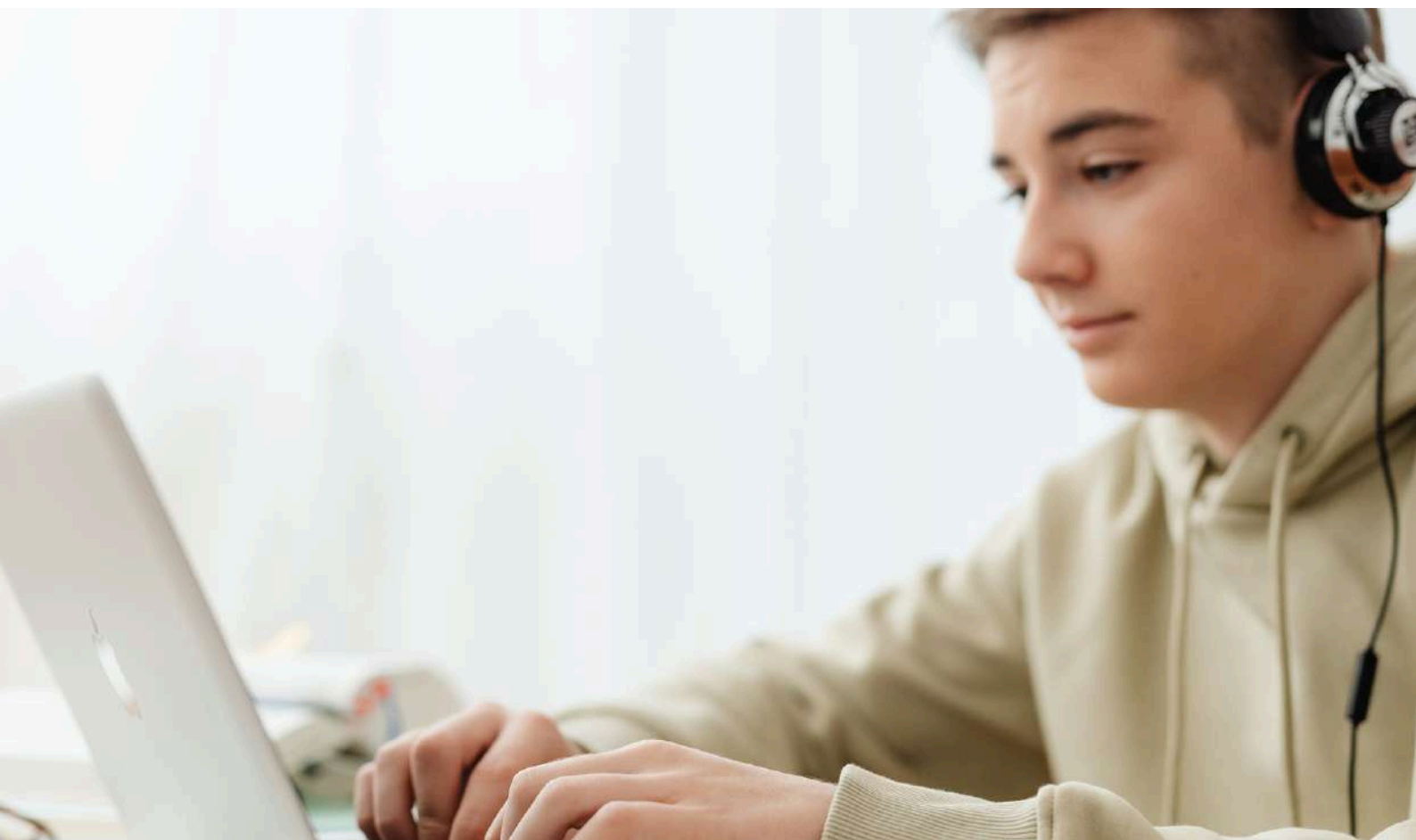
In addition, Wide Bay has a strong reliance on industries such as construction, retail, and tourism, which traditionally employ a large proportion of young workers. Recent slowdowns in construction activity, driven by higher interest rates, supply chain pressures, and reduced investment, have disproportionately affected entry-level and casual roles. These roles are often the first to be reduced during economic downturns, leaving young people particularly vulnerable when industry conditions soften.

Taken together, these factors suggest that youth unemployment in Wide Bay is influenced by both cyclical economic pressures and longer-term structural issues. Addressing the challenge is likely to require a combination of expanded local education and training opportunities, stronger school-to-work transition pathways, and economic diversification to create more stable, youth-friendly employment across a broader range of industries.

No specific youth unemployment data for Fraser Coast or Bundaberg was found. Youth participation rate data also not found readily available.

References:

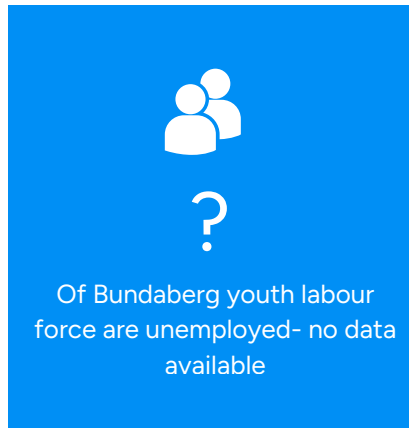
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Fraser Coast- Youth Unemployment Rates



Bundaberg- Youth Unemployment Rates



Wide Bay Region- Youth Unemployment Rates



Wide Bay & Sunshine Coast Employment Region- Youth Unemployment Rates



Queensland- Youth Unemployment Rates



Australia- Youth Unemployment Rates





3.4 Women

Women's employment patterns in the Fraser Coast and Bundaberg highlight both their significant contribution to the local workforce and their ongoing economic vulnerabilities when compared with Queensland and Australia overall. While women form a slight majority of workers in both regional areas, lower participation rates, high levels of part-time employment, and lower representation in high-income brackets point to structural inequalities that affect lifetime earnings and superannuation accumulation.

In Fraser Coast, women comprise 54% of workers, yet only 42.8% participate in the labour force. Half of employed women work part time (50%), compared with 43% working full time. Women are concentrated in health care and social assistance (31.9%), education and training (13.2%), and retail trade (12.7%)—industries that are essential but often lower paid and more likely to offer part-time roles. Only 12.4% of women earn a high income (\$1,750 or more per week), while 18.5% earn a low income. By contrast, 17.9% of male workers earn high incomes and 13% are low income, with men more strongly represented in construction (16.3%), a typically higher-paying industry. These income gaps directly reduce women's superannuation contributions and compound financial insecurity over time.

Bundaberg shows a similar trend. Women account for 52% of workers, with a participation rate of 48.2%, still below state and national averages. Of employed women, 47% work part time and 46% full time. The leading industries for women—health care and social assistance (30%), education and training (12.7%), and retail trade (12.2%)—mirror Fraser Coast. Only 11.7% of women earn a high income compared with 17.1% of men, while 17.6% of women earn a low income (compared with 12.5% of men). Men are more concentrated in construction (13.5%) and agriculture, forestry and fishing (13.3%), sectors that can offer stronger full-time earnings. These structural patterns reinforce wage inequality and contribute to lower lifetime savings for women.

Across Queensland and Australia, women's participation rates are higher (58.9% and 57.8% respectively), yet gender gaps persist. In Queensland, 16.3% of women earn high incomes compared with 26.7% of men. Nationally, 20% of women earn high incomes compared with 28.1% of men. Occupational segregation remains evident, with women clustered in caring, education, and retail roles, and men dominating construction, manufacturing, and professional or technical services—industries often associated with higher wages.

An additional and critical factor influencing women's workforce participation in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg is the impact of motherhood and caring responsibilities. Many women reduce their hours or exit the workforce entirely while raising children, which contributes to the lower participation rates observed in these regions. When children reach school age or become more independent, mothers often seek to re-enter employment but face barriers including outdated qualifications, limited recent work experience, lack of flexible roles, and reduced confidence after extended career breaks. In regional areas, access to available, affordable childcare, transport, and local training opportunities can further constrain re-entry pathways.

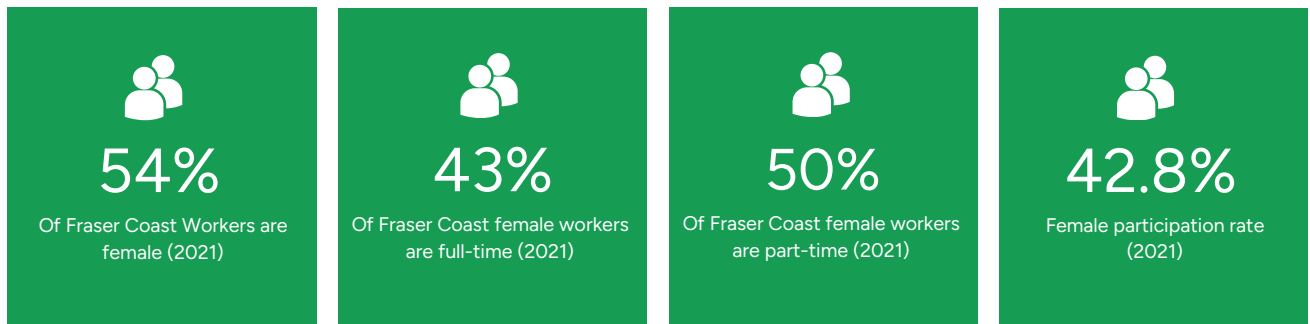
Support for mothers returning to work is therefore essential. Investment in flexible employment options, affordable childcare, return-to-work programs, and targeted upskilling or reskilling initiatives can help women transition back into secure and better-paid employment. Access to vocational education, digital skills training, and pathways into growth industries beyond traditional female-dominated sectors would broaden opportunities and improve earning capacity. Strengthening these supports would not only lift participation rates in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg but also help reduce wage gaps and improve long-term superannuation outcomes for women.

Overall, women in these regions face layered vulnerabilities: lower workforce participation, high rates of part-time employment, concentration in lower-paid industries, wage gaps, and career interruptions due to caring responsibilities. Addressing these issues requires coordinated policy and community responses that recognise the economic value of women's work and actively support mothers to re-enter, reskill, and progress in the workforce across their life course.

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Fraser Coast- Women's Employment



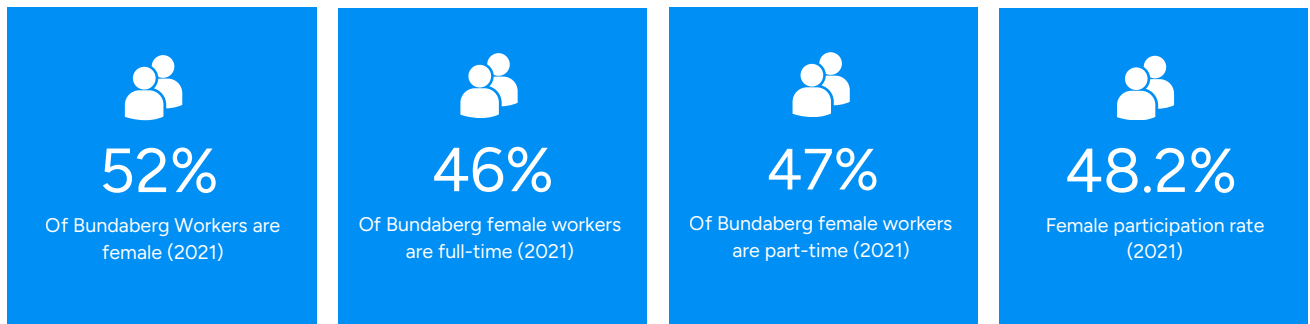
Fraser Coast- Women: Job Industry

Industry	Fraser Coast 2021		Queensland
	No. people	%	%
1. Health care & social assistance	6,147	31.9%	24.3%
2. Education & training	2,537	13.2%	13.3%
3. Retail trade	2,437	12.7%	10.8%
4. Accommodation & food services	1,772	9.2%	8.2%
5. Public administration & safety	987	5.1%	5.7%
6. Other Services	743	3.9%	3.9%
7. Professional, scientific & technical services	685	3.6%	6.4%
8. Administrative and support services	676	3.5%	3.6%
9. Construction	479	0.8%	1.6%
10. Manufacturing	446	2.3%	3.2%

Fraser Coast- Female Worker Income

	Fraser Coast Female Income 2021		Queensland
Gross Weekly Income	No. people	%	%
\$1 - \$149	680	3.8%	3.5%
\$150 - \$299	652	3.6%	3.7%
\$300 - \$399	770	4.3%	3.9%
\$400 - \$499	1,117	6.2%	4.9%
\$500 - \$649	1,905	10.6%	8.7%
\$650 - \$799	2,444	13.5%	11.3%
\$800 - \$999	2,709	15%	13.5%
\$1,000 - \$1,249	2,387	13.2%	13.5%
\$1,250 - \$1,499	1,531	8.5%	9.9%
\$1,500 - \$1,749	1,318	7.3%	8.4%
\$1,750 - \$1,999	897	5%	5.9%
\$2,000 - \$2,999	996	5.5%	8.1%
\$3,000 - \$3,499	126	0.7%	1.3%
\$3,500 or more	170	0.9%	1.9%

Bundaberg- Women's Employment



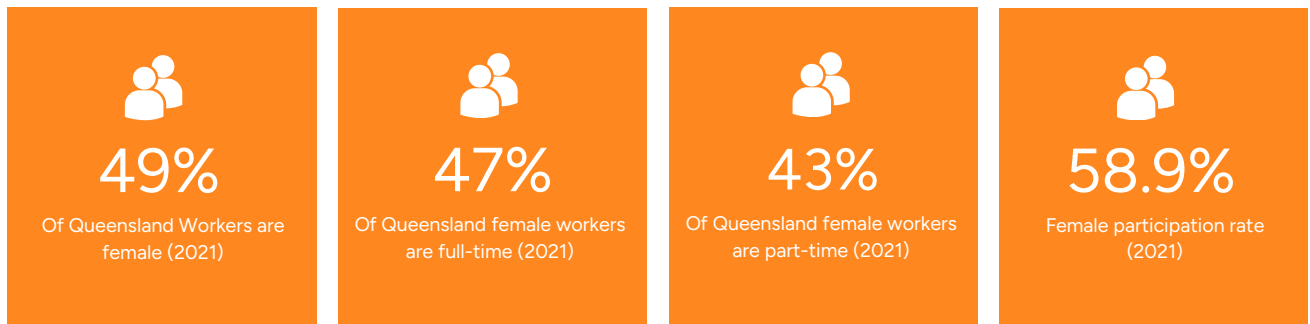
Bundaberg- Women: Job Industry

Industry	Bundaberg 2021		Queensland
	No. people	%	%
1. Health care and social assistance	5,811	30%	24.5%
2. Education and training	2,445	12.7%	13.3%
3. Retail trade	2,354	12.2%	11.6%
4. Accommodation & food services	1,527	7.9%	9.3%
5. Agriculture, forestry & fishing	1,268	6.6%	2.9%
6. Public administration & safety	748	3.9%	4.9%
7. Other Services	682	3.5%	4.0%
8. Professional, scientific & technical services	680	3.5%	5.1%
9. Manufacturing	633	3.3%	2.9%
10. Administrative & support services	579	3%	3.6%

Bundaberg- Female Worker Income

	Bundaberg Female Income 2021		Queensland
Gross Weekly Income	No. people	%	%
\$1 - \$149	659	3.5%	3.5%
\$150 - \$299	688	3.7%	3.7%
\$300 - \$399	758	4.1%	3.9%
\$400 - \$499	1,040	5.6%	4.9%
\$500 - \$649	2,025	10.9%	8.7%
\$650 - \$799	2,609	14%	11.3%
\$800 - \$999	2,932	15.7%	13.5%
\$1,000 - \$1,249	2,507	13.5%	13.5%
\$1,250 - \$1,499	1,601	8.6%	9.9%
\$1,500 - \$1,749	1,289	6.9%	8.4%
\$1,750 - \$1,999	859	4.6%	5.9%
\$2,000 - \$2,999	1,009	5.4%	8.1%
\$3,000 - \$3,499	117	0.6%	1.3%
\$3,500 or more	202	1.1%	1.9%

Queensland- Women's Employment



Queensland- Women: Job Industry

Industry	Queensland 2021		Australia
	No. people	%	%
1. Health care & social assistance	291,798	24.3%	23.3%
2. Education & training	159,738	13.3%	13.2%
3. Retail trade	129,718	10.8%	10.6%
4. Accommodation & food services	77,302	8.2%	7.3%
5. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	77,302	6.4%	7.3%
6. Public Administration and Safety	68,142	5.7%	6.5%
7. Other services	46,856	3.9%	3.5%
8. Administrative & support services	43,568	3.6%	3.4%
9. Manufacturing	38,931	3.2%	3.6%
10. Financial & insurance services	34,376	2.9%	3.9%

Queensland- Female Worker Income

	Queensland Female Income 2021		Australia
Gross Weekly Income	No. people	%	%
\$1 - \$149	41,825	3.5%	3.2%
\$150 - \$299	43,735	3.7%	3.7%
\$300 - \$399	46,192	3.9%	3.9%
\$400 - \$499	58,941	4.9%	4.9%
\$500 - \$649	103,594	8.7%	8.2%
\$650 - \$799	134,714	11.3%	10.3%
\$800 - \$999	161,283	13.5%	12.3%
\$1,000 - \$1,249	161,675	13.5%	13.3%
\$1,250 - \$1,499	118,650	9.9%	10.1%
\$1,500 - \$1,749	99,952	8.4%	8.7%
\$1,750 - \$1,999	70,633	5.9%	6.2%
\$2,000 - \$2,999	97,330	8.1%	9.4%
\$3,000 - \$3,499	15,911	1.3%	1.7%
\$3,500 or more	22,733	1.9%	2.7%

Australia- Women's Employment



Australia- Women: Job Industry

Industry	Australia 2021	
	No. people	%
1. Healthcare & social assistance	1,361,177	23.3%
2. Education & training	770,916	13.2%
3. Retail trade	618,580	10.6%
4. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	429,767	7.3%
5. Accommodation & food services	424,891	7.3%
6. Public administration & safety	377,922	6.5%
7. Financial & insurance	225,283	3.9%
8. Manufacturing	211,022	3.6%
9. Administrative and Support Services	201,178	3.4%
10. Construction	156,980	2.7%



3.5 First Nations

According to ABS 2021 Census data, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent 5.1% of the Fraser Coast population and 5% of the Bundaberg population, both higher than the Queensland average (4.6%) and the national average (3.2%).

