

# Local Jobs Forums

Different Times, Different Thinking, Different Action

Snapshot



**Jobs Victoria** held 16 **Local Jobs Forums** across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria from late July to early October 2022. We connected employers, employment service providers and community services to explore opportunities for inclusive employment collaboration, innovation and local action.



**Barwon** - Geelong  
**Central Highlands** – Ballarat  
**Eastern Metro** – Ringwood  
**Gippsland** - Traralgon  
**Goulburn** - Shepparton

**Great South Coast** –  
Warrnambool  
**Inner Metro** – Abbotsford  
**Loddon Campaspe** –  
Bendigo  
**Northern Metro** –  
Craigieburn

**Ovens Murray** – Wodonga  
**Southern Metro** – Frankston &  
Cranbourne  
**Western Metro** – Werribee, Sunshine &  
Melton  
**Wimmera Southern Mallee** – Horsham



**We had diverse local participation** from employers, community organisations, employment services, education and training organisations, Jobs Victoria partners, Local Government, State Government, Commonwealth Government and peak bodies.



Average of **78 external attendees** at each Forum



**Over 70 industry champions participated** in panel conversations. **Employee industry champions** included people who have overcome barriers to employment to secure jobs and build a career. Backgrounds included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, newly arrived migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with a disability, people who have had interaction with the Justice system, people experiencing mental health challenges, veterans and women over 45. **Employer industry champions** included leaders from small, medium and large businesses across a range of industries.



**Emerging themes** from the Forums are below, and we have captured supporting ideas for action.

- Changing attitudes and practices underpins inclusive employment
- Investing in supports in the workplace boosts employee retention
- Accessible and practical transport options are critical to engage workers
- Active support is needed to overcome hesitancy to enter the workforce and disengagement from the workforce
- Re-imagining traditional ways of working will help remove barriers to attracting workers
- Employers would value support to build more inclusive employment practices



## Important Benefits

The Forums delivered **beneficial outcomes**.



**Connected** employers with local employment services and strengthened local networks



**Enhanced** local employers' awareness of under and unemployed cohorts



**Identified** local barriers to employment and **generated** tangible strategies to tackle them and boost workforce participation



**Surfaced** innovative ideas to address acute labour shortages and encourage joined-up local responses



**Built** greater understanding of Jobs Victoria's support across every region of the State



## Important Projects

The Forums have catalysed **Priority Workforce Projects** generating employment opportunities across Victoria:



### Latrobe Valley Renewables Project

The Latrobe Valley Authority and Solar Victoria will support 130 people from priority cohorts into jobs in renewable energy and related supply chain industries



### 'Opportunity Wyndham' Partnership

Supporting 100 local people from priority cohorts into jobs in horticulture and land management, agribusiness, food processing, health care and social assistance



### Youth Activating Youth (YAY)

Supporting 60 young people aged 16-29 from multicultural backgrounds to transition into ongoing jobs



### NORTHLINK

Supporting 150 local people from priority cohorts into jobs in manufacturing and related sectors



## Important Momentum

We're using the Forums as a springboard for **action**.



**Developing** bespoke local solutions for acute labour shortages surfaced through the Forums



**Connecting** local employers with Jobs Victoria partners to address immediate employment needs



**Designing** a future suite of Jobs Victoria products, programs and services to spark and support local employment outcomes



**Continuing** to showcase innovative and inclusive employers



**Leveraging** Forum outputs to inform State-wide policy development

We heard some **inspiring stories and insights** from our industry champions, drawing on their **lived experiences** of confronting and overcoming barriers to employment.

What if we changed our mindset from 'screening out' to 'screening in' of applicants?

It not enough to connect with community leaders. We need to help them engage within their community.

People who have experienced employment barriers are productive and committed when they get a job.

It's not about giving someone a job, it's about finding a future leader for your business.

As an organisation we're always looking at what we can do to help empower people and support them through their careers

Employing a few people from a community group we previously hadn't been in touch with has really opened the door for us to lots of new workers from that community.

Remember people aren't just looking for a job, they're looking to make a difference to their life. Purpose matters.

Sometimes businesses don't know who is 'out there'. Some awareness raising would be helpful.

Sometimes you just need someone who will take the time to listen to your story, and not treat you as a number.

Anyone can make it with the right people around them.

Forum participants explored the **opportunities and challenges** we face in overcoming local barriers to employment, and actions we can undertake to create local jobs and strengthen employment pathways. A summary of **themes** and **ideas for action** is outlined below and overleaf.

## Theme

## Challenges & Opportunities - Drivers of Change

## Ideas for Local & System-wide Action

### Changing attitudes and practices underpins inclusive employment

- Assumptions about priority cohorts may drive unhelpful biases and perceptions about an individual jobseeker's skills and abilities. Need to focus on the person.
- Typical recruitment practices, such as requesting written applications, can impact individuals from priority cohorts applying due to language barriers, limited access to technology or a disability.
- Alternative available include non-bias recruitment techniques and inclusive technologies, that could enable more jobseekers from priority cohorts to apply.
- Priority cohorts could also be aided by a return towards more face-to-face recruitment processes, providing more informal interview forums, and more focus on job seeker attitude and potential.

