

## LOW UNEMPLOYMENT RATES NO CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION IN RIVERINA

The latest unemployment data released by the National Skills Commission shows unemployment in the Riverina remains low, with an average of 2.4% across the region. The highest rates were recorded in the Hay and Narrandera Shires (3.7%) with the lowest rates recorded in the Bland Shire (1.4%) and Lockhart Shire (1.5%).

Overall, unemployment rose slightly in the March quarter, but the rate is still one of the lowest recorded in the past decade. RDA Riverina CEO and Director of Regional Development Rachel Whiting says it's no cause to celebrate, however, as the issue is that the Riverina has more jobs than people to fill them.

"In 2020, we surveyed Riverina employers and found that almost half could not find the staff they need and left roles unfilled, while almost 80% had trouble recruiting.

"This comes down to several factors including our ageing workforce and industry increasingly needing more workers. For example, we have up to 8000 construction jobs across the region and neighbouring regions and not enough skilled workers to meet that need.

"For the past 5 years, RDA Riverina has focused on developing strategies that will help meet the medium and long-term employment needs of the Riverina."

Working with businesses to establish their needs and develop programs to assist them, RDA Riverina has developed [Country Change](#) to attract people from other places in Australia, [Grow Our Own](#) to build the skills of young people from within the region, [JobsRiverina](#) to help job seekers easily find work opportunities and [Skilled Migration](#) to help attract migrants to fill employers' needs.

In 2021, RDA Riverina became a 'Backbone Coordinator' for the NSW Government's \$3 million Growing Regions of Welcome (GROW) program designed to help new migrants and refugees in Western Sydney find new opportunities to live and work in the regions.

"Leeton and Temora are both pilot towns for the Growing Regions of Welcome program in the Riverina, which will not only help address some of our skills shortages but also add to the cultural fabric of our communities. It is our hope that the Riverina becomes a prime choice for overseas workers.

"While it's definitely a good thing that unemployment rates remain low, we need to consider the much broader employment problem we face here and continue to do all we can to bring skilled workers to the Riverina and grow our own talent and opportunities."

- ENDS -

**MEDIA NOTE: For more information or to arrange interviews, contact RDA Riverina CEO and Director of Regional Development Rachel Whiting on 0429 444 213. Read more about the National Skills Commission's March Quarter figures [here](#).**

