



Western Australian Skills and
Workforce Development

ACTION PLAN

November 2024





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1

Introduction

1.1 Minister's message

I am pleased to present Western Australia's first jurisdictional Action Plan under the five-year National Skills Agreement which includes significant funding and joint commitment to reforms from the Commonwealth Government. A key deliverable under the National Skills Agreement, and in response to the National Skills Plan, it outlines key issues for Western Australia's skills, training and workforce development needs and our significant investment in initiatives to ensure we have skilled workers to support a strong and diversifying economy.

The Western Australian Government has made significant investments in free and low fee training, with record course enrolments in 2023 and further growth in 2024. This is helping to provide a supply of skilled workers across priority industry sectors, prepare for new and emerging industry needs and supporting employers to grow their businesses.

There is still more to do to ensure all Western Australians can access training and employment opportunities, particularly those who may need assistance to overcome barriers. There is also a need to ensure workers are supported to reskill and upskill to reduce mismatch of skills resulting in underemployment as our economy transitions.

Western Australia's strong TAFE sector is vital to deliver training around the State, complemented by quality private training providers, to ensure students can access training as close as possible to home. I am particularly proud to be leading Australia's first Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence, which will leverage the existing strengths of the network of TAFEs and publicly funded specialist private training providers across the State.

The National Skills Agreement sets out an ambitious agenda, and I look forward to working with my Commonwealth, State and Territory colleagues, and stakeholders nationally and locally on the State's priority actions over the term of the National Skills Agreement.



Hon. Simone McGurk MLA

Minister for Training and Workforce Development



1.2 Purpose

Jurisdictional Action Plans are a new initiative under the National Skills Agreement agreed by all States and Territories with the Commonwealth Government. Their purpose is to identify those actions that will contribute to jointly identified national priorities, targets and outcomes, and also to provide greater visibility for industry and community stakeholders on how the vocational education and training system, under joint national stewardship, is meeting the needs of all Australians and promoting social and economic prosperity. The national plan, and by extension the State's plan, is informed by engagement with the VET sector, tripartite leadership structures such as Jobs and Skills Australia and Jobs and Skills Councils, and with First Nations organisations and communities.

The focus of our action plan includes specific workforce needs, capability, priority cohorts, national reforms, and broader workforce development priorities to ensure a well-functioning labour market that can supply the right skills in the right place at the right time to ensure

the nation continues to prosper. Skills Ministers have agreed to annual reviews and updates to the national and jurisdictional plans, which will help steward the national system in a consistent and coordinated way to maximise the collective investment in skills and workforce development. Importantly, it is the adaptation of the national plan to the State's local context that will deliver on our agreed priorities.

In the year ahead jurisdictions will be working together to finalise an outcomes framework for the national skills system and related targets that contribute towards the agreed national priorities. The initial national and jurisdictional action plans will outline the relevant actions and directions, with subsequent updates in 2025 and beyond to include the approach to agreed outcomes and targets.



2

Spotlight on WA

2.1 Economy

Western Australia remains a powerhouse of the nation's economy. While accounting for just under around 11% of Australia's population, it contributed a much higher 17.4% of the nation's economic output in 2022-23. It also leads the way in exports, driving employment and underpinning the revenue needed to deliver benefits for the community in areas such as education, training, health, social care and assistance and the plethora of services delivered across the State.

WA Economy (2022-23)

- **\$445 billion** GSP in 2022-23
- **3.5%** GSP growth
- **17.4% share** of national economy

WA Business investment (2023-24)

- **\$62 billion** of business investment

WA Exports (2022-23)

- **\$254 billion** of overall mineral and petroleum sales
- **\$125 billion** in iron ore sales, World's largest producer
- **\$56 billion** of LNG produced, World's 3rd largest producer
- **\$21 billion** of Lithium (spodumene concentrate) sales, World's largest producer (for 2022-23)
- **\$19 billion** of gold produced, World's 4th largest producer

Population (to March quarter 2024)

- **2.95 million** population
- **10.9% share** national population
- **3.1% population growth** (over the year to March quarter 2024)

Employment / Labour Market (September 2024)

- **1.62 million** people employed
- **3.6%** unemployment rate
- **68.8%** participation rate - highest of all states

Wages

- **4.4%** wage price index growth (annual average growth to June quarter 2024)
- **\$2,094 average weekly earnings** in May 2024 - highest of all states

Main sources used in this section: Economy: ABS (2022-23), *Australian National Accounts: State Accounts*; Business Investment: ABS (June 2024), *Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product*; WA Exports: *WA Mineral and Petroleum Statistics Digest 2022-23*; Population: ABS (March 2024), *National, state and territory population*; Employment: ABS (September 2024), *Labour Force, Australia*; Wages: ABS (June 2024), *Wage Price Index, Australia*; ABS (May 2024), *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia*.



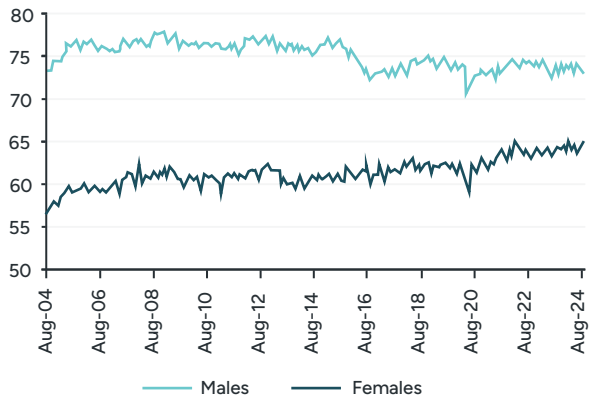
2.2 Social

Skilled workers are critical to support Western Australia's strong and diversifying economy. The WA Government has made significant investments in training. Training is vital to provide a supply of skilled workers across priority industry sectors; prepare people for new and emerging industry needs and equip Western Australia's diverse industry sectors to grow their businesses. The labour market is tight and to continue to grow the State needs to foster productivity and overcome barriers to participation, especially for women, Aboriginal people, and youth.

There are now more affordable training opportunities for individuals to prepare for entry level roles, for the upskilling of existing workers and reskilling for those seeking new careers. Training can help people to rejoin the workforce and transform peoples' lives.

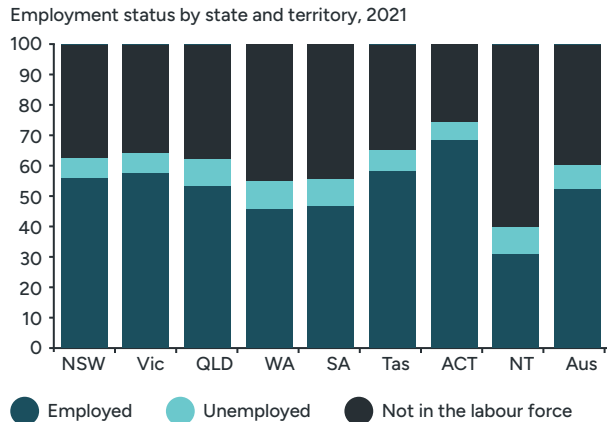
Part of the complexity in the State's jobs market comes from skills mismatches in some areas – that is, some of the positions employers in the State are seeking to fill may not quite match the additional labour that is locally available.

