

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

First Nations Guidelines: South West

Increasing income and employment opportunities in the South West from electricity infrastructure projects

May 2024



Acknowledgement of Country



Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

First Nations Guidelines: South West

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Foreword

The South West First Nations Working Group acknowledges the various Aboriginal clans and language groups throughout New South Wales and their continued connection to their land, waters, skies and communities.

The Wiradjuri, Barkandji, Yorta Yorta, Baraba Baraba, Wemba Wemba, Wadi Wadi, Madi Madi, Nari Nari, Dadi Dadi, Kureinji and Yitha Yitha people have cultivated and sustained a deep connection with the land, waters and skies that is central to our spiritual identity, and we have maintained this connection despite the devastating impacts of colonisation and forced removal. Although we are individual communities with our own unique histories, there is strength in unity. Through a shared voice and collective action, we can forge a more resilient region, evident in economic, social and environmental aspects, all while upholding our cultural values.

As representatives of our Aboriginal communities these guidelines recognise our rights and ambitions to be involved in and contribute to the state's developing renewable energy system. We are best positioned to advocate for our goals and aspirations and look forward to working with Roadmap entities and proponents to discuss how this can be achieved.

We are deeply proud of our region and recognise the important role our communities will play in driving New South Wales towards a cleaner, renewable energy system. As such, these guidelines provide a resource to support meaningful engagement with the Aboriginal communities in the South West Renewable Energy Zone. The information outlined in this document has been developed by the working group, made up of community members representing key community-run organisations and government agencies within the South West Renewable Energy Zone.

These guidelines are a strong foundation for the working group to advocate for their communities and achieve shared goals of long-term employment, local business development and increased skills capacity, to collectively share in the economic benefits offered by the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. It is vital active participation and communication between working group members, local Aboriginal community members, proponents and Roadmap entities is prioritised in the planning and delivery of energy infrastructure developments in the region. The working group is motivated to work with other key stakeholders to ensure that shared goals are reached. Targets reflect the working group's priorities for local Aboriginal people and businesses, and respect Traditional Owners' desire to be proactive in decision-making for their land, waters, skies and resources.

The working group acknowledges the efforts of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water in ensuring the region-specific guidelines are built on a foundation of engagement and consultation with the Aboriginal community. This is fundamental to building a collaborative and constructive relationship for implementing the First Nations Guidelines under the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* and achieving the long-term objectives of the Roadmap.

South West First Nations Working Group

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1 Introduction

The NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (the Roadmap) is the state's 20-year plan to transform the electricity system into one that is cheap, clean and reliable.

The Roadmap establishes an integrated, whole of system approach to transform the state's electricity system by attracting, securing and coordinating private investment to develop the necessary infrastructure. This involves the investment in transmission, energy generation, storage and firming infrastructure as ageing coal fired generation plants retire over the coming decades.

The Roadmap is enabled by the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* (EII Act). The EII Act has long term objects to increase employment and income opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in New South Wales and to promote consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal Traditional Owners of land on which electricity infrastructure projects are proposed to be constructed and operate.

1.1 Purpose of the First Nations Guidelines

The purpose of the First Nations Guidelines is to set out the expectations for increasing employment and income opportunities for Aboriginal peoples and communities in the construction and operation of new electricity infrastructure projects in New South Wales (NSW) delivered under the Roadmap.

There are 2 parts to the First Nations Guidelines, detailed below:

1.1.1 General guidelines

The *First Nations Guidelines: Increasing income and employment opportunities from electricity infrastructure projects* provide details about requirements for and approaches to consultation and negotiation with local Aboriginal communities.

1.1.2 Region-specific guidelines

The region-specific guidelines outline key socio-demographic information about the regions and the communities. They provide guidance on engagement with local Aboriginal communities, and emphasise the communities' key priority areas for employment and income opportunities.

Each renewable energy zone (REZ) declared under the EII Act will have its own region-specific guidelines.

1.2 Scope of the South West guidelines

These guidelines have been developed under section 4 of the EII Act and require energy infrastructure proponents to consult and negotiate with local Aboriginal communities about opportunities for increasing employment and income. It is expected that any commitments made will be met by proponents.

While the details in region-specific guidelines are primarily focused on achieving economic and employment outcomes, proponents are not prevented from working with the local Aboriginal community to support other outcomes that have importance for communities.

These guidelines do not replace other consultation obligations with Aboriginal people and communities under NSW and Commonwealth legislation concerning cultural heritage, environmental, social, or other impacts of proposals.

Proponents must exercise due diligence to understand and meet all relevant legislative requirements for proposed projects to ensure consultation with Aboriginal people and communities addresses all relevant matters of concern. If necessary, parties should seek their own independent legal advice.

1.2.1 Introduction to the South West First Nations Working Group

A South West First Nations Working Group (the working group) was established consisting of South West local Aboriginal community representatives. These representatives are the Elders, various knowledge-holders, elected representatives from Aboriginal community groups, and other organisations that provide support and services to the various Aboriginal communities within that region. The working group was established for the purposes of contributing to the development and co-design of the region-specific guidelines, to ensure they reflect the aspirations of the local communities.

The goals, targets and aspirations outlined in this document have been identified by the working group as priority matters to strengthen economic outcomes for the local Aboriginal community. In addition, the guidelines outline how the local Aboriginal communities wish to be engaged with, and how they want to participate in Roadmap activities.

For further details on the working group's purpose, objectives, and membership, please refer to section 3, 'Engaging with the South West First Nations Working Group'.

1.3 Review

The Minister may amend the First Nations Guidelines from time to time, in consultation with the working group.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water will review the First Nations Guidelines at least every 2 years and will update the guidelines in consultation with the working group if required, to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate for the local Aboriginal community.

2 South West

The South West region of New South Wales is situated around Hay on the lands of the Wiradjuri, Barkandji, Yorta Yorta, Baraba Baraba, Wemba Wemba, Wadi Wadi, Madi Madi, Nari Nari, Dadi Dadi, Kureinji and Yitha Yitha peoples.

Providing a source of life and sustenance to the land and its people, the Murrumbidgee River flows through Balranald, Hay and Murrumbidgee. The Aboriginal people of these lands continue to maintain significant cultural and spiritual connection to the land, its waters and skies. The area is also known for its strong agricultural history, with wheat, livestock, rice and fruits growing well in the region. Further, the Flat Plains of Hay continue to attract travellers from across the country.

The former Minister for Energy and Environment formally declared the South West REZ on Friday 5 November 2021 (Figure 1).

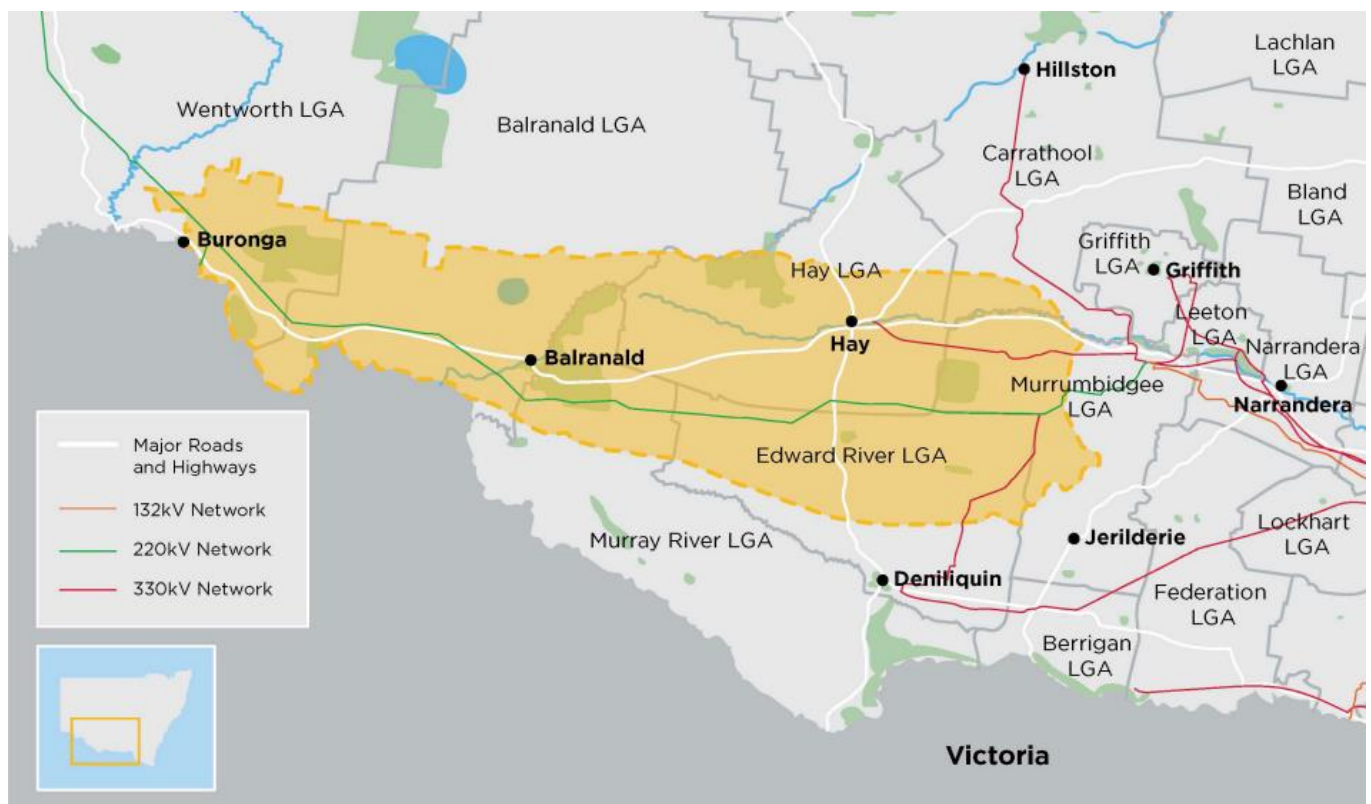


Figure 1: Local government areas in the South West REZ region

The local government areas (LGAs) within the South West REZ region are:

- Balranald
- Carrathool
- Edward River
- Hay
- Murray River
- Murrumbidgee
- Wentworth.

Figure 2 shows the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) boundaries that sit across the South West REZ. LALC boundary lines can be used to visualise the Local Aboriginal Land Council areas within New South Wales, as established under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (NSW).¹ Boundary lines differentiate the many different Aboriginal nation groups, clans or communities across New South Wales. However, it should be noted that the boundary lines on the map may not necessarily align with traditional or cultural connections to Country.

The LALC boundary map may be helpful for proponents and other entities to identify a LALC when engaging, planning or proposing a project under the Roadmap.

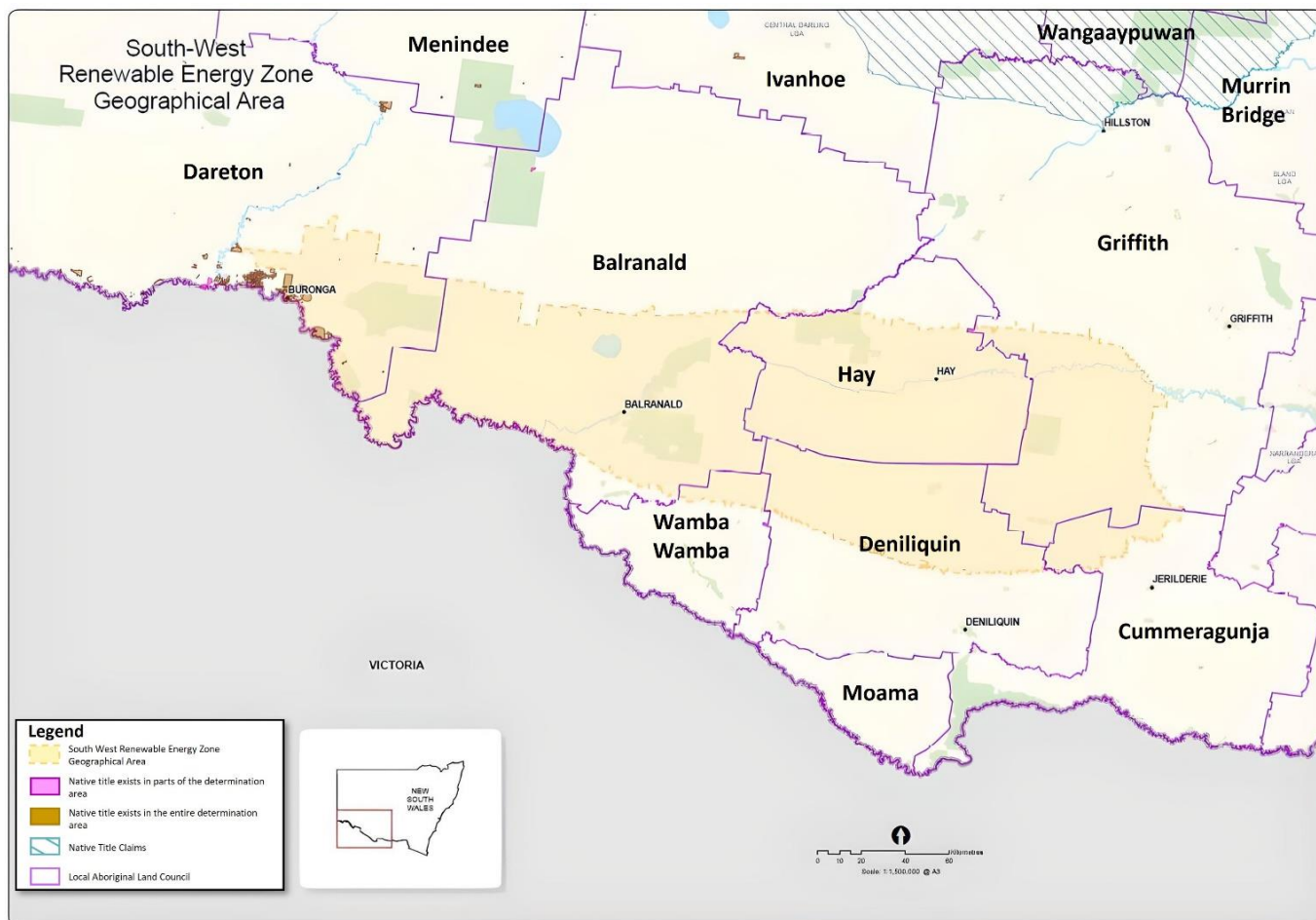


Figure 2: Local Aboriginal Land Council boundaries and Native Title claims and determinations in the South West region

¹ *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (NSW) Part 1 section 4.