Employment participation among First Nations people in the region is lower than state and national levels. On the Fraser Coast, 47.3% of First Nations people are employed, compared with 53.2% in Bundaberg, 56.6% across Queensland, and 54.1% nationally.

Employment patterns show a mix of full-time and part-time work. In the Fraser Coast, 39% of employed First Nations people work full-time and 34.9% part-time, while in Bundaberg 43.1% work full-time and 33.3% part-time. These figures are slightly lower than Queensland and national full-time employment rates for First Nations people.

Across both local government areas, First Nations workers are most commonly employed in community and social services, healthcare, retail, and hospitality. The largest employing industries include Other Social Assistance Services, Takeaway Food Services, Supermarket and Grocery Stores, Hospitals, and Aged Care Residential Services, reflecting similar patterns across Queensland and Australia.

Despite increasing participation in the workforce, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to face structural barriers to employment. These barriers can include limited access to education and training pathways, particularly in regional and remote areas, which can restrict opportunities to enter higher-skilled or higher-paying industries. Transport limitations and geographic isolation can also make it more difficult to access employment opportunities, particularly where jobs are concentrated in regional centres.

Systemic and cultural factors also play a role. Experiences of discrimination and cultural unsafety in workplaces can discourage participation or limit career progression. In addition, limited access to culturally appropriate employment services, mentoring, and career development pathways can make it more challenging for First Nations jobseekers to enter and remain in the workforce. Family and community responsibilities, including caring roles and cultural obligations, may also influence employment patterns, particularly where workplaces lack flexible or culturally responsive policies.

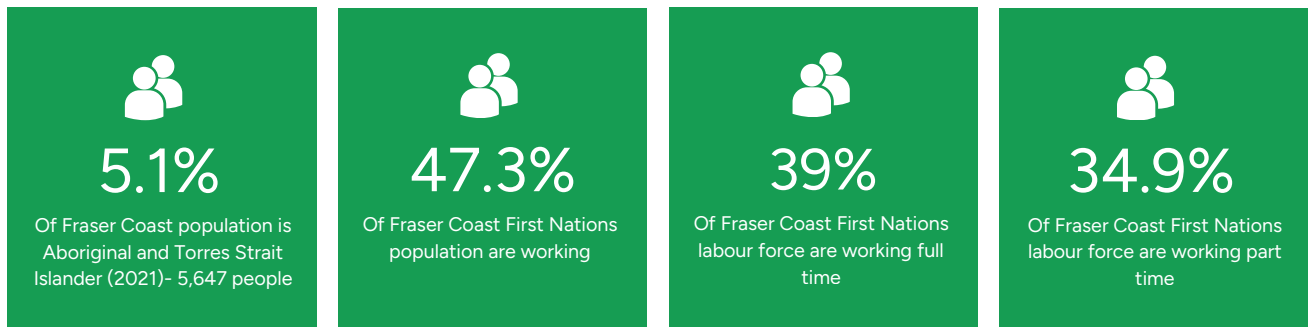
Addressing these barriers requires coordinated efforts across government, employers, and community organisations. Initiatives that strengthen culturally safe workplaces, targeted training programs, local employment pathways, and partnerships with First Nations organisations can help improve employment outcomes and support stronger economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Hinkler region.

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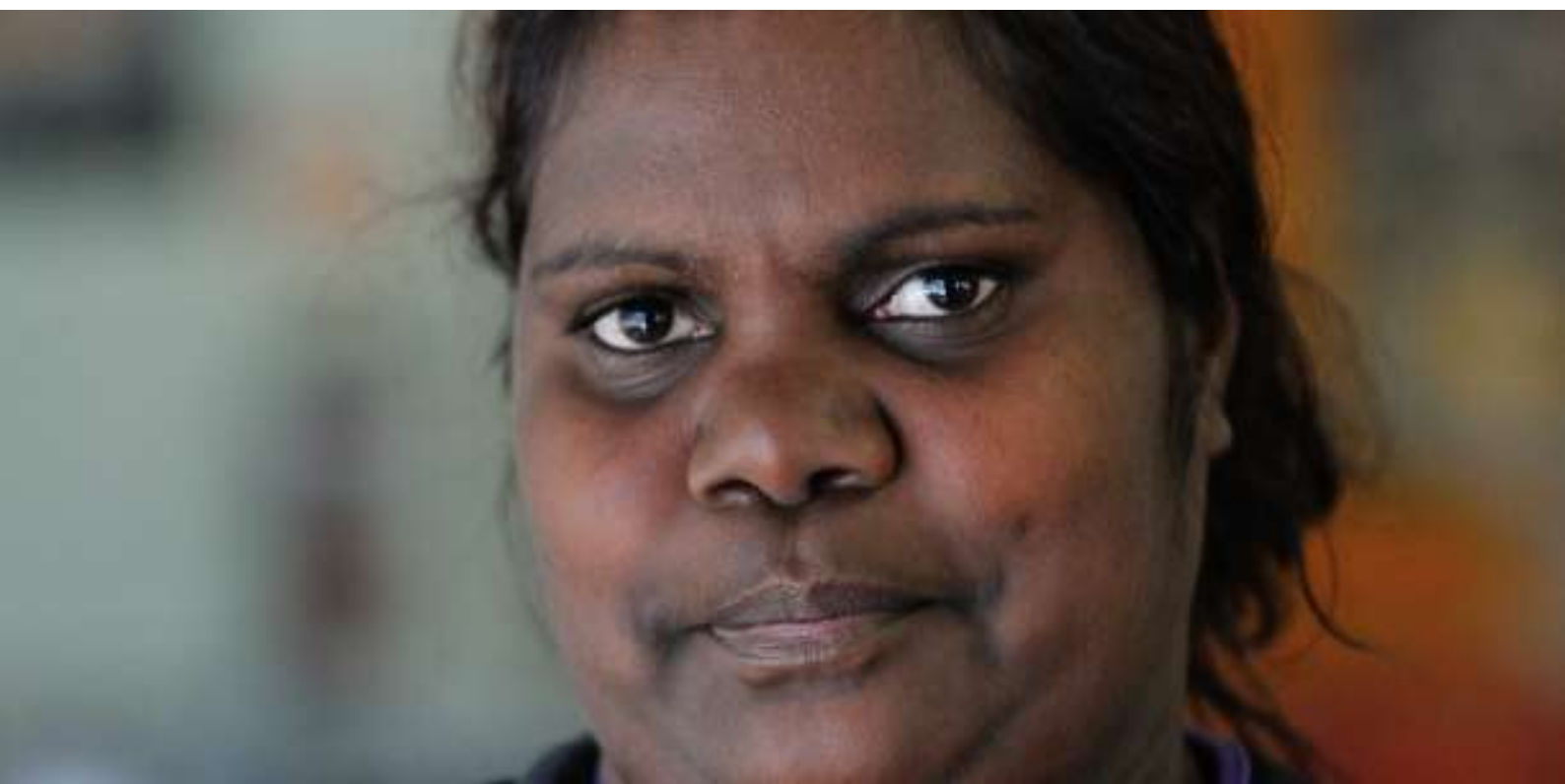


Fraser Coast- First Nations Employment

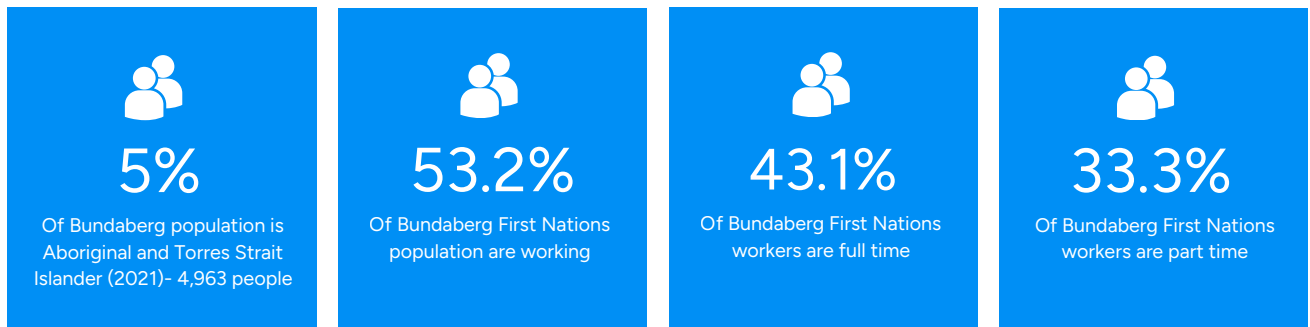


Fraser Coast- First Nations: Job Industry

Industry	Fraser Coast 2021		Queensland
	No. people	%	%
1.Other Social Assistance Services	103	7.1%	3.9%
2.Takeaway Food Services	65	4.5%	3.1%
3.Supermarket and Grocery Stores	62	4.3%	3.4%
4.Hospitals	48	3.3%	3.8%
5.Aged Care Residential Services	46	3.2%	2.0%



Bundaberg- First Nations Employment

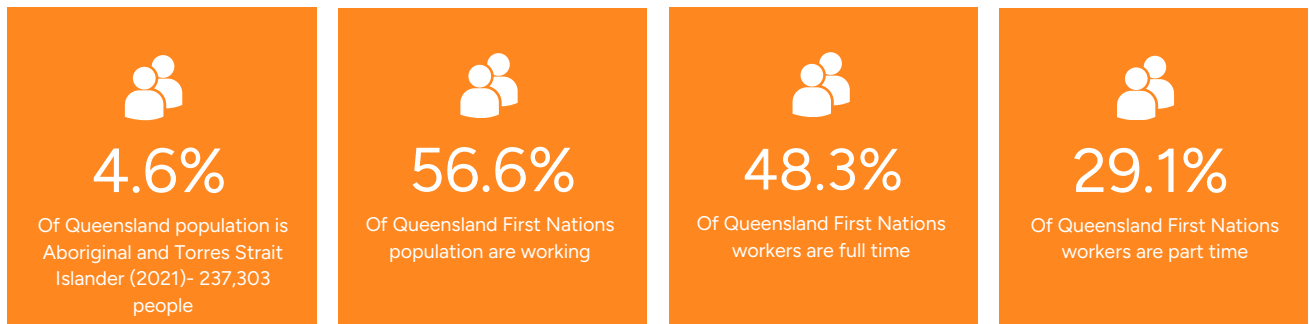


Bundaberg- First Nations: Job Industry

Industry	Bundaberg 2021		Queensland
	No. people	%	%
1.Other Social Services	109	7.5%	3.9%
2.Takeaway Food Services	54	3.7%	3.1%
3.Hospitals	51	3.5%	3.8%
4.Supermarket and Grocery Stores	48	3.3%	3.4%
5.Aged Care Residential Services	48	3.3%	2.0%



Queensland- First Nations Employment

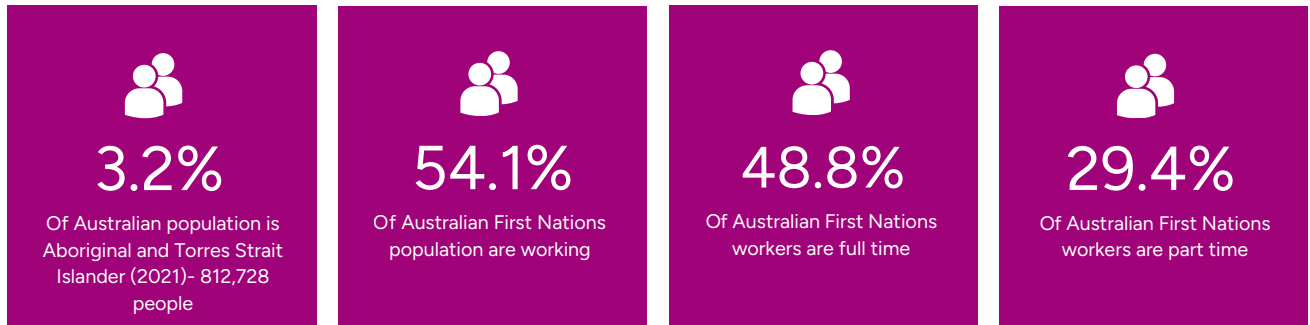


Queensland- First Nations: Job Industry

Industry	Queensland 2021		Australia
	No. people	%	%
1.Other Social Services	3,030	3.9%	3.9%
2. Hospitals	2,897	3.8%	3.6%
3.Supermarket and Grocery Stores	2,658	3.4%	3.4%
4.Takeaway Food Services	2,385	2.5%	2.8%
5.Local Government Administration	2,337	3.0%	2.6%



Australia- First Nations Employment



Australia- First Nations: Job Industry

Industry	Queensland 2021	
	No. people	%
1.Other Social Assistance Services	10,154	3.9%
2.Hospitals	9,313	3.6%
3.Supermarket and Grocery Stores	8,816	3.4%
4.Takeaway Food Services	7,371	2.8%
5.Local Government Administration	6,639	2.9%





3.6 Disability

According to ABS 2021 Census data, a significant proportion of people in the Hinkler region live with disability and may require assistance with core activities. On the Fraser Coast, 10.8% of the population reported a need for assistance due to disability, while 9.6% of the Bundaberg population reported the same. Of these groups, 17.9% on the Fraser Coast and 15.8% in Bundaberg are aged 20–64 years, representing the primary working-age population.

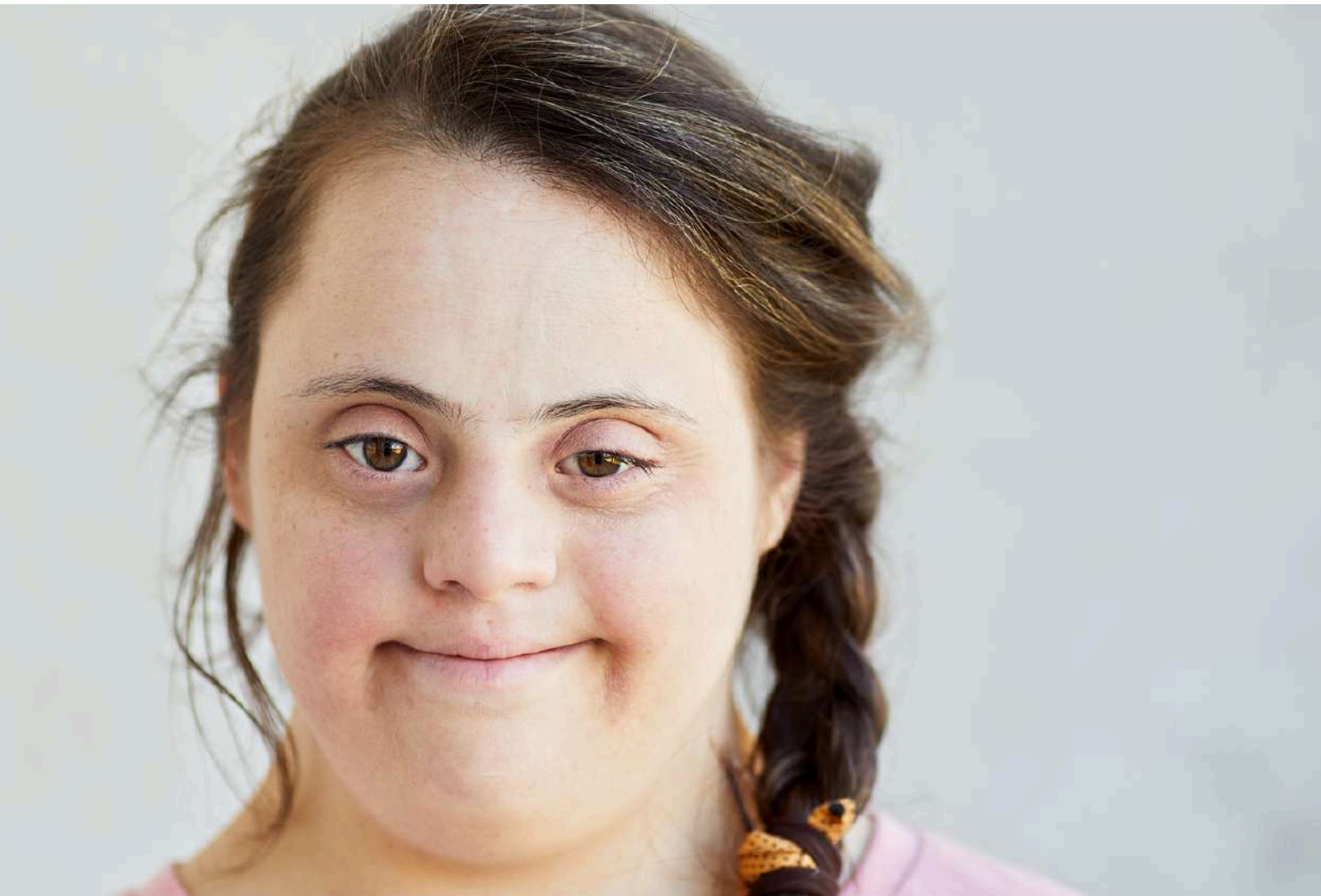
Comparable employment data specifically for people living with disability at the local government level is limited. However, broader trends provide useful context. Across Queensland, around 6% of the population live with disability, with 9.8% of these individuals aged 20–64, and 48% of people with disability are employed. Nationally, 5.8% of Australians live with disability, with 9.1% of those of working age, and similarly 48% are employed. While direct local employment data is not available, the higher proportion of people requiring assistance in the Fraser Coast and Bundaberg suggests disability inclusion is an important consideration for the regional labour market.