Figure 2-1 WA labour market participation by gender, monthly



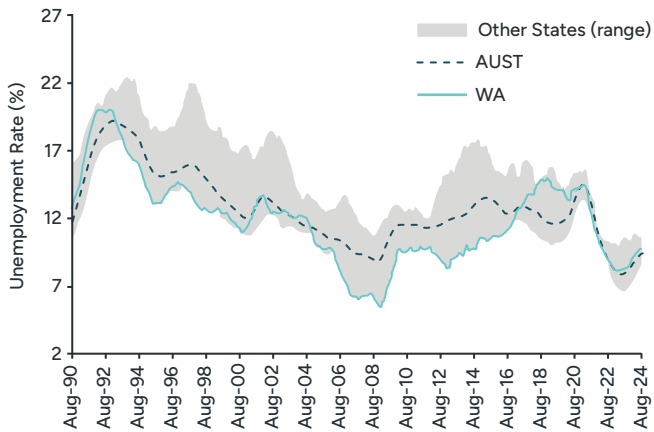
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (August 2024), Labour Force, Australia

Figure 2-2 Aboriginal labour market participation and unemployment, Census 2021



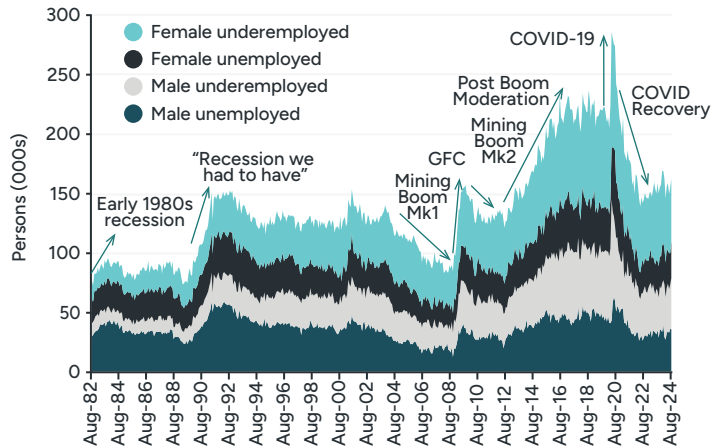
Source: ABS 2021 Census (AIHW calculations)

Figure 2-3 WA youth unemployment, monthly (relative to national, other states)



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (August 2024), Labour Force, Australia,

Figure 2-4 Underemployment and unemployment by gender, monthly



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (August 2024), Labour Force, Australia

2.2.1 Participation

In August 2024, around 1.61 million people were employed in Western Australia, with the State's participation rate remaining the highest of all States and Territories at 68.9%. Fee free training has been highly successful to remove fee barriers due to cost of living and financial disadvantage, with 63% of enrolments by women, 5% by Aboriginal students and 9% by students with a disability (at 30 September 2024).

2.2.2 Barriers to labour market participation

While Western Australia's participation rate remains strong, this is balanced by the 1 in 10 people, or approximately 160,990 people in the labour force looking for more work than they currently have, providing an opportunity to grow the supply of labour (at August 2024). While the overall unemployment rate in Western Australia remains at historic lows, there are areas across our community where the unemployment rate for youth and Aboriginal people is well above average.

The National Skills Agreement provides opportunities for investment in initiatives to enhance access to training and support more students to complete their training including policy initiatives for:

- Closing the Gap
- Ensuring access to foundation skills training
- Improved completions – especially for priority groups.

Importantly, the reasons behind whether barriers to participating in the labour market also impact the capacity of individuals and priority cohorts to participate in training need to be understood and addressed.

2.2.3 Gender

A focus on supporting gender equality and ensuring women are accessing training that leads to high paying occupations is critical. Trade occupations continue to be in high demand across the economy in industry sectors including building and construction, mining and resources, defence and the Net Zero transition. As at 31 December 2023, women accounted for around 12% of apprentices in training in Western Australia across all trade categories. While the proportion of women in apprenticeships has been increasing over time, progress is slow.

Conversely, women are disproportionately represented in training for lower paying occupations, especially the care sector. This is illustrated in fee free training, with seven of the top ten fee free courses being in the care sector, and 63% of fee free course enrolments being taken up by women. This compares with the top five *Lower fees, local skills* (LFLS) courses being trade focused, and 72% of enrolments in LFLS course being by males (at 30 September 2024).

Supporting gender equality in the vocational education and training (VET) system will need to consider a range of intersecting influences on training and career decisions that begin early in life. These include family, cultural and social attitudes toward gender, available role models, media and literature, toys, and gender bias within school curricula and career counselling programs. Once students are in the VET pathway, it is also important to consider how the design and delivery models of courses affect gender equality, and the impact of issues such as childcare, family friendly arrangements and wraparound support.

2.2.4 Foundation skills

Foundation skills are essential skills needed to thrive in work and life – English language, literacy, numeracy, digital skills, and skills required for the workplace such as teamwork, innovation and problem solving. The need for Western Australians to develop their foundation skills has grown in response to social and economic changes. The digital economy expanded rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic and many Western Australians now access services, connect with community and family and do their shopping and entertainment online. Employers are increasingly seeking skilled workers and there are fewer entry level jobs available in the labour market². A Commonwealth Government report released in 2022 noted that one in five Australian adults have literacy skills below the level required to operate effectively in the modern workplace³.

A *Foundation Skills Policy Review* conducted in 2022 and 2023 identified five drivers of change:

- declining foundation skills among people entering the VET sector;
- shortage of foundation skills teachers in WA, particularly in regional areas;
- changing economic needs including fewer entry level jobs, transition from legacy industries such as coal and forestry, growth in the digital economy, automation and mechanisation;
- prioritisation of foundation skills nationally in response to economic change and the need to ensure that no one is left behind; and
- the need for foundation skills support in community settings.

With future jobs requiring a higher level of skill, it is important that foundation skills policy settings and supports are available to assist Western Australians to achieve their training goals as the economy transitions and diversifies.

²Department of Training and Workforce Development, 2023, *Foundation Skills Policy Review*

³Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2022, *Don't Take it as Read: Inquiry into adult literacy and its importance*, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, Commonwealth of Australia.

⁴Pathways to Post-School Success Review of Western Australian senior secondary pathways, 2024, Expert Panel Report: Consultation Draft

2.2.5 Youth

The youth unemployment rate in Western Australia has averaged 9.8% over the 12 months from August 2023 to August 2024, and in some areas exceeds 20%. Vocational education and training plays a critical role in engaging and re-engaging young people. Strengthening partnerships between schools, tertiary providers and industry is seen as an important way to help students gain exposure to possible careers, enable students to undertake 'career tasters' and work experience programs, raise aspirations, and support post-school transition⁴.

The State Training Board's *Mobilising WA's Future: Young people in VET* report identified that VET plays a critical role for both young people and the future strength of Western Australia's economy, society and culture. The *WA Youth Action Plan 2024-2027* and *At Risk Youth Strategy 2022-2027* also recognise the particular importance of access to training for young people. The State Training Board's report identified three key themes from the consultations, including:

- Engagement and exposure to VET – need for earlier, impartial and tailored advice with direct exposure to VET;
- Changing the perception of VET – prioritise a pathway neutral approach to career advice in schools and promote the VET training to career influencers; and
- VET delivery and support – provide clear, accessible information on training and career pathways and look at ways to improve training outcomes.



2.3 Aboriginal people

Western Australia is home to more than 120,000 Aboriginal people, representing 4.3% of the State's population, and 50% of Aboriginal people are under 25 years. More than 60 Aboriginal languages are spoken in Western Australia and there have been 134 determinations of native title, covering 85% of the State. Over 60% of Aboriginal people in Western Australia live in regional areas, with around one in eight living in more than 200 Aboriginal communities and homelands.

Under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, all parties have committed to key reporting and accountability measures to enable transparency on how the Priority Reforms and the socioeconomic outcomes are being embedded into Government policies, strategies and partnerships. On 2 October 2023, the Western Australian Government released its second *Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023-2025*, which outlines new initiatives and key strategies to drive progress towards the Priority Reforms and socioeconomic outcomes.

On 22 May 2024, the WA Government released a whole-of-Government Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) strategy⁵ to achieve greater involvement of ACCOs in planning, designing and delivering more culturally responsive and secure services to Aboriginal people. This has positive impacts for service users as well as for the broader community by creating new economic opportunities, including the employment of local Aboriginal staff. The ACCO strategy was developed in partnership with the Social Services Committee of the Aboriginal Health Council of WA and builds on the establishment of Western Australia's second peak body, the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia.

2.3.1 Challenges

The Productivity Commission's first review of progress on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, released in February 2024, highlighted that fundamental changes are required to deliver on the Agreement. The report made four recommendations regarding sharing of power, Indigenous data sovereignty, mainstream systems and culture and stronger accountability mechanisms needed to drive behaviour change.

2.3.2 Empowerment

The WA Government's *Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021-2029* (Strategy) sets out how the Western Australian Government will direct its efforts towards a future in which all Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation.

Developed in partnership with the Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA, the Strategy outlines a high-level framework for future State Government policies, plans, initiatives and programs that contribute to better outcomes for Aboriginal people, built around genuine partnerships and engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders, strong accountability, and culturally responsive ways of working. It consists of 10 strategic elements grouped into four themes, and a set of core principles. Together, these set the high-level direction for the WA Government, its agencies and staff to work towards achieving the Strategy's goal. Increasing economic participation is critical to provide secure foundations and rewarding futures for Aboriginal people, with support for their employment and business aspirations.