2.1 About the Aboriginal community

2.1.1 Aboriginal community profile²

The data below is from the 2021 Census, the latest publicly available at the time of development of this document. The data relates to Edward River, Hay, Balranald, Wentworth, Murray River and Murrumbidgee LGAs only, and is provided to give a general overview of the Aboriginal statistics for the region. Further data may be obtained on these and other LGAs within the REZ by visiting the [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#).

According to the 2021 Census:

- Of the 33,849 residents, 2,193 or 6.5% said they had Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origins, or both.
- The Aboriginal community is significantly younger than the non-Aboriginal population, with a median age of 27 versus 47 years.
- The median income of Aboriginal adults over 15 years of age was about \$519 a week, compared to \$729 for non-Aboriginal adults aged over 15.
- The labour force participation rate among Aboriginal adults over 15 years of age stands at 53.3%, slightly below the corresponding rate of 63.2% among non-Aboriginal adults over 15.
- The total number of Aboriginal residents attending an education institution is 775 (35% of the Aboriginal population) compared to 6,732 (21% of the non-Aboriginal population).

2.1.2 Aboriginal organisations and groups

Listed below is a brief range of community organisations, businesses and government agencies that provide direct employment, training and social support and services to local Aboriginal people and communities within the South West region.

Aboriginal community organisations and businesses

- Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs)
 - Balranald LALC
 - Dareton LALC
 - Griffith LALC
 - Hay LALC
- Nari Nari Tribal Council
- Barkandji Native Title Registered Native Title Body Corporate (RNTBC)
- Local Aboriginal community working parties and/or advisory groups
- Privately owned and recognised Aboriginal businesses as identified by the working group

² Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile (Edward River LGA12730, Hay LGA13850, Balranald LGA10300, Wentworth LGA18200, Murray River LGA15520 and Murrumbidgee LGA15560).

- Riverina Murray Regional Alliance (RMRA)
- Workforce Australia Employment Services providers

State-wide organisations

- NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC)
- NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (NSW ICC)

Government agencies and entities

- NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- Department of Regional NSW, including Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services
- Premier's Department (Aboriginal Affairs NSW)
- NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, including the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the NSW Environment Protection Authority
- NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, including Crown Lands
- National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Training Services NSW
- TAFE NSW
- Aboriginal Housing Office

3 Engaging with the South West First Nations Working Group

These guidelines have been co-designed with the South West First Nations Working Group. Through consultation and discussion, the working group identified key goals and aspirations on behalf of their communities that proponents should consider when planning for and submitting projects under the Roadmap. The goals and aspirations detailed below are designed to help proponents and Roadmap entities understand the needs of local Aboriginal communities in the South West when engaging, negotiating, and consulting with them. They are intended to be built upon over time to remain relevant and appropriate to community priorities.

3.1 Goals and aspirations of the South West First Nations Working Group

The Aboriginal communities in the region include the Wiradjuri, Barkandji, Yorta Yorta, Baraba Baraba, Wemba Wemba, Wadi Wadi, Madi Madi, Nari Nari, Dadi Dadi, Kureinji and Yitha Yitha peoples, who are seeking accountability and actionability from proponents when engaging about delivering projects under the Roadmap. They welcome proactive and meaningful engagement and look forward to participating in conversations about practical pathways to achieve goals and aspirations.

The working group is looking to promote constructive relationships with proponents, and other Roadmap entities, to increase localised benefits that may be provided under the Roadmap. The working group is especially focused on ensuring local Aboriginal communities are equipped with the necessary skills to participate and excel in such opportunities. The working group recognises that economic prosperity for the community is best achieved through participation and involvement of Aboriginal people at all levels of decision making. Thus, the working group will advocate for increased involvement in decisions that directly affect them in relation to the delivery of the Roadmap in the South West REZ.

The goals and aspirations outlined below are centred on enabling empowerment and uplift of local Aboriginal communities to participate in and benefit from the renewable energy transition happening across the South West region.

3.1.1 Long-term goals and aspirations of the South West First Nations Working Group

Long-term skills and capability development

- Strengthen transferable skills and capability of local Aboriginal people to be equipped for roles and opportunities across the entire lifecycle of renewable energy projects
- Build local Aboriginal business capability and capacity to tender for work packages and other income opportunities available under the development and operation of the REZ

- Promote traineeships and school-based programs to engage young Aboriginal people in training and education opportunities for long-term employment prospects
- Proponents to establish and promote training opportunities and pre-employment programs to engage local Aboriginal people in work readiness and employment opportunities within the South West REZ
- A long-term aspirational goal of 10–12%³ of the contract value to be subcontracted to First Nations businesses
- A long-term aspirational goal of 10–12%³ of the project workforce (FTE) that directly contributes to the contract to be First Nations employees

Caring for Country

- Prioritise and support caring for Country and managing cultural heritage impacts throughout the project lifecycle of REZ infrastructure projects
- Community investment funds sourced from infrastructure projects support caring for Country initiatives, cultural heritage activities and similar projects

Cultural safety and wellbeing

- Local Aboriginal businesses provide proponents and Roadmap entities with cultural awareness guidance and training
- The wellbeing and cultural safety of local Aboriginal people working on REZ infrastructure projects is prioritised and promoted by proponents to ensure they are safe and supported on site
- The social, cultural and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people is supported and promoted through the activities and funding of proponents, Roadmap entities and the wider community

Relationship building and commercial partnerships

- Establish meaningful, constructive and proactive relationships between local Aboriginal communities, proponents, Roadmap entities and other stakeholders throughout the delivery and operation of REZ infrastructure projects
- Establish Aboriginal community-owned and operated renewable energy projects, such as through joint venture opportunities

Improving energy security and affordability for Aboriginal communities

- South West REZ energy generation to provide lower cost, reliable and resilient electricity to local Aboriginal community-owned properties and households

³This target considers the local Aboriginal population of the REZ and provides a long-term stretch target established by the South West First Nations Working Group.

3.1.2 Priority activities of the South West First Nations Working Group

To assist in achieving the long-term goals and aspirations, the working group has identified several priority activities and outcomes that can be used to monitor progress, promote accountability and measure success.

Aboriginal communities invite proponents to engage with them about these priority activities to understand how they could be achieved and built into Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plans (IAPPs) and business planning.

Implementation of an Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan

The IAPP is a requirement for both generation and network infrastructure proponents and will be assessed by both the Consumer Trustee, AEMO Services Limited and the Infrastructure Planner, EnergyCo. As a starting point, proponents should design and implement an IAPP with existing training, employment and support mechanisms. Where support mechanisms are limited or unavailable, proponents should consider designing and creating them to meet their participation plan commitments.

The working group encourages proponents to consider the following priority activities when designing an IAPP:

- Prioritise the use of Aboriginal-owned land for project development, to promote Aboriginal ownership and income generation from electricity infrastructure projects. This should follow relevant local community advice about respectful and appropriate use of the land, as well as land rights, planning, cultural heritage and environmental laws and regulations.
- Where adequate capacity and capability allows, procure goods and services from Aboriginal-owned businesses and employ Aboriginal people in short-term roles, long-term roles and recurring work.
- Consider joint ventures or partnership opportunities to support Aboriginal participation while building skills, capability and capacity.
- Provide transparency about the skills, training and qualifications required for roles so people can prepare for upcoming opportunities.
- Advance specific opportunities in employment and training for Aboriginal women, Aboriginal people with disabilities, youth and persons facing pre-employment challenges.
- Invest in pre-employment training and upskilling opportunities to promote skills development and transferability. To achieve this, proponents are encouraged to:
 - prioritise Aboriginal group training and recruitment organisations to provide a range of workforce solutions, personnel services and supports to employees
 - use local training and employment support agencies and providers to match local Aboriginal job seekers to new positions
 - support existing or establish new community education and training programs as required to increase workforce skills, capabilities and work readiness
 - involve local Aboriginal community members in the tender process for Aboriginal consultants or service providers to seek their support for any appointment.

3.2 South West engagement protocols

3.2.1 South West First Nations Working Group

The working group will support local Aboriginal community engagement and negotiations during the project tendering stage and through the ongoing activities of the infrastructure project lifecycle in the REZ. It will provide a consistent voice for the South West REZ in relation to Aboriginal economic and employment opportunities.

3.2.2 Working group objectives

The objectives for the South West First Nations Working Group are:

- Achieve a consistent approach to engaging with and involving local Aboriginal communities in Roadmap projects within the South West Renewable Energy Zone.
- Ensure Aboriginal inclusion in decision-making processes that may affect them.
- Support prospective proponents to understand the local Aboriginal communities' employment and educational needs.
- Act as a source of information and connection between proponents and local Aboriginal communities to achieve shared goals.
- Maintain and advocate for a consistent approach in how proponents engage with local Aboriginal communities – accountability and actionability.
- Support the development of long-term employment strategies to ensure Aboriginal people in the region are equipped with necessary skills to work and participate in opportunities under the Roadmap.
- Increase proponent's cultural competency by prioritising cultural awareness and best practice during the development, construction and maintenance of renewable energy projects.
- Enable self-determination of local Aboriginal people in decisions that directly affect them.

3.2.3 Membership of the working group

The working group currently comprises representatives from the organisations listed below. This current membership reflects the organisations that developed the South West REZ First Nations Guidelines.

Working group members:

- Barkandji Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC)
- Balranald LALC
- Dareton LALC
- Griffith LALC
- Hay LALC
- Nari Nari Tribal Council
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council

- Premier’s Department (Aboriginal Affairs NSW)
- Department of Regional NSW
- Training Services NSW

The working group membership may be amended during implementation of the guidelines to ensure appropriate representation of the local Aboriginal community. Amendments require the working group’s endorsement of any such changes to its terms of reference.

3.2.4 EnergyCo’s First Nations Outcomes team

EnergyCo has established a First Nations Outcomes team, with dedicated staff to coordinate consultation, engagement and implementation of programs and initiatives that deliver outcomes to the local Aboriginal communities within the South West REZ.

As part of this program, EnergyCo’s First Nations Outcomes team will support the South West First Nations Working Group in:

- liaising with proponents during the development of their IAPPs
- coordinating and supporting the working group to engage and negotiate with proponents from project inception through project delivery and operation
- maintaining a feedback loop with the working group and proponents on best practice, lessons learnt and positive experiences from other REZs
- providing information from proponents to the local Aboriginal communities on matters that affect them, for example, through social media, community meetings and information days.

EnergyCo’s First Nations Outcomes team is the first contact point for proponents seeking to engage, consult and negotiate with local Aboriginal communities about Roadmap projects. Proponents who contact the working group members will be redirected to the First Nations Outcomes team.

The team will coordinate and prioritise requests to meet with the working group according to working group availability.

The team can be contacted at firstnationsoutcomes@energyco.nsw.gov.au.

3.2.5 Engagement approach

This section provides proponents and EnergyCo with steps and information to prepare themselves to engage with the working group. It is expected that proponents will refer to these guidelines during engagement and negotiations when tendering for or developing an infrastructure project within the South West REZ. Proponents are encouraged to contact the First Nations Outcomes team at EnergyCo as early as possible to arrange consultation and engagement within project timeframes and the working group’s availability.

The engagement approach is:

- The proponent contacts EnergyCo’s First Nations Outcomes team to advise of possible activities or projects within the South West REZ area.
- The proponent should be ready to provide EnergyCo and the working group with detailed and relevant information in writing, about:
 - the proposed project, including the type of infrastructure proposed

- the timeframe for negotiations and engagement
 - the estimated project timeline, if successful
 - where possible, the estimated project cost and resources, if successful
 - the proposed IAPP, if available
 - the specific support and input requested from the working group.
- Once adequate information has been provided, the First Nations Outcomes team may convene a meeting with the working group members as soon as practicable to review the proposal and commence engagement and negotiations about the employment and income opportunities and targets for the local Aboriginal people and businesses, and the project plan in general, as appropriate.
 - The South West First Nations Working Group may:
 - guide the proponent through a constructive consultation process, agreed by the working group and proponent. Consultation processes may include advising the proponent of specific Aboriginal communities who need to be consulted, or respectful customs that should be adhered to
 - collaborate with the proponent to identify and access the local Aboriginal workforce, businesses and services as required, to contribute to the content of a tender proposal
 - provide support and engagement throughout the project lifecycle to ensure the IAPP activities and targets are achieved
 - provide support and local insight to the development of proposals that will contribute to the tender’s employment and procurement targets, as well as the proponent’s proposed IAPP targets
 - maintain a feedback loop between the working group and the local Aboriginal communities to keep them updated and informed on matters that affect them.

3.2.6 Recognised annual dates and events of significance

Aboriginal people meet regularly throughout the year to celebrate their ongoing culture and connection and to acknowledge and share their local history at various community gatherings, events and festivals.

