



Loddon Campaspe 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 Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, Baraba Baraba, Ngurraillam, Wurundjeri and Yorta Yorta 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.

Loddon Campaspe Regional Skills Taskforce

The VSA acknowledges the time, contribution, and insights of the Loddon Campaspe 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 Loddon Campaspe regional economy and community.

Member	Organisation
Andrea Noonan	Bendigo Health
Brett Hosking	Grain Growers Association and Farmer
Dave Richardson	Bendigo Kangan Institute of TAFE
Deanne Armstrong	Committee for Echuca Moama
Dominique Trickey	Crossroads Town Planning
Julie Rudner	La Trobe University
Kate Nuttall	Don KR Castlemaine
Katheryn Mackenzie	Echuca, Moama and District Tourism Association
Luke Martin	Bendigo Trades Hall Council
Marnie Baker	Bendigo and Adelaide Bank
Mick Josey	Fairbrother
Nickola Allan	Maryborough District Health Services
Rachel Lee	Regional Development Victoria (Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions)
Roslyn Hames	Clear Dynamics
Steve Wroe	Daylesford Macedon Ranges Tourism
Sue Mills	Agnico Eagle

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

To access the latest data, readers are directed to the VSA employment forecast dashboard at: 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 Loddon Campaspe region

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

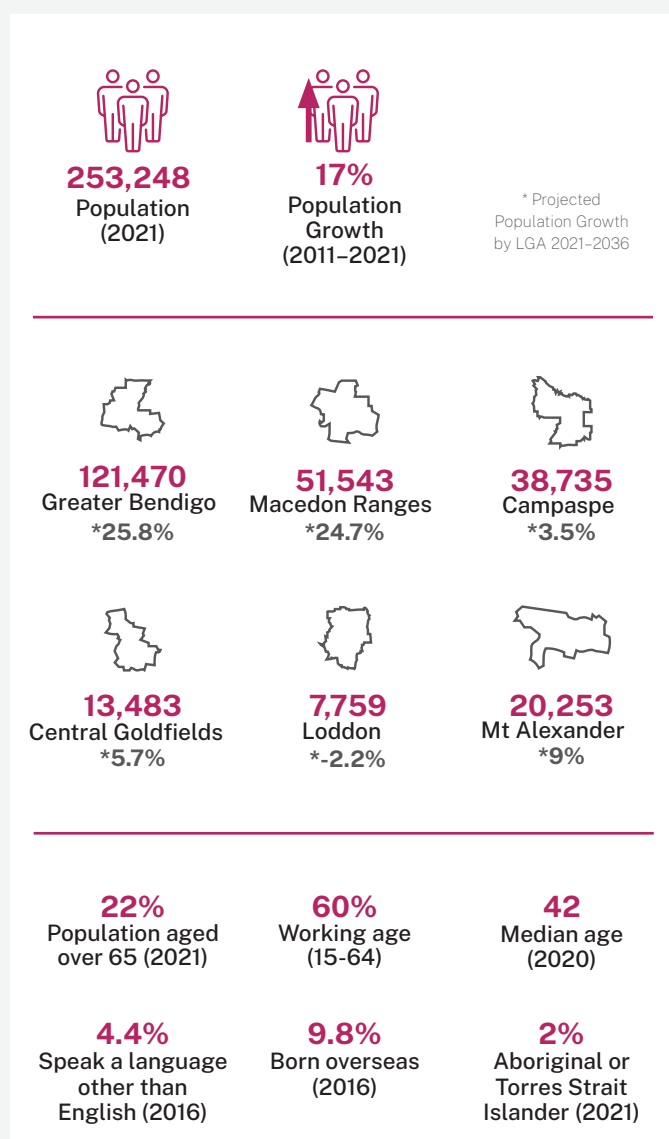


Figure 1 | Overview of the Loddon Campaspe region

The Loddon Campaspe region is situated in central Victoria with a population of more than 253,000 people. It encompasses the local government areas of Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Greater Bendigo, Loddon, Macedon Ranges and Mount Alexander. The region is home to Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, Baraba Baraba, Ngurraillam, Wurundjeri and Yorta Yorta 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 17% – 35,000 people – with Bendigo experiencing the largest total population increase with more than 20,000 new residents from 2011 to 2021.

This growth is expected to continue, with the region's population estimated to reach around 300,700 by 2036.

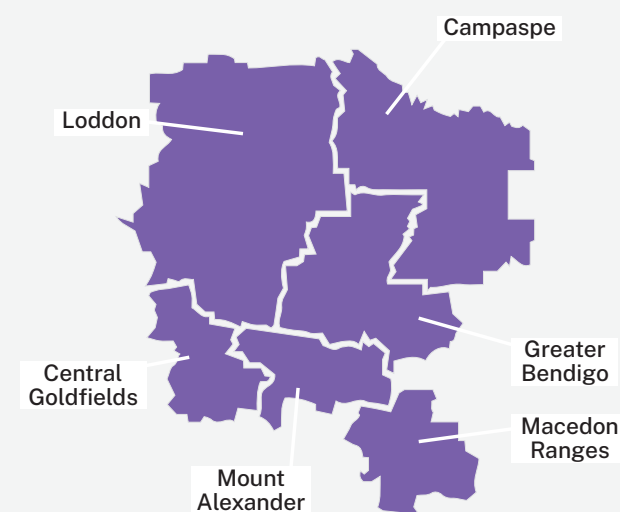


Figure 2 | Map of the Loddon Campaspe region



Industries in the region

Running through the centre of the region is the Employment and Innovation Corridor which connects Melbourne to Bendigo and through to Echuca. It provides road and fast rail connectivity through much of the region and is underpinned by enabling physical and digital infrastructure.

