

**26 JULY 2024**

## **UNEMPLOYMENT EASES IN JUNE**

According to the latest employment figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for June 2024, the monthly unemployment rate in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie eased back above 2 percent, whilst the Hunter Valley dropped below 5 percent.

The Newcastle and Lake Macquarie monthly unemployment rate rose to 2.4 percent, up from 1.7 percent in May, whilst the rate in the Hunter Valley fell to 4.5 percent, down from 5.1 percent in May.

Despite the fall in unemployment in the Hunter Valley, the overall unemployment rate for the region also eased from 3.1 percent to 3.3 percent. This remains well below the rates recorded for NSW, which rose to 3.9 per cent, and Australia, which rose to 4.1 percent.

Business Hunter CEO, Bob Hawes said the figures showed there was a loss of 3,700 jobs across the region in June, adding to the 10,400 lost in May, and most of these were full-time roles.

“Despite this loss of roles, the data still suggests the regional labour market remains relatively tight, but perhaps on the verge of levelling off or even softening,” he said.

The region’s overall participation rate is 62.7 percent, which is well below the national rate of 66.8 percent.

“The low unemployment rates continue to be impacted by volatility in the participation rate, which masks the loss of positions over recent months,” said Mr Hawes.

“The participation rate fell again in the Hunter Valley, from 62.2 percent in May, to 58.1 percent in June and had the rate not dropped, the unemployment would have been worse. We’re continuing to see signs that job seekers are withdrawing from the market outside of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie and we suspect issues like travel, housing and skills and experience mismatch are contributing to this.”

The pool of unemployed people remained relatively stable for a further month at around 12,000 people.

Mr Hawes said this was “not a significant number when you consider this pool was almost double, prior to Covid in early 2020”.

The latest Jobs and Skills Australia Internet Vacancy Index for June 2024 fell slightly to 5,583 positions, compared with the 5,800 roles on offer in May.

“While this represents a slowdown, given the figure was nearly 7,000 around 12 months ago, workforce demand continues from business and sectors across the region that continue to do well. We know there are also many that are struggling, as consumers and businesses grapple with cost of living challenges, and this would be influencing the drop in demand of businesses placing ads for new employees,” Mr Hawes said.

The regions youth market (15 to 24 year olds) continues to show resilience with the overall unemployment dropping from 6.5 percent in May, to 5.2 percent in June. There was growth in the number of roles and most of these were full time.

“The continued relative strength in employment in the youth market is a healthy sign and hopefully the training and the experience this cohort is receiving augers well for stepping up into the future,” Mr Hawes said.

For interviews, please contact **Bob Hawes: 0418 496 745**