Proponents seeking to engage with Aboriginal organisations and groups should be aware of these events as communities and organisations may be unavailable to meet on these dates or leading up to them. Seeking to meet with the Aboriginal community at times when cultural festivities are occurring could delay community decisions or affect future relationships.

Dates and periods to be considered when planning engagement and negotiations include, but are not limited to:

- 26 January
- National Sorry Day (26 May)
- National Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June)
- NAIDOC week (first full week in July, Sunday to Sunday)

- Koori Knockout (Indigenous NSW Rugby League carnival) (October long weekend)
- VIC Koori Football and Netball Carnival (early October).

Aboriginal communities can also enter periods of mourning called Sorry Business, without warning, after the loss of a community member. It is requested that proponents who have planned or are expecting to meet with a local Aboriginal community 'check-in' with a local contact a day or so in advance, to confirm availability and suitability to attend. This is an act of respect for the community, but also a way to prevent waste of resources in attending a meeting that has been cancelled due to the unavailability of the community.

There may be other dates when local Aboriginal community groups and organisations are not able to engage. Proponents can avoid these by contacting and submitting their engagement requests to the First Nations Outcomes team as early as possible. This would allow time for the working group to respond and advise of the availability of local Aboriginal community groups and stakeholders to meet, and any other relevant information that could impact the success of the consultation.

Proponents may also refer to the NSW Department of Communities and Justice website, which lists dates of significance to NSW Aboriginal people.

Appendix A: Glossary

Term	Description
Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, First Nations	<p>An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which they live.</p> <p>First Nations, or First Nations people, is commonly used to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a collective term for the first sovereign people of Australia.</p>
Caring for Country	<p>Caring for Country refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's role as custodians of their ancestral land and their inherent responsibility to safeguard and nurture it.</p> <p>See <i>Country</i> below.</p>
Consumer Trustee	<p>The independent Roadmap entity responsible for planning the level, timing and type of investment that will take place under the Roadmap. It designs, plans and implements a schedule of competitive processes to award long-term energy service agreements and access rights.</p> <p>AEMO Services Ltd, a subsidiary of the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), has been appointed as the NSW Consumer Trustee.</p>
Country	<p>Country is often used by Aboriginal peoples to describe the lands, waterways, skies and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity.</p>
Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo)	<p>A company established under section 7 of the <i>Energy and Utilities Administration Act 1987</i> (NSW) to coordinate energy infrastructure, e.g. transmission, generation, firming and storage projects, to ensure the right infrastructure is built at the right time, to meet energy needs.</p> <p>Under this Act, EnergyCo is appointed as the Infrastructure Planner for the 5 proposed REZs.⁴</p>
Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan (IAPP)	<p>A written agreement outlining a prospective supplier's activities to employ and offer training to Aboriginal people or use Aboriginal-owned businesses to procure goods and services. The commitments in the participation plan may form part of the contractual agreement if an authorisation or agreement is awarded.</p>
Local Aboriginal community	<p>As per the <i>Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an Aboriginal person or a person who has native rights and interests, within the meaning of the <i>Native Title Act 1993</i> (Cth), in relation to the land to which the relevant project relates • the LALC for the area to which the relevant project relates • other Aboriginal persons prescribed by the regulations.

⁴ Section 23(5) EII Act

Term	Description
Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs)	LALCs are councils established under the NSW <i>Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983</i> . These councils are representative bodies that play a crucial role in advocating for and managing land rights and interests on behalf of Aboriginal communities.
Prescribed bodies corporate (PBCs) / registered native title bodies corporate (RNTBCs)	<p>When a Native Title determination is made under the <i>Native Title Act 1993</i> (Cth), a prescribed body corporate (PBC) is established to protect the Native Title rights and manage obligations and responsibilities provided under the Native Title Act. It is a requirement for Native Title holders to incorporate under the <i>Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006</i> (Cth). This allows the PBC to become a separate legal entity from its members and benefit from legal rights and obligations, such as entering a contract and employing people.</p> <p>The Native Title Act states that all PBCs must register with the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT) and once this registration is official the PBC becomes a registered native title body corporate (RNTBC). An RNTBC indicates it is a corporation that manages Native Title.</p>
Roadmap proponents / project proponents / proponents	A person or organisation that is carrying out a REZ network infrastructure project, a Priority Transmission Infrastructure Project, or a generation or storage infrastructure project seeking a long-term energy service agreement or access rights under a REZ access scheme.
Renewable energy zones (REZs)	Areas in New South Wales that combine renewable energy generation such as wind and solar, storage such as batteries, and high-voltage electricity network infrastructure to deliver electricity to users. The EII Act contemplates at least 5 such zones to be located in the Central-West Orana, Illawarra, New England, South West and Hunter-Central Coast areas. REZs are declared under the EII Act.
Storage	Storage refers to the collection and retention of energy generated from renewable sources, such as solar or wind power, for later use. Common storage technologies include batteries, pumped hydro storage, and thermal energy storage, enabling the efficient integration of renewable energy into the overall energy grid.
Transmission	Transmission in the context of renewable energy refers to the system of interconnected components, such as power lines, substations and transformers, that transport electricity from the generation source (such as a wind farm or solar facility) to distribution networks and ultimately to consumers. It plays a crucial role in delivering electricity efficiently over long distances, connecting renewable energy resources to areas with high energy demand.

Appendix B: General information about the South West region

Introduction

This section provides more information about the South West region, and is taken from Appendix 1 of the *Employment, Skills and Supply-Chains: Renewable Energy in NSW – Final Report* (referred to in this section as ‘the report’).⁵

Appendix 1 of the report examines the economic structure and performance of each REZ region within its broader economic context. The objective is to establish region-specific baselines that collectively describe the region’s progress on a transition to renewable energy. This is indicated by their integration within local and global supply chains, industry composition, the depth of training and development opportunities available to local and incoming workforces, and current labour market capacity.

‘Region’ refers to a spatial approximation of the REZ region. For the purposes of this analysis, regions are defined by concurrence between Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) administrative boundaries and the best approximation of the REZ’s geographic extent. For this analysis of the REZ, concurrence is based on Statistical Area 1 (SA1s) and the indicative site boundaries that are published online by the NSW Government, and by Statistical Area 2 (SA2s) for place of work data. While the administrative boundaries do not perfectly align, they are the best fit for the purpose of Census data collection and analysis.

Using a combination of ABS and qualitative data, this chapter profiles each region as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Components of REZ profiles

Baseline theme	Elements
Demographic profile	Population size in 2021 and projected population to 2041 Population density Age distribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population Educational attainment Non-school qualifications Occupational profile Employment status Personal weekly income Employment and education profile by gender Employment and education profile by age

⁵ Briggs C, Gill J, Atherton A, Langdon R, Jazbec M, Walker T, Youren M, Tjondro M, Rutovitz J, Cunningham R, Wright S and Nagrath K (2021) *Employment, Skills and Supply-Chains: Renewable Energy in NSW – Final Report*, University of Technology Sydney and SGS Economics and Planning, Sydney.

Baseline theme	Elements
Economic structure	Gross regional product (GRP) growth, compared to state-wide and national GRP growth Industry mix and contribution to the region's GRP Shifts in the industries' share of production, 2015–2020 The region's competitive strengths
Institutional endowments and industry specialisations	Major educational institutions and their course mix, in terms of highest attainment level and industry pathway

Statistical and economic concepts

The following terms and concepts are used to describe the economic structure of the regions:

- **Statistical Areas (SAs)** refers to the statistical areas, reflecting the location of people and communities, used by the ABS for the publication and analysis of official statistics and other data. They are updated every 5 years to account for growth and change in Australia's population, economy and infrastructure.⁶
 - **Statistical Areas Level 1 (SA1s)** are designed to maximise the geographic detail available for Census of Population and Housing data while maintaining confidentiality. SA1s are built from whole Mesh Blocks and have a population between 200 and 800 people. SA1s are designed to represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as accurately as possible, particularly in remote areas.
 - **Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2s)** refers to medium-sized general purpose areas built up from whole Statistical Areas Level 1 (SA1s). Their purpose is to represent a community that interacts together socially and economically.
- **Location quotient (LQ)** is a ratio that compares the region to a larger reference region (for this analysis it is New South Wales) according to some characteristic. In the bubble charts, a position to the far right indicates specialisation while a larger bubble size indicates the average annual employment growth between 2016 and 2021.
- **Gross Regional Product (GRP)** is a measure of size or net wealth generated by the local economy. Changes in this figure can indicate employment shifts, changes to productivity and/or industry mix.

South West REZ regional summary

The South West REZ region's economy is characterised by strong agriculture, forestry and manufacturing industries. The region has strategic links to key markets along the agricultural supply chain and already demonstrates strong agricultural employment. Increasing demand for high-value food and beverage is growing the region's specialisations in beverage and food product manufacturing, diversifying the economy from its primary production strengths. The nearby Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct will have a sustainability focus and is expected to strengthen

⁶ For more detailed information on this classification, see the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3.

industry specialisations in agribusiness, freight and logistics, advanced manufacturing, recycling and renewable energy.

The Western Murray region spanning the Wentworth, Balranald and Hay shire councils has been identified as suitable for renewable energy projects due to its climatic features and proximity to existing and planned transmission networks. Hay and Balranald are considered suitable for large-scale solar power generation and there are associated opportunities to grow the region's mining operations in tandem, while attracting growth in the construction sector (REDS, 2018).

To capitalise on these opportunities, there will be a need to support the local and incoming workforce with education and training initiatives to meet future skills demand. Education, training and employment programs such as Western Riverina's 'Grow Our Own' are focusing on cross-industry and sector partnerships to review training gaps and align course mix to local needs. Given the region's proximity to Victoria, there is the potential for greater cross-border collaboration on labour mobility.

The South West REZ is near the Victorian border, anchored by the regional township of Hay and just north of Deniliquin (Figure 3). The centre of the region is roughly 700 km from the Sydney CBD.

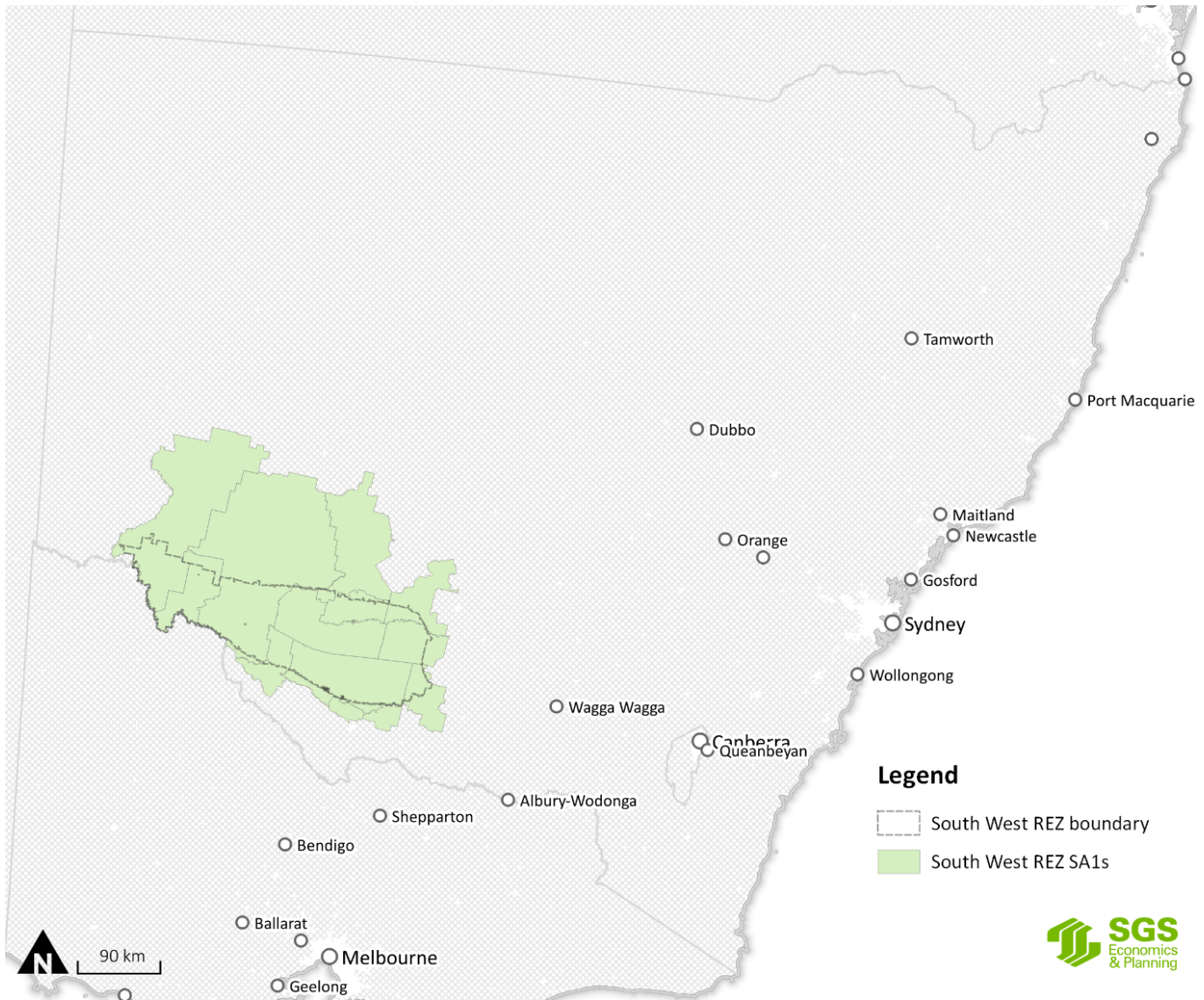


Figure 3: South West REZ boundary

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2023

Within the indicative REZ region, Coleambally Solar Farm is operational, but many others are under construction (Sunraysia, Limondale and Darlington Point solar farms) or have passed the approval phase (Hay and Lang’s Crossing solar farms). A bioenergy development, the Agriwaste Energy Project (MacAnzac Project) is also being planned next to the Coleambally Solar Farm.

