



**Media Release**  
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## **Central Otago Employment Continues to Grow**

“According to a recent Statistics New Zealand release the number of people in paid employment had continued to increase in Central Otago District”, said Jonathan Gadd, Business Development Manager at the Central Otago District Council.

In fact, to the year ended February 2009, employment in Central Otago rose 4.5%, increasing from 10,320 to 10,780. This increase was driven by a number of industry sectors, including wholesale trade, administration and support services, healthcare and agriculture (including horticulture and viticulture).

Construction, accommodation and food services and retail trade all suffered small losses of people working in these areas.

The overall increase ranked employment growth in Central Otago second of all local authority areas in New Zealand (behind Buller). In comparison, employment in Queenstown Lakes District fell by 3.5% (560 people fewer in employment). Other noteworthy areas include Greater Auckland down 3.5% (22,000), Christchurch down 2.7% (5,200) and Dunedin down 3.8% (2,200)

Nationally, there were 53,000 fewer people in employment at the end of February 2009 than 12 months previously, down 2.7%.

Of the 72 local authority areas in New Zealand only 16 had an increase in the number of people in employment. Interestingly, 10 of the 16 were in the South Island and only 2 of the 16 (Invercargill City and Porirua City) would be considered to be urban based.

This employment growth has been the consistent story for Central Otago for the last 10 years. In this time, employment rose from 7,500 to 10,780, an increase of 53%. Again, on a national level Central Otago ranks second, with only our near neighbour Queenstown Lakes District having stronger employment growth over that time.

Within Central Otago the construction industry has had the strongest growth, followed by agriculture and administration and support services. Retail trade and accommodation and food services also experienced strong growth before the hiccups experienced last year.

Central Otago's Mayor, Dr Malcolm Macpherson says: “employment data supports the view that Central's economy is 'different'. The drivers that have contributed to the unprecedented growth of the past decade still dominate, and we are the most resilient district economy in New Zealand.”

John Christie, Chief Executive of the Otago Chamber of Commerce noted that the economic tsunami, as it is being called overseas, had its greatest impact on large manufacturing businesses. "The Central Otago economy is predominantly made up of smaller enterprises, and this has provided some insulation against the downturn. This strength in the hinterland is important for the whole region".

\*\*\* Note: increased employment does not imply that unemployment has decreased. In June 2009 there were 70 people registered as unemployed in Central Otago, a rate of under 1%. This, however, was well up from the 27 people unemployed at the end of March.

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