The National Skills Agreement provides funding to invest in the capability, sustainability and growth of the ACCO and First Nations owned training sector; and to grow the First Nations workforce.

2.4 Diversify WA

Diversify WA provides an economic blueprint for collaboration between government, industry and the community, and supports the WA Government's focus on creating secure, quality jobs, growing and diversifying the economy and attracting investment. It identifies eight priority sectors in which Western Australia has a competitive advantage and where there are significant growth opportunities, and outlines the initiatives, actions and strategies that will contribute to achieving this vision. *Diversify WA* informs skills and workforce development initiatives, and training investments, such as the recently announced the Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence, which will harness the collective capacity and capability of the State's TAFE network and publicly funded private providers to meet skill requirements in these critical areas. *Diversify WA's* strategic focus areas include:

- Energy
- Tourism, events and creative industries
- International education
- Defence industries
- Mining, and mining equipment, technology and services (METS)
- Space industries
- Health and medical life sciences
- Primary industries

⁵New government strategy to support Aboriginal-led solutions | Western Australian Government (wa.gov.au)

2.5 Regions

Western Australia's nine regions are critical to Western Australia's prosperity and liveability. The nine regions are diverse, differing in population size, demographic composition, serviceability, industry focus, geography and natural resources. This diversity creates regional competitive and comparative advantages, and also brings about unique challenges for each region.

The WA Government, through its *WA Regional Development Framework*⁶, is committed to a vision for 'sustainable, vibrant and liveable regional communities, supported by strong and prosperous economies'. To achieve this, the WA Government is committed to creating sustainable and balanced labour markets in regional Western Australia that supports economic growth, diversification and development across all regions.

Western Australia has nine Regional Development Commissions that play a crucial role in promoting economic and social development across the state's diverse regions. These commissions collaborate with local industry, government and community members to develop strategies that address the unique needs and opportunities in the local region or sub-region, ensuring balanced growth and prosperity. Regional Development Commissions are involved in strategic planning to ensure sustainable development.

The nine Regional Development Commissions in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development support Western Australia's regional development portfolio and provide a key resource and strategic partner to help align training and workforce development strategies and investment.

The priority focus areas include:

- **Regional Liveability:** Ensuring regions are good places to live is critical to the wellbeing of regional residents and underpins labour market and community resilience.
- **Economic Development, Diversification and Innovation:** Diversification must leverage existing strengths in resources, primary industries, and tourism, and seek to develop and support new industries and careers.
- **Climate Resilience and Low Carbon Transition:** A changing climate alongside the global transition to a low carbon economy provide risks and significant opportunity for diversification and job growth in our regions.
- **Aboriginal Empowerment and Prosperity:** Partnerships and engagement with Aboriginal people, strong accountability and culturally responsive working will enable regions to realise a future in which all Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation.



3

Skills and Workforce Development

The State Government has five TAFE colleges servicing the training and workforce development needs of Western Australia, complemented by around 200 publicly funded private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), including nine ACCO RTOs. There are also 28 Group Training Organisations (GTOs) providing crucial wrap around support services funded by the State Government.

3.1 TAFE at the heart

The WA Government has worked to ensure the State's TAFE colleges are at the heart of the VET sector. WA's TAFE colleges play an important leadership role, working closely with industry, unions and their local community to deliver training which responds to industry and community needs. TAFE colleges also work in partnership with education sectors, including schools and universities to ensure joined up education and training pathways. Importantly, TAFE colleges are instrumental in rolling out new training and workforce initiatives across the State, for example, Jobs and Skills Centres, Fee Free TAFE, and the *Lower Fees, local skills* initiative. TAFE colleges also play a vital role in supporting students who need additional support to access training, providing important pathways to employment and further education. The *Foundation Skills Policy Review* highlighted the significant community service obligation TAFE colleges carry across metropolitan and regional Western Australia.

3.1.1 Access for everyone

Five TAFE colleges in WA deliver publicly funded training across 54 campuses and up to 16 satellite training delivery locations, offering more than 1,000 courses. TAFE colleges are the centre of the State's training system, providing agile, locally responsive training to support industry, communities and the people in those communities, with a focus on:

- enabling all Western Australians to easily choose and access training that leads to jobs and careers according to their aspirations;
- lifting the participation of Aboriginal people and under-represented groups in training and employment;
- growing the supply of skilled workers to sustain our economy and community wellbeing;
- providing affordable training; and
- adjusting to the specific needs of people in our community living with disability.



The State's TAFE colleges are supported by 19 Jobs and Skills Centres, providing free pathway neutral career and training guidance to help transform lives and communities, and enable a thriving economy.

TAFE colleges are the anchor institute of the State's training system providing the skills development to the widest possible catchment of people, industry, and areas. TAFE colleges also provide services in thin training markets that are not commercially viable, but critical for the community, individuals and industry.

3.1.2 Support

The WA Government has invested in a range of initiatives to drive participation in training and workforce development and to build the skills pipeline for Western Australia, including:

- Aboriginal Employment Enabling Program
- Construction Visa Subsidy Program
- Enhanced support for jobseekers
- Job Ready Programs
- Jobs and Skills Centres
- State migration initiatives

3.1.3 Modern infrastructure

The State Government has invested \$250 million in capital works projects to deliver contemporary training facilities at TAFE colleges.

This significant program of work includes:



- Balga - Booriarup Specialist Teaching Block
- Joondalup - Electric Automotive Vehicle Training Centre



- Armadale - Training Campus
- Fremantle - Maritime simulators
- Mandurah - Hospitality and Tourism Training Centre



- Pundulmurra (South Hedland) - Trades Expansion
- Kununurra - Health and Hospitality Training Centre
- Minurmarghali Mia (Roebourne) - classroom block
- Broome - Hospitality and Student Services Centre



- Northam - metals and construction workshop
- Geraldton - creative industries hub
- Geraldton - maritime training vessel
- Kalgoorlie - Heavy Plant and Engineering Trades Workshop



- Albany - Kinjarling Trades Workshops



- Muresk Institute - Agriculture Machinery Training Centre

The WA Government has also invested **\$25 million in modern equipment for TAFE colleges**, to ensure students are trained on the latest industry-standard equipment.

Through the TAFE Technology Fund, the Commonwealth Government has also provided funding to progress:

- **North Metropolitan TAFE's Midland campus** – renewable energy and wind turbine training facilities

- **South Metropolitan TAFE's Bentley campus** – expansion of hospitality training facilities
- **North Regional TAFE's Pundulmurra campus** – expansion of renal training services
- **Ellenbrook Senior High School** – trade training centre (through the Department of Education).

The recently announced Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence will further expand the investment in modern equipment and infrastructure, focusing on capital investment to support TAFE colleges to deliver the skills needed to realise the State's ambition to be a world leader in renewable energy exports.

3.1.4 Expanded capacity and capability

The State Government has committed to support TAFE lecturers to return to industry to undertake professional development. TAFE colleges are funded to support lecturers to return to industry to undertake professional development to ensure TAFE lecturers can connect with employers and industry and take contemporary industry practice back to their training areas to prepare the future workforce. Benefits of the program for industry and TAFE colleges include:

- development of new industry partnerships and the consolidation of existing partnerships;
- industry and lecturers exchanging knowledge, and building important one on one relationships;
- lecturers being exposed to the latest advancements, technologies, methods, systems and practices;
- industry gaining an understanding, and helping to shape and positively influence the occupational expertise of lecturers;

- lecturers passing on their contemporary knowledge and expertise to students in the form of better training and assessment outcomes; and
- lecturers promoting industries and employers to their students.

3.1.5 Regions

Western Australia's size – 2.7 million square kilometres with 12,800 km of coastline - and geography creates unique challenges for students to access VET around the State. The State's three regional TAFE colleges cover three distinct geographic parts of the State with very different training and employment needs. Thin markets and high cost of delivery in regional and remote Western Australia are critical considerations.

North Regional TAFE covers the Pilbara and Kimberley regions, Central Regional TAFE covers the entire Midwest, Gascoyne, Wheatbelt and Goldfields regions, and South Regional TAFE covers the State's southern regional areas including Bunbury, Albany, Esperance and Narrogin. These regions also embrace diverse and vibrant Aboriginal cultures.

Western Australia is home to more than 120,000 Aboriginal people, representing 4.3% of the State's population, with:

- **50% under 25** years of age;
- more than **60 Aboriginal languages** are spoken;
- over **60% of Aboriginal people living in regional areas**, with **1 in 8 living in more than 200 remote communities** and homelands; and
- **134 determinations of Native Title**, covering **85% of the State**.