Within the REZ’s broader catchment, many solar developments have been approved; these are clustered around the existing transmission capacity stretching between Wagga Wagga and Griffith, including Avonlie Solar Farm, Leeton Solar Farm and Riverina Solar Farm.

Demographic profile

Population size and density

In 2021, the population in the REZ was 10,915, based on the identified SA1s according to the definition shown in Figure 2 and ABS 2021 Census data. Population in the broader Riverina Murray (beyond the REZ), as defined by the former Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in its planning region projections, is estimated to grow at an annual average rate of 0.8% between 2021 and 2041, from 281,090 to 324,393. The main population centres in the South West REZ region are Mildura, Hay and Balranald.

Age distribution

As is characteristic of many regional communities, the region has lower shares of tertiary age and working age populations aged 20–49, compared to the state and national proportions. Conversely, the region has a much higher share of people in the 50–69 years old age bracket, and a slightly higher proportion of younger children (Figure 4).

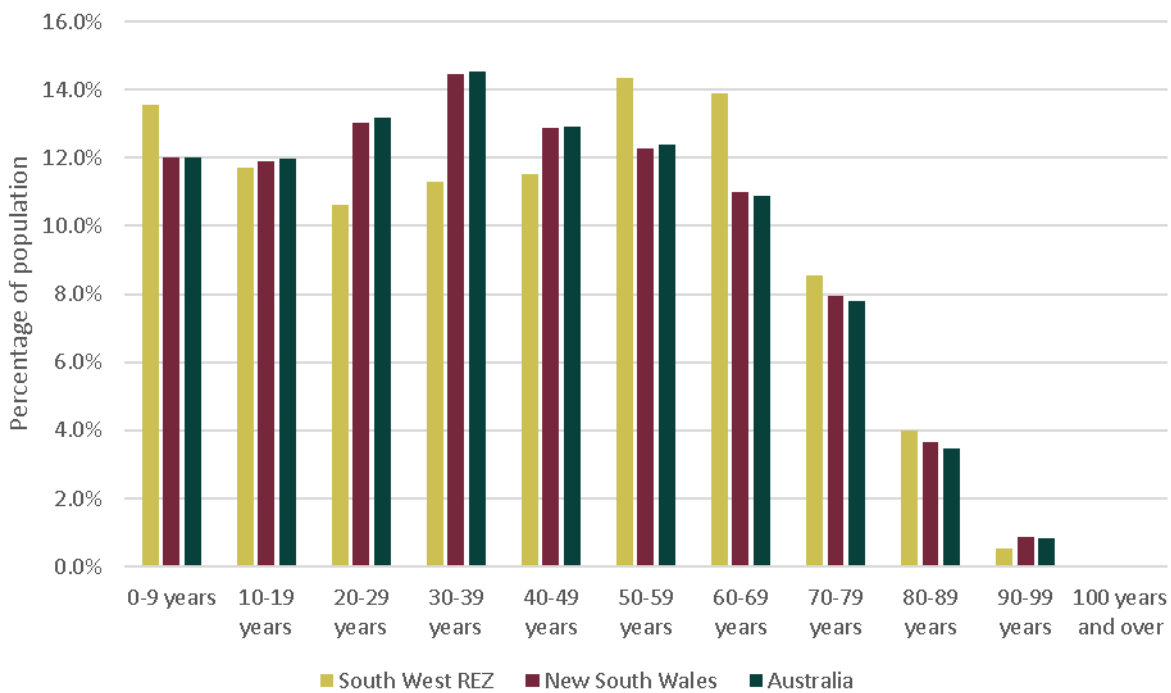


Figure 4: Age distribution, South West REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population

The region has a higher Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population at 6.3% compared to the NSW proportion of 3.6% and Australian proportion of 3.4% (Table 2).

Table 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, South West REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

	South West REZ	New South Wales	Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	6.3%	3.6%	3.4%
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	93.8%	96.4%	96.6%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Educational profile

The educational attainment profile of the South West REZ region indicates that a large proportion of residents have qualifications at the Certificate III and IV Level and Secondary Education – Years 10 and above, accounting for 63% of all residents. The region has a lower share of residents with qualifications at the Bachelor Degree level and above compared to New South Wales and Australia respectively (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Highest level of education attainment, South West REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

The most common non-school qualifications in the South West REZ region include Engineering and Related Technologies, Management and Commerce, and Health. The proportion of qualifications in Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies is much higher in the South West REZ region than for New South Wales and Australia, likely due to the dominance of the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry in the region (Figure 6).

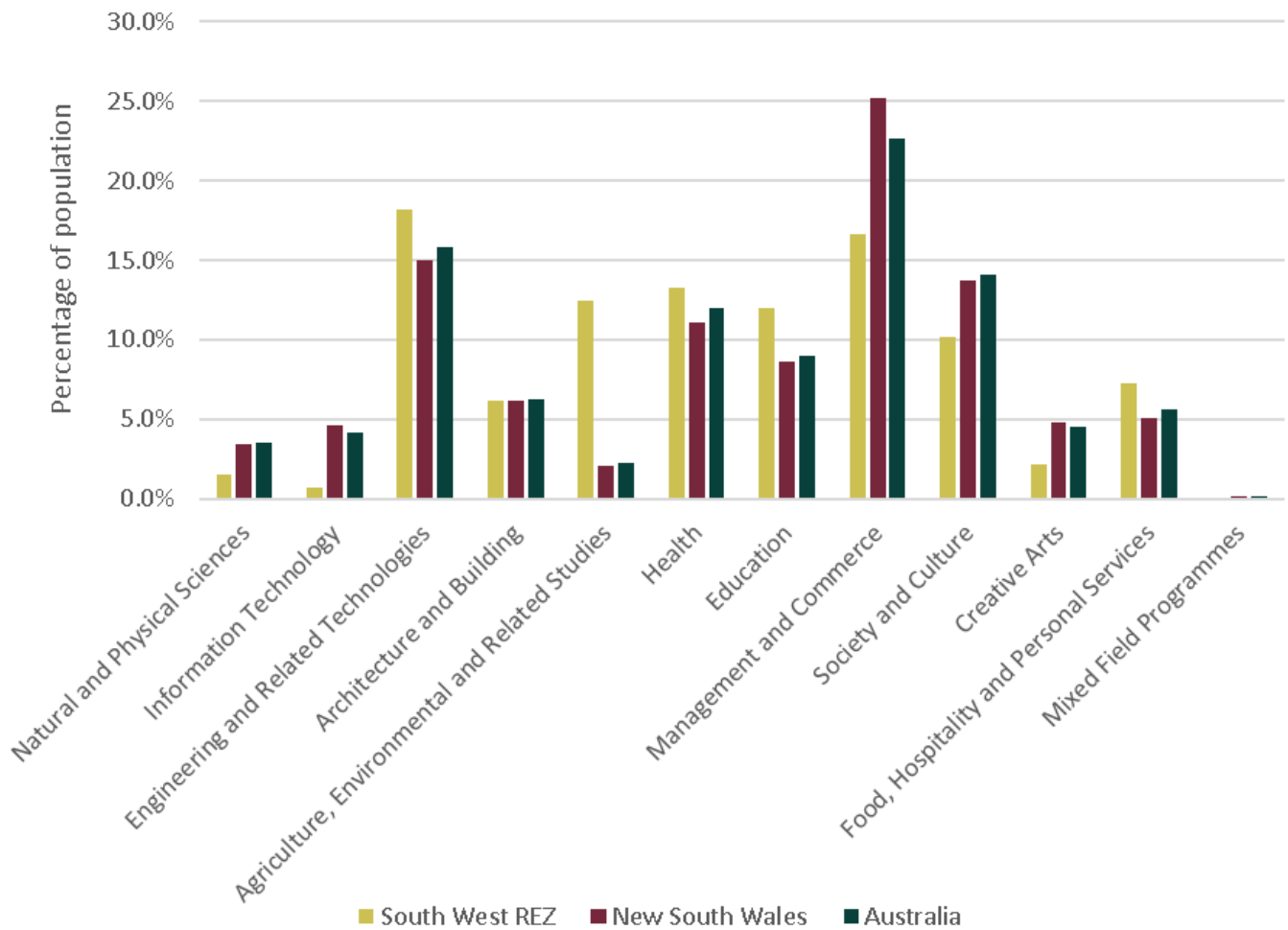


Figure 6: Non-school qualifications, South West REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Occupational profile

The dominance of agricultural employment in the South West REZ region is reflected in the 2 largest occupation groups by share of residential employment: Farmers and Farm Managers (17.3% of all working residents) and Farm, Forestry and Garden Workers (7.3% of working residents). Carers and Aides, and Sales Assistants and Salespersons both account for the third largest share of employment for working residents, 4.7% each. The other top 10 occupation groups are primarily population serving, and generally account for a smaller share of employment in this region (Figure 7).

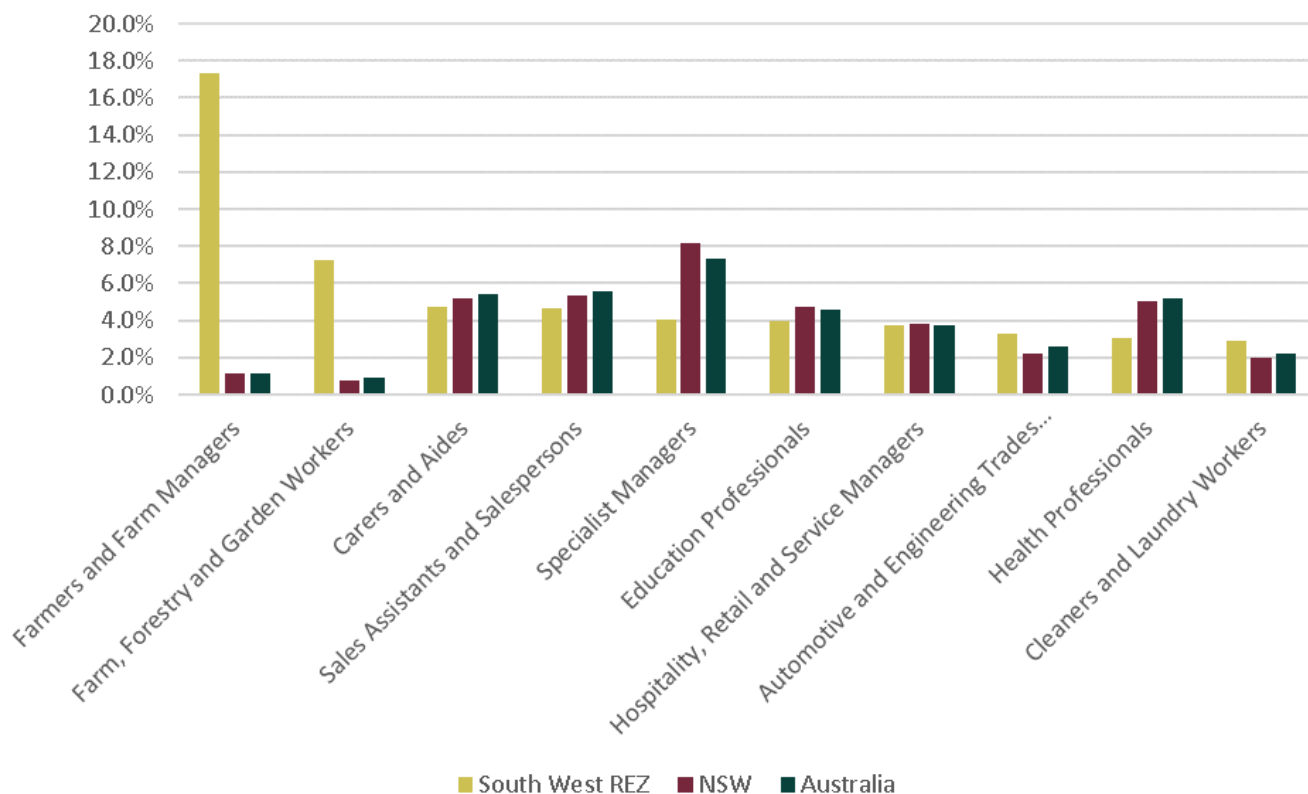


Figure 7: Top 10 occupation groups (2-digit level), South West REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Employment status and average income

Compared to New South Wales and Australia, the South West REZ region has a higher share of full-time working residents and a lower share of residents that are not in the labour force (Figure 8). The South West REZ region also has slightly lower rates of unemployed residents than those for New South Wales and Australia.