People living with disability continue to face a range of barriers to employment. These can include limited access to accessible workplaces and transport, fewer flexible job opportunities, and gaps in education or training pathways. Workplace discrimination, misconceptions about capability, and limited employer awareness of inclusive practices can also reduce employment opportunities. In regional areas, these barriers can be compounded by smaller labour markets and fewer specialised support services, making it more challenging for people with disability to access and maintain meaningful employment.

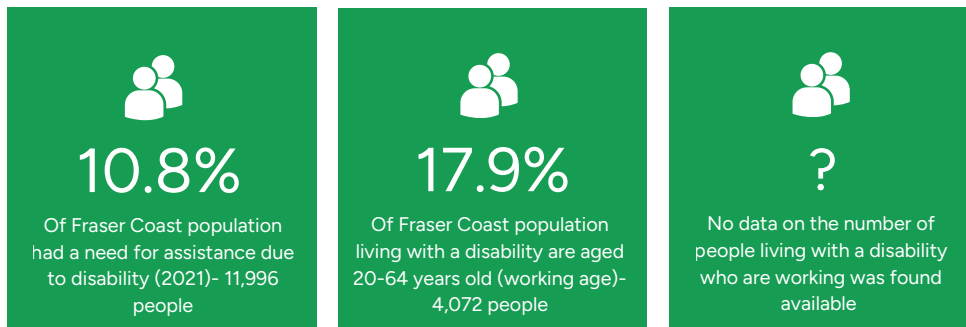
Improving employment outcomes for people with disability in the Hinkler region may involve strengthening inclusive hiring practices, improving workplace accessibility, and expanding local training and support services that enable people with disability to participate more fully in the workforce.

References:

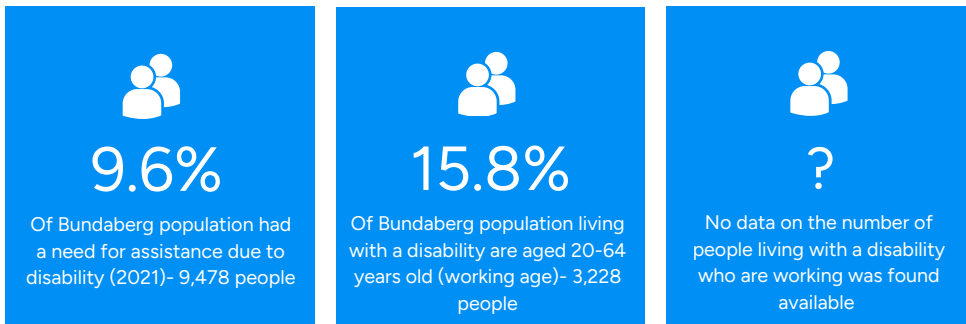
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Fraser Coast- People living with a disability



Bundaberg- People living with a disability



Queensland- People living with a disability



Australia- People living with a disability





3.7 Mature Workers

The Hinkler region has a higher proportion of mature aged workers compared with both Queensland and Australia overall. In the Fraser Coast, mature aged workers make up 48.9% of the workforce, while in Bundaberg they represent 46.3%. This is notably higher than the Queensland average of 41% and the national average of 40.6% of workers aged 45 and over. These figures highlight the relatively older workforce profile across the Hinkler region, reflecting broader demographic patterns including population ageing and regional migration trends.

Despite the higher overall proportion of mature aged workers, available data indicates that younger workers outnumber mature workers across all industries within both the Fraser Coast and Bundaberg local government areas. This suggests that mature workers are broadly distributed across sectors rather than concentrated within particular industries.

While mature aged workers bring significant value to the workforce, they can also face barriers to employment and career progression. These may include age-related discrimination, employer perceptions about adaptability or technology skills, and fewer opportunities for training or career development later in working life. Mature workers may also experience challenges when re-entering the workforce after job loss, often taking longer to secure new employment compared to younger workers.

In regional areas such as the Hinkler electorate, additional barriers may arise due to limited local job opportunities, industry transitions and changing skill requirements. Ensuring access to reskilling, flexible work arrangements and age-inclusive employment practices can help support mature aged workers to remain active in the workforce. Addressing these barriers will be important to maximise the contribution of mature workers while supporting workforce sustainability as the population continues to age.

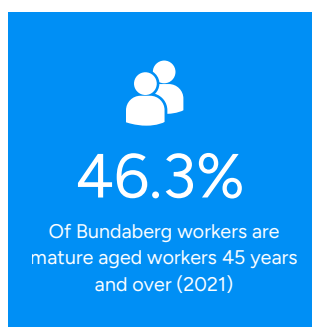
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Fraser Coast- Mature Aged Workers



Bundaberg- Mature Aged Workers



Queensland- Mature Aged Workers



Australia- Mature Aged Workers





Job Opportunity

EMPLOYMENT

3.8 Available Jobs Advertised

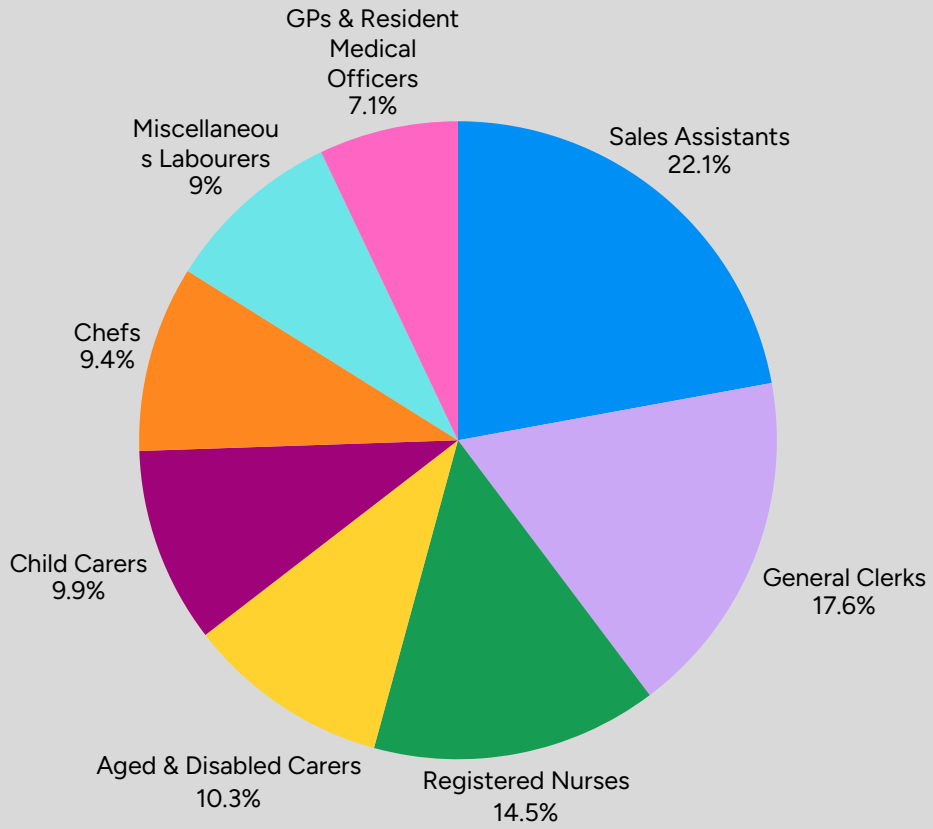
Job vacancy data indicates a softening labour market across all geographic levels, including the Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast region. In November 2025, there were 4,334 jobs advertised in the Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast employment region, according to the Jobs and Skills Australia Labour Market Dashboard. This represents 240 fewer positions than in November 2024, a decline of 5.2%. The most commonly advertised roles were general sales assistants, general clerks and registered nurses, reflecting continued demand in retail, administrative support and healthcare services. While opportunities remain available, the year-on-year decline suggests a moderation in hiring activity, which may further constrain employment prospects in areas already experiencing higher unemployment and lower participation rates.

This trend is consistent at the state and national level. Across Queensland, 49,933 jobs were advertised in November 2025, 3,394 fewer than the same period in 2024, equating to a 6.4% downturn. Similarly, nationally there were 204,456 job advertisements, a decrease of 15,935 positions or 7.2% compared to November 2024. The occupational profile was consistent across all regions, with general clerks, general sales assistants and registered nurses comprising the largest share of advertised roles. The concentration of vacancies in these occupations suggests ongoing demand in foundational service sectors; however, the overall decline in job advertisements points to tightening labour market conditions, which may disproportionately impact regions such as Wide Bay where employment growth is already comparatively subdued.

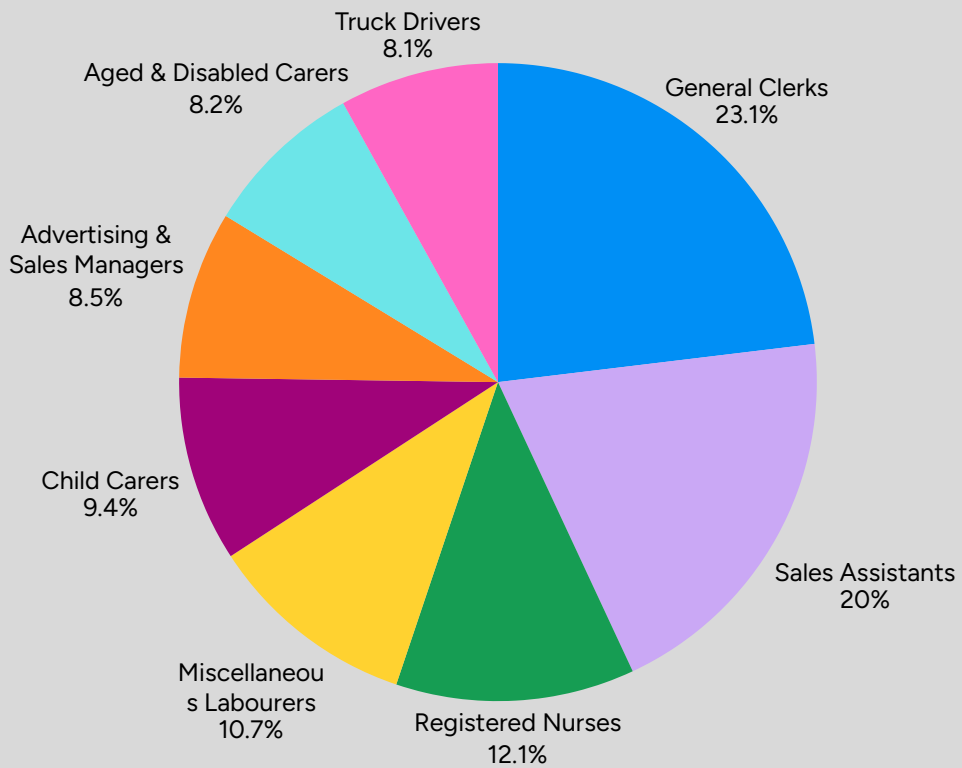
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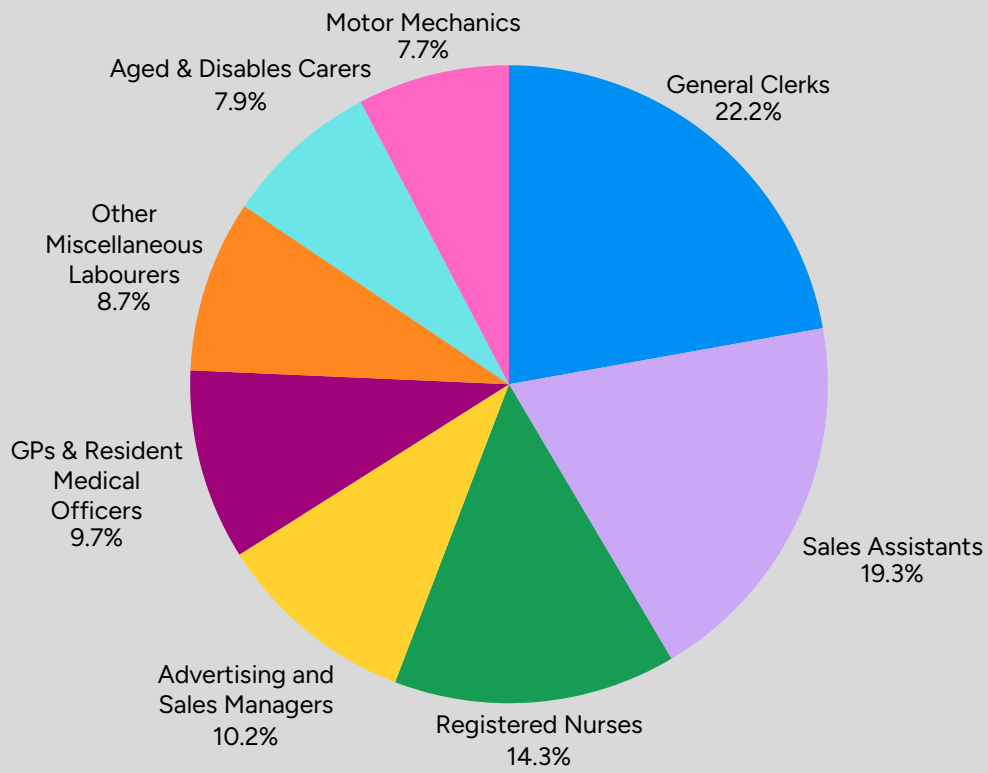
Wide Bay & Sunshine Coast Employment Region- Online Job Advertisements by Occupation (Nov 2025)



Queensland- Online Job Advertisements by Occupation (Nov 2025)



Australia- Online Job Advertisements by Occupation (Nov 2025)



Success is the sum of small efforts,
repeated day in and day out

-Robert Collier



Showcase- Fraser Coast Careers Pathways Program

The Fraser Coast Career Pathways Program (FCCPP), is a Queensland Government School to Work (S2WT) initiative dedicated to supporting students take the next step from school into a career or further education and training.

FCCPP supports career education programs in schools and provides a vital link with local manufacturing, construction, engineering, and health sectors, based on the Fraser Coast.

We provide tailored support to equip students with the values, skills and knowledge required to succeed in the workforce through:

- Industry immersion tours and workshops that give real world insights into career pathways in the manufacturing, construction, engineering and health sectors
- Work experience opportunities
- School-based traineeships and apprenticeships
- Work readiness preparation through career planning, resume writing and interview skills.

The Fraser Coast Career Pathways Program is proudly funded and supported by the Queensland Government, and is part of the Good People, Good Jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032.



FCCPP FRASER COAST
CAREER PATHWAY
PROGRAM

Find out more



Showcase- yourtown Bundaberg

yourtown Bundaberg offers training, workshops, individualised one-on-one support, and more – all based around where people at and what you need.

The service has two separate employment service programs available to help people figure out their next move.

- Transition to Work is a program that supports 15- to 24-year-olds to get into work (including apprenticeships and training) or education.
- Inclusive Employment Australia (IEA) helps young people aged 15 to 25 living with disability prepare for, find, and thrive in meaningful work.

Some ways Transition to Work and Inclusive Employment Australia (IEA) program can help include:

- building a resume
- support to find a job an individual will actually like
- the choice between face-to-face help or virtual
- helping prepare for interviews
- provide people with referrals to apprenticeships, traineeships and study courses
- ongoing support and mentoring to reach any goals



yourtown

SCAN ME



Find out more

04. Regional Skills & Education



4.1 Education & Qualifications

Qualification profiles across Fraser Coast and Bundaberg highlight a significant gap in higher education attainment compared to state and national averages. According to 2021 ABS Census data sourced from .id (Informed Decisions), only 19.6% of workers in Fraser Coast and 19.3% in Bundaberg held a bachelor degree or higher qualification. This compares to 29.3% across Queensland and 35.4% nationally. The difference is substantial, with both regions recording proportions of degree-qualified workers that are roughly ten percentage points lower than the Queensland average and more than fifteen points below the national figure. This disparity has important implications for local workforce capability, industry diversification and long-term economic resilience.

Lower levels of higher education attainment are influenced by several structural and demographic factors. Informed Decisions attributes part of the gap to the age profile of the workforce in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, which includes a comparatively higher proportion of older workers and retirees. Older cohorts are statistically less likely to hold university qualifications than younger generations, reflecting historical differences in access to and participation in tertiary education. As a result, regions with older populations often record lower overall qualification levels.

Industry structure also plays a critical role. Both Fraser Coast and Bundaberg have strong employment bases in sectors such as agriculture, construction, tourism, retail and care services. Many roles in these industries require vocational training, certificates or on-the-job experience rather than university degrees. Where local employment opportunities do not require higher education credentials, there may be less incentive for residents to pursue university study, particularly if it involves relocating to metropolitan areas.

Educational pathways and aspirations further shape qualification outcomes. Decisions about pursuing tertiary education are influenced by personal ambition, financial capacity, exposure to career opportunities, and the availability of local training providers. Limited access to diverse higher education programs within the region can create barriers to continued study beyond compulsory schooling. Additionally, opportunities for adult retraining may be constrained by cost, time, caring responsibilities or limited awareness of available pathways.

