



# Barwon Regional Skills Demand Profile

Snapshot 2023



**Victorian  
Skills Authority**



Jobs, Skills,  
Industry  
and Regions



# Acknowledgements

## Acknowledgement of Country

The Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) acknowledges and recognises the Traditional Owners of the land within the regional area of the Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar and its people, their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Barwon Regional Skills Taskforce

The VSA acknowledges the time, contribution, and insights of the Barwon Regional Skills Taskforce (and additional representatives from industry, local government, training providers, and related agencies) who contributed to the development of this profile.

The findings in this profile would not be possible without their openness, generosity, expertise, and commitment to the Barwon regional economy and community.

<b>Member</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Allan Hood	Bulla Dairy
Anne Howard	Colac Otway Shire
Beth Rider	WorkSafe
Ben Flynn	Geelong Chamber
Brendan Windmeyer	Barwon Water – Barwon Asset Solutions
Brett Ince	Tourism Greater Geelong and The Bellarine
Brett Winter	Geelong Port
Dineli Mather	Deakin University
Garry Ellis	Bellarine Community Health
Jennifer Conley	Geelong Manufacturing Council
Jennifer Cromarty	Committee for Geelong
Joe Ormeno	The Gordon TAFE
Kerri Erler	Regional Development Victoria
Lee Jeffery	Barwon Health
Lisa Smith	Epworth HealthCare
Mario Varricchio	SouthWest TAFE
Matthew Dingle	FormFlow
Millie Keating	Hanwha Defense Australia
Robyn Seymour	Surf Coast Shire
Robyn Stevens	City of Greater Geelong
Tony Anderson	Geelong Trades Hall
Zoe Barnett	PCP and G21 – Geelong Region Alliance



## About the Victorian Skills Authority

The Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) was established by the Victorian Government in July 2021 in response to the recommendations of the Skills for Victoria's Growing Economy Review.

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

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

## Regional Skills Demand Profiles

Regional Victoria is at the forefront of key priorities for the Victorian Government. These include the 2026 Commonwealth Games, which will contribute more than \$3 billion to Victoria's economy and create more than 7,500 jobs, and the establishment of the State Electricity Commission (SEC), which will help deliver more than 59,000 new jobs. These new opportunities, along with increasing regional populations, and existing and emerging industries, highlight the critical need to grow and advance skills in the regions so that the people, businesses, and communities of regional Victoria can thrive.

The VSA worked with Regional Skills Taskforces and Industry Roundtables during 2022 and early 2023 to develop Regional Skills Demand Profiles that identify current and future skills needs across Victoria's regions. The profiles have been prepared with support from Regional Development Victoria (RDV) in the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions. The profiles are a valuable resource for regional Victoria and the Victorian Government. The VSA is working closely with stakeholders to address the opportunities and issues identified in the profiles.

This document is a summary of key findings. The profiles are available on the VSA website at: [skillsauthority.vic.gov.au](https://skillsauthority.vic.gov.au)

To access the latest data, readers are directed to the VSA employment forecast dashboard at: [www.vic.gov.au/victorian-skills-plan](https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-skills-plan) and the Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) interactive data dashboards at: <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/resources/regional-economic-development-strategies>