- Reduce reliance on resumes as a recruitment tool, with increased focus on attitude and potential
- Introduce recruitment technologies to minimise hiring biases
- Promoting job success stories on social media
- Job fairs with employers conducting on-the-spot interviews
- Business-wide cultural awareness training to develop new mindsets and better understanding

### Investing in supports in the workplace boosts employee retention

- Staff turnover costs employers time and money, with the loss of skills and knowledge.
- Inclusive employment can drive higher retention rates which has many benefits, including stronger workplace cultures and enhanced recruitment efficiencies.
- Direct and tailored support to new employees (especially those from priority cohorts) can greatly increase retention by helping new starters feel valued, safe and welcomed.
- Employers have reported needing further assistance from Jobs Victoria to develop and implement more effective support programs for more diverse workforces.

- Support services to build business capability to engage a more diverse workforce, including wrap around services for supervisors and employees
- Regional mentoring programs, especially for junior or new employees to the industry
- Leadership mentors from priority cohorts

### Accessible and practical transport options are critical to engage workers

- Limited access to public transport is a barrier to employment for many cohorts, particularly in regional and outer suburban areas with fewer public transport options.
- Access to and ability to use private transport (e.g. cars) can be limited in priority cohorts. This may prevent people applying for positions that can't be accessed by public transport.
- Providing targeted, localised transport solutions can help ease short term challenges and complement longer term infrastructure projects.

- Employer specific transport, e.g. dedicated buses for workers in employment hubs, coordinated use of ride sharing apps for multiple employees
- Aligning shift times with local public transport timetables
- Public transport providers to review routes and timetables to ensure services are available to employment hubs and training facilities

## Theme

## Challenges & Opportunities - Drivers of Change

## Ideas for Local & System-wide Action

**Active support is needed to overcome hesitancy to enter the workforce and disengagement from the workforce**

- COVID-19 has amplified hesitancy to join the workforce for some people, resulting in further disengagement from the labour market.
- A job provides a range of personal benefits, which need to be promoted to overcome hesitancy and disengagement.
- Building an individuals' confidence, self-esteem and understanding of job roles will help to overcome hesitancy, creating a potential source of new employees for businesses.
- Using networks, community social media channels, and accessing trusted partnerships between employers, community groups and community leaders can improve effectiveness of engagement.
- 'Hard to reach' community members look to trusted sources and networks for information, opportunities and pathways into work.

- Leverage existing community networks to help create awareness of local employment opportunities and available support
- Targeted social media campaigns, using community channels, for groups who may be disengaged from the workforce
- Pre-employment industry training programs and micro-credentials
- Enhance employer engagement in schools' careers guidance, emphasising opportunities offered through apprenticeships and traineeships

**Re-imagining traditional ways of working will help remove barriers to attracting workers**

- Traditional work design and job requirements may be presenting barriers for jobseekers who have specific needs to manage (e.g. family, caring responsibilities and education).
- Not all jobseekers are looking for full time work. Job sharing and adopting more flexible arrangements could attract other different cohorts of jobseekers, without affecting productivity.
- Employers that have adopted more flexible processes, job design and recruitment practices, have accessed a new pool of talent that wasn't considered suitable in the 'old mindset'.
- Challenging some traditional norms could also enable employers to more easily and suitably fill job vacancies and benefit from the advantages for a more diverse workforce.

- Introduce more flexible work hours and shift times where possible, to provide opportunities for jobseekers with differing needs, aspirations and commitments
- Provide infrastructure to support daily lives, such as onsite childcare and prayer rooms
- Create job sharing opportunities

**Employers would value support to build more inclusive employment practices**

- Employers recognise the value of developing their own solutions to address workforce shortages that suits their particular needs.
- Many employers, especially small businesses, reported they have limited time and resources to invest in developing more inclusive practices because of existing time pressures.
- Employers see great potential in more support being offered by Jobs Victoria with the view of achieving better employment outcomes through genuine partnership.
- Support could include tailored solutions to align to the unique needs of different industries and employer types.
- Employers in retail and hospitality have identified mental health support and customer service training (especially for young people) as key areas for support that could enable them to deploy more inclusive employment practices.

- Increase businesses awareness of available supports, particularly for small-medium enterprises through networking events and forums
- Support for informal connection opportunities including employment centres and employer fairs

Jobs Victoria has a vibrant partner ecosystem in all regions of the State, and were represented at all our local Jobs Forums making positive, productive and insightful contributions. The partner ecosystem will be vital for us to pursue the ideas and initiatives emerging from the Forums.



Each Forum incorporated industry champion panels, table-based ideation and local networking.





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