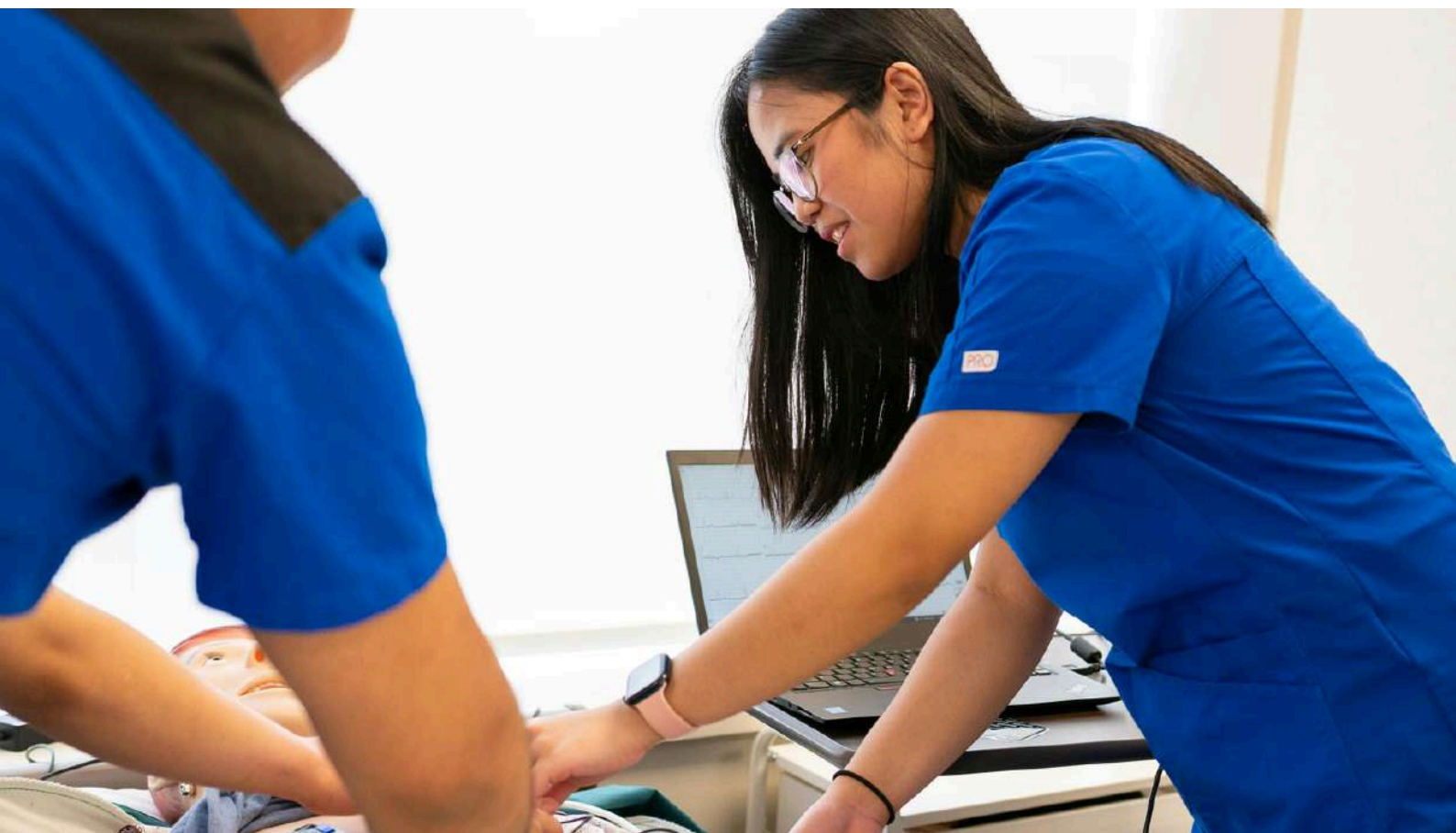
Overall, the lower proportion of degree-qualified workers in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg reflects a combination of demographic composition, industry demand, educational access and career aspirations. While vocational qualifications and trade skills remain critical to the regional economy, increasing access to and uptake of higher-level qualifications may support economic diversification, attract new industries, and strengthen long-term workforce adaptability.

References:

- .id Community. (n.d.) Australia – Workers’ Level of Qualifications. [online] Available at: <https://economy.id.com.au/australia/workers-level-of-qualifications?WebID=120&IGBMID=50> (Accessed: 23 February 2026).
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Qualifications level	Local Worker Qualifications 2021		Queensland
	No. people	%	%
Bachelor or Higher Degree	6,576	19.6%	29.3%
Advanced Diploma or Diploma	3,681	11%	11.3%
Certificate I and II Level	728	2.2%	1.5%
Certificate III and IV Level	9,796	29.3%	23.2%
Certificate Level, nfd	681	2%	1.8%
No qualification	11,197	33.4%	30.7%
Inadequately described or not stated	815	2.4%	2.2%



Qualifications level	Local Worker Qualifications 2021		Queensland
	No. people	%	%
Bachelor or Higher Degree	6,918	19.3%	29.3%
Advanced Diploma or Diploma	3,249	9.1%	11.3%
Certificate I and II Level	843	2.2%	1.5%
Certificate III and IV Level	9,726	27.1%	23.2%
Certificate Level, nfd	681	1.9%	1.8%
No qualification	13,499	37.6%	30.7%
Inadequately described or not stated	959	2.7%	2.2%



Queensland- Worker Qualifications

Qualifications level	Worker Qualifications 2021		Australia
	No. people	%	%
Bachelor or Higher Degree	711,231	29.3%	35.4%
Advanced Diploma or Diploma	275,019	11.3%	11.1%
Certificate I and II Level	37,438	1.5%	1.3%
Certificate III and IV Level	562,380	23.2%	19.5%
Certificate Level, nfd	43,792	1.8%	1.7%
No qualification	744,597	30.7%	28.7%
Inadequately described or not stated	53,764	2.2%	2.2%





JOB VACANCY

4.2 Skill Level of Available Jobs

Analysis of advertised vacancies shows a clear variation in the level of qualifications required across regions, reflecting differences in industry composition and labour market demand. Job skills are categorised across five levels, ranging from Level 1 (Bachelor degree or higher) through to Level 5 (Certificate I or secondary education). In the Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast region in November 2025, of the 4,334 jobs advertised, 28% required a bachelor degree or higher (Level 1). A further 27% required a Certificate II or III (Level 4), and 19% required a Certificate III or IV (Level 3). This indicates that while over a quarter of roles demand higher education qualifications, a substantial proportion of opportunities are concentrated in vocational or mid-level skill categories.

When compared to broader benchmarks, the proportion of degree-qualified roles increases at the state and national level. Across Queensland, 31% of advertised jobs required a bachelor degree or higher, while nationally this figure rose to 36%. Conversely, the share of roles requiring Certificate II or III qualifications was similar across regions (27% in Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast and Queensland, and 26% nationally), while Certificate III or IV requirements were slightly higher in Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast (19%) compared to Queensland (18%) and Australia (16%). This pattern suggests that regional labour markets have a relatively stronger concentration of mid-skilled vocational roles and a smaller proportion of highly skilled professional positions compared to the national profile.

These differences are likely driven by industry structure. Wide Bay and surrounding areas have strong employment bases in healthcare, retail, construction, hospitality and community services. While healthcare contributes to demand for degree-qualified professionals such as registered nurses, many other dominant industries rely on trade qualifications, certificates, and operational skills rather than university degrees. In contrast, metropolitan and capital city labour markets typically host a higher concentration of professional services, corporate headquarters, advanced technology roles and specialised industries, which increases demand for bachelor-level and postgraduate qualifications.

The data also aligns with the lower proportion of degree-qualified residents in parts of the region, such as Fraser Coast and Bundaberg. Labour markets tend to evolve in response to both employer demand and workforce supply. Where there is a smaller pool of degree-qualified workers, industries that require advanced qualifications may be less likely to establish or expand locally, reinforcing the concentration of mid-skilled roles. This dynamic can contribute to slower economic diversification and limit the growth of knowledge-intensive sectors.

Overall, the qualification profile of advertised jobs in the Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast region reflects a labour market weighted toward vocational and mid-skill employment, with comparatively fewer high-skill professional opportunities than seen nationally. Strengthening higher education pathways and attracting industries requiring advanced qualifications may help broaden the regional employment base, while continued investment in vocational education remains critical to supporting the substantial share of roles requiring certificate-level skills.

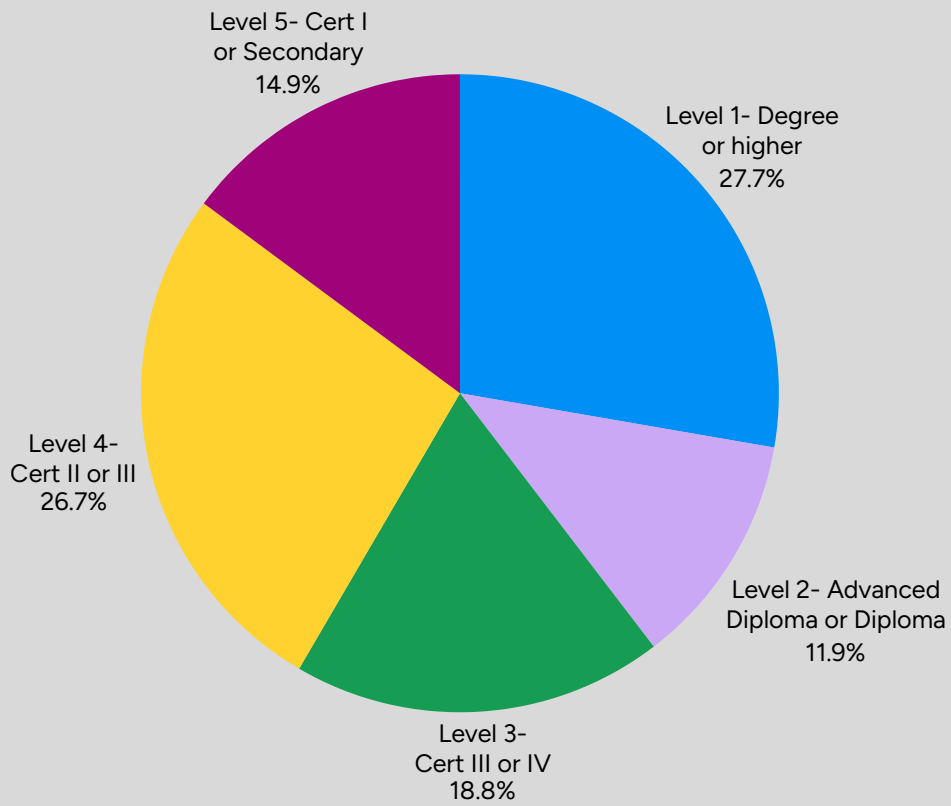
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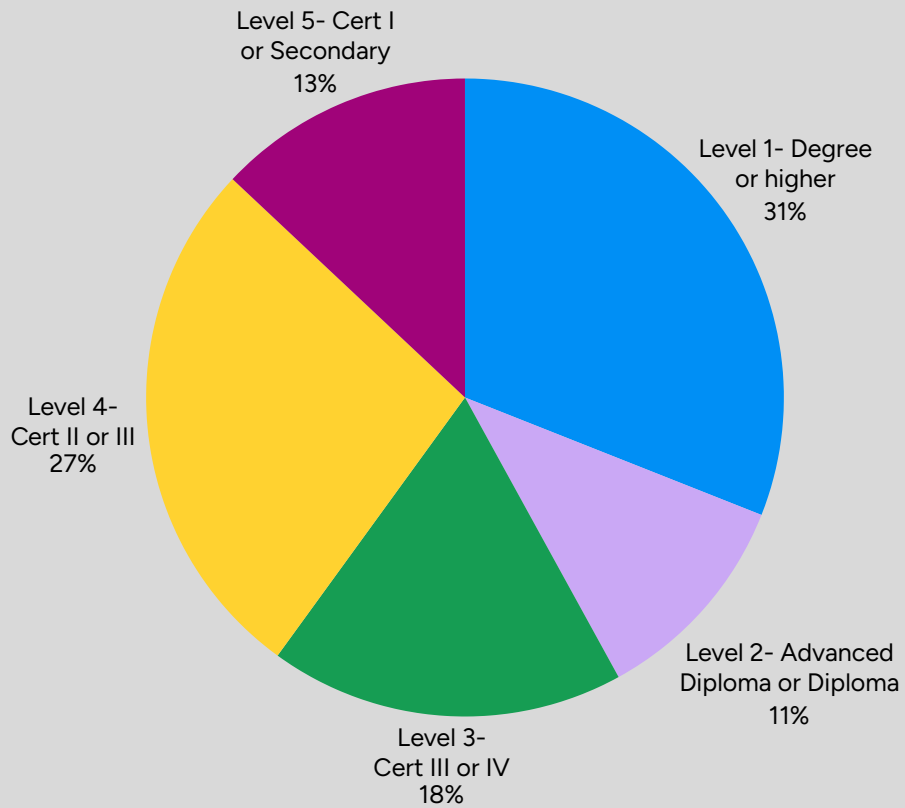
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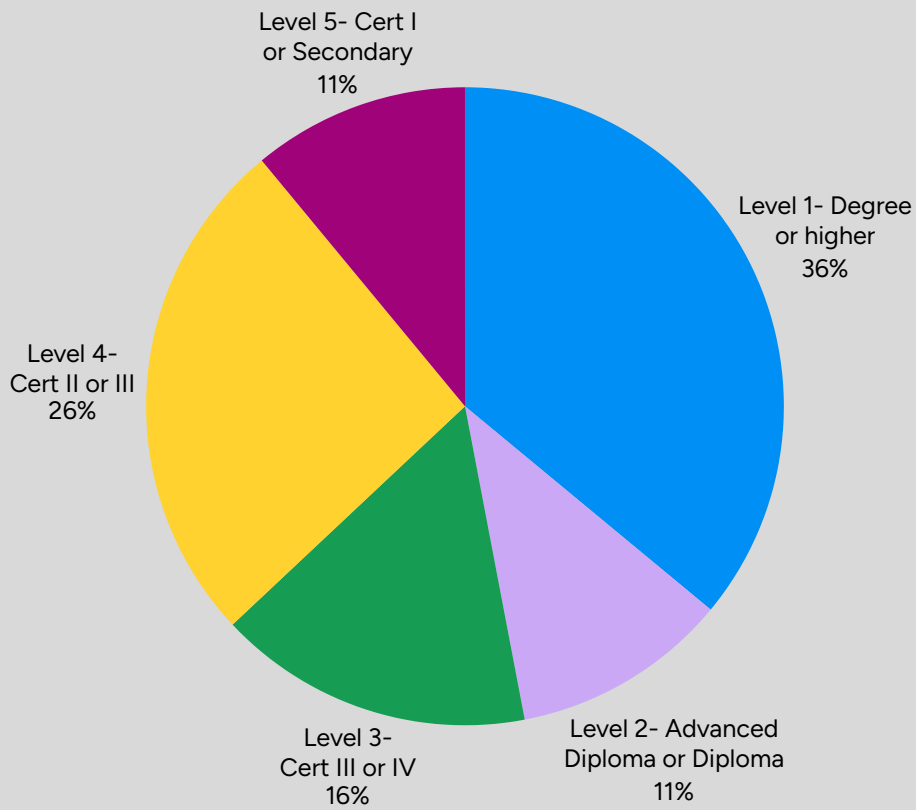


Wide Bay & Sunshine Coast Employment Region- Skill Level of Online Job Advertisements (Nov 2025)



Queensland- Skill Level of Online Job Advertisements (Nov 2025)







4.3 Area of Worker Qualifications

Field of qualification data for Fraser Coast and Bundaberg reflects both the historical industry base of the regions and the types of roles currently being advertised. According to the 2021 ABS Census, the top three qualification fields in Fraser Coast were management and commerce (11.4%), health (10.5%), and society and culture (10.4%).

Within management and commerce, most qualifications were in business and management (6.4%). In health, nursing accounted for the largest share (4.7%), while in society and culture the dominant area was Human Welfare Studies and Services (6.6%). In Bundaberg, the leading fields were management and commerce (11%), engineering and related technologies (9.6%), and health (9.6%). Business and management qualifications (5.9%) made up the largest component of management and commerce. Within engineering and related technologies, most qualifications were in Mechanical and Industrial Engineering and Technology, while nursing (3.7%) was the largest field within health.

At the Queensland level, the top three fields were management and commerce (13.5%), engineering and related technologies (11.4%), and society and culture (7.9%). Business and management (7%) dominated the management and commerce category, while engineering qualifications were largely concentrated in Mechanical and Industrial Engineering and Technology and Electrical and Electronic Engineering and Technology. In society and culture, Human Welfare Studies and Services featured prominently.

When considered alongside job advertisement data, several alignments emerge. Across Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast, Queensland and Australia, some of the most frequently advertised occupations in November 2025 included general clerks, general sales assistants and registered nurses. The strong representation of business and management qualifications in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg aligns with demand for clerical, administrative and retail management roles, many of which fall within management and commerce fields but do not necessarily require advanced postgraduate qualifications. Similarly, the prominence of nursing qualifications in both regions corresponds directly with consistent demand for registered nurses, one of the top advertised occupations across all geographic levels. This suggests that, at least in health and business-related roles, there is a reasonable alignment between workforce qualifications and job availability.

