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Hunter youth unemployment three times lower than national average

The region's peak business group, **Business Hunter** observes that the region's monthly youth unemployment rate (15 to 24 year olds), continues to significantly outperform the nation.

While the rate increased from 3.1 percent in November to 4.7 percent in December, it remains nearly three times lower than the national figure of 14.1 percent.

Business Hunter CEO, Bob Hawes observed that "This is quite remarkable when you consider how the region has historically struggled to employ youth at rates comparable to the overall working population."

"It's worth noting that November and December are typically good months for part-time work, thanks to seasonal demand. However, even with that factor, the Hunter's youth unemployment rate is still remarkably low compared to the national average," he added.

Mr Hawes said tightness in the overall job market was likely a primary driver.

"It's rare nowadays to visit an organisation's website or a shopping centre and not see job postings. Sometimes, we're seeing businesses hiring people without the experience they're looking for, which can affect productivity, but it's also opening doors for young people who otherwise might not have had these opportunities. Coupled with this are the incentives for training through TAFE and other providers, which enable people to upskill concurrently," said Mr Hawes.

The overall monthly unemployment rate recorded in the Hunter region fell to 2.6 percent in December from 2.8 percent in November and is now 1.2 percentage points below the NSW rate, at 3.8 percent.

Despite little change in the overall figures across the region, the unemployment rate in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie fell from 2.5 percent in November to 1.9 percent in December.

"The current Newcastle and Lake Macquarie unemployment rate remains low by historical standards and has reached this level or lower on only three other monthly occasions, all in the last 18 months, since this series began in 1998.

"This indicates the strength of the local employment market. It's a far cry from the pandemic related 10.9 percent unemployment peak in June 2020," said Mr Hawes.

Unemployment in the Hunter Valley eased from 3.4 percent in November to 3.8 percent in December.

The number of job ads based on the Jobs and Skills Australia Internet Vacancy Index for December took a big dive falling from 5,546 in November to 4,770 in December, a drop of 14%.

Mr Hawes said “the fall is consistent with seasonal drops this time of year, as activity to employ takes a break from Christmas and the New Year holiday period.”

“The ongoing trend of a tight labour market could mean businesses seeking additional capacity over the holiday period could have experienced difficulties in finding new staff. On the other hand, people looking for work will have continued to experience a fertile market if they have the skills and experience businesses are looking for.”

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