Loddon Campaspe has a well-established food and fibre sector that prides itself on its reputation as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy. The agricultural industry is experiencing intensification and adopting new innovations to drive productivity, which is changing the nature of skills and training required in the region.

Loddon Campaspe is home to Victoria's largest gold mine and the ground released for further gold exploration in 2021 is expected to generate significant economic growth and jobs in mining and exploration.

Outlook on jobs growth

The VSA's 3-year employment projections show significant demand for workers in the region – with more than 6,900 additional new workers required in the 3 years between 2022 and 2025.

At least 5,600 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 2022–2025 across the 7 key industries in Loddon Campaspe are as follows:

- cultural, creative and visitor economy – 2,650
- heavy industries – 730
- health and community services – 2,730
- infrastructure – 160
- food and fibre – 530
- business, professional, and public administration services – 2,490
- education and training – 1,260



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

Loddon Campaspe challenges and opportunities

Challenges

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

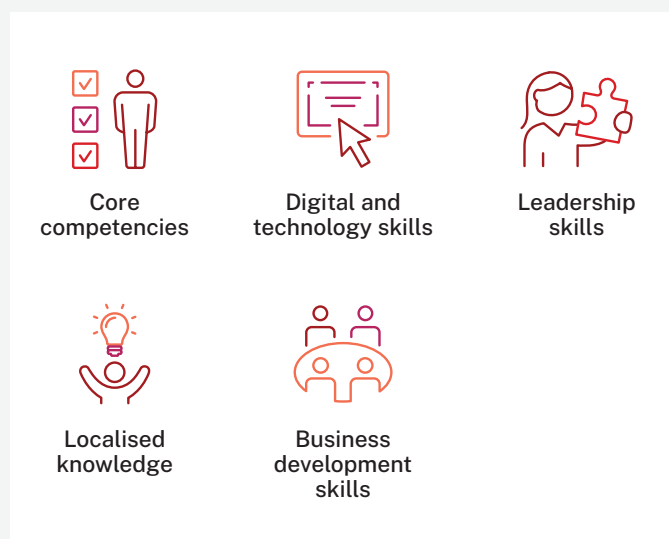


Figure 3 | Priority skills needs across Loddon Campaspe's major industries

Like other parts of Victoria, Loddon Campaspe 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.

Key to supporting Loddon Campaspe's continued success is the need for a skilled, future-proof workforce that can grow and develop with the region to meet the current, emerging, and future community and industry needs.

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

Feedback from the Loddon Campaspe 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 Loddon Campaspe Regional Skills Taskforce and industry roundtables identified a set of common priority skills requirements across all major industries in the Loddon Campaspe region as per Figure 3.



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

Table 1 | Workforce challenges and opportunities in Loddon Campaspe

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	Promote awareness of industry activity and associated career pathways
Alignment between education and training and workforce needs	Leverage industry experience to develop innovative training approaches
Barriers to accessing education and training	Identify and address the barriers to participation in education and training and transition to employment
Inter and intra-sector workforce competition	Promote greater inter and intra-sector collaboration amongst businesses
Risk of a low-skilled workforce	Increase opportunities for continual learning and development





There are opportunities to engage under-represented cohorts and increase workforce participation across major industries.



Opportunities

Employment growth has outpaced the state average in 7 (of 19) industries across the region and Loddon Campaspe's economic strength continues to make the region an attractive location for population and industry growth.

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

The Regional Taskforce identified 7 industries of focus within the Loddon Campaspe region:

- cultural, creative and visitor economy
- heavy industries
- health and community services
- infrastructure
- food and fibre
- business, professional, and public administration services
- education and training

The Loddon Campaspe region has unique strengths and future opportunities.

The health care and social assistance industry is the largest employer in Loddon Campaspe, employing about 18% of the workforce. This is followed by construction and manufacturing employing 10% of the workforce each.

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

There are also specific opportunities for growth in the region.

Opportunities for growth

Commonwealth Games

Bendigo will be a regional host city for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, hosting several sport programs, including cycling, lawn bowls and para lawn bowls, netball, squash, and basketball. 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 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.

Food manufacturing

Food manufacturing in the region is diverse and operations vary in size. Examples include Don KR (Castlemaine), Eagle Foods (Bendigo), Salute Oliva (Boort), and Eat Well Foods (Kyneton). Loddon Campaspe has a strong reputation for quality food product and is increasingly capitalising on the gains afforded by greater automation and intensification through the production process. This has allowed producers to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and maintain a high standard of food outputs to customers domestically and abroad.

