



## Illawarra Regional Information Service

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### **Employment in the Illawarra: More Jobs & More Diversity**

The region's labour force has undergone significant change over the last decade. The IRIS Economic Report *How is our Labour Force Changing* reveals that not only are more residents of the Wollongong Statistical District working, the industries and occupations they are employed in are becoming more diverse and their place of work is moving.

In 2006 there 119,544 members of the WSD labour force, up 8.4% on 1996. The number of employed increased by over 13,000 (up 13.6%), resulting in a downward spiral of the unemployment rate to 7.5%. More residents are working part-time, and more women entering the labour market.

While the WSD continues to predominately be a manufacturing and mining region, the share of employment across industry groups is becoming more diverse. While the Manufacturing industry experienced a 16.4% fall in jobs, the Health Care & Social Assistance sector grew by 25.5% and Retail created 21.8% more jobs, both well above the NSW average.

There is also a change in the distribution of jobs across occupation groups. The number of Professional positions in the WSD increased by 36.6%, while the number of Machinery Operators & Drivers fell by 9.1%. Encouragingly there has also been strong growth in apprenticeships and traineeships across the region.

Two thirds of Wollongong residents work within Wollongong, while self containment levels for Shellharbour and Kiama sat at around the one third mark. Nearly 16,000 people commute to jobs in Sydney, amounting to 14.2% of the WSD resident workforce. This is down slightly on the 2001 figure of 15.4%.

In terms of local job generation, over 8,000 new jobs were created in the WSD between 1996 and 2006, a rise of 10.3%. While this is below the state and national averages, the good news is that it appears to be enough job generation to reduce the region's dependence on Sydney.

Business Owner/Managers tend to work the longest hours. 32.6% work over 49 hours per week, compared to just 11.1% of Employees. However they also tend to earn more, with the median weekly income for male Owner/Mangers being \$199 higher than that of Employees. There continues to be a large disparity in earnings between the genders in the region.

The report is available to members on the IRIS website: [www.iris.org.au](http://www.iris.org.au).

**Further comment:**

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