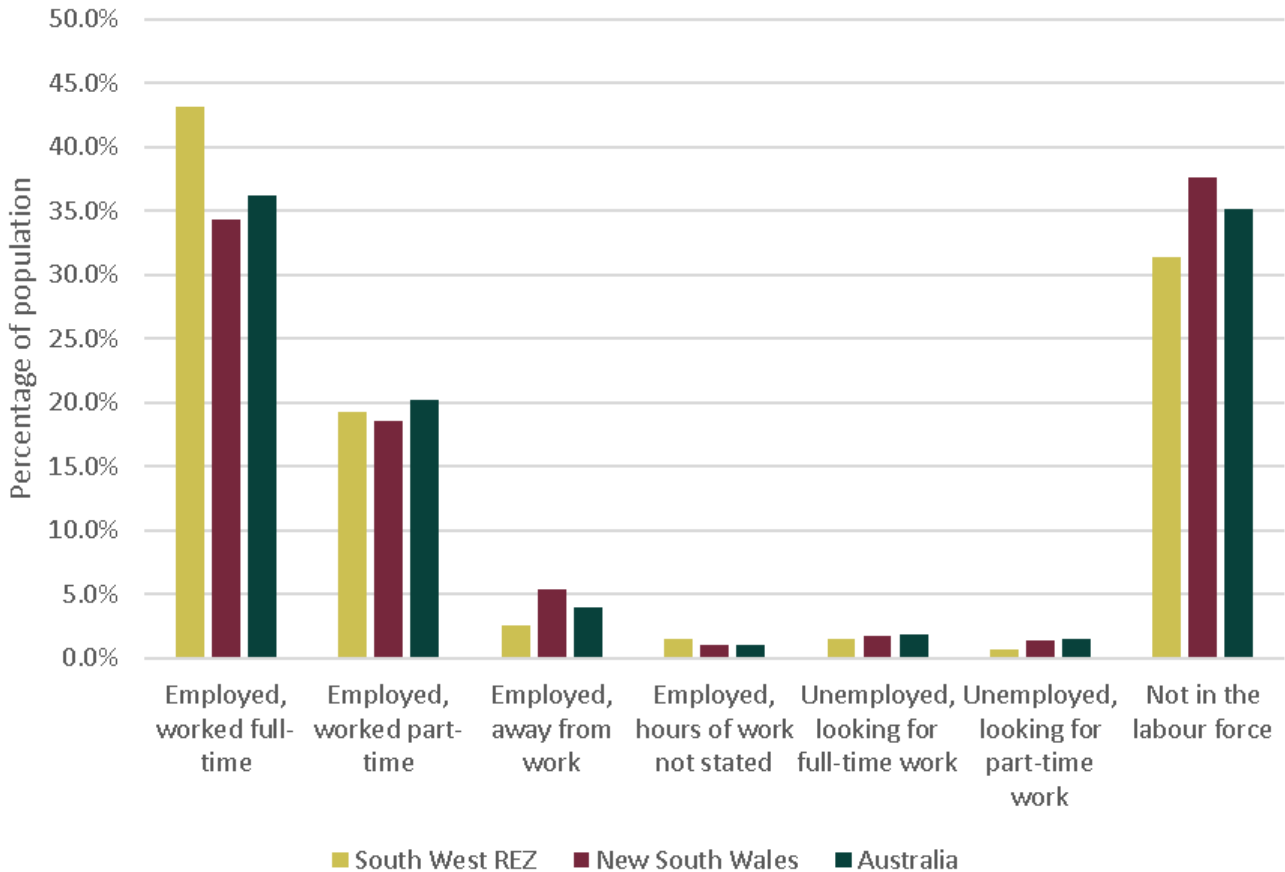


Figure 8: Labour force status, South West REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Historically, unemployment levels have been much higher in the South West REZ region than the rest of New South Wales, though the unemployment rate fluctuates heavily year on year. This is linked to the dominance of the agricultural sector in the region and the cyclical nature of employment in this industry. The most recent data from 2023 shows the unemployment rate in the South West REZ region is lower than the NSW and Australian rates, at 2.7% (Figure 9).

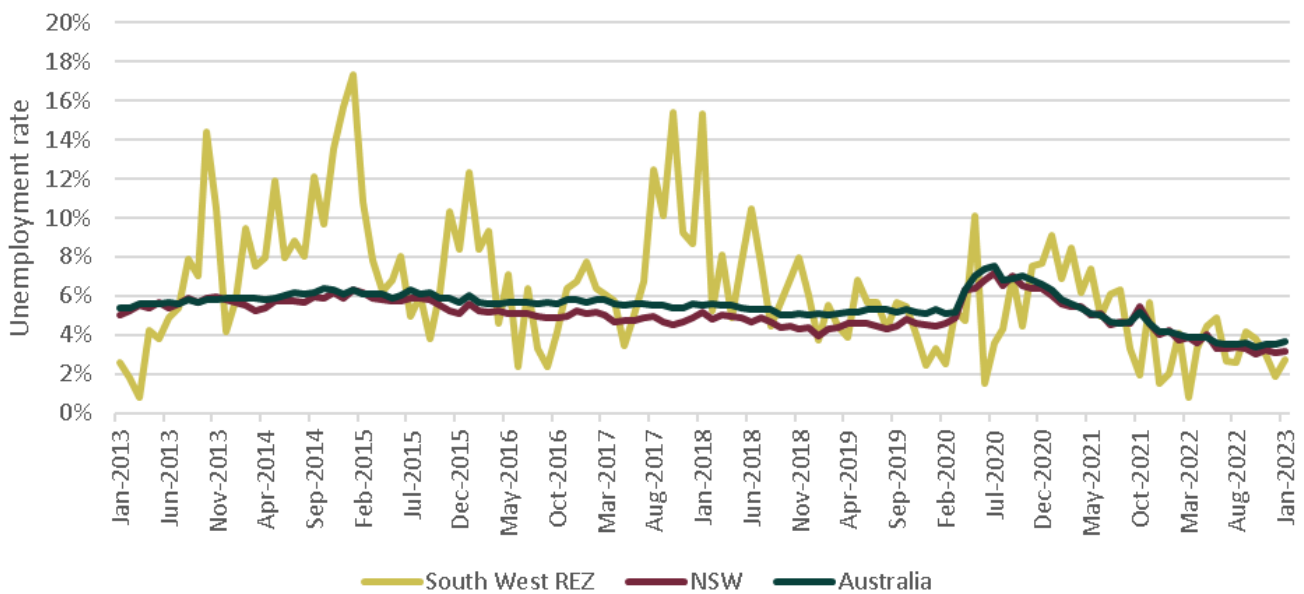


Figure 9: Unemployment rate, South West REZ, NSW & Australia, 2013–2023⁷
 Source: ABS Labour Force Australia, January 2023

In 2021, the share of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population that was unemployed and looking for full-time work (Table 3) was slightly lower than the NSW average (Table 4), at 2.6% compared to 3.6%. The proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in full-time employment was also slightly higher than the NSW proportion, at 29.3% compared to 28.4%. The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed part-time in the South West REZ region was less than the NSW proportion (at 13.9% compared to 17.6%). The share not in the labour force is slightly higher than the NSW proportion, at 43.6% compared to 42.0%. Strategically in the Western Riverina, there is a current focus on advocating for greater Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business and service provision opportunities as part of a broader skills development strategy (REDS, 2018).

Table 3: Population by work status, South West REZ, 2021

	Employed, worked full-time	Employed, worked part-time	Employed, away from work	Employed, hours of work not stated	Unemployed, looking for full-time work	Unemployed, looking for part-time work	Not in the labour force
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	29.3%	13.9%	2.4%	3.1%	2.6%	2.2%	43.6%

⁷ The South West REZ unemployment rate is based on the ‘Murray’ SA4, sourced from the ABS Labour Force Australia January 2023 dataset.

	Employed, worked full-time	Employed, worked part-time	Employed, away from work	Employed, hours of work not stated	Unemployed, looking for full-time work	Unemployed, looking for part-time work	Not in the labour force
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	44.1%	19.5%	2.6%	1.4%	1.3%	0.6%	30.5%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Table 4: Population by work status, NSW, 2021

	Employed, worked full-time	Employed, worked part-time	Employed, away from work	Employed, hours of work not stated	Unemployed, looking for full-time work	Unemployed, looking for part-time work	Not in the labour force
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	28.4%	17.6%	4.6%	1.6%	3.6%	2.1%	42.0%
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	34.6%	18.6%	5.4%	1.0%	1.7%	1.3%	37.4%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Table 5: Population by work status, Australia, 2021

	Employed, worked full-time	Employed, worked part-time	Employed, away from work	Employed, hours of work not stated	Unemployed, looking for full-time work	Unemployed, looking for part-time work	Not in the labour force
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	27.3%	16.4%	3.6%	1.7%	4.3%	2.5%	44.2%
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	36.6%	20.4%	4.0%	1.0%	1.7%	1.5%	34.8%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

In 2021, the South West REZ region had a large proportion of residents with weekly incomes between \$400 and \$1,249, at 48.1% of the total region population, compared to 41.2% of NSW residents. Conversely, there was a smaller proportion of residents in the REZ region in the higher income brackets compared to New South Wales and Australia (Figure 10).

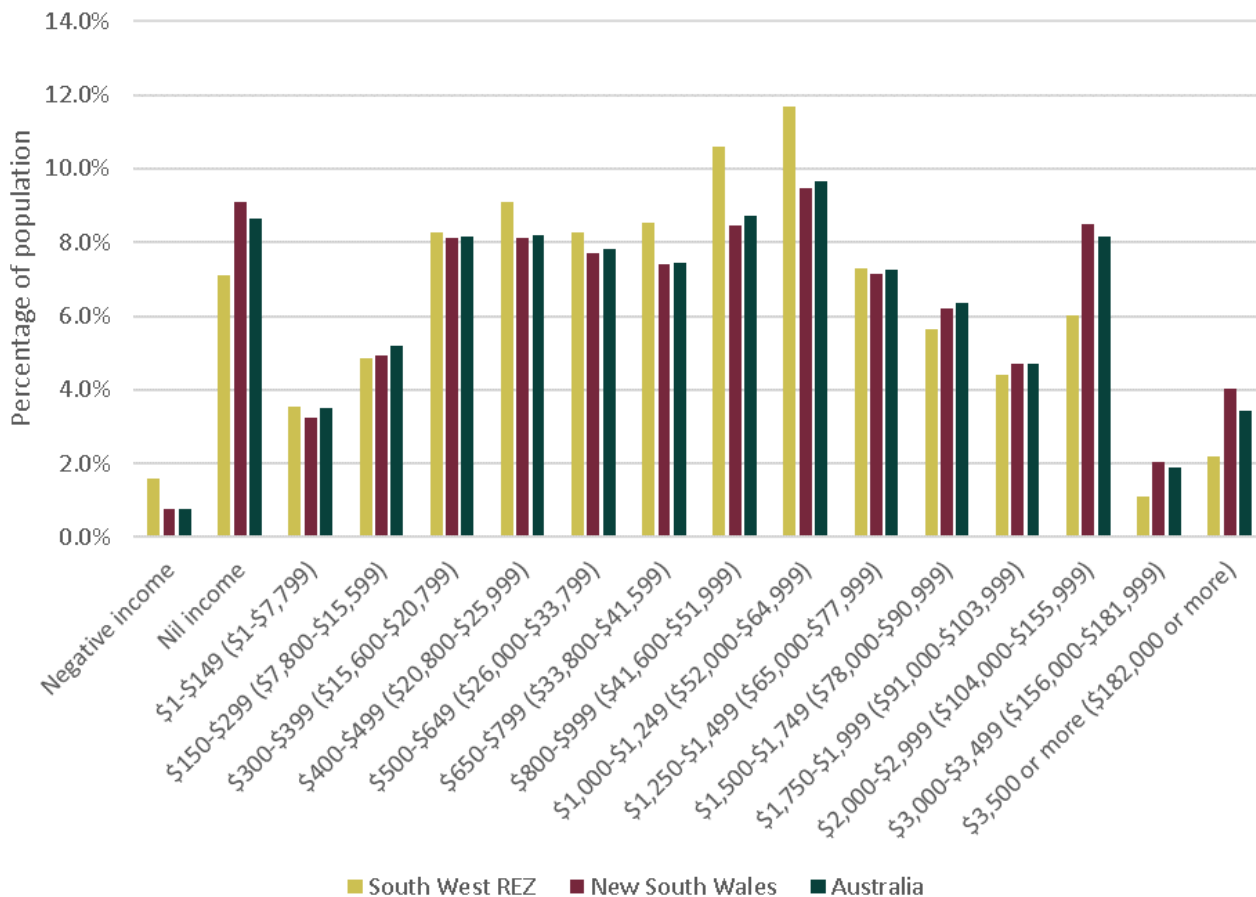


Figure 10: Personal weekly income, South West REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Employment and education profile by gender

In the South West REZ area, more than half of residents who are employed full-time are male, at 65.7% (Figure 11), while females make up a large proportion of residents working part-time at 72.8%. The gender breakdown of residents who were unemployed and looking for full- or part-time work matches the breakdown of residents employed in the same capacity, with 73.4% of residents looking for full-time work being male and 62.7% of residents looking for part-time work female.

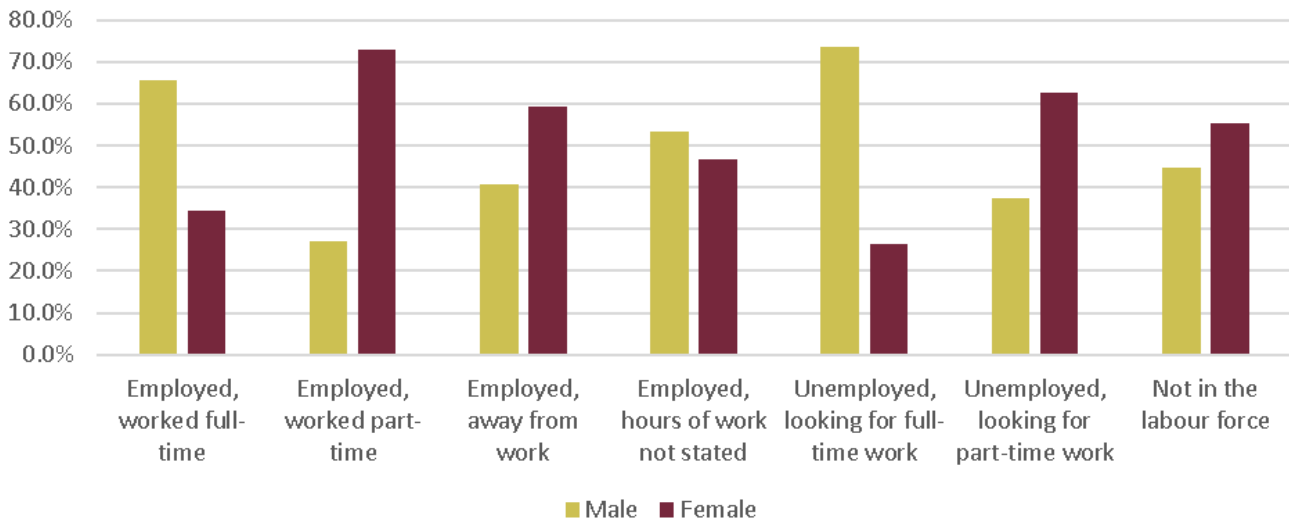


Figure 11: Labour force status by gender of South West REZ, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

For the South West REZ, there are some distinct patterns in the types of industries that are male versus female dominated in terms of employed persons. Male residents make up the majority of those working in industrial-based sectors, such as Agriculture, Mining, Manufacturing, and Construction. Female residents feature more in knowledge intensive industries such as Financial and Insurance Services, Administrative and Support Services, and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services. Female residents also account for a large share of workers in the Education and Training, and Health Care and Social Assistance sectors, at 82.0% and 88.1% respectively (Figure 12).