However, there are also structural considerations. While engineering and related technologies represent a significant qualification field in Bundaberg (9.6%) and Queensland (11.4%), the proportion of advertised roles requiring degree-level qualifications in the Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast region (28%) is lower than the national figure (36%). This indicates that although technically qualified workers are present in the region, the overall volume of high-skill, degree-requiring roles is comparatively smaller. As a result, some engineering and highly skilled graduates may need to seek employment outside the immediate region or accept roles below their qualification level, potentially contributing to underemployment or outward migration of skilled workers.

The strong representation of qualifications in Human Welfare Studies and Services, particularly in Fraser Coast, also reflects regional demographics. Higher proportions of older residents and vulnerable populations increase demand for community services, aged care and social support roles. Many of these occupations require certificate or diploma-level qualifications (Levels 2–4) rather than bachelor degrees, aligning with the regional job skill profile, where a substantial share of vacancies require Certificate II, III or IV qualifications.

Overall, the field of qualification profile in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg broadly reflects the dominant service-based and care-oriented nature of the regional economy, with solid alignment in areas such as nursing, business and welfare services. However, the comparatively lower share of highly specialised and degree-intensive job opportunities limits the absorption of advanced qualifications, particularly in engineering and other technical fields. Strengthening industry diversification and expanding higher-skill employment pathways may help better utilise the existing qualification base and improve long-term workforce retention within the region.

References:

- .id Community. (n.d.) Australia – Workers’ Field of Qualification. [online] Available at: <https://economy.id.com.au/australia/workers-field-of-qualification?WebID=120&IGBMID=30> (Accessed: 23 February 2026).
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Fraser Coast- Field of Qualification

Field of Qualification	Field of Qualifications 2021		Queensland
	No. people	%	%
1.Management & commerce	3,830	11.4%	14.6%
2.Health	3,538	10.5%	8.8%
3.Society & culture	3,509	10.4%	9.1%
4.Engineering & related technologies	3,244	9.6%	10.9%
5.Education	2,516	7.5%	5.8%
6.Food, Hospitality & Personal Services	1,762	5.2%	4.2%
7.Architecture and Building	1,223	3.6%	4.5%
8.Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies	582	1.7%	1.4%
9.Creative Arts	417	1.2%	2.5%
10.Natural and Physical Sciences	281	0.8%	1.8%

Bundaberg- Field of Qualification

	Field of Qualifications 2021		Queensland
Field of Qualification	No. people	%	%
1.Management and Commerce	3,966	11%	14.6%
2.Engineering and Related Technologies	3,477	9.6%	10.9%
3.Health	3,468	9.6%	8.8%
4.Society and Culture	3,190	8.8%	9.1%
5.Education	2,449	6.8%	5.8%
6.Food, Hospitality and Personal Services	1,582	4.4%	4.2%
7.Architecture and Building	1,217	3.3%	4.5%
8.Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies	743	2%	1.4%
9.Creative Arts	368	1%	2.5%
10.Natural and Physical Sciences	362	1%	1.8%

Queensland- Field of Qualification

Field of Qualification	Field of Qualifications 2021		Australia
	No. people	%	%
1. Management & commerce	288,861	13.5%	14.9%
2. Engineering & related technologies	243,913	11.4%	10.9%
3. Society & culture	169,570	7.9%	8.6%
4. Health	164,268	7.7%	7.4%
5. Education	120,009	5.6%	5.4%
6. Architecture and Building	102,519	4.8%	4.4%
7. Food, Hospitality and Personal Services	85,422	4%	3.6%
8. Creative Arts	47,468	2.2%	2.7%
9. Information Technology	38,160	1.7%	2.5%
10. Natural and Physical Sciences	35,704	1.6%	2.1%

The secret of getting ahead is
getting started
-Mark Twain



Showcase- Fraser Coast Jobs Hub

The Fraser Coast Jobs Hub is a one-stop portal for employment in the Fraser Coast region. Local jobseekers can sign up for free to find local jobs, create an AirCV, keep up to date with further training opportunities, job expos, and local employment trends.

Fraser Coast businesses looking for new staff can connect with jobseekers by posting job vacancies on this portal at no cost.

The Jobs Hub is backed by the Fraser Coast Regional Council.



Fraser Coast
JobsHub



Find out more



SCAN ME



Showcase- APM

APM is located in Bundaberg and Fraser Coast and provides a range of employment services, including:

- Inclusive Employment Australia: Supports individuals with disabilities, injuries, or health conditions in finding and keeping jobs.
- Job Placement Assistance: Helps job seekers search, apply, and gain the necessary skills for suitable employment.
- Workplace Modification: Assists with modifications to the workplace to accommodate individuals with disabilities.
- Career Counseling: Offers personalized career guidance to help individuals develop their resumes and prepare for interviews.



Find out more



05. Economic Impact



5.1 Economic Impact

Economic output data highlights both the contribution and relative scale of Fraser Coast and Bundaberg within the broader Queensland and national economy, and provides important context for understanding local employment dynamics. According to National Economics (NIEIR) data published by .id Informed Decisions, Fraser Coast's Gross Regional Product (GRP) in 2023/24 was \$6.15 billion, representing annual growth of 7.4%. Bundaberg recorded a GRP of \$6.0 billion in the same period, with growth of 5.6%. Both regions outpaced state and national growth rates, with Queensland's Gross State Product increasing by 2.9% to \$520 billion and Australia's Gross Domestic Product growing by 1.5% to \$2,604 billion.

While these growth rates are comparatively strong, the overall economic scale of Fraser Coast and Bundaberg remains modest. Each region contributes approximately 1.6% of Queensland's total employment, underscoring their relatively small share of the state's labour market. This means that even with solid annual growth, the capacity of these local economies to generate large volumes of new jobs—particularly in highly specialised or knowledge-intensive industries—can be constrained by their size and industry composition.

Importantly, economic growth does not always translate directly into proportional employment growth. GRP can increase due to higher commodity prices, productivity gains, capital investment, or output expansion within existing industries, without necessarily creating significant numbers of new jobs. In regions such as Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, where key sectors include agriculture, construction, healthcare, retail and tourism, growth may be driven by increased output or service demand rather than large-scale workforce expansion. This can help explain why participation rates and unemployment levels may not immediately align with strong headline economic growth figures.

At the same time, the relatively higher growth rates in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg compared to Queensland and Australia suggest emerging economic momentum. If sustained, this growth has the potential to support job creation, particularly in health care, social assistance, construction and professional services linked to population growth and infrastructure investment. However, maximising employment outcomes will depend on aligning workforce skills with industry needs, attracting diversified investment, and ensuring that local residents are equipped to access new and higher-value roles generated through economic expansion.

Overall, while Fraser Coast and Bundaberg represent a small share of Queensland's total employment, their recent economic growth performance is comparatively strong. The key policy challenge lies in converting this economic expansion into broader labour market participation, reduced unemployment, and higher-skilled employment opportunities to strengthen long-term regional resilience.

References:

- .id Community. (n.d.) Australia – Gross Regional Product. [online] Available at: <https://economy.id.com.au/australia/gross-regional-product?WebID=120> (Accessed: 23 February 2026).
- .id Community. (n.d.) Bundaberg – Gross Regional Product. [online] Available at: <https://economy.id.com.au/bundaberg/gross-regional-product> (Accessed: 23 February 2026).
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Fraser Coast- Economic Impact



Bundaberg- Economic Impact



Queensland- Economic Impact



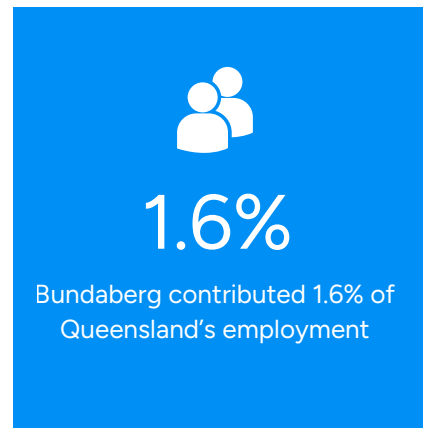
Australia- Economic Impact



Fraser Coast- Economic Impact



Bundaberg- Economic Impact



Queensland- Economic Impact



Australia- Economic Impact





5.2 Local Businesses

The number and industry composition of GST-registered businesses in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg provide important insight into local employment patterns and economic structure. In 2025, ABS data presented by .id Informed Decisions shows there were 7,102 GST-registered businesses operating in the Fraser Coast. The largest sector was construction, comprising 21.6% of all businesses (1,538 businesses), followed by health care and social assistance at 11.5% (820 businesses), and rental, hiring and real estate services at 9.8% (693 businesses). This distribution reflects a region driven by residential development, population servicing and property-related activity, rather than large-scale industrial or corporate sectors.

In Bundaberg, there were slightly more registered businesses, totalling 7,542 in 2025. The dominant industry was agriculture, forestry and fishing, accounting for 18% (1,362 businesses), followed by construction at 17% (1,279 businesses), and rental, hiring and real estate services at 10.9% (824 businesses). The prominence of agriculture distinguishes Bundaberg from Fraser Coast and aligns with its strong horticultural and primary production base. This industry structure shapes the types of employment available locally, with greater demand for seasonal labour, trade skills, machinery operation and supply chain services linked to agribusiness.

By comparison, Queensland and Australia have a more diversified business base with a stronger concentration in professional, scientific and technical services. Statewide, construction remains the largest sector (17%), but professional, scientific and technical services account for 12.4% of businesses, followed by rental, hiring and real estate (11.7%). Nationally, a similar pattern emerges, with construction (17%), professional, scientific and technical services (12.9%), and rental, hiring and real estate services (11.3%) forming the top three sectors. The larger share of professional and technical firms at the state and national level indicates a higher concentration of knowledge-intensive industries, which typically generate a greater proportion of degree-qualified and higher-skilled employment opportunities.

The business profile of Fraser Coast and Bundaberg helps explain several labour market trends observed in the regions. A high proportion of construction businesses supports demand for Certificate III and IV trade qualifications, aligning with the regional job skill profile that shows strong demand for vocational-level qualifications. The significant presence of health care and social assistance businesses in Fraser Coast corresponds with both the ageing population and the high share of qualifications in nursing and human welfare. In Bundaberg, the dominance of agriculture reinforces the importance of vocational skills and seasonal employment, which can contribute to employment volatility and lower participation rates at certain times of the year.

Additionally, the relatively smaller share of professional, scientific and technical services businesses in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg compared to Queensland and Australia suggests more limited availability of high-skill, knowledge-based employment. This can constrain opportunities for degree-qualified residents and may contribute to outward migration of professionals seeking advanced career pathways elsewhere.

Overall, the number and type of registered businesses in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg reflect economies centred on construction, primary industries, property services and health care. These sectors provide essential employment and underpin recent economic growth; however, the industry mix also shapes qualification demand, job stability and income levels. Greater diversification into professional and technical industries could broaden employment opportunities, strengthen workforce participation and support higher-skilled job creation over the long term.

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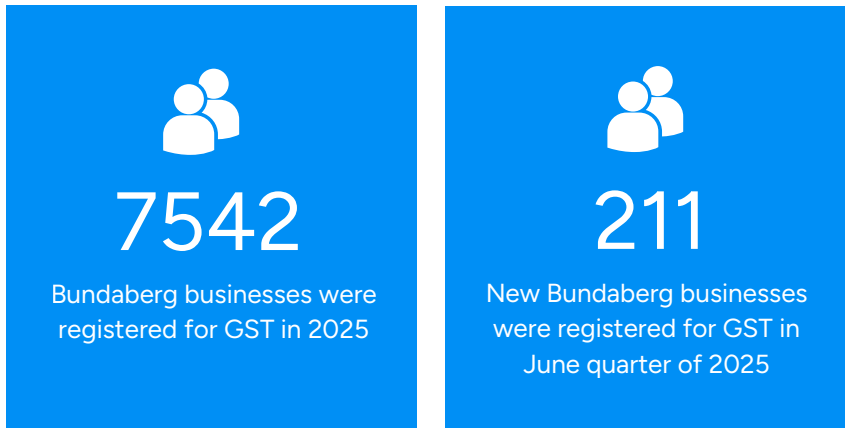
Fraser Coast- Local Businesses



Fraser Coast- Top Business Types Registered for GST

Business Type	Fraser Coast 2025		Queensland
	No. people	%	%
1. Construction	1,538	21.6%	17%
2. Health care & social assistance	820	11.5%	8.3%
3. Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	693	9.8%	11.7%
4. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	642	9%	7.9%
5. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	549	7.7%	12.4%
6. Other	476	6.7%	5.6%
7. Retail Trade	438	6.2%	5.6%
8. Transport, Postal and Warehousing	427	6%	7.7%
9. Accommodation and Food Services	332	.7%	3.9%
10. Administrative and Support Services	314	4.4%	4.6%

Bundaberg- Local Businesses



Bundaberg- Top Business Types Registered for GST

Business Type	Bundaberg 2025		Queensland
	No. people	%	%
1.Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1,362	18%	7.9%
2.Construction	1,279	17%	17%
3.Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	824	10.9%	11.7%
4. Health Care and Social Assistance	740	9.8%	8.3%
5.Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	530	7%	12.4%
6.Other	476	6.3%	5.6%
7.Retail trade	424	.6%	5.6%
8.Transport, Postal and Warehousing	367	4.9%	7.7%
9.Manufacturing	328	4.3%	3.5%
10.Accommodation and Food Services	297	3.9%	3.9%



Queensland- Top Business Types Registered for GST

Business Type	Queensland 2025	
	No. people	%
1. Construction	89,311	17%
2. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	65,085	12.4%
3. Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	61,253	11.7%
4. Health Care and Social Assistance	43,557	8.3%
5. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	41,597	7.9%
6. Transport, Postal and Warehousing	40,611	7.7%
7. Other	29,345	.6%
8. Retail trade	29,344	5.6%
9. Financial and Insurance Services	22,081	4.2%
10. Accommodation and Food Services	20,187	3.9%



Australia- Top Business Types Registered for GST

Business Type	Australia 2025	
	No. people	%
1. Construction	462,880	17%
2. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	353,220	12.9%
3. Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	308,049	11.3%
4. Transport, Postal and Warehousing	249,242	9.1%
5. Health Care and Social Assistance	213,158	7.8%
6. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	170,656	6.3%
7. Retail trade	156,018	5.7%
8. Other	134,543	4.9%
9. Financial and Insurance Services	133,723	4.9%
10. Administrative and Support Services	127,075	4.7%



5.3 Employee Income

Income data from the 2021 ABS Census highlights notable differences between Fraser Coast and Bundaberg compared to Queensland and national averages, reflecting the structure of local employment markets. In Fraser Coast, 15% of workers earned \$1,750 per week or more (classified as high income), while 16% earned a low income. The largest shares of workers were concentrated in the middle-income brackets, with 14.7% earning between \$1,000–\$1,249 per week and an equal 14.7% earning \$800–\$999 per week. This distribution suggests a workforce weighted toward moderate and lower income roles, with fewer workers in higher earning brackets.

A similar pattern is evident in Bundaberg. In 2021, 14.3% of workers earned \$1,750 per week or more, while 15.2% were classified as low income earners. The largest single income bracket was \$1,000–\$1,249 per week, accounting for 15.4% of workers. As in Fraser Coast, the proportion of high-income earners is lower than the proportion recorded at broader geographic levels, indicating a comparatively smaller presence of highly paid professional and managerial roles.

By comparison, 21.6% of Queensland workers earned \$1,750 per week or more, with only 13.2% classified as low income earners. Nationally, the share of high-income earners was higher again at 23.3%, while 12.7% fell into the low-income category. These figures demonstrate a clear income gap between the two regional areas and the state and national economies, with Fraser Coast and Bundaberg having both fewer high-income earners and a slightly higher proportion of low-income workers.

Importantly, Fraser Coast is also recognised as one of the more socio-economically disadvantaged areas in Australia based on SEIFA (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas) scores. Lower SEIFA rankings indicate higher levels of disadvantage, including lower incomes, higher unemployment, and lower levels of educational attainment. This broader socio-economic context reinforces the income data, suggesting that labour market outcomes in Fraser Coast are shaped not only by industry structure but also by entrenched disadvantage, intergenerational unemployment, and limited access to higher-paying employment pathways.

These income patterns closely align with the industry and qualification profiles of the regions. Both Fraser Coast and Bundaberg have strong concentrations of employment in construction, agriculture, retail, health care, social assistance and property services. While some occupations within these industries—such as experienced tradespeople or health professionals—can command higher wages, many roles are part-time, seasonal, or certificate-qualified positions that typically fall within low to mid-income ranges. The comparatively smaller presence of professional, scientific and technical services businesses also limits the availability of high-paying knowledge-based roles that are more common in metropolitan economies.

Lower workforce participation rates and higher youth unemployment in the regions may further influence income distribution. Where employment opportunities are limited or concentrated in specific sectors, workers may accept part-time or lower-wage roles due to fewer alternatives. Additionally, regions with older populations often have higher proportions of part-time workers or individuals transitioning toward retirement, which can moderate overall income levels.

Overall, the income profile of Fraser Coast and Bundaberg reflects labour markets characterised by service-based, trade and primary industry employment, with fewer high-wage professional roles than seen across Queensland and Australia. In the case of Fraser Coast, broader socio-economic disadvantage compounds these labour market challenges. Strengthening economic diversification, expanding access to higher-skill employment, and improving education and training pathways will be critical to lifting income levels and improving long-term regional economic resilience.