WA's unique geographical context and diverse Aboriginal communities will add time and complexity to the development of partnerships and implementation of the National Skills Agreement.

Twelve Regional Coordinating Committees (RCCs) are in place including Karratha, Port Hedland, Broome, Kununurra, Gascoyne, Geraldton, Northam, Peel, Bunbury, Albany, Kalgoorlie and Esperance. RCCs are led by the relevant regional TAFE college, Regional Development Commission, local Regional Chamber of Industry and the Department of Training and Workforce Development and have evolved to include a broad range of community stakeholders in each region. The RCCs are critical to identifying local training and workforce needs and ensuring regional areas benefit from the State Government's investment in training and workforce development initiatives in line with their local priorities.

3.2 Accessible training

Affordable and publicly subsidised training is key to supporting learners and supplying industry with the skills it requires. Training is the key to people improving their employability, getting a job, increasing job security, and improving their earnings outlook. With fees at record highs, declining TAFE enrolments and significant skill shortages, the decision was made to cut fees to respond to challenges in the State's labour market and assist with the post-pandemic recovery. This was informed by the State Government's extensive community and industry consultation through a series of Skills Summits in 2021 and a 2020 review of the training sector.

3.2.1 Lower fees, local skills (LFLS)

In 2020 the State Government cut fees by up to 72% for priority courses under the LFLS initiative. The list of courses under the LFLS initiative increased to 210 courses in 2022 across all major industry groupings critical to the State's economy. In 2023, around 130 qualifications and skill sets were included in the Fee Free training initiative, with around 160 courses remaining in LFLS.

Courses selected under LFLS respond to skill shortages (e.g. care sector, early childhood education, health, construction, mining and resources), address the needs of priority industries (e.g. defence, agriculture, hospitality and tourism) and target youth, jobseekers, women and Aboriginal students.

Under LFLS the State Government also formalised the public subsidisation for skill sets, with an initial focus to help workers impacted by the disruption caused by the COVID pandemic to pivot to new careers. These skill sets were codesigned with industry and are now a critical component of the State Government's publicly subsidised training programs. The LFLS initiative also includes subsidised existing worker traineeships in aged and disability care, early childhood and education, civil construction supervision and information and communications technology.

The maximum course fees students will pay for LFLS qualifications have been capped annually at \$400 for concession students, youth up to 25 years and jobseekers, and \$1,200 for non-concession students. In 2023 there were almost 58,000 enrolments in *Lower fees, local skills*. There have already been more than 53,150 enrolments in the *Lower fees, local skills* initiative this year (as at 30 September 2024), with 57% of enrolments by students aged 15-24 years of age.

3.2.2 Fee Free training

Around 130 Fee Free courses and skill sets were introduced in January 2023, which is jointly funded by the Commonwealth Government. Both qualifications and skill sets are included in the Fee Free training initiative. These courses continue to be free in 2024 and 2025. The Fee Free TAFE agreement with the Commonwealth is in place until 2026.

In 2023, the WA Government supported around 38,300 fee free enrolments, with the most popular courses in 2023 in early childhood education, aged and disability care, nursing and technology. High demand for Fee Free TAFE qualifications and skill sets continues in 2024, with almost 43,000 enrolments already recorded by the end of September.

3.2.3 Increased opportunities – breaking down barriers

Job Ready programs are a fresh approach to training that integrate industry led candidate screening, accredited short course and job placements that can lead directly to employment. Many participants in Job Ready programs have experienced barriers to employment. Participants include mothers returning to work, disengaged youth, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal people, and people who have experienced long-term unemployment. Where necessary, Job Ready programs include wraparound support such as mentoring, language, literacy and numeracy support and employability skills coaching. The Department of Training and Workforce Development delivers the program in partnership with TAFE colleges and RTOs and in close collaboration with employers, unions, industry bodies and State Government agencies including the departments of Education,

Transport, Justice and Communities, as well as the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workforce Relations. Strategic partnerships with the not-for-profit sector have been critical to the success of these programs, providing additional sources of wraparound support and participant referrals.

There are currently eight Job Ready programs being delivered across metropolitan and regional Western Australia including Mandurah, Broome, Northam, Katanning, Bunbury, Collie, Geraldton and Albany. During 2024, delivery of the Heavy Vehicle Driving Operations Program was extended in regional areas with course delivery commencing at Muresk (Northam), Katanning, Merredin, Esperance and Kalgoorlie. The Job Ready programs continue to mature and gain further industry support as a strategy for recruiting and training entry-level workers.

3.2.4 Apprenticeships, traineeships and pathways

The *State's Vocational Education and Training Act 1996* (VET Act) sets up the advisory and regulatory framework for the apprenticeship system. This includes the role of the State Training Board (STB) in advising the Minister for Training and Workforce Development on the classification of nationally recognised qualifications as apprenticeships or traineeships, and any further conditions the Minister should place on the delivery of these qualifications under contracts of training.

- **School based apprenticeships and traineeships (SBATs)** are an employment-based training pathway for full-time school students. These qualifications are recommended by industry as suitable for delivery to school students. By undertaking an SBAT, students gain valuable skills and knowledge in their chosen field or the career they want to explore further post-school.

- **Aboriginal School Based Training (ASBT)** delivers selected VET qualifications to Aboriginal school students in Years 10 – 12 who are not yet 'work ready' or living in regional and remote areas. The ASBT is designed to help these students gain the skills to keep studying after school or commence an apprenticeship or traineeship or get a job aligned to their career aspirations.

- **Pre-apprenticeships and pre-traineeships** offer a combination of nationally accredited and recognised training plus hands on workplace experience, allowing individuals to gain a solid base of skills and knowledge plus industry experience to fast track their career.

These training courses can be undertaken in school or post-school. They provide an important pipeline into apprenticeships and an opportunity for students to work out if the industry and trade is for them. From an industry perspective, including for RTOs, the program provides an important counter-cyclical measure to maintain capacity and capability needed for the next upswing.

3.2.5 Incentives

- **Western Australian Group Training Program**

The Western Australian Group Training Program provides incentive funding to group training organisations to employ apprentices and trainees in priority target groups and support them through to completion. Eligible cohorts include:

- Aboriginal people
- People with disability
- Women in non-traditional trades
- School-based apprentices and trainees
- Humanitarian and refugee visa holders
- People in regional and remote areas of the State.

■ Jobs and Skills WA Employer Incentive

The Jobs and Skills WA Employer Incentive was introduced on 1 July 2019, to provide financial assistance of up to \$8,500 to employers to meet the costs of employing an apprentice or new entrant trainee. The Government has paid \$122.13 million in incentives to assist 7,846 employers since the commencement of the scheme.

To promote opportunities for disadvantaged and under-represented cohorts in key sectors of the economy, additional loading payments are available for employers of apprentices and trainees who have a disability, are Aboriginal, are living in regional WA, are undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship in a State priority occupation or are aged between 21 to 30 years (apprentices only). The Employer Incentive is one of five State Government incentives for employers of apprentices and trainees.

■ Construction Training Fund

The Construction Training Fund (CTF) is a key partner in building a skilled and sustainable construction workforce, with a range of initiatives that support employers to take on an apprentice or trainee and to upskill and re-skill existing workers to meet changing industry requirements, including:

- Apprentice completion grant and apprentice support bonus
- Employer grants
- Mature-age wage gap support
- Pre-apprenticeship award payment
- Recognition of Prior Learning funding support
- Upskilling and short-course funding program

The CTF also helps to build the pipeline of skilled workers through initiatives that engage parents, VET coordinators and career advisors to improve their understanding of the construction industry.

3.2.6 VET Delivered to Secondary School Students

The Western Australian Government has initiatives in place to enhance access to career guidance and VET pathways for senior secondary students.

■ Year 9 Career Taster Program

The Year 9 Career Taster Program enables around half of Year 9 students to explore early career interests and participate in practical industry experiences to support early engagement with career pathways and the world of work. The program gives students across the State access to VET career options earlier and a genuine understanding of all education pathways before they make subject selections in Years 11 and 12.

■ VET Delivered to Secondary Schools

In 2024, 10,600 VET Delivered to Secondary Schools (VETDSS) places were available at TAFE colleges and selected private Registered Training Organisations, which are aligned to qualifications supported by industry for delivery to senior secondary students.