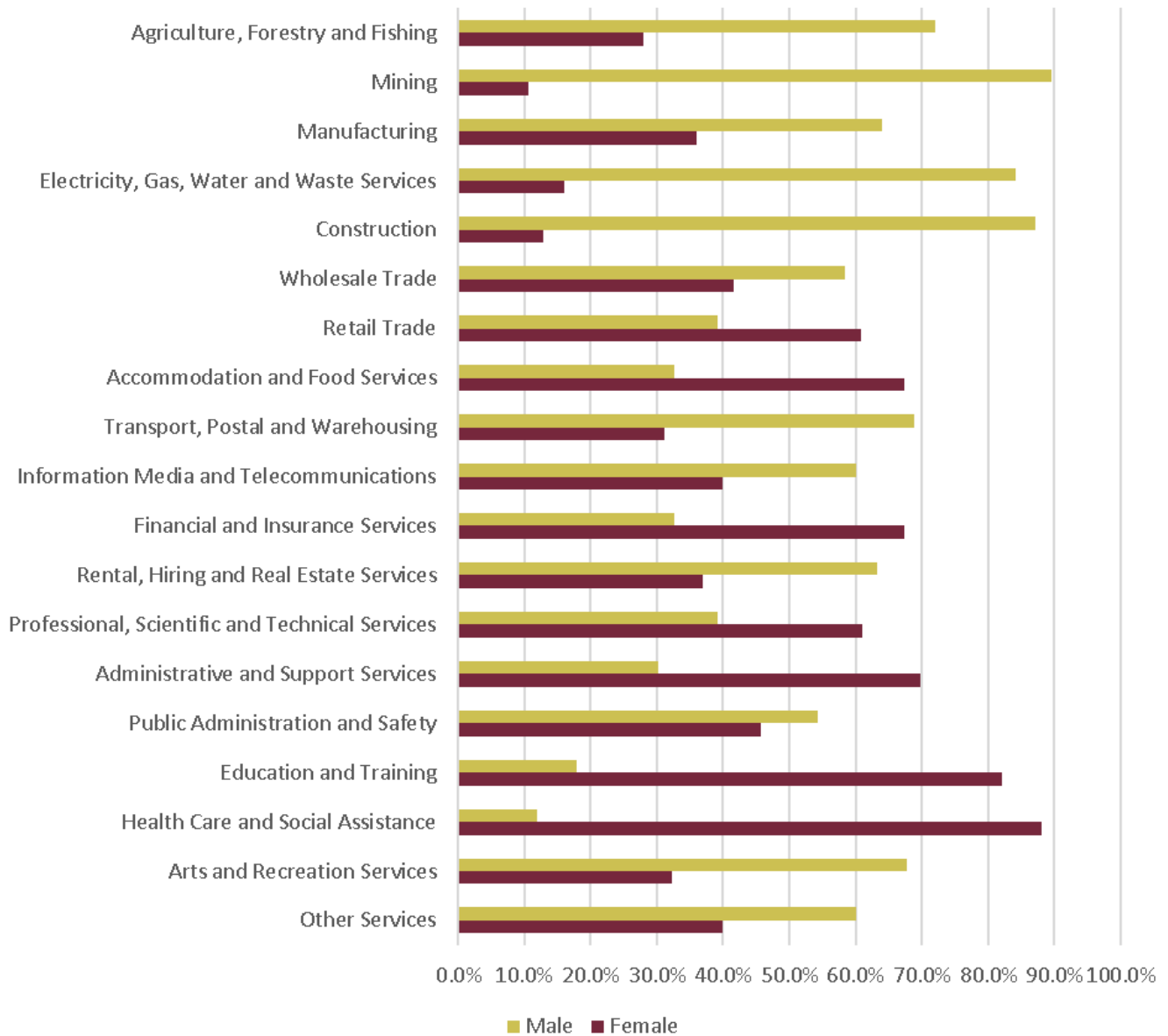


Figure 12: Industry of employment by gender of South West REZ, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Reflective of the industry and gender profile above, occupations that are typically vocational, such as Labourers, Machinery Operators and Drivers, and Technicians and Trade Workers, have a larger share of male than female workers in the REZ region, while more females are typically working in occupations such as Professionals, Community and Personal Service Workers, and Clerical and Administrative Workers (Figure 13).

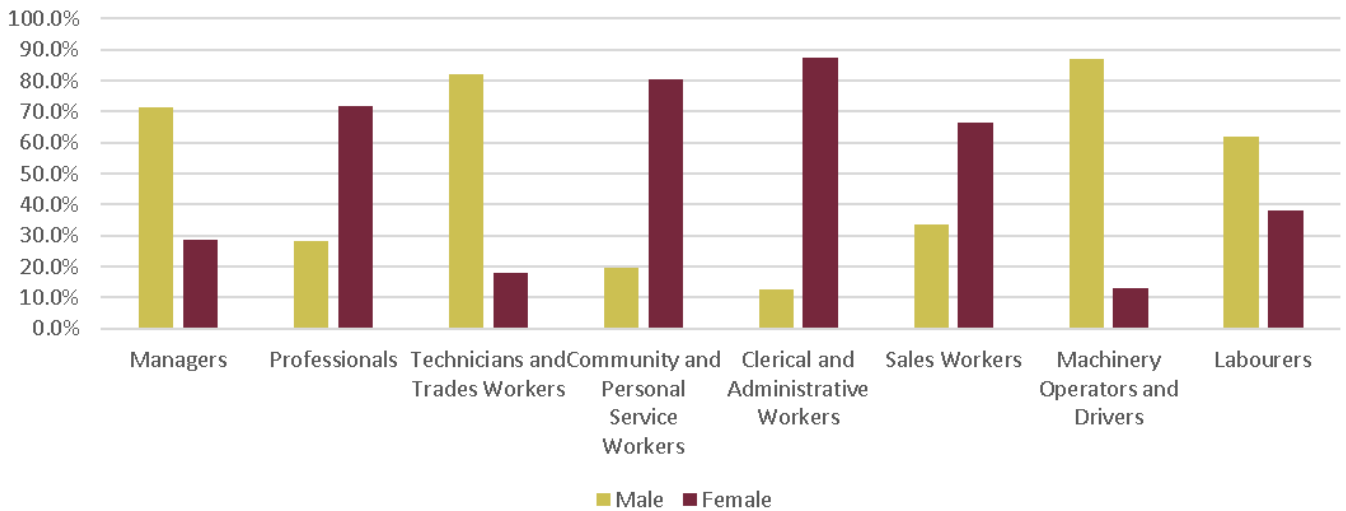


Figure 13: Occupation by gender of South West REZ, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Female residents in the South West REZ region have higher levels of education than their male counterparts. Over half of residents in the region with a qualification at the Postgraduate Degree level or Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate level were female, at 63.7% and 81.8% respectively. Females also account for more than half of residents with qualifications at the Certificate I and II level. Residents with their highest levels of education in Certificate III and IV level and Secondary Education Years 9 and below are more likely to be male than female (Figure 14).

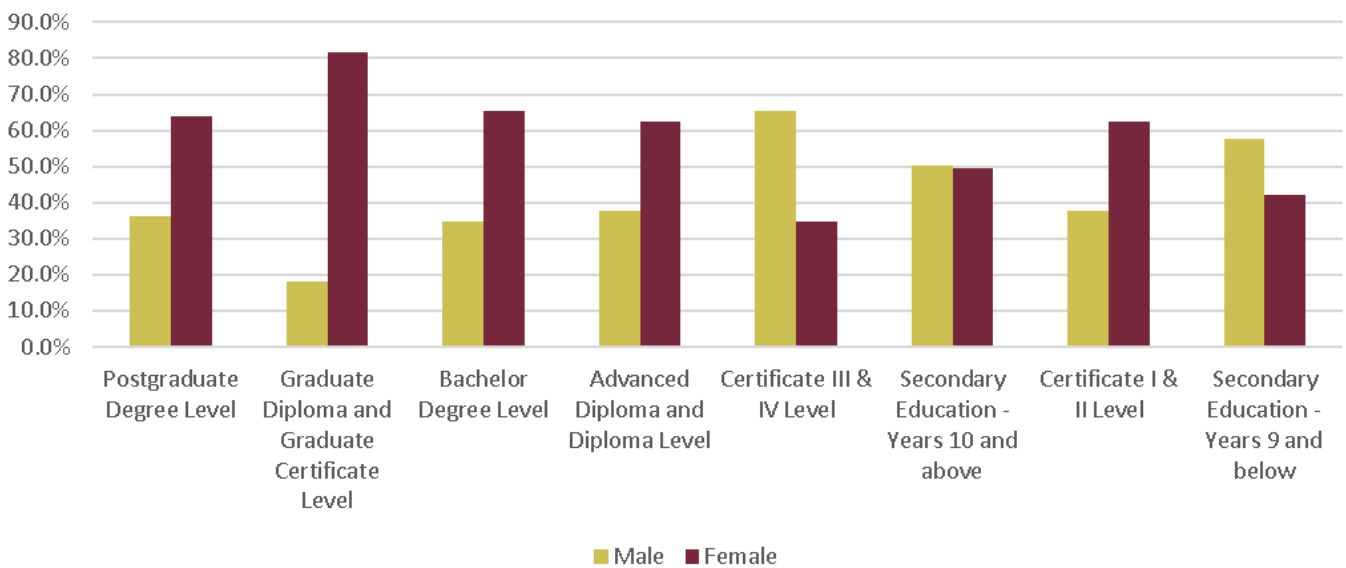


Figure 14: Education attainment level by gender of South West REZ, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Employment and education profile by age

In the South West REZ region in 2021, 44.5% of the working residents employed full-time were aged between 40 and 59 years (Table 6). There was a more even distribution between age groups for those employed part-time, with larger shares in the younger and older aged brackets. This is most likely influenced by young students who may be studying or starting their careers and mature aged adults who are looking to work less before retirement. Nearly 50% of the region's residents looking for part-time work were aged between 20 and 39 years in 2021.

Table 6: Labour force status by age of South West REZ, 2021

Age range	Employed, worked full-time	Employed, worked part-time	Employed, away from work	Employed, hours of work not stated	Unemployed, looking for full-time work	Unemployed, looking for part-time work	Not in the labour force
10–19 years	2.2%	10.3%	4.7%	13.3%	3.2%	11.1%	9.9%
20–29 years	17.1%	15.0%	20.4%	21.2%	29.8%	25.9%	5.8%
30–39 years	18.0%	17.4%	22.5%	21.2%	17.0%	22.2%	5.7%
40–49 years	19.9%	16.6%	17.3%	18.6%	16.0%	11.1%	4.5%
50–59 years	24.5%	18.5%	14.1%	11.5%	28.7%	9.3%	8.9%
60–69 years	14.6%	16.8%	18.3%	9.7%	5.3%	20.4%	23.5%
70–79 years	3.1%	4.4%	2.6%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	26.3%
80+ years	0.5%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	15.4%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Typically, most industries have a large proportion of workers aged between 30 and 49 years, though population serving sectors including retail and hospitality generally have higher shares of younger workers.

Table 7: Industry of employment by age of South West REZ, 2021

Industry (1-digit ANZSIC)	10–19 years	20–29 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–69 years	70–79 years	80+ years
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	3.1%	14.5%	17.1%	17.5%	20.6%	18.8%	6.2%	2.2%
Mining	0.0%	22.5%	15.0%	27.5%	17.5%	17.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Manufacturing	5.2%	19.9%	18.8%	16.2%	20.9%	14.7%	4.2%	0.0%

Industry (1-digit ANZSIC)	10–19 years	20–29 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–69 years	70–79 years	80+ years
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	0.0%	7.6%	22.8%	25.3%	31.6%	12.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Construction	3.4%	21.6%	20.1%	17.9%	22.2%	14.0%	0.8%	0.0%
Wholesale Trade	3.5%	18.8%	22.2%	18.8%	26.4%	10.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Retail Trade	14.0%	20.3%	15.0%	17.3%	17.5%	13.5%	2.5%	0.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	17.8%	15.4%	16.2%	12.3%	23.3%	12.3%	2.8%	0.0%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	1.6%	8.5%	13.8%	21.2%	28.6%	19.6%	4.8%	2.1%
Information Media and Telecommunications	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	16.7%	33.3%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%
Financial and Insurance Services	0.0%	26.1%	23.9%	19.6%	15.2%	6.5%	8.7%	0.0%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	0.0%	10.0%	15.0%	22.5%	32.5%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	5.6%	17.8%	20.6%	21.5%	17.8%	14.0%	2.8%	0.0%
Administrative and Support Services	9.8%	8.2%	15.6%	23.0%	27.9%	15.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Public Administration and Safety	2.7%	9.5%	20.1%	24.7%	24.7%	16.8%	1.5%	0.0%
Education and Training	0.7%	18.2%	16.8%	22.5%	24.5%	16.4%	0.9%	0.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	1.6%	19.8%	20.6%	22.4%	22.4%	12.6%	0.6%	0.0%
Arts and Recreation Services	13.3%	24.4%	13.3%	20.0%	17.8%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Services	8.0%	21.2%	20.4%	14.6%	21.9%	11.7%	2.2%	0.0%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

In terms of occupation, younger workers aged under 30 in the South West REZ are most commonly working as Sales Workers, Community and Personal Service Workers, Technicians and Trades Workers, or Labourers (Table 8). A large proportion of Machinery Operators and Drivers, and Managers in the REZ region are aged between 60 and 69 years.

