



## School Leaving Age Changes

At its last meeting the Education and Skills Forum identified the need to communicate more widely the recent changes to the School Leaving Age in New South Wales and what this means for young people considering their senior school, work or TAFE options. We hope this brief article will help to answer some of your questions.

### **How has the law on the school leaving age changed?**

From 1 January 2010, young people in New South Wales must complete Year 10 and then continue in either full-time education or training, full-time paid employment, or a combination of education, training and employment until at least the age of 17.

### **What does this change mean for young people?**

The best place for most students to complete Year 10 is at school. Completing Year 10 at school means students will also get english, reading and mathematics support, and they will be with friends of the same age.

Completing Year 10 at school also opens up a wider range of training and education options for their future. In Year 11 and 12 students wanting to start practical job training can still study a VET course at school as part of their HSC. This can include school-based traineeships and TAFE-delivered VET (TVET) courses.

### **Can young people still complete Year 10 at TAFE?**

It is still possible in some exceptional circumstances for students to apply to go to a TAFE campus to study a Certificate II qualification equivalent to Year 10. They will need to discuss this option with their careers adviser or principal, their parent or caregiver and a TAFE Counsellor and show that they have:

- the ability and skills to study in an adult learning environment;
- the ability to undertake specific vocational qualifications; and
- the language, literacy and numeracy skills to complete their selected qualification.

If their school and the campus agree that TAFE is the best option, the student and their parent or caregiver will be asked to meet with a TAFE counsellor to explore options, which could include attending school, TAFE or a combination of school and TAFE. They will complete an approval form, which they can get from their school principal or a TAFE campus.

Young people will only be approved to study at TAFE if:

- they meet all the above criteria;
- there is a place available at the TAFE campus; and
- they have written permission from both the school principal and the Institute Director or their delegate.

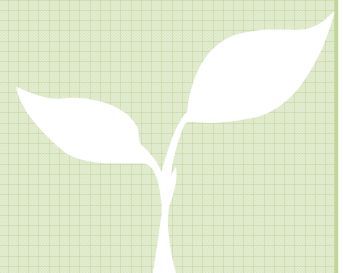
## Education and employment trends

The Port Macquarie-Hastings population is growing at approximately 100 people per month. In comparison, an average of 200 jobs each month are being advertised locally. Some of these jobs are the result of business growth and some are being advertised due to industries suffering from high staff turnover and seasonality.