# About the Barwon region

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

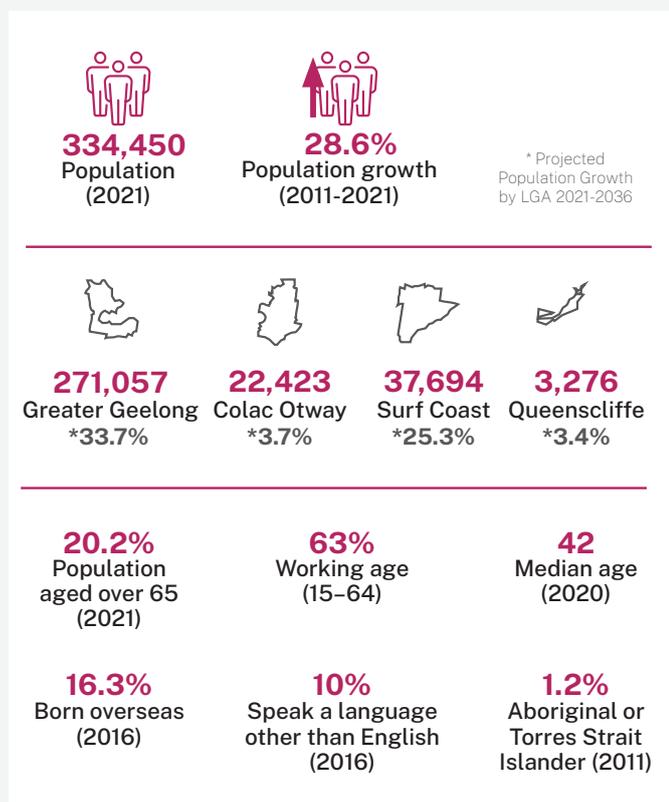


Figure 1 | Overview of the Barwon region

Barwon is Victoria's most populated regional area and has more than 334,400 residents. It encompasses the local government areas of the City of Greater Geelong, Surf Coast Shire, Colac Otway Shire, and Borough of Queenscliffe. The region is home to Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung peoples, who have lived, worked, and cared for their Country and resources for many thousands of years.

Since 2011, the region's population has grown more than 28.6% – or 80,000 people – significantly faster than the rest of the state. Central to this growth is Geelong, Victoria's second largest city and one of the fastest growing regional cities in Australia.

This growth is expected to continue, with the region's population estimated to reach around 431,200 by 2036.



Figure 2 | Map of the Barwon region



## Industries in the region

The Barwon region is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Victoria, famous for its natural landscapes and coastal towns along the Great Ocean Road and the Bellarine Peninsula. In 2019, the region hosted upward of 2.5 million domestic and international visitors.

Historically, Barwon was known for manufacturing. The closure of large multinational firms, including Alcoa and Ford in 2014 and 2016 respectively, challenged the economic and social future of the region.

In the years since, Barwon has experienced an incredible rebound and accelerated growth. The economy has transitioned from a reliance on manufacturing to a more diversified range of industries. This has enabled growth across the region and boosted economic prosperity, employment, and population growth so that Barwon is now the largest regional contributor to total Victorian Gross Value Added.

## Outlook on jobs growth

The VSA 3 year employment projections show significant demand for workers in the region – with more than 10,530 additional new workers required in the 3 years between 2022 and 2025.

At least 7,590 workers will also be needed to replace retirements. The type of skills required by industry are becoming more complex. This highlights the need to ensure workers have the skills to meet industry’s evolving needs.

Estimates of total new workers for 2022–25 across the 6 key industries in Barwon are as follows:

- business, professional, and public administration services – 3,490
- construction – 1,520
- health and community services – 3,870
- manufacturing – 660
- visitor economy – 4,250
- education and training – 2,170



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



# Barwon challenges and opportunities

## Challenges

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



Figure 3 | Common priority skills needs across Barwon's major industries

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

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

Barwon's unemployment rates are among the lowest across the state. This suggests Barwon's workforce is close to full employment, which presents challenges for industry and is resulting in significant labour shortages across many sectors.

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

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

The Barwon Regional Skills Taskforce and industry roundtables identified a set of common priority skills requirements across all major industries in the Barwon region, as per Figure 3.



The Barwon Regional Skills Taskforce and industry roundtables raised 6 common challenges related to workforce skills and training in Barwon along with opportunities to address cross-cutting workforce and skills needs.

Table 1 | Workforce challenges and opportunities in Barwon

Challenge	Opportunity
Perceptions of jobs across the major industries	Promote the benefits and opportunities within key industries
Limited understanding of industry growth and career pathways	Broaden understanding of growth areas and career pathways within and across major industries
Alignment between education and training and workforce needs	Enhance industry involvement in planning and delivery of education and training
Skills to support sustainability	Build local skills and capabilities to support the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of the region
Inter and intra-sector workforce competition	Build opportunities to partner and collaborate on workforce attraction and retention across industries and within the region
Risk of a low-skilled workforce	Advocate the importance of skills development and support the promotion of life-long learning to ensure a future-fit workforce





The Barwon region has unique strengths and future opportunities.