Clean economy

As a region with many attractions relying on natural assets, the Loddon Campaspe region has a strong general awareness of climate change, energy efficiency and the need for environmentally safe practices in all areas of the economy. Embracing the opportunity to be a leader in the sustainably clean and circular economy space is a key strength and opportunity area for the region and sector as circular economy activities are likely to be intensified as Recycling Victoria enacts each of its 11 commitments for a smarter, cleaner Victoria.

Mining

Loddon Campaspe is a historic gold mining region sharing a deep history dating back to the Gold Rush. Today, the region is home to Victoria's largest gold mine, Fosterville. The ground released for further gold exploration in 2021 is expected to generate significant economic growth, and jobs in mining and exploration.

Existing collaboration and connection between organisations in this industry, such as through the Bendigo Manufacturing Group, the Minerals Council of Australia, and Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership, are a testament to the future mindedness of key players in the region to identify and capitalise on emerging opportunities in the sector.

Visitor economy

Bendigo as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy is recognised as a 'foodie and creative hub' with over 120 wineries and breweries, more than 395 small-scale, niche, and artisanal producers in the region and 16 regular community and farmers markets.

The towns of Bendigo, Echuca, Heathcote, and Mount Macedon were recognised in the 2022 Top Tourism Town Awards for their respective categories and the region has a strong, existing commitment to 'growing from within' while attracting the right investment into traditional and social infrastructure that will enable sustainable growth for current and future generations within the region.

Investment in an Indigenous Interpretive Garden in Central Goldfields through the Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund will foster recognition and respect of Dja Dja Wurrung culture and become a new and beautiful outdoor component of the visitor experience to the region.



The towns of Bendigo, Echuca, Heathcote, and Mount Macedon were recognised in the 2022 Top Tourism Town Awards for their respective categories.

Next steps

The Loddon Campaspe 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. Provide capability, organisational and administrative support to strengthen connections across the region between education, industry, and non-traditional experience pathways across Loddon Campaspe'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. Provide wider access to existing industry-specific training materials and facilities to prepare students and prospective employees for employment.
5. Collaboration across industry and education and training institutions to design and deliver industry-recognised short courses, including micro credentials.
6. Undertake explorative research to better understand the data, trends and factors affecting participation in education and training.
7. Prepare prospective students to enter formal learning through non-traditional program pathways.
8. Actively support the Bendigo Education Plan.
9. Provision of data and insights to support workforce planning.
10. Facilitate peer learning and cross-business mentoring.
11. Review and redesign recruitment processes to prioritise core (soft) skills, alongside technical competency.
12. Promotion of micro-credential courses that can meet industry and employee skill development needs.
13. 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 expertise to support teacher training and development.
5. Encourage industry and education providers to take a place-based approach to course design and delivery.
6. Highlight the opportunities and benefits of lifelong learning.
7. Advocate for simplifying participation pathways for workers in transition across industries or mature and retiring cohorts.
8. Shared recruitment pools across organisations where appropriate or feasible.
9. Increase access and provision of support for Aboriginal people to enter education, training, and employment through working closely with traditional owners.
10. Promote a culture of learning through establishing communities of practice around different industries, technological innovations, or skill level cohorts.

Longer-term impact (5+ years)

1. Promote the successes of industries and sectors in the Loddon Campaspe region and appropriately recognise the value of 'everyday' jobs that enable other activity.
2. Facilitate recruitment and support activity for underrepresented and non-traditional cohorts.
3. Provide local insights to support the development of the annual Victorian Skills Plan.
4. Facilitate a smooth flow of teachers between industry and training.
5. Partner with regional, community and other industry bodies to improve access to a holistic suite of support services for students completing their studies.
6. Advocate and support local initiatives to address housing accessibility challenges that are impacting participation in education and training, employment and upskilling of current and prospective learners and workers.
7. Future skill requirement planning and mapping.

Loddon Campaspe case studies

Energy Breakthrough Maryborough

Since 1991, Maryborough has hosted the Energy Breakthrough for students, teachers, parents, and local industry to work together to design and construct a vehicle or machine, or innovate on an existing machine.

Ranging from the design and construction, display, and presentation, and finally trials stages, the learning experience exposes participants to the opportunities of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM).

More than 300 teams from 150 schools participate each year to foster a community of passionate young innovators and showcase the Maryborough region as a centre for collaboration and technology.

Passions and Pathways

Passions and Pathways is a primary school-based program that aims to expose children to potential career pathways – especially those which may be considered non-traditional or with less visibility.

This program is hands on and connects students with real life business and entrepreneurial projects in order to start conversations and spark aspirations about what they would like to be when they grow up.

Not only for students, the program also works to coordinate teachers and industry as to how they can best support students in their training journey.

Notably, this program is founded upon self-discovery, core competencies (soft skills) and imagination which promotes an attitude of continual learning.





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Level 3, 289 Wellington Parade South
East Melbourne Victoria 3001
vsa.enquiries@education.vic.gov.au

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Authority**

Victorian Skills Authority

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

E: vsa.enquiries@education.vic.gov.au

www.skillsauthority.vic.gov.au