Table 8: Occupation by age of South West REZ, 2021

Age range	Managers	Professionals	Technicians and Trades Workers	Community and Personal Service Workers	Clerical and Administrative Workers	Sales Workers	Machinery Operators and Drivers	Labourers
10–19 years	1.0%	0.5%	6.9%	7.2%	2.2%	19.9%	2.9%	8.2%

Age range	Managers	Professionals	Technicians and Trades Workers	Community and Personal Service Workers	Clerical and Administrative Workers	Sales Workers	Machinery Operators and Drivers	Labourers
20–29 years	8.5%	16.3%	23.8%	24.1%	14.7%	20.5%	16.3%	20.2%
30–39 years	16.7%	23.1%	19.3%	19.5%	18.3%	13.0%	14.9%	18.6%
40–49 years	20.7%	24.1%	17.0%	18.3%	21.4%	12.3%	16.5%	14.9%
50–59 years	25.2%	22.7%	18.8%	19.9%	22.9%	17.8%	25.3%	20.4%
60–69 years	19.8%	11.5%	11.6%	10.0%	16.5%	12.7%	21.1%	14.5%
70–79 years	6.1%	1.9%	2.6%	1.0%	3.4%	3.9%	2.9%	2.3%
80+ years	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Around half of the residents in the South West REZ region with a Postgraduate Degree are aged between 30 and 49 years (at 50.6%), while 44.1% of residents with a Bachelor Degree are aged between 20 and 39. A large share (75%) of the residents that have their highest level of education as Secondary Education – Years 9 and below are over the age of 50. This indicates that younger age groups are becoming more educated than previous generations.

Table 9: Education attainment level by age of South West REZ, 2021

Age range	Postgraduate degree	Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate	Bachelor degree	Advanced Diploma and Diploma	Certificate III & IV	Secondary education – Years 10 and above	Certificate I & II	Secondary education – Years 9 and below
10–19 years	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.9%	11.1%	0.0%	13.5%
20–29 years	12.6%	12.4%	18.5%	9.7%	17.6%	15.1%	0.0%	3.1%
30–39 years	29.9%	20.7%	25.6%	16.5%	20.5%	10.6%	0.0%	4.4%
40–49 years	20.7%	21.5%	23.3%	19.4%	16.4%	11.8%	0.0%	6.1%
50–59 years	17.2%	22.3%	15.8%	25.7%	20.0%	16.9%	100.0%	13.5%
60–69 years	14.9%	17.4%	10.2%	18.4%	15.8%	19.4%	0.0%	19.7%
70–79 years	4.6%	5.8%	4.7%	7.0%	6.6%	10.2%	0.0%	23.1%
80+ years	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	2.7%	2.3%	5.0%	0.0%	16.5%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Economic structure

Gross regional product growth

In the past decade the South West REZ region has generally had a lower level of GRP growth compared to Australia and New South Wales overall, with a particularly heavy decline in growth between 2018 and 2019 (Figure 15). However, since 2019 GRP growth has increased substantially.

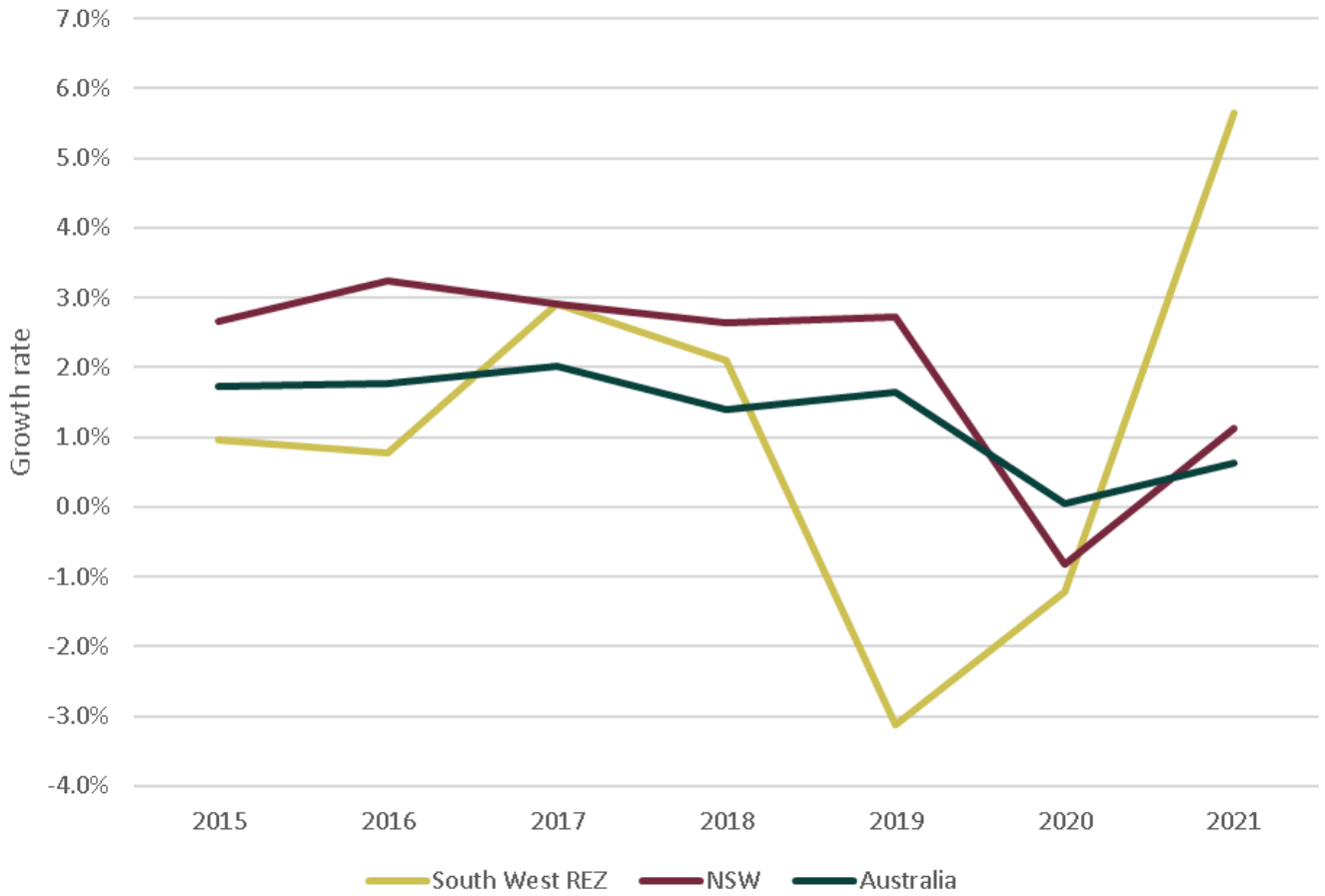


Figure 15: GRP growth compared to NSW & Australia, South West REZ, 2015–2021

Source: Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product December 2022 and SGS Economics and Planning's Australian Economic Wellbeing GDP by Industry

Industry mix

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing makes the largest contribution to the region’s GRP in 2021 (Figure 16), with 25.8% of the gross value added (GVA) to GRP coming from this industry. This reflects the region’s identity as south-eastern Australia’s food bowl for domestic and overseas markets. Manufacturing is the next highest contributor, which generates 13.1% of the region’s GRP. Combined, agriculture and manufacturing contribute more than 60% of business income in the Western Riverina, and have been identified as key growth engines in the region’s economic development strategy (REDS, 2018).

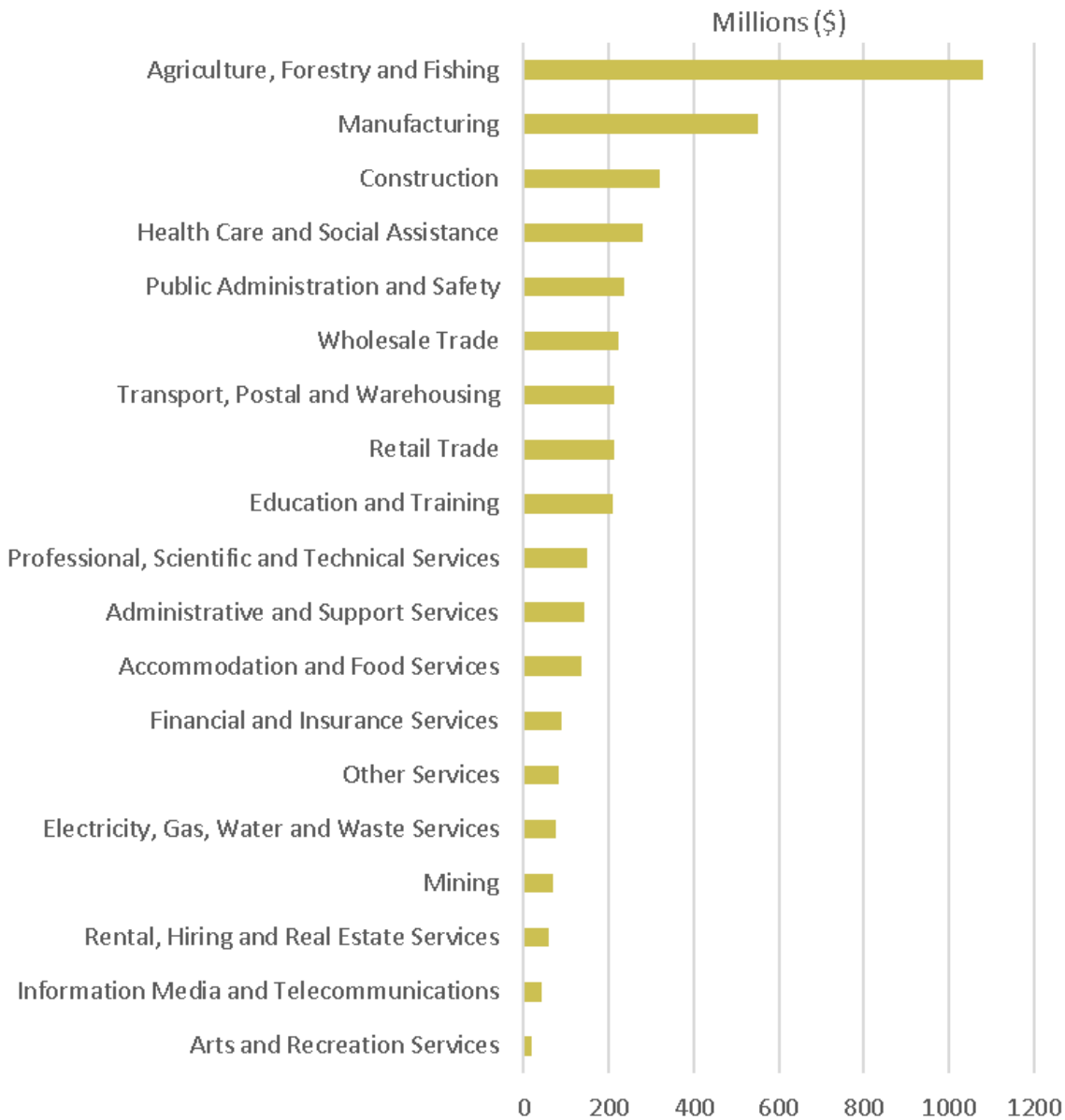


Figure 16: Industry contribution to GRP, South West REZ, \$ millions, 2021

Source: SGS Economics and Planning’s Australian Economic Wellbeing GDP by Industry

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing remains the largest industry by a significant margin when considering the share of employees in the South West REZ (Figure 17), accounting for 21.9% of jobs in the region. The same is true for the Manufacturing industry, which accounts for 12.2% of jobs in the region. Most other industries contribute a share of employment that is consistent with the size of their GRP output in the region and also consistent with the proportion of employment in New South Wales and Australia.

