

Chief Executive's Report

COVID-19 is presenting both challenges and opportunities.

Over the last couple of months, DWC has hosted journalists and reporters from TVNZ Breakfast, Stuff, NZ Herald and Seven Sharp, just to name a few. This has resulted in great exposure for the region in the national media. We thank all our tourism operators who have helped showcase the Coast to the rest of the country.

In the current environment the West Coast has been doing relatively well at attracting domestic visitors. According to MBIE data, retail spending on the Coast over the past four weeks was 7.9% higher than for the same period last year. In contrast New Zealand has experienced a decrease in spending of 8%.

Despite the current positive numbers, we remain cautious as there is no guarantee on how long domestic visitor numbers will continue and when international visitors will return.

COVID-19 is already having a significant effect on our economy. Unemployment amongst our working age-population has now risen to 7.9% - up from 6.1% at the start of the year. It's important to note that these figures are for the week ended 28 August.

Since then the wage subsidy extension and the resurgence wage subsidy have begun to end, so we would expect the jobseeker numbers to have increased further.

The impact of COVID is being experienced in vastly different ways across the region, with the Glacier Country being particularly hard hit by the loss of international visitors. It is understandably having a very real effect on the mental wellbeing of business owners and their staff. With this in mind, we recently held a wellbeing workshop in Fox Glacier.

The full extent of the economic shock of COVID is still to play out, so it is vital we support one another and leverage available opportunities.

DWC's Capability and Growth Advisors have now issued around 200 vouchers to local businesses through the Regional Business Partner (RBP) network's COVID-19 Business Advisory Fund and the Tourism Transition Fund. This support has enabled local businesses to tap into valuable professional advice services. We have also



Wellbeing workshop in Fox Glacier

signed up more local service providers to the RBP programme to ensure we can keep both the advice and revenue on the Coast.

Our new PGF-funded Upskill employment and training scheme has hit the ground running. The Upskill team are providing further opportunities for West Coast businesses, supporting people to attain recognised industry qualifications, and building industry skills. The timing of Upskill couldn't be better with numerous construction projects about to get underway. We are supporting local companies to get ready to take on contracts, meaning less of the work will end up with outside contractors.

At DWC we are looking at wider opportunities for the region. Alongside the West Coast Regional Council, Department of Conservation and Iwi, we have just signed an MoU to form the Kotahitanga kit e Uru Regional Alliance. The Alliance has been established to initiate, support and drive West Coast initiatives and secure central government funding to support the economic recovery and mitigate the social and economic impacts of COVID.

There are also opportunities to mitigate the economic impact of COVID by increasing our output in the minerals sector. The proposed reopening of the Spring Creek mine would have a significant positive economic impact. The mine has some of the highest quality coal in the world, which can be used in the manufacture of silicon for electronics and solar panels. A real win-win opportunity.

It is a very challenging time, but there are opportunities out there and the team at DWC are here to help.

Heath Milne | DWC Chief Executive

Boosting the West Coast's presence on Wikipedia

DWC has brought New Zealand's 'Wikipedian at Large', Dr Mike Dickison, to the West Coast.

"Wikipedia is a window to the world, and every place's public face," says Mike Dickison, who spent a year travelling New Zealand as the world's first 'Wikipedian at Large', supported by the US Wikimedia Foundation.

Dickison is currently running free workshops across the West Coast to train people to become Wikipedia editors and showing tourism operators how the online encyclopaedia can help their business. With a team of remote volunteers, he is also working with heritage organisations, galleries, libraries, and museums to boost the West Coast's Wikipedia presence.

Wikipedia is the 8th most visited website in the world. Wikipedia articles are regularly in the top search results for any topic. Anyone can edit Wikipedia, and the articles are written by volunteers; currently, about 250,000 dedicated editors (Wikipedians) around the world.

"Despite the lack of an editorial board, Wikipedia's coverage is usually very accurate, sometimes amazingly so. There are teams of volunteers and software 'bots' that check the articles for accuracy and remove vandalism within a few minutes. Since it was launched in 2001, Wikipedia has been a great example of

the power of collaboration and crowdsourcing," he says.

But according to Dickison, New Zealand has a Wikipedia problem. "Our volunteer editor community is quite small. So in almost every area - towns, national parks, artists, endangered species - Wikipedia's coverage is much poorer than a similar place, person, or thing in the UK or the USA.