■ School based apprenticeships and traineeships

School based apprenticeships and traineeships are employment-based learning pathways available to senior secondary students that lead to obtaining nationally recognised qualifications and can contribute towards their achievement of a Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE).

■ Fees

Senior secondary students do not need to pay fees for funded VETDSS courses. Students who leave school early have access to an annual fee cap of \$420 while they are considered a school-aged student.

4

Nationally Agreed Priority Actions

4.1 Gender equality

4.1.1 WA context

Western Australia's population and workforce participation are at or near record highs. The key trend in labour market supply since the mid-1960s has been the convergence between male and female participation rates. The participation gap between males and females has fallen from around 50% points to just over 10%, which has been offset by a decline of around 13% points in male participation.

Despite the gender convergence in key labour market supply and demand indicators, other disparities persist with respect to wages and employment concentration of women in low paying industry sectors. The training and workforce barriers experienced by women include inflexible training work arrangements; limited financial and wraparound supports, suitable on-site facilities, discrimination, and equal access to career progression opportunities. Adult females in Western Australia are also reported to have the lowest numeracy levels nationally, further impacting

career progression and the ability for women to take up opportunities in higher-paid industries with known skills shortages including non-traditional and emerging industries. Alongside the social mandate to improve gender equity, there is a clear and urgent need to support women and other under-represented cohorts into the clean energy and building and construction industries to support the State's transition to Net Zero and address housing supply.

Addressing gender inequality in training and the workplace is critical to women's economic equality, security and safety. The Western Australian Government is building on current initiatives and exploring further strategies to build the gender balance across industries, identify the barriers to female workforce retention, recognition of skills, flexible delivery for skills for the future and training to improve workplace safety and culture.





4.1.2 WA strategies

Key policies underpinning Western Australia's vision and commitment to addressing the gender imbalance, include:

- *Department of Training and Workforce Development Strategic Plan 2023-2028*
- *Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality 2020-2030*
- *Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Sector*
- *Women: Action Plan to Improve WA Public Sector Employment Outcomes 2020-2025*
- *Future jobs, future skills: driving STEM skills in Western Australia*
- *Strengthening Responses to Family and Domestic Violence: System Reform Plan 2024 to 2029*

4.1.3 Programs and initiatives

Current programs aimed at supporting female participation in vocational education and training and creating broader opportunities for workforce participation, include:

Fee free TAFE and equity and diversity courses:

- Fee free courses and low fee training to respond to skill shortages in priority industries and targeting women and other under-represented cohorts.
- Job Ready programs providing short training programs with industry placements leading to employment and/or further training.

Financial supports:

- Wage subsidies for employers of female apprentices and trainees.
- Various scholarship programs including for women in non-traditional trades, defence and equity areas.

Secondary school programs:

- Promoting engineering trades to young women through the women in pre-apprenticeship program.
- Supporting early career exploration through the Year 9 Career Taster Program, including non-traditional career pathways for under-represented cohorts.

Wraparound supports

- Western Australian Group Training program supporting priority cohorts including women, to complete apprenticeship and traineeship training.
- Participation program - providing additional support to people who face barriers to participating in training to support them to develop the skills required to participate in the workforce.

4.1.4 Key focus areas and directions

- Developing a workforce culture and diversity strategy for the building and construction industry through the Construction Training Fund.
- Providing additional loadings for the employer incentive programs for female apprentices and trainees in the clean energy sector.
- Promoting non-traditional pathways for females through the Year 9 Career Taster Program and STEM outreach programs.
- Promoting and developing initiatives to support women's participation and retention in training in emerging industries including clean energy and defence qualifications.

4.2 Closing the Gap

4.2.1 WA context

Under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the WA Government has committed to priority reforms including working with Aboriginal people towards a future where policies and programs that impact on their lives are carried out in genuine partnership.

The priority reforms commit to:

- strengthening and establishing formal partnerships and shared decision-making;
- building the Aboriginal community-controlled sector;
- transforming government organisations so they work better for Aboriginal people; and
- improving and sharing access to data and information to enable Aboriginal communities make informed decisions.

WA's vast geographical context provides the opportunity for WA to lead the way in piloting place-based approaches and community led decision-making. Since the signing of the National Agreement in 2020, the WA Government has released two implementation plans developed in consultation with the Aboriginal Advisory Council WA (AACWA) and the Coalition of Peaks jurisdictional partner, the Aboriginal Health Council of WA. These plans align closely with the [*Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021-2029*](#), which was developed in partnership with AACWA and sets out the WA Government's approach for working with Aboriginal people towards empowerment and better outcomes.

The second [*WA Government Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023-2025*](#) deepens the WA Government's commitment to a new

way of doing business and outlines new initiatives and key strategic actions to drive progress towards its commitments. Coordinated workforce development at the local level will be key to driving sustainable economic development across all regions. *WA's Diversification Strategy*, transition to Net Zero and establishment of the Regional Coordinating Committees positions the State to harness the opportunities to improve social, education and workforce outcomes so that all Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation.

Aboriginal people, communities and organisations will be placed at the forefront of developing strategies to close the gap on employment and training measures, and in developing the skills to realise their economic and community development priorities. Over the next year the WA Government will formalise and strengthen relationships with key WA Aboriginal stakeholders to develop initiatives against the agreed commitments of the National Skills Agreement (NSA).

4.2.2 WA strategies

The WA Government has developed and is implementing a range of strategies and policies, including:

- *Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021-2029*
- *WA Government Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023-2025*
- *Whole-of-Government Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO) Strategy; for community services to Aboriginal People*
- *Department of Training and Workforce Development Strategic Plan 2023-2028*
- *Diversify WA Economic Development Framework*
- *Diversify WA Supply Chain Development Plan 2021-22*

4.2.3 Programs and initiatives

Current programs aimed at supporting Aboriginal people's participation in vocational education and training and creating broader opportunities for workforce participation, include:

Attraction and Retention

- ACCO RTOs – The Department contracts nine Aboriginal Community Controlled RTOs to support culturally appropriate training delivery.
- Expanded service delivery to Aboriginal people through the 19 Jobs and Skills Centres and Aboriginal employment and engagement officers who work closely with stakeholders to maximise training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal clients.
- Kimberley Group Training is a Group Training Organisation and Registered Training Organisation providing support to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the Kimberley region to establish a career pathway by providing training, sustainable employment opportunities and support services.
- Participation program - provides additional support to people who face barriers to participating in training to support them to develop the skills required to participate in the workforce.
- Aboriginal Employment Enabling Program: pilot program providing targeted and practical training and employment support to Aboriginal people in the Kimberley and Goldfields regions.
- Waalitj Foundation partnership - the Waalitj Foundation provides assistance to Aboriginal jobseekers aged 15 to 24 years who are not at school as well as those aged 25 to 30 years exiting the justice system, to address individual barriers to participating in employment or training leading to employment.

Secondary students

- Aboriginal school-based training program delivers selected VET qualifications to Aboriginal secondary students in Years 10 – 12 who are not yet 'work ready' or are living in regional and remote areas.
- Pre-apprenticeships and pre-traineeships offer a combination of nationally accredited and recognised training plus hands on workplace experience, allowing individuals to gain a solid base of skills and knowledge plus industry experience to fast track their career.
- Bespoke and targeted career exploration for Year 9 Aboriginal and regional students exploring through the Career Taster Program.

Financial support

- Jobs and Skills WA Employer Incentive program assists employers to meet the costs of employing apprentices and trainees and includes a 10% loading to promote employment of Aboriginal people.
- Construction Training Fund - Grants for Employers of Apprentices and Trainees program includes an additional supplement of 30% of the base rate of the grant for Aboriginal people.

4.2.4 Key focus areas and directions

Under the NSA the WA Government has committed to strengthening relationships with Aboriginal people and communities and codesigning projects and initiatives that will enable Aboriginal people to take part in training and meaningful work.

There are a range of focus areas the WA Government are pursuing to increase Aboriginal people's participation in the VET system:

- Promoting and developing initiatives to support Aboriginal people's participation and retention in training in emerging industries including clean energy and defence qualifications.
- Exploring culturally appropriate delivery models, skills and training opportunities for Aboriginal people through the Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence as agreed under the State's bilateral implementation plan for the Centre.
- Working with Aboriginal stakeholders to co-design activities to expand investment in the capability, sustainability, and growth of the Aboriginal Community Controlled (ACC) and First Nations Owned (FNO) training sector.
- Activities to grow the Aboriginal VET workforce and boost cultural competency of mainstream RTOs.