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Fraser Coast- Worker Income

	Fraser Coast Worker Income 2021		Queensland
Gross Weekly Income	No. people	%	%
\$1 - \$149	1,103	3.3%	2.9%
\$150 - \$299	1,054	3.1%	2.8%
\$300 - \$399	1,221	3.6%	3%
\$400 - \$499	1,725	5.2%	3.8%
\$500 - \$649	3,002	9%	6.7%
\$650 - \$799	3,912	11.7%	9%
\$800 - \$999	4,910	14.7%	12.3%
\$1,000 - \$1,249	4,907	14.7%	13.8%
\$1,250 - \$1,499	3,199	9.6%	10.5%
\$1,500 - \$1,749	2,678	8%	9.2%
\$1,750 - \$1,999	1,878	5.6%	6.8%
\$2,000 - \$2,999	2,331	7%	11.3%
\$3,000 - \$3,499	347	%	2.4%
\$3,500 or more	524	1.6%	3.9%

Bundaberg- Worker Income

	Bundaberg Worker Income 2021		Queensland
Gross Weekly Income	No. people	%	%
\$1 - \$149	1,176	3.3%	2.9%
\$150 - \$299	1,106	3.1%	2.8%
\$300 - \$399	1,237	3.4%	3%
\$400 - \$499	1,631	4.5%	3.8%
\$500 - \$649	3,137	8.7%	6.7%
\$650 - \$799	4,186	11.7%	9%
\$800 - \$999	5,554	15.5%	12.3%
\$1,000 - \$1,249	5,521	15.4%	13.8%
\$1,250 - \$1,499	3,490	9.7%	10.5%
\$1,500 - \$1,749	2,725	7.6%	9.2%
\$1,750 - \$1,999	1,912	5.3%	6.8%
\$2,000 - \$2,999	2,416	6.7%	11.3%
\$3,000 - \$3,499	345	1%	2.4%
\$3,500 or more	682	1.9%	3.9%

Queensland- Worker Income

	Queensland Worker Income 2021		Australia
Gross Weekly Income	No. people	%	%
\$1 - \$149	70,619	2.9%	2.6%
\$150 - \$299	68,846	2.8%	2.8%
\$300 - \$399	72,068	3%	3%
\$400 - \$499	91,956	3.8%	3.8%
\$500 - \$649	161,775	6.7%	6.4%
\$650 - \$799	218,079	9%	8.2%
\$800 - \$999	298,763	12.3%	11.2%
\$1,000 - \$1,249	335,066	13.8%	13.3%
\$1,250 - \$1,499	254,791	10.5%	10.5%
\$1,500 - \$1,749	222,717	9.2%	9.3%
\$1,750 - \$1,999	166,158	6.8%	7%
\$2,000 - \$2,999	273,588	11.3%	12.4%
\$3,000 - \$3,499	58,328	2.4%	2.9%
\$3,500 or more	94,005	3.9%	5.1%



5.4 Job Seeker Support

JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipient data provides a clear indication of labour market pressure within Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, reinforcing trends observed in unemployment, participation and income levels. In December 2025, there were 7,245 JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients in the Fraser Coast, representing 11.9% of the relevant population cohort. This is a comparatively high proportion, particularly when benchmarked against broader regional and state figures. Within the Fraser Coast, payment recipients are geographically concentrated in areas including Maryborough surrounds (15.9%), Maryborough (14.3%), Granville (13.8%), and Torquay (12.9%), suggesting pockets of entrenched labour market disadvantage.

In Bundaberg, there were 6,155 JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients in December 2025, equating to 10.8% of the population. The highest concentrations were recorded in Bundaberg (17.9%), Gin Gin (16.8%), and Walkervale–Avenell Heights (11.8%). As in Fraser Coast, this clustering highlights localised areas where unemployment and income support reliance are significantly above broader averages.

At a wider level, 7% of people in the Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast employment region were receiving JobSeeker payments in November 2025. This compares with 5.9% across Queensland and 5.5% nationally. The difference of more than five percentage points between Fraser Coast and the national average underscores the relative intensity of labour market challenges in the region. Elevated reliance on income support payments typically reflects a combination of higher unemployment, lower participation rates, underemployment, and structural barriers to workforce engagement.

The current base rate of JobSeeker for a single person over 22 without children is approximately \$793.60 per fortnight, which equates to a modest income well below average full-time earnings. High proportions of residents reliant on this payment can contribute to lower overall household incomes, reduced consumer spending capacity, and flow-on effects for local businesses and economic activity. This dynamic can create a reinforcing cycle, where weaker local economic conditions limit job creation, sustaining higher levels of payment reliance.

The concentration of JobSeeker recipients in specific suburbs also aligns with SEIFA disadvantage indicators, particularly in Fraser Coast. Areas with higher rates of income support reliance often experience interconnected challenges including lower educational attainment, limited transport access, health issues, and fewer local employment opportunities. In regions where the business base is concentrated in construction, agriculture, retail and community services, employment can also be seasonal or sensitive to economic downturns, increasing vulnerability to income disruption.

Overall, the elevated rate of JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg reflects structural labour market constraints rather than short-term fluctuations alone. Addressing this reliance will likely require coordinated strategies that combine job creation, skills development, targeted support for disadvantaged communities, and industry diversification to expand stable, higher-paying employment opportunities across the region.

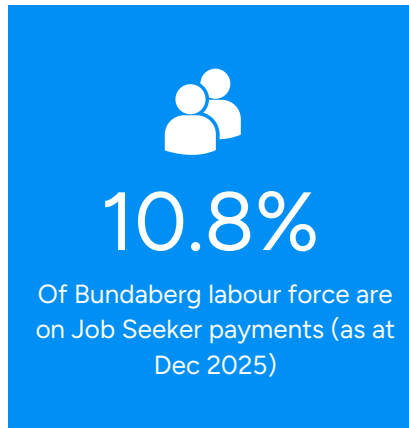
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Fraser Coast- Job Seeker Rates



Bundaberg- Job Seeker Rates



Wide Bay & Sunshine Coast Employment Region- Job Seeker Rates




Queensland- Job Seeker Rates



Australia- Job Seeker Rates



A scenic view of a tropical beach. The foreground shows a sandy shore with gentle waves washing onto the beach. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, transitioning to a deeper blue further out. The background is filled with dense, lush green trees and vegetation. A few people can be seen in the distance on the beach. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

Alone, we can do so little.
Together, we can do so much
-Helen Keller

Showcase- RDA Wide Bay

Regional Development Australia- Wide Bay focuses on facilitating sustainable regional economic growth for the Wide Bay, partnering with all levels of government, business and community groups to identify economic opportunities, leverage investment into our region, and connect markets and investors with industry. RDA delivers key projects for the region including Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program, Jobs Fraser Coast, Jobs Bundaberg, and Fraser Coast Career Pathways Program.

RDA's current strategic plan 2022-2025 focuses on growing a skilled, adaptable and diverse workforce, harnessing emerging opportunities and technology to position the region for economic growth, and facilitating regional collaboration by bringing regional leaders and stakeholders together to identify priorities and develop local solutions.



Regional
Development
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Find out more

SCAN ME



Showcase- ARLF

The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) and the Regional Australia Institute (RAI) have been instrumental in the development of the Leading Australian Resilient Communities (LARC) program in the Wide Bay Burnett region.

This program aims to build leadership capacity in regions impacted by multiple disasters and to support local communities in driving positive change. The LARC program is fully funded and includes immersive leadership workshops, community Future Forum sessions, and support for practical, community-led projects.

The initiative is part of the Australian Government's Building Resilient Regional Leaders Initiative (Pilot) grant.

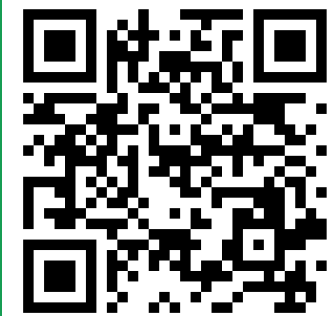


Australian
Rural Leadership
Foundation

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SCAN ME



06. Challenges & Barriers



6.1 Transport

Transport patterns in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg reflect highly car-dependent regional labour markets, with limited public transport usage and lower rates of remote work compared to state and national averages. According to 2021 ABS Census data compiled by .id Informed Decisions, 73.6% of Fraser Coast workers travelled to work by private vehicle, while only 0.6% used public transport. A further 7.2% worked from home. In Bundaberg, reliance on private vehicles was even higher at 76.7%, with 0.9% using public transport and 6% working from home.

These figures contrast sharply with broader trends. Across Queensland, 64.9% of workers travelled by private car and 3.9% used public transport, while 13.8% worked from home. Nationally, reliance on private vehicles was lower again at 58.1%, with 4.5% using public transport and 21% working from home. The significantly lower rate of working from home in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg reflects the occupational structure of the regions, where a large share of employment is concentrated in construction, agriculture, health care, retail and community services—industries that generally require physical presence and cannot be performed remotely.

The very low use of public transport also highlights structural transport limitations. Regional centres such as Fraser Coast and Bundaberg have less extensive and less frequent public transport networks than metropolitan areas. This can create barriers for residents without access to a private vehicle, particularly young people, low-income households, older residents, and individuals receiving JobSeeker or Youth Allowance. Limited transport options can restrict access to employment opportunities, training providers, and job interviews, contributing to lower participation rates and higher unemployment in certain areas. In dispersed regional communities, distance between residential areas and employment hubs can further compound these challenges.

Work-from-home trends surged during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in metropolitan and professional sectors. However, there has been a gradual shift back toward office-based work across many industries, especially in government, corporate and administrative roles. While hybrid work models remain more common than pre-pandemic levels, the overall proportion of remote work nationally has stabilised below its peak. For regions such as Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, where remote-capable industries are less dominant, the long-term impact of work-from-home trends has been more limited.

Looking forward, alternative work models—including hybrid arrangements, flexible hours and four-day work weeks—are gaining policy and industry attention. These models may offer opportunities for regional areas if supported by reliable digital infrastructure and employer adoption. Increased flexibility could enable more residents to access roles outside the immediate region without relocating, particularly in professional or administrative occupations. However, the benefits will depend on expanding the local base of knowledge-intensive and digitally enabled industries.

Overall, transport-to-work patterns in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg underscore a strong reliance on private vehicles and highlight structural mobility constraints. Limited public transport and the occupational profile of the regions restrict both physical and remote access to employment. Addressing transport barriers—alongside digital connectivity and industry diversification—will be important in improving workforce participation, supporting disadvantaged communities, and enabling access to emerging flexible work opportunities.

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Fraser Coast- Transport to Work



73.6%

Of Fraser Coast workers travelled by private car to work in 2021



0.6%

Of Fraser Coast workers travelled to work by public transport in 2021



3.3%

Of Fraser Coast workers walked or cycled to work in 2021



7.2%

Of Fraser Coast workers worked from home in 2021



0.2%

Of Fraser Coast workers took a taxi or ride share to work in 2021



0.7%

Of Fraser Coast workers rode a motorcycle to work in 2021

Bundaberg- Transport to Work



76.7%

Of Bundaberg workers travelled by private car to work in 2021



0.9%

Of Bundaberg workers travelled to work by public transport in 2021



2.9%

Of Bundaberg workers walked or cycled to work in 2021



6%

Of Bundaberg workers worked from home in 2021



0.2%

Of Bundaberg workers took a taxi or ride share to work in 2021



0.6%

Of Bundaberg workers rode a motorcycle to work in 2021

Queensland- Transport to Work



64.9%

Of Queensland workers travelled by private car to work in 2021



3.9%

Of Queensland workers travelled to work by public transport in 2021



3.3%

Of Queensland workers walked or cycled to work in 2021



13.8%

Of Queensland workers worked from home in 2021



0.3%

Of Queensland workers took a taxi or ride share to work in 2021



0.7%

Of Queensland workers rode a motorcycle to work in 2021

Australia- Transport to Work



58.1%

Of Australian workers travelled by private car to work in 2021



4.5%

Of Australian workers travelled to work by public transport in 2021



3.2%

Of Australian workers walked or cycled to work in 2021



21%

Of Australian workers worked from home in 2021



0.3%

Of Australian workers took a taxi or ride share to work in 2021



0.4%

Of Australian workers rode a motorcycle to work in 2021



6.2 Housing

Housing availability and affordability are emerging as significant barriers to employment across the Hinkler region, including Fraser Coast and Bundaberg. Persistently low rental vacancy rates and rising housing costs are placing pressure on both local residents and potential new workers, with flow-on effects for labour market participation and workforce attraction.

In Fraser Coast, the rental vacancy rate in January 2026 sits at 1.9%, indicating a tight rental market. The average weekly rent is \$582, representing a 9.6% increase over the previous year. At the same time, the average house price has risen to \$737,000, up 15.11% year-on-year. While housing remains comparatively more affordable than in metropolitan Queensland or national markets, the pace of price growth is significant, particularly in a region characterised by lower average incomes and higher socio-economic disadvantage. Rapid increases in both rents and house prices can disproportionately affect low- and moderate-income households, including those in casual or part-time employment.

Bundaberg faces even tighter rental conditions, with a vacancy rate of just 1.39% in January 2026. Average rents have climbed to \$555 per week, up 7.9% over the year, while the average house price has reached \$737,000, increasing 13.21%. Such low vacancy rates signal extremely limited rental supply, making it difficult for new workers to relocate to the area and for existing residents to secure stable housing. For employers seeking to fill vacancies—particularly in health care, agriculture, construction and community services—housing shortages can directly constrain workforce availability. Statewide and nationally, rental vacancy rates are similarly tight (1% in Queensland and 1.2% nationally), with average weekly rents of \$650 and \$680 respectively. However, while capital city markets tend to have higher absolute prices, they also generally offer higher average wages and a greater concentration of high-income employment. In contrast, Fraser Coast and Bundaberg have lower proportions of high-income earners and higher reliance on income support payments, meaning housing cost increases consume a larger share of household income. This affordability gap can reduce disposable income, increase financial stress, and limit individuals' capacity to engage in education, training or job search activities.

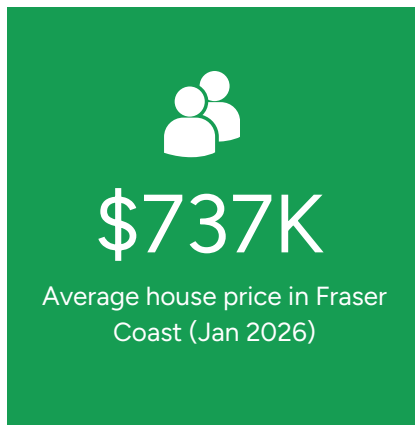
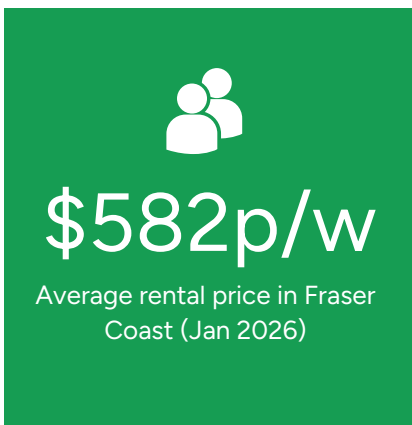
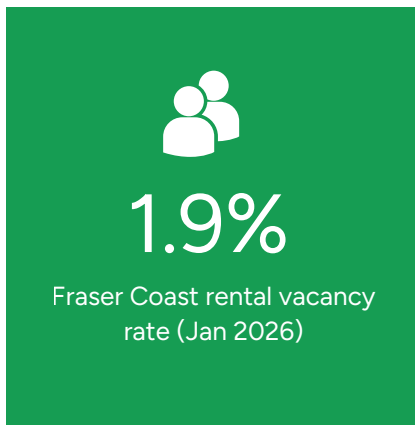
Housing pressures also create indirect employment barriers. Workers experiencing rental stress or housing instability may struggle to maintain consistent employment, particularly in roles requiring early starts, shift work or travel. Younger workers and JobSeeker recipients may find it especially difficult to secure rental properties in competitive markets, further compounding youth unemployment and participation challenges. For key worker sectors such as health care and social assistance—already among the most in-demand occupations in the region—limited affordable housing can deter recruitment and retention.

Overall, the housing availability crisis in the Hinkler region is closely linked to labour market outcomes. Low vacancy rates and rising prices restrict labour mobility, hinder workforce attraction, and place financial strain on lower-income households. Addressing housing supply and affordability will be critical not only for social wellbeing but also for supporting employment growth, regional economic development, and long-term workforce sustainability.

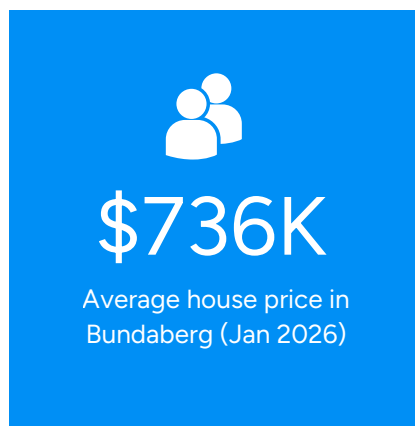
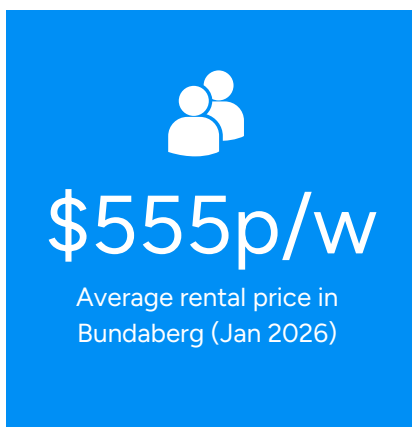
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Fraser Coast- Housing Data



Bundaberg- Housing Data



Queensland- Housing Data



1%

Queensland rental vacancy rate (Nov 2026)



\$650p/w

Average rental price in Regional Queensland (Jan 2026)



4.8%

Growth in prices from previous year (Jan 2025)



\$850K

Average house price in Queensland (June 2025)



3.6%

Growth in prices from previous year (June 2024)

Australia- Housing Data



1.2%

Australia rental vacancy rate (Jan 2026)



\$686p/w

Average rental price in Australia (Jan 2026)



7.6%

Growth in prices from previous year



\$1M

Average house price in Australia (March 2025)



0.7%

Growth in prices from previous year



6.3 Access to Education

Access to education and post-secondary training is a significant structural factor shaping employment outcomes in both Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, with more pronounced limitations evident in Fraser Coast. The availability, diversity and accessibility of tertiary education options influence not only individual career pathways but also the types of industries that can sustainably operate and grow within a region.

