Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council

The Hon Andrew Giles MP
Minister for Skills and Training

The Hon Steve Whan MP
New South Wales
Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education

The Hon Gabrielle Williams MP
Victoria
Minister for Skills and Training

The Hon Ros Bates MP
Queensland
Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training

Ms Jodie Hanns MLA
Western Australia
Parliamentary Secretary for Skills and TAFE

The Hon Lucy Hood MP
South Australia
Minister for Education, Training and Skills

The Hon Felix Ellis MP
Tasmania
Minister for Skills and Jobs

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA
Australian Capital Territory
Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations

The Hon Jo-Anne Hersey MLA
Northern Territory
Minister for Education and Training

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ
18 September 2026

COMMUNIQUE

MEETING OF FEDERAL, STATE AND TERRITORY SKILLS MINISTERS

Federal, state and territory Skills Ministers met today to discuss shared national priorities for the skills system. Skills Ministers wished Team Australia's 38 Skillaroos every success as they leave Sydney today to represent Australia at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026, showcasing the talent, excellence and opportunities created through Australia's vocational education and training (VET) system on the world stage.

Annual Stewardship Meeting

Ministers considered the 2026 *Independent Review of the National Skills Agreement (NSA) Stewardship Model.* Ministers reaffirmed their shared commitment to stewardship as central to the ambition of the NSA, providing a framework for governments to work collectively towards shared national priorities and outcomes while responding to local skills needs. The Review found that the stewardship model is now largely well established and delivering early benefits including stronger collaboration across jurisdictions and improved alignment around national priorities. Ministers noted the Review's conclusion that the foundations of the model are sound and agreed that the next phase of work should focus on maturing stewardship practice across the VET system by deepening understanding and articulating the roles and responsibilities of all actors in the system, strengthening coordination, and improving system learning and feedback systems. Ministers agreed the Review's Executive Report will be published on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website.

Ministers also considered the *National Skills Agreement Outcomes Framework Balanced Scorecard Baseline Report* developed by Jobs and Skills Australia and noted its value as a key stewardship tool and baseline for monitoring progress under the NSA over time. Ministers further agreed that the current national priorities remain critical to addressing Australia's workforce, economic and social needs and reaffirmed their commitment to collective action to support productivity, workforce participation and long-term skills outcomes.

VET Data Streamlining Program

Ministers welcomed the strong progress of the VET Data Streamlining Program and agreed to commence Stage 1 go-live on 1 October 2026, following positive independent assurance and delivery confidence assessments.

Closing the Gap: VET Policy Partnership

Ministers were joined by co-chairs of the VET Policy Partnership (VETPP), Dr Belinda Russon, CEO of the Indigenous Centre of Vocational Excellence, and Ms Anna Faithfull, Deputy Secretary, Skills and Training (Commonwealth), who reflected on the outcomes of the inaugural meeting of the VETPP. Ministers from participating jurisdictions recognised the important role of the VETPP in supporting implementation of the National Skills Agreement and advancing Closing the Gap outcomes. Ministers from participating jurisdictions endorsed the VETPP's First Year Work Plan which outlines the actions, delivery timeframes and focus areas for upcoming VETPP meetings.

National TAFE Network

Ministers received an update from Ms Mary Faraone, National TAFE Network Committee Chair, on progress implementing the National TAFE Network and the 2026 Annual Workplan. All states and territories have made significant contributions to the establishment of the Network and have projects underway that will benefit all jurisdictions and national priorities. For example, a New South Wales-led project to develop pre-commencement micro skill learning modules for apprentices entering training and employment, a Queensland-led project establishing Earn While You Learn pathways in ICT and engineering, a Victorian project to develop resources to improve education and employment outcomes for learners with disability, a South Australian-led project to develop sharable learning products for priority industry areas, and a Western Australian-led project developing an On-Country VET Framework aimed at strengthening culturally grounded training and supporting pathways into Aboriginal Ranger and land management roles.

Apprenticeships Completions

New South Wales led a discussion highlighting work underway across jurisdictions through NSA Improved Completions policy initiatives to address broader cultural and systemic factors affecting apprenticeship participation, retention and completion. Ministers discussed early lessons and emerging best practice from initiatives aimed at improving apprenticeship retention and completions, with a view to strengthening outcomes for apprentices and supporting a skilled and sustainable workforce.

Tertiary Harmonisation

Ministers received an update from Mr David Coltman, Commissioner, Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) and Mr David Turvey, Chief Executive Officer, ATEC on activities and progress to date in developing ATEC's Tertiary Roadmap and National Credit Recognition Framework.

Ministers discussed VET priorities to inform the Tertiary Roadmap and National Credit Recognition Framework, and encouraged ATEC to explore options to strengthen alignment between VET and higher education sectors, including improved credit transfer arrangements and better aligned funding and regulatory settings to support a more connected and equal tertiary education system.

Apprenticeships Aligned to AQF Level 5-8 Qualifications

Ministers noted *The Next Level: Realising the Potential of Apprenticeships Aligned to AQF Level 5 to 8 Qualification report.* The report explores opportunities for apprenticeships and traineeships aligned to AQF level 5 to 8 qualifications. Ministers acknowledged the significant contribution of the High-Level Apprenticeships Working Group and thanked members and stakeholders for their work in developing the report. Minsters agreed the report will be published on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website.

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Minister Giles (Commonwealth):
Alex Collum
0468 795 648
alex.collum@dewr.gov.au

Minister Whan (NSW):
Anthony Puntoriero
0466 504 142
anthony.puntoriero@minister.nsw.gov.au

Minister Williams (Vic):
Grace Cramer
0447 913 851
grace.cramer@minstaff.vic.gov.ua

Minister Bates (Qld):
Joe Hill
0408 962 453
joe.hill@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Minister Sanderson (WA):
Claire Deale
0448 298 197
Claire.Deale@dpc.wa.gov.au

Minister Hood (SA):
Tom Angley
0431 704 801
tom.angley@sa.gov.au

Minister Ellis (Tas):
Will Sanderson
0487 190 927
will.sanderson@dpac.tas.gov.au

Minister Pettersson (ACT):
Jonathan Goodwin
0421 749 612
Jonathan.Goodwin@act.gov.au

Minister Hersey (NT):
Zac Webster
0466 102 011
zac.webster@nt.gov.au