4.3 Supporting the Net Zero transformation

4.3.1 WA context

The Western Australian *Energy Transformation Strategy*, sets out the Western Australian Government's commitment to working with all sectors to reach Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

With over \$200 billion of planned investment in clean energy infrastructure already in the pipeline, and the expected creation of 351,000 jobs across Western Australia's clean energy occupations and industries between 2025 and 2050, a strong training focus is needed to build a skilled clean energy workforce to meet current and future clean energy demand and the Net Zero targets.

The Net Zero targets will change the nature and demand of many current occupations and lead to the development of many new occupations and career pathways. This provides a unique and exciting opportunity for all Western Australians to benefit from the transition to Net Zero and take up opportunities in developing industries including hydrogen, wind, solar, battery applications, carbon capture and storage. These emerging industries will bolster and support regional development and help ensure the WA economy remains robust and resilient in the face of global economic or policy changes.

The Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence (CESNCE) has been jointly funded by the State and Commonwealth governments under the National Skills Agreement. The CESNCE will support the WA Government's investment in positioning the state as a world leader in the production and export of clean energy and innovate training in clean energy technologies to the clean energy workforce.

Genuine engagement and partnerships across industry, government, with Aboriginal people, unions and the skills ecosystem will support the State's clean energy goals, align training programs with the evolving needs of the clean energy market and support workers in traditional energy sectors to transition into clean energy roles. This collaboration will also include partnering with the Pilbara based Clean Energy Training and Research Institute (CETRI) being established as part of the Commonwealth Government's Clean Hydrogen Industrial Hubs Initiative.

4.3.2 WA strategies

- *Collie Just Transition Plan / Collie Futures Fund*
- *State Training Plan 2023-24*
- *Department of Training and Workforce Development Strategic Plan 2023-2028*
- *Electric Vehicle Strategy*
- *Energy Transformation Strategy*
- *Future Battery and Critical Minerals Industries Strategy*
- *Renewable Hydrogen Strategy*
- *State Energy Policy*
- *Western Australian Climate Policy*
- *Western Australian State Training Plan*
- *Wind Turbine Manufacturing Initiative*

4.3.3 Programs and initiatives

Current programs that will help develop the State's ability to transition to Net Zero include:

Attraction and Retention:

- \$16 million Apprentice Tool Allowance provides eligible apprentices a \$1,000 rebate to assist in purchasing tools and safety equipment.
- Jobs and Skills WA Employer Incentive Scheme offers employers incentive payments to hire new trainees or apprentices, with a 10% for trades in priority areas.

Financial support:

- Women in Non-Traditional Trades provides 4-year scholarships for women to undertake training in non-traditional trades.

Infrastructure investment:

- Training facility upgrade for clean energy:
 - \$17 million Green Skills Training Centre, jointly funded by the Commonwealth and State governments specialises in providing training for future green jobs.
 - \$21.3 million upgrade to North Metropolitan TAFE's Joondalup campus, for an Electric Automotive Vehicle Training Centre.
 - \$22 million investment to modernise trade training facilities at South Regional TAFE.
 - \$3.24 million upgrade funded by the Commonwealth's TAFE Technology Fund for North Metropolitan TAFE's Midland campus, transforming the campus into a renewables training hub with a wind turbine and working at heights training tower.

Secondary students

- School-based apprenticeships and traineeships and Pre-apprenticeships, allowing individuals to gain a solid base of skills and knowledge plus industry experience to fast track their career into clean energy related apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Exploration of clean energy career pathways through the Year 9 Career Taster Program.

Specialised facilities

- CESNCE works with industry and other relevant stakeholders to lead the planning and development of clean energy training and workforce initiatives, and to build the capability and capacity of the TAFE and training provider network.
- CETRI is focused on leading research and development activities, as well as developing skills and training related to clean energy industries, including production, transportation, storage and export of renewable hydrogen. The \$22 million, Pilbara-based state-of-the-art facility is set to be established in 2026 as a multi-user training hub and research institute that incorporates different training providers and research site locations across industry, tertiary and vocational training settings.

4.3.4 Key focus areas and directions

The WA Government is building on existing initiatives to leverage the CESNCE's work in developing the State's clean energy workforce.

- Developing a Clean Energy Skills Workforce Roadmap for Western Australia to inform the development of strategies to expand the capacity and capability of the TAFE and training network.

- Leading development of appropriate higher apprenticeship models for clean energy.
- Developing an incentives program for employers to take on apprentices and trainees from cohorts currently under-represented in the industry, particularly for women and Aboriginal people, as agreed with the Commonwealth Government under the under the CESNCE implementation plan.
- Promoting and developing initiatives to support individuals currently under-represented in the clean energy and associated industries.
- Developing partnership arrangements to facilitate collaboration between the CETRI once it is established in 2026 and the CESNCE to harness the strengths of WA's TAFE network to build the clean energy workforce across industries including production, transportation, storage and export of renewable hydrogen.

4.4 Sustaining essential care services**4.4.1 WA context**

The Social assistance and allied health industry is the largest employing sector in Western Australia, and it is anticipated to grow by 12% over the next five years. With an ageing population and increased migration, the demand for aged care, health, childcare, disability and mental health services are expected to increase with the greatest workforce challenges being in regional areas. Whole-of-government workforce development initiatives focused on attraction and development of new workers and upskilling and retaining existing workers are essential to meeting the future demand for services.

The WA Government in collaboration with industry and strategic stakeholders including the Care Sector Working Group, comprising

relevant public sector agencies and peak industry representatives, are working to position the State to meet the growing demand, building on current initiatives and exploring further strategies to grow the supply of skilled workers. Key to ensuring the sustainability of the care sector will be identifying issues relating to workforce retention and lifting the participation of Aboriginal and under-represented groups in the sector.

VET provides critical pathways for care related professions, including childcare, aged and disability care, alcohol and other drugs, youth work and mental health. A range of new skill sets for the sector have been implemented and have been included in the Government's fee free Job Ready program. Pre-vocational programs for secondary students that articulate into Certificate III or higher qualifications and opportunities for students to engage with the sector through the Year 9 Career Taster Program, have also been implemented.

Central to the WA Government's approach for building the skilled workforce for the care sector is its continued work in the implementation of the recommendations in the State Training Board's *Social Assistance and Allied Health Workforce Strategy*. Taking a holistic and harmonised approach to the implementation demonstrates the agility and responsiveness of the VET sector in addressing workforce skills and capacity.



4.4.2 WA strategies

Key policies underpinning Western Australia's vision and commitment to sustaining essential care services, include:

- *State Training Plan 2023-24*
- *State Training Board Social Assistance and Allied Health Workforce Strategy*
- *Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Strategy 2022 - 2032*
- *State Disability Strategy: A Western Australia for Everyone 2020-2030*
- *WA Health Workforce Strategy 2034*
- *Regional TAFE International Student Strategy*

4.4.3 Programs and initiatives

Current vocational education and training programs aimed at sustaining essential care services, include:

Attraction and retention

- Job Ready Program in aged and disability care providing free training that leads to pathways to entry-level jobs, and traineeships.
- Western Australian Care Sector Working Group – established as an advisory and information sharing group bringing together relevant public sector agencies and peak industry representatives to tackle the most complex skills and workforce development challenges of WA's care sector.
- The WA Health Aboriginal Graduate Program.

Secondary students

- Free vocational education and training places for secondary school students including a new Certificate II in Community Health and Wellbeing pre-traineeship.

- Pre-traineeships such as the Certificate II in Introduction to Aged Care offer a combination of nationally accredited and recognised training plus hands on workplace experience, allowing individuals to gain a solid base of skills and knowledge plus industry experience to fast track their career.
- Exploring care sector careers through the Year 9 Career Taster Program provides employers.

Financial support

- Nursing Stipend – assists regional Diploma of Nursing students with travel and accommodation costs related to the work placements part of their training.
- Reducing the cost of upskilling existing workers through low fee existing worker traineeships in aged care and disability services for the Certificate III in Individual Support and Certificate IV in Ageing Support qualifications.

Attracting skilled workers to Western Australia

- A total of \$250,000 in grant funding offered as part of the Attraction and Retention Packages for Regional Child Care Workers Program.
- Skilled Migrant Employment Register - provide ability for migrant and employer to be job matched and to build the workforce.
- Skilled Migrant Job Connect program - this \$4.25 million program reduces the barriers for migrants to enter the job market. It offers a range of programs and services including Australian Workplace Cultural Awareness training and the Job Connect Subsidy Program, which supports skilled migrants to help meet the cost of training, licensing and registration to gain employment in WA in line with their qualifications, skills and experience gained overseas.
- State Nominated Migration Program.
- Western Australian Designated Area Migration Agreement.