In the Fraser Coast, the local university campus—University of the Sunshine Coast (USC)—currently offers just three Bachelor degree programs: Nursing, Social Work and Primary Education. While these programs align well with strong regional demand in health care, community services and education, the limited breadth of disciplines restricts pathways into fields such as engineering, business, information technology, environmental science and other professional sectors. As a result, students seeking degrees outside these three areas must relocate to larger centres, often leading to outward migration of young people. Many who leave to study do not return, contributing to “brain drain” and reinforcing the region’s lower proportion of degree-qualified workers.

By contrast, Bundaberg benefits from the presence of Central Queensland University (CQU), which offers a broader range of 18 different degree areas. This greater diversity of study options supports a wider range of career pathways and increases the likelihood that students can pursue higher education locally. The availability of multiple disciplines also strengthens the region's ability to attract and retain students, support industry partnerships, and align skills development with emerging economic opportunities.

Both regions are supported by TAFE campuses in Hervey Bay and Bundaberg, which deliver a wide range of Diploma, Certificate IV and Certificate III qualifications. TAFE plays a critical role in meeting local workforce needs, particularly in construction, trades, health support services, business administration and community services. Given that a substantial proportion of advertised jobs in the Wide Bay–Sunshine Coast region require Certificate-level qualifications, TAFE provision is well aligned with the prevailing labour market profile.

The cost of education is an additional barrier to employment in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, particularly for low-income households and individuals receiving income support. Expenses associated with tertiary study—including tuition fees, textbooks, technology, travel, and potential relocation costs—can be prohibitive, especially in regions with lower average incomes and higher socio-economic disadvantage. For students who must move away to access a broader range of university programs, accommodation and living costs further increase the financial burden. Even vocational training can involve course fees, equipment purchases and unpaid placement requirements. These financial pressures may discourage school leavers and mature-age workers from pursuing further qualifications or retraining, limiting skill development and reducing access to higher-paying employment opportunities over the long term. In 2025, the average Higher Education Loan (HELP) debt in Australia was \$27,000, according to the Australian Taxation Office.


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Provider	Course
<p>University of Sunshine Coast- Fraser Coast Campus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Nursing Science • Bachelor of Primary Education • Bachelor of Social Work • Diploma in Allied Health Assistance • Diploma in Animal Ecology • Diploma in Education Studies (Primary) • Diploma in General Studies • Diploma in Social and Human Services • Undergraduate Certificate in Allied Health Assistance • Undergraduate Certificate in Animal Ecology • Undergraduate Certificate in Education (Primary) • Undergraduate Certificate in Health
<p>TAFE Hervey Bay Campus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma of Beauty Therapy • Diploma of Early Childhood Education & Care • Diploma of Nursing • Cert IV in Business • Cert IV in Disability Support • Cert IV in Accounting and Bookkeeping • Cert IV in Leadership and Management • Cert IV in School Based Education Support • Cert III in Barbering • Cert III in Automotive Underbody Technology • Cert III in Baking • Cert III in Sport Coaching • Cert III in Individual Support- Ageing • Cert III in Individual Support- Disability • Cert III in Motorcycled Mechanical Technology • Cert III in EAL • Cert III in Beauty Services • Cert III in Engineering-Fabrication- Boilermaking/ welding • Cert III in Engineering- Fabrication- Sheetmetal • Cert III in Hairdressing • Cert III Light Vehicle Mechanical Technology • Cert III in Accounts Administration • Cert III in Nurse Operations • Cert III in Electrotechnology Electrician • Cert III in Early Childhood Education Care • Cert III in Hospitality • Cert III in Fitness • Cert III in Carpentry • Cert III Individual Support • Cert III School Based Support • Cert III in Engineering- Mechanical Trade- Fitting/ Machining • Cert III in Horticulture • Cert III in Commercial Cookery • Cert III Cake and Pastry • Cert III Breadmaking

Provider	Course
<p>Central Queensland University- Bundaberg Campus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctor of Philosophy by Portfolio • Doctor of Philosophy (Industry) • Doctor of Education • Doctor of Philosophy • Master of Research • Graduate Certificate in Research • Bachelor of Midwifery • Bachelor of Agriculture • Bachelor of Science (Psychology) • Bachelor of Education (Secondary) • Bachelor of Engineering Technology • Bachelor of Creative Media • Bachelor of Education (Primary) • Bachelor of Physiotherapy (Honours) • Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (Honours) • Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) • Bachelor of Psychological Science • Bachelor of Medical Science (Pathway to Medicine) • Bachelor of Digital Media • Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) • Bachelor of Engineering (Civil Design) (Honours) • Bachelor of Medical Science (Specilisation) • Bachelor of Engineering (Civil Construction) (Honours) • Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) • Associate Degree of Digital Media • Diploma of Nursing • Diploma of Animation • Diploma of Interactive Media • Diploma of Screen Production • Diploma of Graphic Design • Diploma of Creative Media • Diploma of Digital Media • Certificate II in Horticulture • Certificate III in Fitness • Certificate III in Individual Support • Certificate II in Sport and Recreation • Certificate IV in Fitness • Certificate III in Horticulture • Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management • Certificate II in Sport Coaching • Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS)
<p>TAFE Bundaberg Campus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma of Beauty Therapy • Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care • Diploma of Nursing • Cert IV Business • Cert IV Accounting and Bookkeeping • Cert IV Leadership and Management • Cert IV School Based Education and Support • Cert III Barbering • Cert III Baking • Cert III Engineering Fixed and Mobile Plant Mechanic • Cert III Individual Support Ageing • Cert III Cabinet Making and Timber Technology • Cert III Production Horticulture • Cert III EAL (Access) • Cert III Conservation and Ecosystem Management • Cert III Engineering- Fabrication- Boilermaking/ Welding • Cert III Engineering- Fabrication- Sheetmetal Working • Cert III Hairdressing • Cert III Heavy Commercial Vehicle Mechanical Technology

Provider	Course
TAFE Bundaberg Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cert III Agriculture• Cert III Light Vehicle Mechanical Technology• Cert III Health Services Assistance• Cert III in Mobile Plant Technology• Cert III Accounts Administration• Cert III Nursery Operations• Cert III Electrotechnology Electrician• Cert III Early Childhood Education and Care• Cert III Animal Care• Cert III Hospitality• Cert III Carpentry• Cert III Automotive Electrical Technology• Cert III Individual Support• Cert III School Based Education and Support• Cert III Engineering-Mechanical Trade- Fitting/Machining• Cert III Horticulture• Cert III Commercial Cookery• Cert III Plumbing• Cert III Cake and Pastry• Cert III Breadmaking



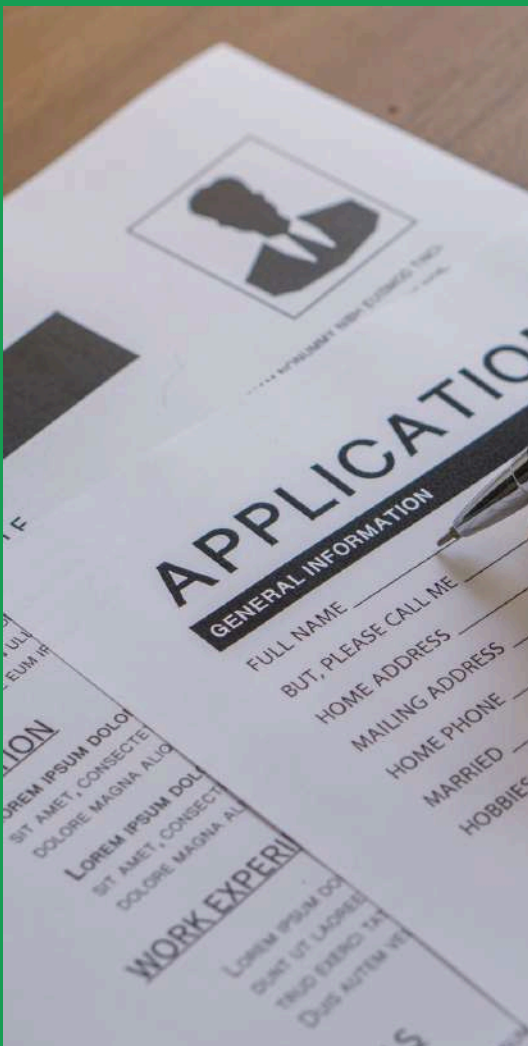
If you can't figure out your
purpose, figure out your passion.
For passion will lead you right into
your purpose
-TD Jakes

Showcase- Community Navigators

Our Community Navigators program provides support to build a stronger and more resilient community by helping people navigate services and activities, with the goal of finding employment.

Community Navigators can provide support with:

- Assistance with forms and linking with services
- Transport to linked services
- Information and referrals
- Advocacy for Services and Programs
- Training / Education enrollments or assistance
- Assistance with resume and interview skills
- Learn skills: budgeting, cooking, life skills, tenancy, job skills, reading and writing



Find out more



Showcase- Local Learning Network

The Local Learning Network is a series of micro-learning hubs aimed at building job skills and encouraging community participation. Workshops and training opportunities are available to promote volunteering, build employment-readiness, development health, well-being and self-care techniques, grow the job skills of the future and enhance life skills and connection.



SCAN ME



Find out more



07. Future Outlook



7.1 Regional Growth

Population projections for Fraser Coast indicate steady long-term growth, but with a demographic profile that presents challenges for employment and workforce sustainability. Forecasts from .id Informed Decisions, based on the National Forecasting Program, estimate the Fraser Coast population will reach approximately 120,000 in 2026 and grow by 25.21% to around 150,000 by 2046. While this overall growth rate is comparable to Queensland's projected 25.7% increase over the same period, the composition of that growth differs significantly.

Between 2021 and 2031, Fraser Coast's working-age population is expected to increase by just 6.7%, substantially lower than the projected 16.7% increase across Queensland and 14.6% nationally. At the same time, the number of people of retirement age in Fraser Coast is forecast to grow by 37.4%, closely aligned with state (38.6%) and national (35.4%) ageing trends. However, unlike Queensland and Australia—which are both projected to see modest growth in the number of children (5.9% and 5.8% respectively)—Fraser Coast is expected to experience a slight decline of 0.6% in its child population. This demographic trajectory has important implications for employment. Slower growth in the working-age population limits the expansion of the available labour force, potentially constraining business growth and service delivery capacity. At the same time, a rapidly increasing retirement-age population will drive higher demand for health care, aged care, social assistance and community services—sectors that are already prominent in the region's employment profile. This may intensify workforce shortages in care-related occupations unless local training and workforce attraction strategies are strengthened.

An ageing population can also affect workforce participation rates, as a greater proportion of residents move out of full-time employment. Combined with existing lower participation rates and higher reliance on income support payments in parts of the region, this trend may place additional pressure on the working-age population to support economic activity and service provision.

Although specific population forecasts were not available for Bundaberg in this dataset, similar regional characteristics—such as an established retiree population and service-based economy—suggest comparable demographic pressures may emerge. In contrast, Queensland and Australia overall are projected to experience stronger growth in working-age cohorts, which can support broader labour market expansion and economic dynamism.

Overall, while Fraser Coast’s projected population growth presents opportunities for economic expansion, particularly in service industries, the relatively modest increase in working-age residents and continued ageing trend pose structural challenges. Supporting workforce participation, attracting skilled migrants, retaining young people, and aligning education and training pathways with projected service demand will be critical to ensuring that population growth translates into sustainable employment growth over the coming decades.

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Fraser Coast- Future Outlook



120K

Fraser Coast population
forecast for 2026



150K

Fraser Coast population
forecast for 2046



25.21%

Predicted growth 2026-2046



6.7%

Increase in working age
population expected between
2021-2031



37.4%

Increase in retirement age
population expected between
2021-2031



0.7%

Decrease in population under
working age expected between
2021-2031

Queensland- Future Outlook



5.7M

Queensland population
forecast for 2026



7.2M

Queensland population forecas
forecast for 2046



25.7%

Predicted growth 2026-2046



16.7%

Increase in working age
population expected between
2021-2031



38.6%

Increase in retirement age
population expected between
2021-2031



5.9%

Increase in population under
working age expected between
2021-2031



28.1M

Australia population forecast for 2026



34.6M

Australia population forecast for 2046



34.7%

Predicted growth 2026-2046



14.6%

Increase in working age population expected between 2021-2031



35.4%

Increase in retirement age population expected between 2021-2031



5.8%

Increase in population under working age expected between 2021-2031





7.2 AI & Technology

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and related technologies are increasingly embedded in the everyday lives of Hinkler residents and are beginning to shape the future of employment in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg. Across Queensland, significant investment in AI has occurred over the past five years, with approximately 650 AI companies now operating domestically and around \$7 billion in foreign investment attracted to the sector. This rapid expansion signals that AI is no longer an emerging niche technology but a mainstream economic force that will influence regional labour markets, including those outside metropolitan centres.

For Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, AI presents both challenges and opportunities in workforce planning. One of the primary challenges is the potential disruption of entry-level and administrative roles. Many occupations that involve repetitive, routine or process-driven tasks—such as clerical work, basic bookkeeping, scheduling, and certain retail or customer service functions—are increasingly subject to automation. In regions where general clerks and administrative roles are among commonly advertised occupations, automation could reduce demand for some traditional pathways into the workforce. Importantly, automation may not eliminate entire occupations but instead automate specific tasks within them, changing job design and requiring workers to adapt and acquire new skills.

This shift places greater emphasis on digital literacy, technical competency and adaptability. As AI adoption expands across industries such as health care, agriculture, construction, retail and local government, workers will need to develop complementary skills that enable them to work alongside technology. However, this creates a potential education access challenge, particularly in Fraser Coast where university program offerings are limited. Ensuring that local education and training systems—through TAFE, universities and industry partnerships—can provide relevant digital and technical upskilling will be critical to preventing further labour market disadvantage.

At the same time, AI presents meaningful opportunities for the region. In areas facing workforce shortages—particularly health care, aged care and agriculture—AI technologies can improve productivity and service delivery. For example, AI-assisted diagnostic tools, workforce scheduling systems, precision agriculture technologies and predictive maintenance systems can help offset labour constraints caused by an ageing population and slower growth in the working-age cohort. In this sense, AI may act as a workforce multiplier, supporting existing workers rather than replacing them.

Ultimately, labour market outcomes in Fraser Coast and Bundaberg will depend on the extent and pace of AI adoption across local industries, the degree to which tasks are automated or augmented, and how effectively the skills and education system responds to technological change. If adoption is proactive and supported by accessible training pathways, AI could enhance regional productivity, attract new industries and create higher-skilled employment opportunities. Conversely, if workforce adaptation lags behind technological change, there is a risk that automation could exacerbate unemployment, underemployment and income inequality.

For the Hinkler region, the future impact of AI will not be determined solely by the technology itself, but by policy settings, education access, industry readiness and the capacity of workers to transition into evolving roles. Strategic planning and investment in digital capability will therefore be central to ensuring AI strengthens rather than disrupts the regional employment landscape.

