

# City council approves DAMA bid

**EMPLOYMENT**  
BY RACHAEL HOULIHAN  
Warrnambool

WITH a desperate skills and labour shortage across the region, the Warrnambool City Council has put in motion the first steps to fill 300 jobs over three years.

Councillors voted at Monday's monthly meeting to approve the submission of a Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) application to the Federal Government.

Under the DAMA framework, employers in areas experiencing skills and labour shortages can sponsor skilled and semi-skilled overseas workers.

They are designed to ensure employers recruit Australians as a first priority, and then if the jobs can't be filled migrant workers can be employed.

A council report said engagement with major employers across the region indicated there was ongoing shortages of skilled and semi-skilled workers.

It said the shortages could generally be attributed to three primary factors – low employment levels across



**GREAT:** Warrnambool chief executive Bruce Anson, Victorian Skills Commissioner Neil Coulson and mayor Tony Herbert at the regional skills demand profile launch.

the region, flat population growth and an ageing workforce leading to the decline in the number of working age people (from 20-64).

"The Victorian Skills Commissioner also recently released its Regional Skills Demand Profile – the Great South Coast with the key finding that industries across the region are reporting challenges in attracting skilled professionals," it says.

"This report estimates the outlook on jobs growth for the region in key industry groups across the period 2018-21 to be in the range of 2450 – 7550 jobs."

Cr Peter Hulin moved the motion to support the DAMA bid, saying once workers had arrived the challenge was to

keep them here in the south-west. Cr Sue Cassidy said the council had taken the lead on this project, not just for Warrnambool but for the whole region.

Cr Robert Anderson said all councils across the south-west had identified a skills shortage.

Mayor Tony Herbert said the council's economic development team had done an "amazing job" with the application.

"We need to stimulate population," he said. "We have a great product here. How could we afford not to be in it?"

Cr David Owen said there was 1000 jobs in Warrnambool that needed filling and a DAMA would help to do that.



**SHORTAGE:** Norton Motor Group chief Marcus Norton is one of numerous south-west employers facing a skills shortage. Picture: Christine Anson

## Dealership's battle for staff

**EMPLOYMENT**  
Norton Motor Group

NORTON Motor Group principal Marcus Norton reckons Warrnambool City Council's bid to get a Designated Area Migration Agreement Area (DAMA) for the south-west is a good idea.

Mr Norton has battled for some time to fill vacancies for automotive technicians at his dealerships in War-

manbool, Horsham and Stawell and hopes a DAMA might improve the situation.

He has employed people from overseas several times to fill automotive technician vacancies but has found they rarely stay for longer than a few years unless there is a local community of their compatriots.

He hopes getting the south-west declared a DAMA area might attract a number of people of similar nationalities to the region, improving the chances of them forming their own community and building good connections with locals.

He currently has two vacancies for automotive technicians at Warrnambool for which he has received a few international applications.

— EVERARD HIMMELREICH

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