"For example, Lyme Regis is a seaside town in Dorset which is popular with fossil hunters. It has similar tourist numbers to Fox Glacier. But the article on the town Fox Glacier is only 150 words long, while the Lyme Regis article is 2600 words.

"The article on the Glacier itself is only about 400 words, and is dominated by coverage of fatal accidents! That's ridiculous for a world-class attraction. I can't imagine someone planning a trip to the West Coast and Googling the famous Fox Glacier wanting to stay and explore the area based on that."

Dickison says while Wikipedia itself is not a marketing tool, there are different projects businesses can work with, such as the online travel guidebook Wikivoyage and the image library Wikimedia Commons. "Anything we do to improve the depth and breadth of the Coast's coverage will have direct and indirect payoffs. We can all contribute, and there are thousands of volunteers around the world wanting to help."

New dental clinic set to create jobs in Hokitika

Construction of a purpose-built dental surgery in Hokitika is underway with support from DWC.

Established Greymouth dentist Angelo Ioanides says the new clinic should be up and running by early to mid-November 2020.

"Like it or not, dentistry is an essential service. Having gone without the services of a local dentist for almost eight years, I'm incredibly excited to not only re-establish this essential service but to also be setting up one of New Zealand's most technologically advanced dental surgeries right here in the heart of Hokitika," says Angelo.

"We're looking to secure the services of various visiting dental specialists to provide specialist care locally. Not only will this greatly reduce the need for Coaster's to travel over the hill for care, it will

also create more jobs locally. In fact, our plan is to employ nine locals to help us deliver extraordinary dental care to the region.

"Setting up a brand-new dental practice requires significant capital. Taking on this project as an independent solo dentist simply would not have been possible without the remarkable help of DWC. Over the five years of planning this project we faced countless challenges and obstacles and through it all DWC have been unwaveringly supportive," says Angelo.

Having successfully run a crowdfunding campaign aimed at employing a larger team from day one, Hoki Dental is currently in the process of recruiting 4 people to join its team. For those interested in applying, more details can be found on the Hoki Dental Facebook page.

Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER

18

Leveraging Wiki for Tourism Operators | Westport
11:00am-12:00pm | EPIC Westport | FREE
Register online at www.dwc.org.nz

19

Editing Wikipedia Public Workshop | Westport
10:00am-4:00pm | EPIC Westport | FREE
Register online at www.dwc.org.nz

25

Leveraging Wiki for Tourism Operators | Hokitika
11:00am-12:00pm | Westland District Library | FREE
Register online at www.dwc.org.nz

26

Editing Wikipedia Public Workshop | Hokitika
10:00am-4:00pm | Westland District Library | FREE
Register online at www.dwc.org.nz

OCTOBER

01

West Coast Training & Employment Roadshow | Reefton
5:30pm | St John, Reefton | FREE
RSVP: jadek@tpp.ac.nz or 027 245 0013

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Accounting for Non-Accountants | CECC | Online
9:00am-12 noon | \$250+GST (member), \$500+GST (non-member)
Register online at <https://cecc.org.nz>
To see if you are eligible for NZTE business capability funding contact DWC.

Signup to DWC's newsletter for the latest news and events: www.dwc.org.nz

CO.STARTERS

Business Start-up & Development Programme



9 week course | \$250

Business Development Programme

DWC's Co.Starters business start-up and development programme is set to begin in Greymouth on 22 September.

The 9 week course is designed to help you find the best approach to starting and growing a business and collaborate with others who share your entrepreneurial spirit as you work through your business model.

Hannah Fitzgibbon attended the previous programme in Greymouth.

"Co.Starters is such an incredible opportunity. It helped me learn a process to work through business ideas eventually leading me to build Hannah Fitzgibbon Facilitation.

"I gained valuable connections, heard stories from business owners in the community and built the belief that running a business was possible for me too. My first clients even came from Co.Starters connections. My business wouldn't be here without the support of this program," she said.

Pana Leontiadu from Wavewise attended the programme in Westport.

"Co.Starters was so helpful in bringing Wavewise to life. The idea was in my head, but I was unsure about how to make my surf therapy programme happen. I didn't know about legal structures to start a social enterprise, how the financial side of things worked and what it takes to present a good pitch to get more support.

"Co.Starters is a great programme, I absolutely recommend it to everyone," Pana said.

If you would like to start your own business, develop your existing business, or explore and develop an idea or project then the Co.Starters programme is for you.

Greymouth programme - 22 September 2020
Westport and Hokitika programmes - February 2021

More info:
events@dwc.org.nz