References:

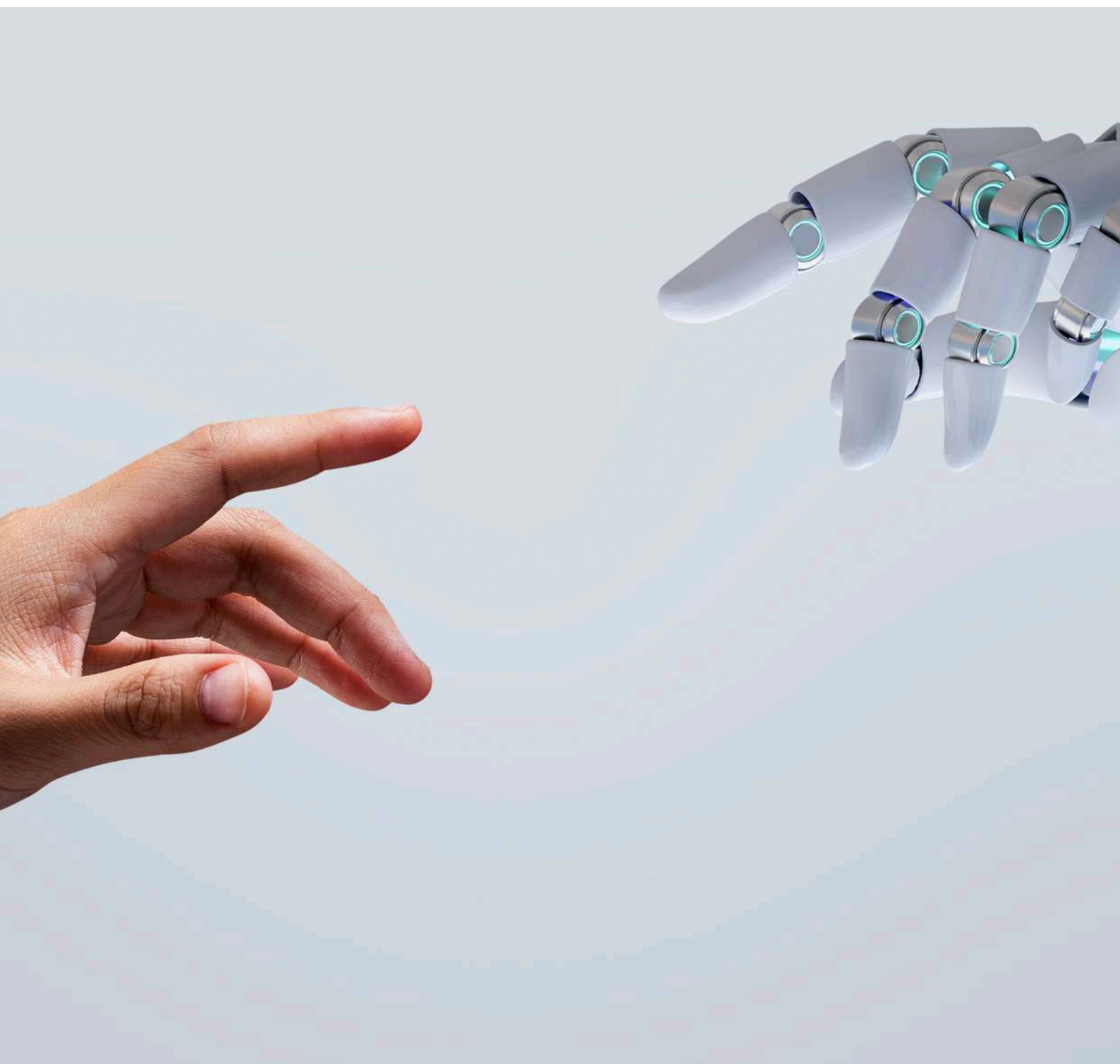
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Summary of ways AI is already embedded into everyday life

Area	Use
Everyday Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smartphones – Predictive text, voice assistants (Siri/Google Assistant), facial recognition, photo enhancement, spam filtering and real-time navigation all use AI. • Social media feeds – Facebook, Instagram and TikTok use AI algorithms to personalise content and advertising. • Streaming services – Netflix, Spotify and YouTube recommend content based on AI-driven viewing and listening behaviour analysis. • Online shopping – Product recommendations, dynamic pricing and targeted advertising are AI-powered.
Banking & Financial Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fraud detection systems monitor unusual transactions and protect residents from scams. • Credit scoring and loan approvals increasingly use AI models. • Chatbots assist with customer service for banks and utilities.
Health & Aged Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical imaging analysis supports doctors in diagnosing conditions. • Appointment booking systems and patient triage tools use AI to streamline services. • Wearable devices (e.g. smartwatches) track heart rate, sleep and activity using AI-driven health insights. • Aged care monitoring technologies assist with fall detection and medication management — particularly relevant in Fraser Coast's ageing population.
Agriculture & Primary Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precision agriculture tools use AI for crop monitoring, irrigation optimisation and yield forecasting. • Drones and satellite imagery analyse soil health and crop performance. • Automated machinery and smart sensors improve efficiency and reduce labour shortages.
Employment & Job Searching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online job platforms use AI to match candidates to roles. • Resume screening software filters applications. • Workplace rostering systems optimise staffing levels. • AI tools for small business marketing and administration are increasingly used by local construction, retail and service businesses.
Retail and local business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point-of-sale systems track consumer patterns and manage inventory. • Online booking platforms for trades, beauty, hospitality and health services use AI scheduling. • Customer review monitoring and automated responses assist small business operators.
Transport & Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GPS navigation apps (Google Maps, Waze) use AI for traffic prediction. • Vehicle safety systems (lane assist, adaptive cruise control) rely on AI. • Freight and logistics routing systems optimise delivery networks.
Government & Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services Australia systems use automated processing for payments such as JobSeeker and Youth Allowance. • Local council planning and asset management tools increasingly use predictive analytics. • Emergency services use AI modelling for disaster prediction and response — particularly relevant in flood and cyclone-prone regions.

Summary of ways AI is already embedded into everyday life

Area	Use
Education & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online learning platforms personalise content and assessment.• AI tutoring tools assist school and university students.• TAFE and university administrative systems use predictive analytics for enrolment and retention.
Home & Lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smart home devices (security cameras, smart speakers, energy monitors).• Energy providers use AI to forecast demand and manage supply.• Weather apps use predictive modelling for severe weather alerts.





7.3 Passion & Purpose

Employment and workforce planning is often described in technical terms—labour markets, skills pipelines, vacancy rates—but at its heart, it is about people. It is about human beings with hopes, dreams, responsibilities and aspirations for a meaningful life. Simply “finding people jobs” is not enough. The real goal is to connect individuals with opportunities that align with their strengths, values and interests. When employment planning recognises this human dimension, it moves beyond filling vacancies and begins fostering long-term wellbeing and economic resilience.

Passion and purpose are central to achieving better employment outcomes. When individuals pursue roles that align with what they care about and what they are good at, they are more likely to experience career satisfaction and a sense of meaning. Meaningful employment contributes not only to personal fulfillment but also to higher levels of productivity, engagement and commitment in the workplace. People who feel connected to their work are more innovative, more resilient in the face of challenges, and more invested in contributing positively to their organisations and communities.

Conversely, the cost of disengagement is significant. Burnout has become a major issue among Australian workers, with 61% experiencing burnout compared to 48% globally. Around 60% of Australian workers report negative impacts from work-related stress, and 40% of resignations are attributed to burnout. These figures highlight that employment outcomes are not just about job placement—they are about job quality, alignment, support and sustainability. When people lack purpose in their work, or feel disconnected from their roles, the consequences are felt in productivity losses, workforce turnover, and declining wellbeing.

For regions such as the Fraser Coast and Bundaberg Region, this perspective has important implications. Both regions have unique economic profiles, with strengths in sectors such as health care, agriculture, tourism, community services and small business. Workforce planning in these communities must consider not only industry demand but also how to cultivate aspiration and pathways for local people—particularly young people—to see a future for themselves locally. When individuals can connect their passion—whether in caring professions, land management, hospitality, entrepreneurship or skilled trades—to real opportunities within their own region, it strengthens both community stability and economic growth.

Fostering passion and purpose in the Fraser Coast and Bundaberg means investing in career guidance, mentoring, work-integrated learning, and strong partnerships between schools, training providers, employers and community organisations. It means designing pathways that are flexible and supportive, reducing the risk of burnout by promoting healthy workplace cultures, and ensuring that employment is not just available, but meaningful. By placing people—not just positions—at the centre of workforce planning, these regions can build a more engaged, productive and resilient workforce that benefits individuals, businesses and the broader community alike.

References:

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Australia Burnout Statistics



61%

Australian workers reported experiencing burnout compared to 48% globally.



40%

Of Australian employee resignations are attributed to burnout.



60%

Of Australian workers felt negative impacts from work-related stress, including reduced interest & motivation.



\$14B

Burnout & stress-related absenteeism costs the Australian economy \$14B annually.

MOTIVATION



LOADING...



7.4 Strategies

Addressing employment challenges across the Fraser Coast, Bundaberg Region and the broader Wide Bay–Burnett requires coordinated workforce and economic development strategies that align industry growth with skills, infrastructure and community needs. Encouragingly, local and state governments have adopted forward-looking plans that provide a strong foundation for sustainable employment outcomes.

In the Fraser Coast, the Fraser Coast Futures 2036 Economic Development Strategy, adopted by the Fraser Coast Regional Council in October 2025, sets an ambitious target of growing the local economy by \$2 billion by 2036. The strategy identifies key growth sectors including housing and construction, advanced manufacturing (particularly trains and marine/maritime equipment), agriculture (timber, fishing, sugar and emerging crops), tourism, education through expanded tertiary provision, and meeting rising aged care demands. Workforce planning must therefore prioritise aligning training pipelines to these sectors—ensuring that local residents can access apprenticeships in construction and manufacturing, upskilling in advanced production technologies, pathways into agribusiness innovation, and qualifications in health and aged care. Expanding tertiary education locally will be critical to retaining young people and building higher-level skills within the region.

Similarly, the Bundaberg Region Economic Development Strategy 2025–2035, led by Bundaberg Regional Council, focuses on economic growth while addressing structural barriers such as housing shortages, skilled labour demand, and the need to modernise advanced manufacturing and agriculture. In Bundaberg, strategies must integrate workforce attraction and retention initiatives with housing supply planning, ensuring that growth industries are not constrained by limited accommodation. Strengthening partnerships between industry and training providers can help address skilled labour shortages, particularly in value-added agriculture, food processing, and emerging manufacturing technologies. Workforce development efforts should also focus on supporting small and medium enterprises to adopt innovation and digital capability, increasing productivity and job quality.

At the regional scale, the Queensland Government's review of the Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan 2023 provides an opportunity to tackle systemic workforce challenges across Bundaberg, Cherbourg, Fraser Coast, Gympie, and North and South Burnett LGAs. Beyond growth targets, the plan recognises the importance of workforce participation and inclusion, education and skills development, living standards, and addressing youth exodus. Effective strategies will need to increase participation among underrepresented groups, including young people, mature workers and First Nations communities, while strengthening school-to-work transitions. Enhancing liveability—through transport, digital connectivity, housing and community infrastructure—will also be critical in attracting and retaining talent.

At the state level, the Queensland Government's Right Skills Strategy 2025–2028 aims to create 430,000 new job opportunities through a \$5 billion investment in training infrastructure, expanded apprenticeships, free or low-cost training, support for trainers, and joint funding initiatives under the National Skills Agreement. For the Fraser Coast and Bundaberg, leveraging this investment will be essential. Local stakeholders should actively align priority industries identified in regional strategies with state-funded training programs, ensuring that apprenticeships, micro-credentials and vocational pathways directly support construction, advanced manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, education and aged care growth sectors.

Collectively, these strategies highlight the need for integrated planning—linking economic development, housing, education, infrastructure and workforce policy. Success will depend on strong collaboration between local councils, regional development bodies, industry leaders, education and training providers, and the Queensland Government. By aligning sector growth with skills investment and inclusive participation strategies, the Fraser Coast, Bundaberg and the wider Wide Bay–Burnett region can build a resilient workforce that not only meets current labour demands but supports long-term economic prosperity and improved quality of life.

References:

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Fraser Coast Futures 2036- Economic Development Strategy

Fraser Coast Futures 2036 was adopted by Fraser Coast Regional Council in October 2025 and provides a forward-looking strategy to grow the local economy by \$2B by 2036, including attracting new investment, reducing the region's median age, and creating more opportunities for young professionals, skilled tradespeople and families. Some of the key ongoing employment opportunities in the region include the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program (QTMP) in Torbanlea and the proposed \$70M Energy Storage Industries (ESI) grid-scale battery manufacturing facility. Key Industry opportunities for the region are listed as:

- Housing- increasing housing and construction.
- Advanced Manufacturing- trains, marine & maritime equipment, food and beverage and other advanced technology products.
- Agriculture- timber, fishing ,sugar production and emerging macadamia nut industry.
- Tourism- particularly around whales and K'gari.
- Education- expanding tertiary education.
- Aged Care- meet current and future demands.

[View document ->](#)



Bundaberg Region Economic Development Strategy 2025-2035

This plan aims to promote economic growth and development over the next decade for the Bundaberg region The strategy addresses key challenges including housing availability, demand for skilled labour, need for advanced manufacturing and agriculture.

The strategy also lists key actions in:

- Workforce planning
- Investment attraction
- Enabling infrastructure
- Development that promotes and protects a growing and diverse economy
- Business and innovation that promoted Bundaberg as a great place to do business
- Monitoring and reporting on annual progress

[View document ->](#)



Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan

The Wide Bay Burnett (WBB) Regional Plan is currently under review by Queensland Government. The current 2023 plan is informed by Local Government covering Bundaberg, Cherbourg, Fraser Coast, Gympie, North Burnett and South Burnett. The Plan covers:

- Improvement pathways: addressing systemic issues around workforce participation and inclusion, education and skills, living standards and youth exodus.
- Attracting population: using strong lifestyle attributes to attract new working age families and skilled workers to the region.
- Facilitate new economic opportunities: providing infrastructure and land use policy settings to support new economic opportunities in key sectors.
- Focus on people: ensuring future regional success by retaining youth, attracting new residents, strengthening existing communities and labour force. This includes housing, liveability, accessibility, services and amenities.
- Building & selling a regional identity: projecting a clear regional and economic identity to build sense of purpose and positivity.
- Succeeding in emerging industries: capitalising on opportunities in agricultural diversification, advanced manufacturing, renewable energy and scalable circular economy.

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The Right Skills Strategy 2025-2028

The Right Skills Strategy 2025-2028 aims to build a skilled workforce in Queensland, unlocking 430,000 new job opportunities through significant investments in training and education to enhance the state's workforce capabilities. The strategy is designed to address current and future skills with a \$5B investment to create a highly skilled workforce and support economic growth. Key initiatives include:

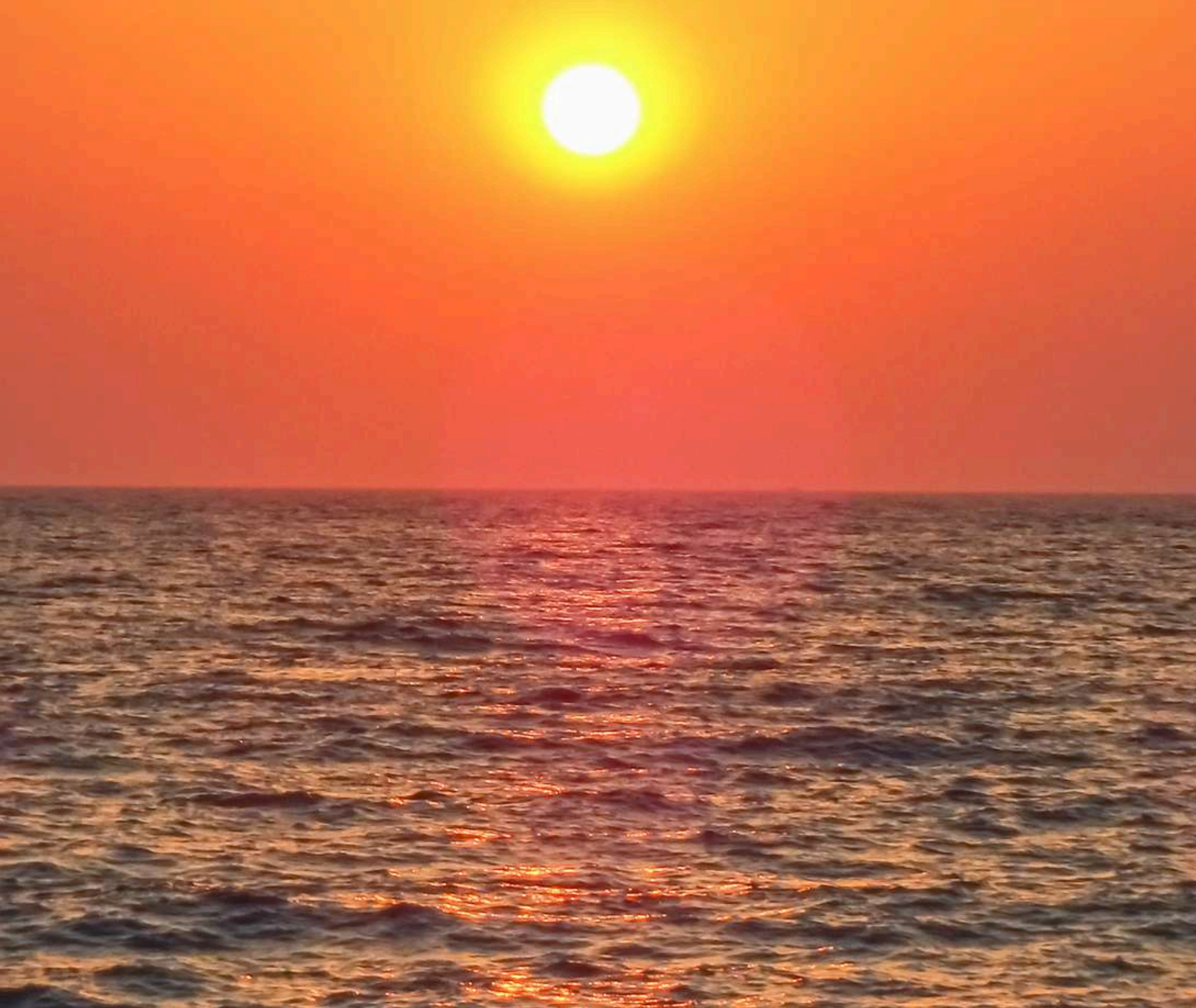
- Investment in Training Infrastructure: \$201.1M allocated towards new Centres of Excellence in various regions.
- Expansion of Apprenticeships: \$50M towards expanding apprenticeships in critical areas including housing, healthcare, and construction to create pathways for young people & those looking to upskill.
- Access to free/ low-cost training: providing free and reduced-cost training particularly targeting young people, women and veterans.
- Support for trainers: \$2M towards recruiting and training the next generation of educators and training, ensuring high-quality training.
- Alignment with National Skills Agreement: supporting the National Skills Agreement with joint funding initiatives aimed at improving access to training and completion rates for apprenticeships and trainees.

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If you don't go after what you want, you'll never have it. If you don't ask, the answer is always no. If you don't step forward, you're always in the same place.

-Nora Roberts



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