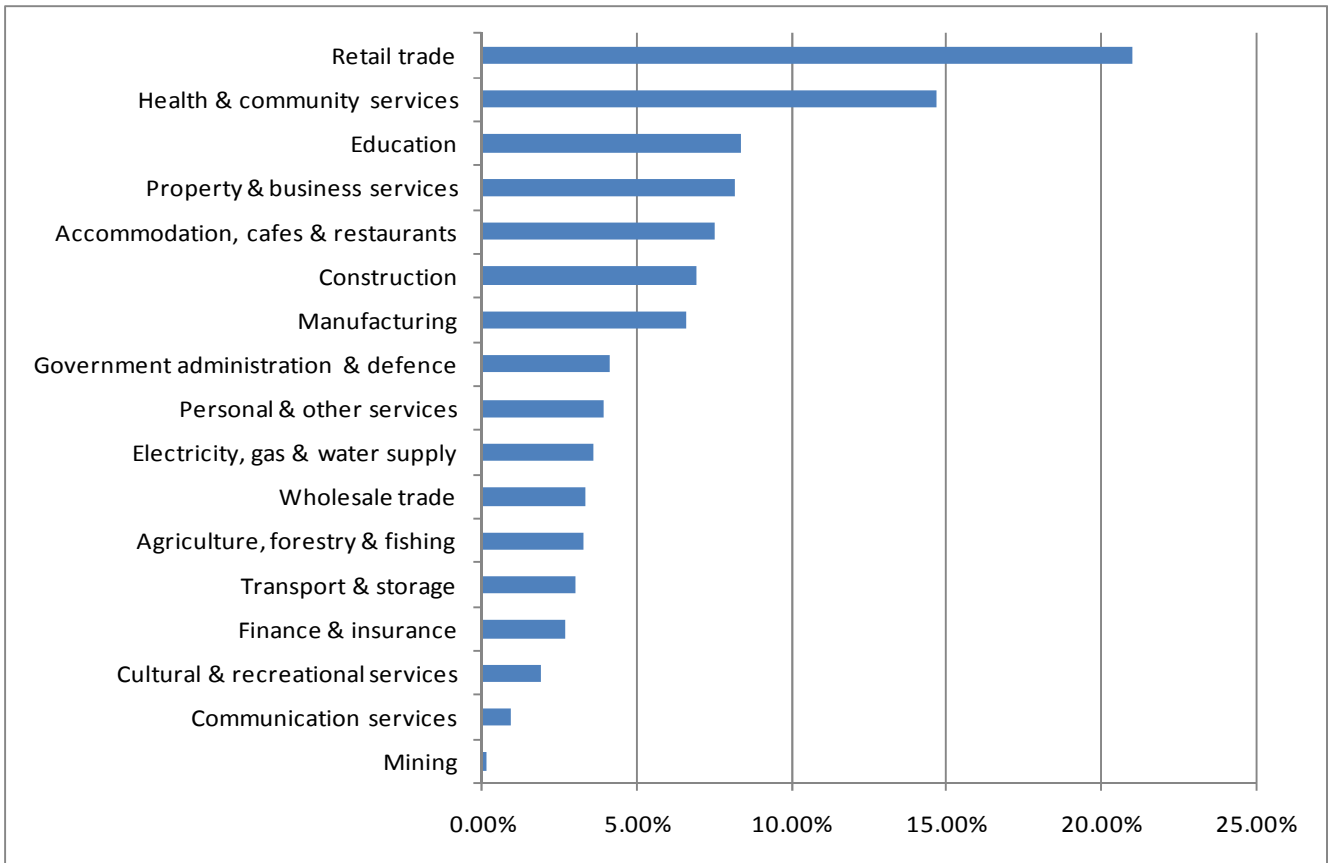
For the past eight months, Council's Economic Development team have been collecting job vacancy data in terms of newspaper and internet job advertisements. Preliminary findings from the study of job vacancies have revealed that four main industries contributed 56% of jobs since August last year. The industry with the highest number of job vacancies is the accommodation, food and beverage industry with 260 jobs advertised. The construction industry is the next highest with 238 jobs. The healthcare and social assistance industry is the third largest advertiser with 237 jobs and the fourth largest advertiser is the retail industry with 205 jobs.

Efforts to link local demands for jobs with education and training remains a high priority. There are strong demands for jobs such as registered nurses, retail managers, allied health professionals, construction project managers, accountants, hospitality managers and engineers. All of these professions would benefit from a more enhanced model of higher education in the region. Developing sustainable educational programs to meet these demands requires immediate attention.