4.4.4 Key focus areas and directions

The WA Government is pursuing a range of initiatives aimed at growing the VET pipeline of skilled workers to keep pace with demand for care and support services including:

- Promoting careers in the care sector and relevant training pathways to school students, parents and communities to raise awareness of opportunities and increase localised employment.
- Working in collaboration with industry and community to explore the barriers and opportunities to increase participation and retention of workers across the range of care sector occupations.

4.5 Developing Australia's sovereign capability and food security

4.5.1 WA context

The WA Government's vision for a strong and diverse economy delivering secure quality jobs is at the heart of the State's economic development framework, with clean energy and defence sovereign capacity and food security being central to this vision.

The recently announced Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence (CESNCE) is a Commonwealth State funded partnership that will lead Australia's move towards clean energy sovereignty and the transition to Net Zero. The CESNCE will steer the planning, coordination, development and promotion of the capability and capacity of the TAFE college and training provider network to develop and futureproof a skilled clean energy workforce.

The Western Australian Defence Industry Workforce Office (WADIWO) is leading the State's planning for the development of a skilled workforce for the State's emerging defence industry. WADIWO is working in partnership with co-signatories to the WA Defence and Defence Industries Industry Workforce Development Plan 2022-2027, including government agencies, universities, TAFE colleges, peak industry bodies and unions to develop a holistic approach to building strong and sustainable local defence capabilities. South Metropolitan TAFE is a key partner in delivering the defence workforce skills needed for Western Australia's emerging industry. South Metropolitan TAFE's long-established relationships with Defence and the defence industry and utilising worldclass facilities such as the Naval Base campus, positions the college to play a pivotal role in delivering a skilled workforce, and has already enabled the delivery of a range of programs, including the award-winning Defence Industry Pathways Program and Women in Defence Industry Scholarship.

Western Australia's primary industries are significant contributors to the State's economy, generating growth and jobs throughout the regions and in metropolitan areas. Ensuring food sovereignty will help build the State's resilience to volatility in global commodity markets and capitalise on WA's current commercial advantages. It will also help to unlock sustained long-term growth and transition the agricultural workforce into higher value jobs. The [Muresk Institute](#) is WA's skills hub for modern agriculture and is a key component to achieving food security through innovations in agricultural technology practices and by building the sector's capacity and pipeline of skilled workers through contemporary skills delivery. The State Training Board is working with the agricultural sector to understand and plan for the skill development needs of this sector, including the exploration of apprenticeship and traineeship pathways.

The *Diversify WA* framework also recognises the importance of activities that will improve value and productivity across multiple sectors of the external-facing economy critical to developing sovereign capacity and food security. These cross-sector activities are:

- supply chain development;
- advanced manufacturing;
- science, innovation and technology; and
- environmental, social and governance (ESG) frameworks.

These cross-sector activities need to be supported through a focused training effort to build the workforce in adjacent sectors including manufacturing, defence, critical minerals extraction and processing, energy, transport and logistics and food production.

4.5.2 WA strategies

- *Collie Just Transition Plan / Collie Futures Fund*
- *Department of Training and Workforce Development Regional Engagement Strategy*
- *Department of Training and Workforce Development's Strategic Plan 2023-2028*
- *Diversify WA Economic Development Framework*
- *Future jobs, future skills: driving STEM skills in Western Australia*
- *Primary Industries Plan 2020-2024*
- *Royalties for Regions*
- *State Training Plan 2023-24*

- State Training Board's Agriculture Workforce and Skills Steering Committee
- Western Australian agriculture and food: a global opportunity
- Western Australian Defence and Defence Industries Strategic Plan
- Western Australian Defence Industry Workforce Development Plan 2022-27
- Western Australia's Energy Transformation Strategy Stage 2: 2021 – 2025

4.5.3 Programs and initiatives

Current programs training and workforce development programs and initiatives aimed at developing clean energy and defence sovereign capacity and food security, include:

Attraction and retention

- "The Other Force" defence industry advertising campaign to lift the profile of the defence industry and highlight the sector's varied career opportunities.
- A specialist defence industry team has been established within the Rockingham Jobs and Skills Centre to provide free career and training pathway advice relevant to the defence industry.
- The Defence Industry Existing Worker Incentive provides financial assistance to Western Australian businesses who provide existing workers with the opportunity to complete a traineeship in the defence industry in one of three targeted qualifications. This incentive is part of a package of initiatives designed to boost defence industry capabilities in WA.

- VET Step to Uni initiative enhances support for the articulation of courses between Western Australian universities and TAFE to develop para-professional and professional workforce for the defence industry.
- West Australian Group Training Program (GTO) incentivises GTO's to help apprentices and trainees to complete their training, especially for individuals from under-represented cohorts.

Financial support

- Defence Industry Internship and Graduate Scholarship Program to stimulate the development of sovereign workforce in para-professional and professional job roles for the defence industry.
- Women in Defence Industry Scholarship Program encourages women to take up a career in the defence industry.
- Women in Non-Traditional Trades provides 4-year scholarships for women to undertake training in non-traditional trades.

Secondary students

- Pre-apprenticeships and pre-traineeships offer a combination of nationally accredited and recognised training plus hands on workplace experience, allowing individuals to gain a solid base of skills and knowledge plus industry experience to fast track their career into an apprenticeship or traineeship relevant to developing Australia's sovereign capability and food security.
- School-based apprenticeships and traineeships is an employment-based training pathway for full-time school students.
- The Western Australian College of Agriculture campuses offering modern education and vocational training programs to young people in Years 10,11, and 12. Each campus is located on a commercial sized farm and students can gain accredited qualifications in a wide range of agriculture and related trades including cropping, livestock, horticulture, viticulture, equine and aquaculture.

Specialised facilities

- Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence (CESNCE) will lead the skilling of the clean energy workforce to support the State's energy transition as well as driving new training and workforce initiatives nationally.
- Muresk Institute is WA's skills hub for modern agriculture

4.5.4 Key focus areas and directions

The WA government is pursuing a range of initiatives aimed at increasing participation in qualifications critical to supporting sovereign capacity in clean energy, defence, and providing food security, including:

- Promoting and developing initiatives to support participation by priority cohorts in the emerging industries including clean energy and defence.
- Promoting vocational education and training options for secondary students and career pathways through the Year 9 Career Taster and STEM outreach programs.

4.6 Ensuring Australia's digital and technology capability

4.6.1 WA context

Over the next five years, an economic transition and strategic shift is required that prioritises the importance of digital skills, digital capabilities and the digitisation of service delivery to provide greater access to learning, jobs and careers.

The WA Government is taking a whole-of-government approach to make WA more digitally inclusive. Through partnerships with industry and community organisations, the West Australian Government is well placed to address issues relating to affordability, place-based and infrastructure access, and ensure all Western Australian's can participate meaningfully in work, education and training and in their community.

4.6.2 WA strategies

Key policies underpinning Western Australia's vision and commitment to addressing digital capability, include:

- *Department of Training and Workforce Development Strategic Plan 2023-2028*
- *Digital Strategy Roadmaps, released annually*
- *Diversify WA*
- *The Digital Inclusion in WA Blueprint and Accord*
- *The Digital Strategy for the Western Australian Government 2021-2025*
- *The Digital Strategy Outcomes Framework*
- *WA Digital Industries Acceleration Strategy*

4.6.3 Programs and initiatives

Current programs aimed at increasing digital capability through vocational education and training include:

Whole of government direction

- The *Digital Inclusion in WA Blueprint and Partnership Framework* represents a cross-sector commitment and agreement to improve digital inclusion outcomes in WA, including government, industry and community partnerships. Over 20 organisations are providing a range of accessible and place-based training opportunities across the State.

- Digital inclusion support through public libraries and Community Resource Centres to increase access to computers, as well as support for the development of digital literacy skills, with an emphasis on regional and remote communities.

Vocational education and training

- Improved accessibility to digital skills and STEM training through *Lower fees, local skills* initiative with fees reduced by up to 72%.
- Expanded VET pathways in ICT qualifications and support for existing worker upskilling including three new traineeships and two existing traineeships expanded or streamlined to increase uptake of ICT qualifications.
- Digital skill sets to support individuals who require upskilling or reskilling into entry level roles in a variety of industries.