## Opportunities

The Barwon region has significantly changed in recent years, but its strengths mean it is well-positioned to actively plan for and address challenges, and take up opportunities. The region's transition from manufacturing to a more diversified economy has contributed to accelerated growth, with greater economic prosperity, increased employment opportunities, and population growth.

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

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

- business, professional, and public administration
- construction
- education and training
- health care and community services
- manufacturing
- visitor economy

---

**Together, these 6 industries make up almost 17% of Barwon's total workforce, employing approximately 29,170 people and contributing more than \$2.8 billion to the local economy in 2021.**

---

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

There are also specific opportunities for growth in the region.

# Opportunities for growth

## Commonwealth Games

Geelong will be a regional host city for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, hosting several sport programs, including aquatics, beach volleyball, cricket T20, gymnastics, hockey, weightlifting and para powerlifting, and triathlon. This is a significant opportunity for investment in community infrastructure, sport facilities, housing, accommodation, and general site activations across the region.

## State Electricity Commission

The Victorian Government is bringing back the State Electricity Commission (SEC) to help drive down power bills and create thousands of jobs to enhance use of renewable energy like wind, hydro and solar, and to store it, such as with batteries. An SEC Centre of Training Excellence will be established to coordinate and accredit courses in clean energy, connecting with TAFEs, Registered Training Organisations, unions and the industry, supporting 6,000 positions for trainees and apprentices.

## Health

Work on the new Barwon Women's and Children's Hospital is underway, creating 1,500 direct and indirect jobs at the peak of construction. New jobs in health and related services will require significant skills and training to ensure the hospital meets the needs of Barwon and its neighbouring regions which access Barwon's health care and community services.

## Manufacturing

Hanwha Defense Australia's \$170 million Armoured Vehicle Centre of Excellence will be built at the Avalon Airport Industrial Precinct. This will further accelerate the rebound of the manufacturing sector in the Barwon region, creating more than 300 new design, engineering and manufacturing jobs in the region and positioning Geelong as the home of the state's increased defence capabilities.

## Clean economy

Barwon's established reputation as a manufacturing hub, as well as access to wind, hydro, and solar energy sources, provides ample opportunity for increased investment in zero emission technologies, creating jobs in manufacturing, maintenance, and operation of these technologies.

There is growing demand for lithium-ion batteries and several projects in the region are already underway or planned. These will require an extensive pipeline of skilled workers. Sustainable manufacturing across the region is supported by significant contribution from the Victorian Government to ManuFutures, Australia's unique advanced manufacturing innovation hub based within Deakin University's Future Economy Precinct.

## Visitor economy

More than 4,000 accommodation rooms are expected to be built across the region, alongside business and performing arts events facilities (including the new Geelong Convention Centre and Geelong Arts Centre redevelopment), which is expected to increase tourism and attract business events across the entire region. This investment will require a significant workforce that is not likely to be reflected in the forecasted demand for workers over the next 3 years.



New jobs in health and related services will require significant skills and training.

# Next steps

## The Barwon Regional Skills Taskforce identified next steps to address regional skills and workforce needs.

The VSA will seek to address some of these over the coming year, while others require coordinated action by industry, government, and the education sector. Next steps have been classified by how long it will take for benefits to be realised, immediate, medium term, or long term. An action plan will be developed in collaboration with the community.

## Immediate impact (1–2 years)

1. Broker connections across the region to lift the perception of Barwon's education and training opportunities and employment experiences across Barwon's major industries.
2. Targeted engagement with students, vulnerable and underrepresented communities, and industry to build awareness of education and training and career pathway opportunities.
3. Publication of industry data and trends for current and prospective students, parents, and career counsellors.
4. Collaboration across industry and education and training institutions to design and deliver industry-recognised short courses and micro-credentials.
5. Provision of data and insights to support workforce planning.
6. Promotion of micro-credential courses that can meet industry and employee skill development needs.
7. Design and delivery of micro-credential courses to upskill employees.