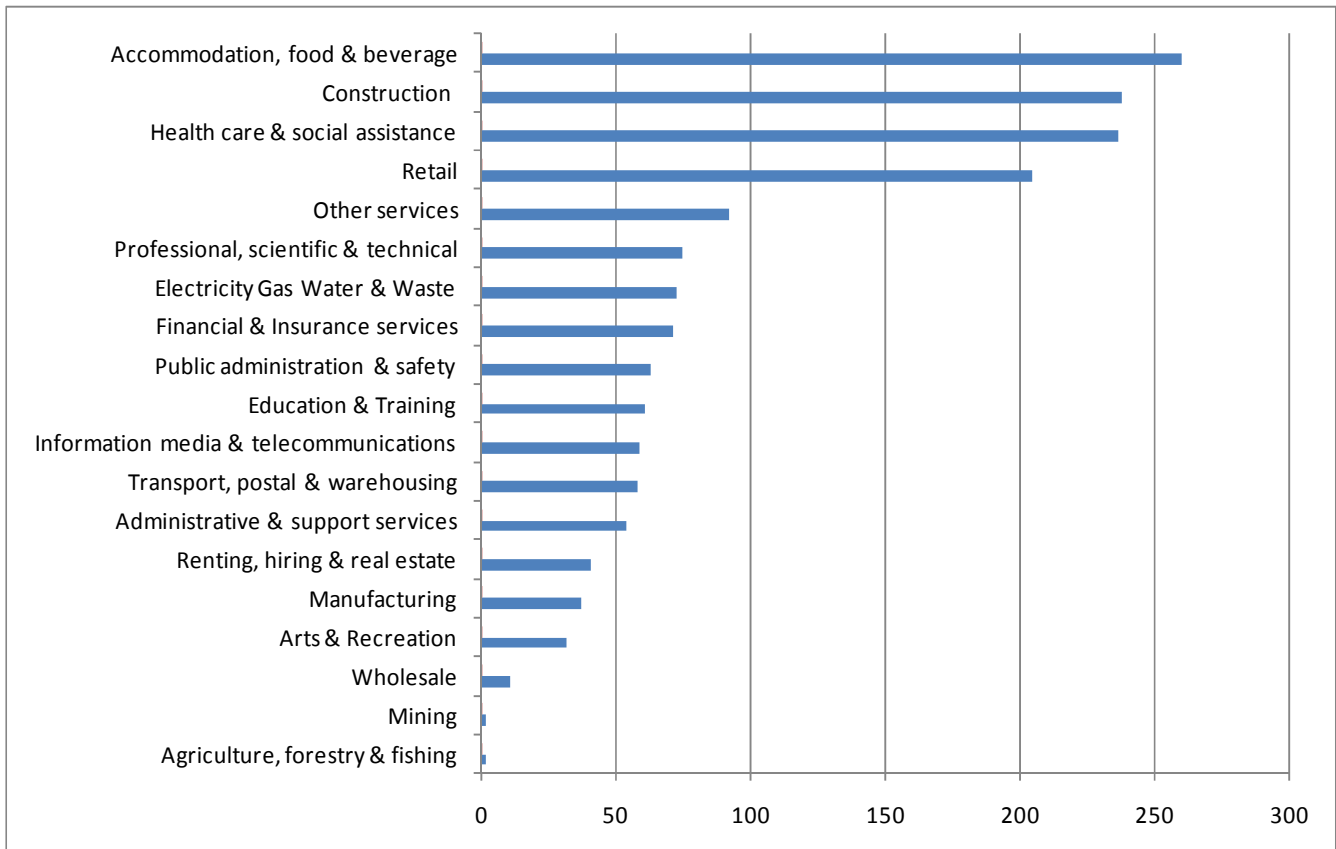
There are approximately 29,000 employed persons in the Port Macquarie-Hastings. The employment profile and the proportion of job vacancies (August 2009 to March 2010) are provided on page 2.



## Employment profile in the Port Macquarie-Hastings



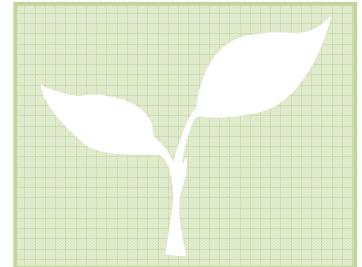
## Job vacancies in the Port Macquarie-Hastings: August 2009 – March 2010





## Federal Education & Training News

**Robert Oakeshott MP**  
**Federal Member for Lyne**



In the first week back in Parliament this year representatives from the Port Macquarie-Hastings Education and Skills Forum came to Canberra and we met with the Minister's office and proposed that:

1. An MOU between Port Macquarie-Hastings Council and the Federal Government be created to increase access to higher education in discipline areas that are linked to regional demands;
2. A feasibility study be carried out to determine the most appropriate model of tertiary education required to achieve the Federal Government objectives; and
3. A demand study be carried out to assess the viability and suitability of course offerings and research strengths.

I was able to meet with the Minister's office and department a second time to follow up on this matter and will hopefully be able to report back in the near future. All lobbying help at this stage is welcome!

In the last weeks of February we saw the changes to the Youth Allowance passed which means eligible students are now receiving the annual Start-up Scholarship and Relocation Scholarships in addition to weekly income support payments. This broadens the base support for students needing to access Youth Allowance and is reform that generally sits well with our desires for a greater "aspiration" for education within the region.

