

Skills shortages identified during a turbulent two years in the Riverina – issued
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- **Charles Sturt partners with Regional Development Australia Riverina for Riverina Skills Study**
- **The study was conducted over the last two years and identifies skills shortages in the region**
- **Results to be released at Charles Sturt in Wagga Wagga on Tuesday 12 October**

The results of the Riverina Skills Study will be revealed and show the extent of the skills shortage in the region.

The study was conducted by [Regional Development Australia \(RDA\) Riverina](#) and was partially funded by Charles Sturt University's [AgriPark](#) Seed Fund.

The results of the collaboration between the University and RDA are to be revealed at Charles Sturt in Wagga Wagga on Tuesday 12 October, with special guests in attendance.

More than 164 survey respondents, eight focus group participants and seven interview participants provided feedback through surveys, focus groups and one-on-one interviews.

The skills study aimed to understand what skills are in short supply, what future skills will be needed and collaborations necessary to deliver solutions to meet the projected growth of the region.

Charles Sturt Director of External Engagement in Wagga Wagga and Albury-Wodonga Ms Samantha Beresford said the University was proud to be involved in an initiative that delivers an important assessment for the region.

“The RDA has shown tremendous leadership in highlighting key issues and engaging industry and community in this important conversation,” she said.

“As an anchor institute in the Riverina, it is important that the University has a deep understanding of how we can help address skills shortages and workforce development to ensure the prosperity and growth of this wonderful region.”

CEO and Director of Regional Development for RDA Riverina Ms Rachel Whiting said the collaboration with the University provided a model to use with other regional universities.

“We are very excited to be able to deliver the work that was conducted over the last two years,” she said.

“This support (by Charles Sturt University) demonstrates the importance of the research presented in the Riverina Skills Study.”

The top five industries to report difficulties were accommodation and food services, agriculture, forestry and fishing, health care and social assistance, manufacturing and professional, scientific and technical services, according to 78 per cent of respondents.

An average of 48 per cent of vacancies in the past 12 months were unable to be filled with hospitality workers, health professionals, farm, forestry and garden workers, engineering ICT and science technicians and design, engineering, science and transport professionals cited as being difficult to find.

Business owners believed the main reasons positions remained vacant was due to a lack of qualified or experienced candidates or candidates unwilling to live and work in regional areas.

Almost 80 per cent of respondents felt that soft skills, including communication, teamwork, people skills, time management and problem solving, were important when hiring new staff.

Participants felt a focus in the region needed to be placed on improved youth retention, education, training and upskilling, addressing the gender segregation of the workforce and utilising the skilled migrant workforce.

Managing Director of [Proway Livestock Equipment](#) Mr Paul Gianniotis was an industry participant in the study.

He said the value of the report is that it collects factual data from industries that indicates the challenges being faced by regional businesses in the Riverina.

“While the results of the report will be no surprise to those in industry, it clearly highlights where the issues are being experienced for a considerable time now and our proposals to resolve them,” he said.

Mr Gianniotis said he hopes private and public sectors use the findings of this study to enhance previous initiatives and implement new ones to address the skills shortage in the long term.

“The most challenging aspect of this exercise will be to act on the recommendations provided within the report,” he said.

“This report goes a long way towards making these next steps in this journey.”

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