## Medium-term impact (2–5 years)

1. Support the Senior Secondary Pathways' reform agenda through facilitation of local opportunities to improve Vocational Education and Training (VET) within the region.
2. Expand engagement activities with students and their networks.
3. Develop and improve visibility of cross-industry career pathways.
4. Work with the VET Development Centre (VDC) and industry experts to support teacher training and development.
5. Leverage education and training facilities for student and employee upskilling opportunities.
6. Encourage industry and education providers to take a place-based approach to course design and delivery for skills and occupations unique to the Barwon region.
7. Plan and invest in short course development to build appropriate skills and capabilities to support environmental, social, and governance priorities of the Barwon region.
8. Implement the Clean Economy Workforce Development Strategy.
9. Advocate for ongoing workplace flexibility and policies that help brand the region as an ideal place to live and work.

## Longer-term impact (5+ years)

1. Promote the successes of industries or sectors in Barwon and appropriately recognise the value of 'everyday' jobs that enable other activity.
2. Facilitate recruitment and support activity for underrepresented cohorts.
3. Provide local insights to support the development of the annual Victorian Skills Plan.
4. Incentivise potential trainers to gain accreditation and enter the skills system.
5. Advocate to build better recognition of existing skills that enable more seamless transition across industries and sectors.
6. Identify success factors and implement shared recruitment pools across organisations where appropriate or feasible.
7. Future skill requirement planning and mapping.

# Barwon case studies

## Short courses to upskill the local hospitality industry

The Gordon Institute of TAFE in conjunction with Tourism Greater Geelong and the Bellarine have been working together to develop accredited short courses and micro-credentials to upskill the region's hospitality industry.

The training is designed and developed in consultation with industry partners to provide upskilling and career progression opportunities to help rebuild the industry and promote longevity within the workforce.

Online micro-credentials have been developed for entry level front-of-house and back-of-house workers, focusing on communication, conflict management and essential service skills.

## Geelong Tech School

The Geelong Tech School is a 'technology hub' that facilitates programs and working relationships that support the vital science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) skills required by industry. Regional business and industry are involved in the school's programs including providing real world scenarios for applied learning, sharing resources and collaborating in the design of teaching programs.

The Geelong Tech School is hosted by The Gordon Institute of TAFE on its city campus and works with schools in the Geelong local government area to deliver class visits and programs that provide students with access to the latest technologies, state-of-the-art facilities, and innovative learning opportunities.

With a clear focus on emerging and future skills, workplaces, and pathway opportunities the Geelong Tech School is a key training enabler for the Barwon region.





Published by the Victorian Skills Authority  
Level 3, 289 Wellington Parade South  
East Melbourne Victoria 3001  
[vsa.enquiries@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:vsa.enquiries@education.vic.gov.au)

June 2023

© The State of Victoria Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and  
Regions Victorian Skills Authority 2023

Unless indicated otherwise, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the State of Victoria as author. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding, including the Victorian Coat of Arms, the Victorian Government logo, the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) logo or the Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) logo. To view a copy of this licence, visit [creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

## Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please contact the Victorian Skills Authority at [vsa.enquiries@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:vsa.enquiries@education.vic.gov.au) This document is also available in accessible Word and PDF format at [skillsauthority.vic.gov.au](https://skillsauthority.vic.gov.au)

## Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you, but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication. While every effort has been made to ensure the currency, accuracy or completeness of the content, we endeavour to keep the content relevant and up-to-date and reserve the right to make changes as required. The Victorian Government, authors and presenters do not accept any liability to any person for the information (or the use of the information) which is provided or referred to in this publication.

## Images

All images in this document have been supplied with permission for use by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions and Visit Victoria, as well as local councils, TAFEs and industry.

## Non-English speakers

If you'd like to speak to us in your language, you can access free phone translation services by calling the National Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.



**Victorian  
Skills  
Authority**

**Victorian Skills Authority**

Level 3, 289 Wellington Parade South  
East Melbourne, Victoria, Australia 3002

E: [vsa.enquiries@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:vsa.enquiries@education.vic.gov.au)

[www.skillsauthority.vic.gov.au](http://www.skillsauthority.vic.gov.au)