Secondary school vocational education and training

- Year 9 Career Taster Program (CTP) supports students to explore potential careers in various industries. CTP promotes digital skill VET pathways and future career opportunities to Year 9 students through industry led experiences.

Financial support

- Scholarships for individuals on the Autism Spectrum to train for ICT jobs.
- WA Digital Inclusion Project Scholarship Program to support completion of one or two skill sets in digital literacy, with a focus on gaining job-ready skills.
- Defence Industry Existing Worker Incentive program provides skills development for existing employees wanting to undertake a traineeship with and ICT or Industry 4.0 focus.

4.6.4 Key focus areas and direction

The WA Government is pursuing a range of skill-based initiatives aimed at increasing digital capability in Western Australian workplaces and communities.

- Expanding foundation skills access and delivery including flexible training delivery models that promote the development of digital skills and use of digital technologies.
- Developing and implementing new training products to meet the digital skills required to work in clean energy sector and industry 4.0 occupations.

4.7 Delivering reforms to improve the regulation of VET qualifications and quality

4.7.1 WA context

The WA Government is committed to building a high-performing and world-class VET sector with TAFE at the heart, a system in which training is accessible to all West Australians to gain the skills they need to participate in the workforce. Among the strategic shifts that are needed to enable the State training system to develop the skills and capabilities of the workforce is the central importance of TAFE as a public institution and the need to partner with TAFE colleges and RTOs to enhance capability to deliver contemporary and agile learning experiences for students across Western Australia.

Western Australia is supporting a suite of national reforms aimed at strengthening the quality, integrity and regulation of the training sector.

These reforms aim to:

- improve the capacity and capability of the VET workforce to deliver education and training; and
- promote consistent and effective regulation nationally.

Supporting the implementation of these reforms is the Western Australian Training Accreditation Council (TAC), which is responsible for regulating the State's five TAFE colleges and provides oversight of the Western Australian VET sector. TAC is also playing a pivotal role in supporting RTOs in their transition to the revised *Standards for RTOs* to strengthen the focus on quality outcomes for learners and employers and allowing for more flexibility and innovation in training delivery across the sector.

4.7.2 WA strategies

- Focus on Quality: TAC Regulatory Strategy 2023-2025

4.7.3 Programs and initiatives

Current programs aimed at improving quality outcomes in vocational education and training include:

- Implementing educative strategies that deliver practical information to support business improvement and compliance practices, including:
 - support materials;
 - a dedicated hub to provide guidance on the revised standards for RTOs; and
 - education and professional development workshops for trainers, via face-to-face and online training.

4.7.4 Key focus areas and directions

- Continuing to work closely with the Commonwealth Government's Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, other VET Regulators and WA registered RTOs to implement the changes to the *Standards for RTOs*.
- Developing a plan to strengthen and upskill the TAFE/VET workforce.

4.8 Delivering Housing Supply

4.8.1 WA context

Housing is a key enabler of social and economic recovery and an important source of job opportunities. The Western Australian Government has invested a record \$3.2 billion in housing and homelessness since 2021-22, which has already delivered more than 2,500 social homes with more than 1,000 under contract or construction.

The current housing challenges in Western Australia (WA) are primarily supply-side – we need to build more houses. The vocational education and training system and apprenticeships and traineeships (employment-based training) in particular, are fundamental to increasing housing supply. Nothing gets built without qualified tradespeople.

The building and construction industry is one of WA's largest employers and growing the workforce capacity is a critical priority for the State Government. In collaboration with industry, the State Government is working with the Construction Training Fund (CTF) to provide range of training and workforce development strategies to address the critical demand for skilled workers in WA's building and construction sector, and the need to build sector capacity and capability.

WA has among the highest building and construction apprenticeship completion rates in Australia. However, the scale and speed of changes in the economy are difficult to accommodate, particularly with WA's economy experiencing the highest growth rate in the nation. The supply of people wanting to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship is influenced by a number of factors such as their aspirations, career awareness, family, school culture, age, wages, and competing opportunities.

Working alongside the CTF and the Building and Construction Consultative Committee (BCCC), and with a strong apprenticeship system in place, the WA Government is exploring a range of strategies to build a viable future supply of workers into the building and construction industry. The strategies include job ready programs, targeted supports for people from under-represented groups in the industry, and strengthening school pathway programs, such as pre-apprenticeships and school-based apprenticeships, underpinned by best practice career counselling and work integrated learning. WA also has a successful and long-standing incentive program in place to encourage and support employers to take on apprentices and trainees, with loadings for priority cohorts, priority trades, and regions.

4.8.2 WA strategies

- *All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030*
- *National Housing Accord*
- *WA Housing Strategy 2020-2030*

4.8.3 Programs and initiatives

Attraction and retention

- The Construction Training Fund's Construction Futures Centre is designed to educate and encourage students and mature-age job seekers to learn about the diverse career options available through an immersive experience.
- Infrastructure Ready and Bricklaying Job Ready Programs with industry placements leading to employment and/or further training.
- Participation Program - providing additional support to people who face barriers to participating in training to support them to develop the skills required to participate in the workforce.
- Western Australian Group Training Program incentivises GTOs to help apprentices and trainees to complete their training, especially for individuals from under-represented cohorts.
- Construction migration initiatives to build workforce capacity across regions, including the Construction Visa Subsidy Program, Construction Migration Office, building and construction qualifications included in the WA Skilled Migration Occupation List, and working with the Commonwealth government on skilled migration through the State-wide Designated Area Migration Agreement.

Financial support

- The Construction Training Fund provides grants for employers to take on an apprentice or trainee in a range of construction occupations.
- Fee Free and *Lower Fees, Local Skills* initiatives providing subsidised training to respond to skill shortages in priority industries and targeting women and other under-represented cohorts.

- GTO Wage Subsidy assists small to medium enterprises by providing them with access to apprentices and trainees through GTO's, and by covering the average estimated award wage paid to apprentices and trainees working in the building and construction sector in WA.
- Jobs and Skills WA Employer Incentive program provides financial assistance to WA businesses that employ an apprentice or new entrant trainee, with additional loadings for apprentices and trainees from under-represented groups and those living in regional areas.
- Supporting managers and supervisors to upskill existing workers through low fee existing worker traineeships with course fees reduced by 72 per cent for the Certificate IV in Civil Construction (Supervision) qualification.
- Travel and accommodation allowance - assists apprentices and trainees with travel and accommodation related to the completion of their off-the-job training component.
- Building and construction qualifications are part of the Fee Free and *Lower Fees, Local Skills* initiatives.
- Women in Non-Traditional Trades initiative provides 4-year scholarships for women to undertake training in non-traditional trades.

Secondary students

- Pre-apprenticeships and pre-traineeships offer a combination of nationally accredited and recognised training plus hands on workplace experience, allowing individuals to gain a solid base of skills and knowledge plus industry experience to fast track their career.
- School based apprenticeships and traineeships is an employment-based training pathway for full-time school students.
- Year 9 Career Taster Program provides employers, industry and training providers the opportunity to showcase the range of careers in their industry and engage young people by highlighting the current and future job and career pathways it offers.

4.8.4 Key focus areas and directions

- Fee free and low fee training for construction trades, pre-apprenticeships and pre-traineeships to build the pipeline of trades.
- School based apprenticeships and traineeships are an employment-based training pathway for full-time school students.
- Year 9 Career Taster Program provides employers, industry and training providers the opportunity to showcase the range of careers in their industry and engage young people by highlighting the current and future job and career pathways it offers.



5

Annual Review

5.1 Consultation

The WA Action Plan is a living document that will be reviewed annually across the lifespan of the National Skills Agreement to ensure it responds to new evidence and emerging priorities.

The WA Action Plan draws on extensive and continuing consultation with Commonwealth and State government agencies, industry, community organisations, training providers including school sectors, TAFE colleges, Registered Training Organisations and universities, and in genuine partnership with the State's Aboriginal people and communities.

This consultation will help to position the Western Australian Government to deliver on the priority areas and ensure that training and workforce strategies are aligned to current and emerging skills needs of the local economy, while widening access to learning, jobs and future careers so that all West Australians can benefit from the economic opportunities arising from the State's economic diversification and transition to Net Zero.

5.2 Feedback

To provide feedback or input into the WA Action Plan, please get in touch via email at Skills.StrategyReform@dtwd.wa.gov.au.