Also, as part of the Government's \$16.2 billion Building the Education Revolution most schools in the area are now seeing a new classroom, library or covered outdoor learning well into the construction phase or completed. Some schools have complained about costing issues so the Minister for Education Julia Gillard has announced that an auditing process will be conducted to ensure that the dollar is being spent effectively. All up \$88 million of capital investment has gone into the Lyne Electorate in the past 18 months.

The *MySchools* website was released, albeit with an early morning glitch, on January 28<sup>th</sup> and has been up and running since. Feedback has been mixed but it is good to see people engaging in the school dialogue. Community can continue to do this as part of the National Curriculum review where comment and feedback is welcome until May 23 so please go to [www.acara.edu.au](http://www.acara.edu.au) to have your say.

The Minister has also released the draft guidelines for the Structural Adjustment Fund which is open for comment to all key stakeholders until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010. I strongly encourage all higher education and VET providers to provide feedback to this process. On the conclusion of this process, competitive funding rounds are expected to be open in early July 2010.

The Minister will soon be releasing the National School Education Funding Review. When it is done, I will be consulting widely with local education authorities and I look forward to the full range of feedback. The Minister's words that "no school will be worse off in dollar terms per student" is an important early commitment, but it needs to be viewed in context with the overall funding reform to know what it means in detail.

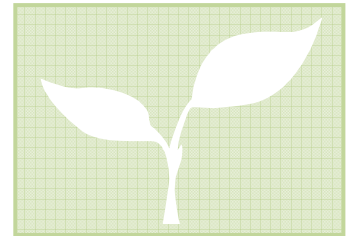
On a related matter, according to the December 2009 Small Area Labour Market figures the unemployment rate is going down in the local government areas of Kempsey, Greater Taree and Port Macquarie-Hastings, while in NSW the jobless figures have risen. This is the third quarter this has occurred, so can now be confidently described as a trend-line. Our strong push for education would be contributing to this and so "pats on the back" all round and thank you!

So whilst on this note, the Centrelink Jobs Expo will be held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010 from 10am to 3pm at the Port Macquarie Sports Stadium. If you are a job seeker or interested in finding out what opportunities are available in our area in the education or skills areas please attend this free event.



## State Education & Training News

**Peter Besseling MP**  
**State Member for Port Macquarie**



The start to the academic year has brought with it a flurry of activity in the education field here in Port Macquarie. As new university and TAFE students settle into their courses for the year, may I extend my best wishes to them as they pursue their chosen field of study. Unfortunately our community has been let down with the decision of Southern Cross University to withdraw their nursing degree program from Port Macquarie, however I am pleased to see the demand for education and training continues to remain strong in this region. Recent figures from State Training Services show that the North and Mid-North Coast trained 11 174 apprentices and trainees in the last quarter of 2009. New and continuing apprentices may want to consider applying for assistance through the State Government's 2010 Ben Chifley Scholarships, which provides \$50 000 to help regional apprentices with the cost of their studies. Applications for a scholarship close 31 May 2010, with further details at [www.training.nsw.gov.au](http://www.training.nsw.gov.au)

The revised NSW State Plan was released in March this year, with Government setting educational targets for the state that included 90% of 20-24 year olds holding qualifications of Yr 12 or a Certificate III or above by 2020. I look forward to seeing if the 2010/11 Budget to be announced in May this year will provide Mid-North Coast education services with the support they need to help our community meet this worthwhile target.

At a Parliamentary level, a Legislative Council Standing Committee is conducting an Inquiry into the Provision of Education to Students with a Disability or Special Needs, which is seeking input from the community. Late submissions are being accepted now, and public hearings begin again in late May. Community members with an interest or expertise in this area may be interested in sharing some of their views with the Standing Committee. Further details are available at <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/gpsc2>

**If you would like to bring an idea for the Port Macquarie-Hastings Education & Skills Forum, please email Wayne Graham ([wayne.graham@pmhc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:wayne.graham@pmhc.nsw.gov.au)), or one of the Forum members listed below.**

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