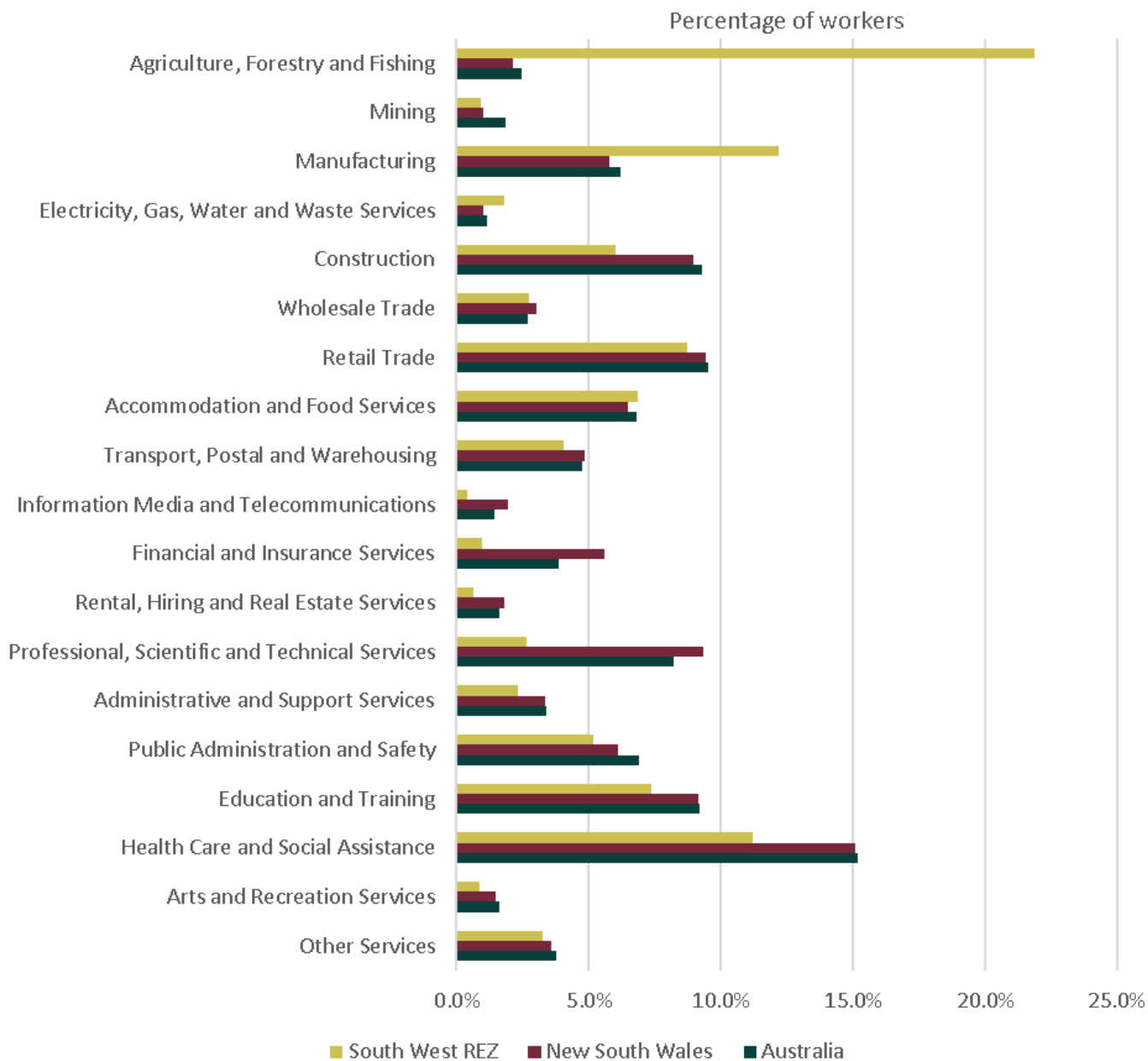


Figure 17: Industry share of employment, South West REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Shifts in industries' share of production, 2016–2021

There has been minimal change in industry share of production in the region between the most recent Census periods. Some industrial sectors such as Agriculture and Mining declined slightly between 2016 and 2021 in outright terms, and as a share of total GRP (Figure 18). Some of the more population serving and knowledge intensive industries, such as Retail Trade, Public Administration and Safety, and Health Care and Social Assistance, grew marginally in the 5 years to 2021.

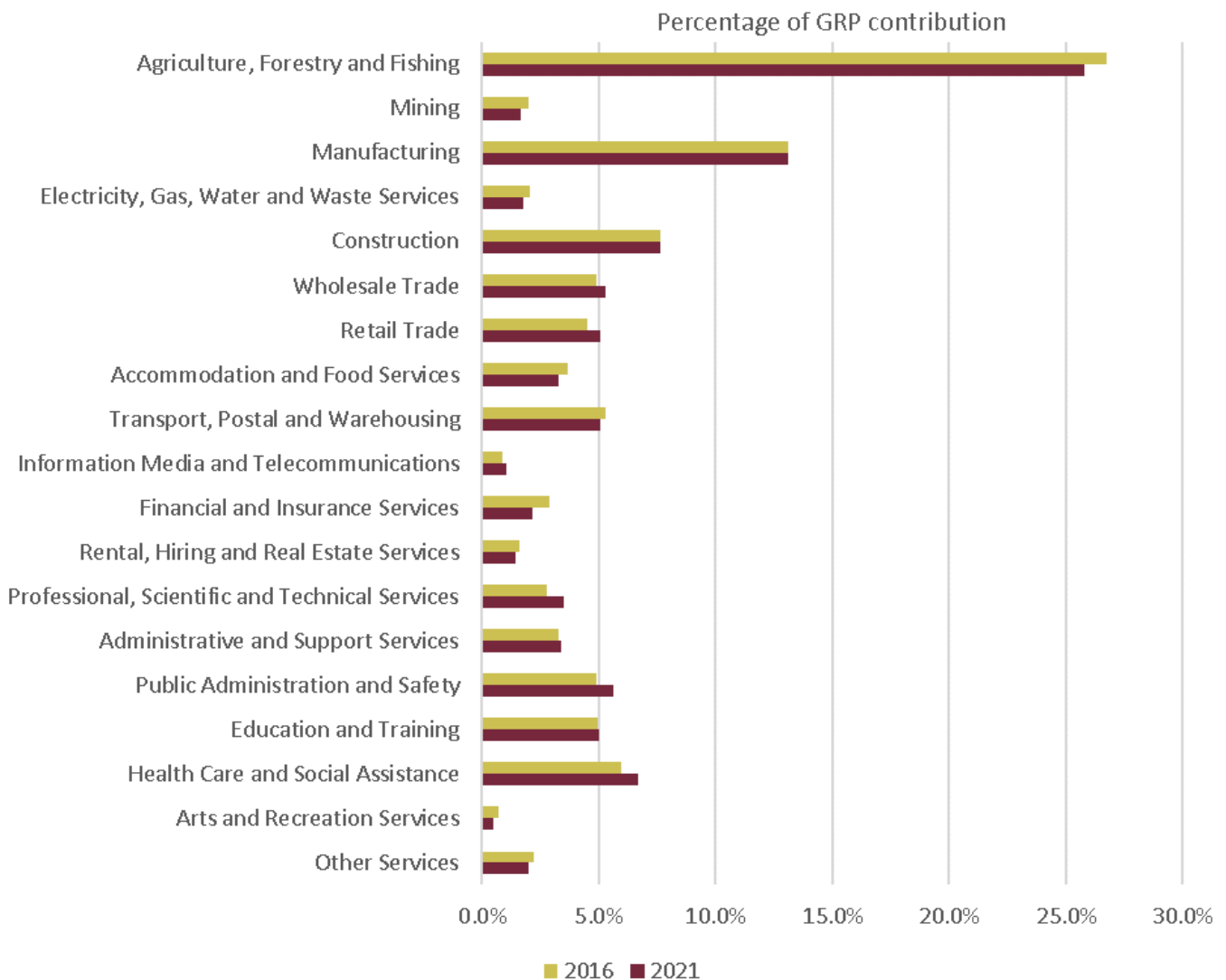


Figure 18: Industry contribution to GRP, South West REZ, 2016 & 2021

Source: SGS Economics and Planning's Australian Economic Wellbeing GDP by Industry

Competitive strengths

The location quotient (LQ) analysis shown in Figure 19 provides some insight into the competitive strengths inherent in the South West REZ region's economic structure. As expected, there is a clear specialisation in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, however the industry's average annual growth rate between 2016 and 2021 was outpaced by Manufacturing. In comparison, Manufacturing is currently only a slight specialisation across the region, despite being the top industry of employment in Griffith and Leeton in 2016 (REDS, 2018). Mining and Wholesale Trade were relatively less specialised than the average for New South Wales, but are growing in this region. The health and education sectors are also emerging industries for the South West REZ region.

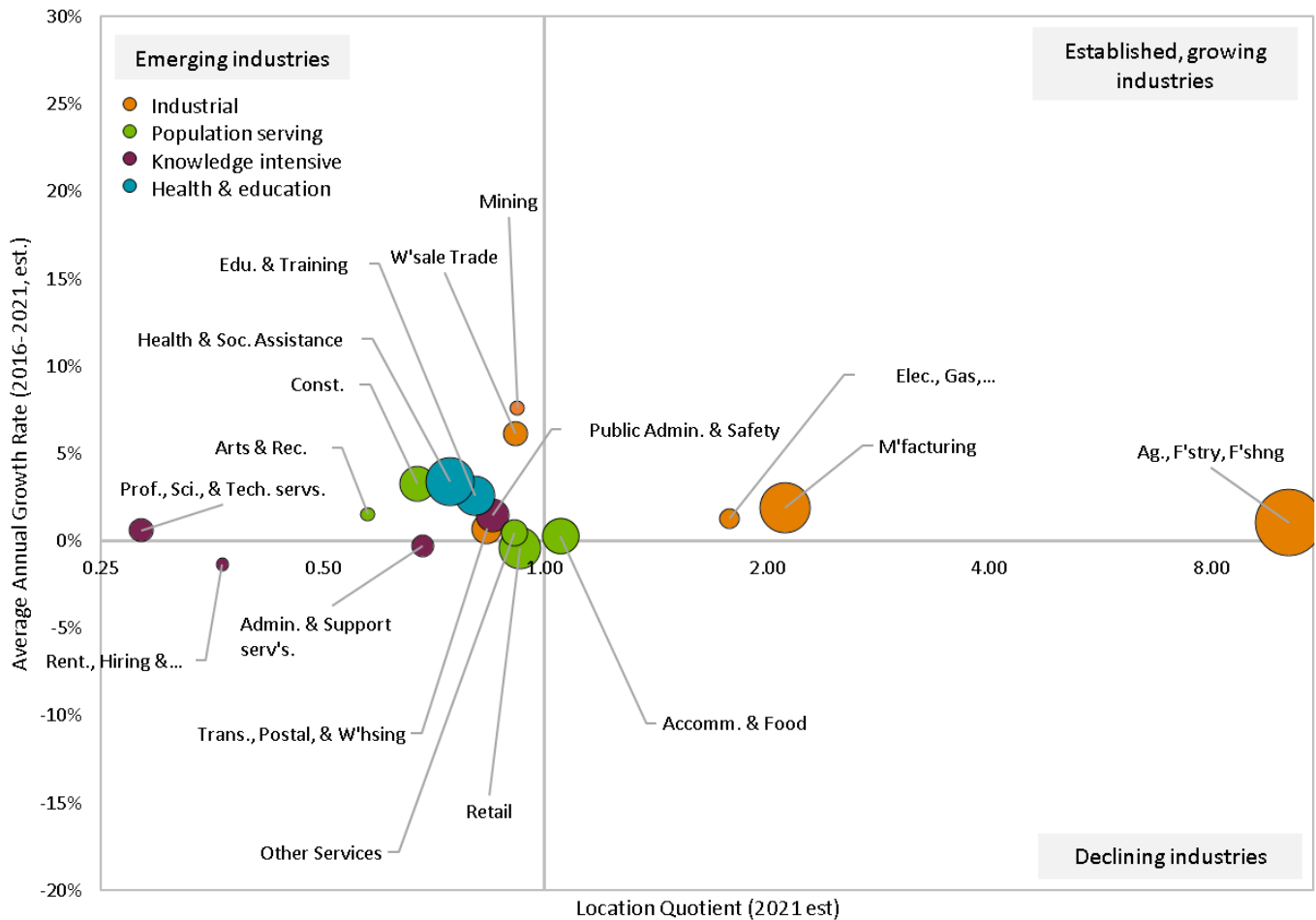


Figure 19: Location quotient of industries in the South West REZ region, 2016–2021
 SGS Economics and Planning, ABS Census TableBuilder 2016, ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Institutional endowments and qualifications

Major education institutions

La Trobe University has a campus at Mildura. The campus has a focus on industry linkages and career pathways. The university has a Regional Reward program that guarantees every regional student the opportunity to participate in a work placement program. Courses offered have a focus on health, education and business. In the science and engineering space courses in Applied Cloud Technology and Applied Information Technology are offered, as well as a Master of Science.

In the region there is the SuniTAFE Mildura Campus, TAFE Hay, TAFE Deniliquin, TAFE Finley, TAFE Griffith, TAFE Narrandera and TAFE Leeton offering vocational education and training opportunities. However, there is a notable absence of tertiary education opportunities in the Murray, compounded by a gap in registered training organisation coverage. The Western Riverina Community College offers short courses on confined space work, as well as forklift operation. Anecdotal evidence suggests there is a pull factor exerted by Victorian institutions based in Shepparton and Melbourne, which is potentially detrimental to service delivery if demand for education and workforce capacity building are difficult to estimate (REDS, 2018).

In the future, promoting a STEM focus (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) within the primary and secondary education settings can help to develop the talent pipeline for renewable

energy industries. STEM skills, particularly science and mathematics, are under-represented in business operations and are foundational to engineering and technology related roles (TAFE, 2020).

Appendix C: Online resources

These resources were referred to in the guidelines.

- [Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 \(NSW\) No 42 – NSW Legislation](#)
- [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) Edition 3](#)
- [Corporations \(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander\) Act 2006 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 \(NSW\) No 44 - NSW Legislation](#)
- [Employment, Skills and Supply Chains: Renewable Energy in NSW \[PDF 4.6 MB\]](#)
- [Dates of significance to NSW Aboriginal people](#) – NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- [First Nations Guidelines](#)
- [First Nations Guidelines – Increasing income and employment opportunities from electricity infrastructure projects](#)
- [National Native Title Tribunal – Register](#)
- [Native Title Act 1993 \(Cth\)](#)