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Seasonal employment improves prospects for young jobseekers

An improvement in youth employment figures is providing a more positive outlook for young Hunter jobseekers heading into the Christmas season.

While the general unemployment rate across the Hunter remained steady in October at 4 per cent, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) monthly Labour Force figures showed improvement in the youth cohort (15 to 24 year olds) – with the regional unemployment rate dropping from 11.6 per cent to 7.6 per cent in October and the total number employed increasing by 4,300.

Business Hunter CEO Bob Hawes said the uplift represented a welcome turnaround.

“We had been observing a slow deterioration of the unemployment rate for youth from June to September so it is good to see what is likely to be the seasonal pick-up of employment as we move towards Christmas,” Mr Hawes said.

“The improvement in the youth rate was on the back of a jump in the participation rate, which means young people entering the workforce or re-joining it were able to find work.

“The challenge will be in maintaining the trend beyond the holiday season.”

Mr Hawes said that while unemployment remained steady for the Hunter region in October, monthly volatility within the figures suggested ongoing instability within the local labour market.

In the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie statistical area, the unemployment rate has dropped from 4.9 per cent in July to 3.7 per cent in October, but it rose from 2.7 per cent to 4.4 per cent across the rest of the Hunter Valley over the same period.

The ABS reported the regional labour force – the number of people either in work or looking for work – recovered in October, rising to 371,100 from 363,600 in September, as both total employment and workforce participation rates improved.

“The increased workforce activity was reflected in a stabilisation of the number of jobs advertised online, with the Jobs and Skills Australia Internet Vacancy Index barely moving from September to October,” Mr Hawes said.

Internet job vacancies in the region have continued to fall over the past three years, and are down by 26.8 per cent or 1,926 positions, since October 2022.

“The sharpest decline has been in the number of ads for clerical and administrative workers, labourers and sales workers, suggesting that employer demands in these areas are largely being met,” Mr Hawes said.

“The decline is less marked for professional and managerial roles, which matches our feedback from business about the difficulties they are having in sourcing people with higher-level education qualifications.”

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