



Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council

The Hon Andrew Giles MP
Minister for Skills and Training

The Hon Blair Boyer MP
South Australia
Minister for Education, Training and Skills

The Hon Felix Ellis MP
Tasmania
Minister for Skills and Training

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

The Hon Simone McGurk MLA
Western Australia
Minister for Training, Water and Youth

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

The Hon Gayle Tierney MLC
Victoria
Minister for Training and Skills

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

Senior officials observed the meeting for the Queensland Government

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ
6 December 2024

COMMUNIQUE

MEETING OF FEDERAL, STATE AND TERRITORY SKILLS MINISTERS

Federal, state and territory Skills Ministers met in Canberra today, for the final time this year, to deliver updates on key reforms. 2024 has been a year of substantial collective achievement, leading with the commencement of the National Skills Agreement (NSA).

Achievements included:

- the roll out of 8 new TAFE Centres of Excellence across the country
- ongoing delivery of our \$1.5 billion investment in Free TAFE and vocational education and training (VET) places across Australia, including 508,800 enrolments nationally from 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2024
- introduction of the Free TAFE Bill 2024 to provide enduring support for delivery of Free TAFE places
- measures to strengthen quality and integrity within the VET sector, and
- publication of the first National Skills Plan and the VET Workforce Blueprint.

Qualifications Reform: Design Group Final Advice

Skills Ministers agreed to a new, purpose-based approach to VET qualifications design that is guided by principles that will improve quality, simplify course designs and reduce complexity. This represents a shift away from a one size fits all approach to qualification development and ensure VET qualifications are more responsive to the needs of learners and employers.

A stronger focus on knowledge in new qualifications will help build adaptable graduates and support transferability of skills to improve job mobility and better enable workers to adjust to changing circumstances in the economy. This, along with other new approaches, including a stronger focus on describing the intended capabilities of graduates and better qualification design overall, are key to meeting the objectives and priorities outlined in the National Skills Agreement.

Skills Ministers reaffirmed that under these reforms current qualifications arrangements for traditional trades, as developed and agreed by industry, remain unchanged. The reforms provide industry with opportunities for new approaches for qualifications linked to a broader industry or vocational education purpose.

The new approach gives Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs) and other qualification developers more scope in the way they design courses to meet learner and employer needs and ensure that the VET sector continues to deliver quality outcomes for all parties. A revised Training Package Organising Framework gives guidance to all key participants in the qualification design process, especially JSCs.

The new system for VET qualifications was developed by the tripartite Qualification Reform Design Group, chaired by Craig Robertson, Victorian Skills Commissioner, and was informed by research, consultation and demonstration projects undertaken by JSCs. Skills ministers noted these reforms are critical to the success of a high-performing VET system, and sought to ensure an appropriately swift and staged implementation. Skills Ministers agreed to a phased implementation approach, with the new system starting to be rolled out from 1 July 2025 for all new projects.

The Qualification Reform Design Group Report is available at www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/vet-qualification-reform.

National Skills Agreement – Outcomes Framework

Skills Ministers agreed to publish the first iteration of the NSA Outcomes Framework. The NSA Outcomes Framework builds on the shared commitment of all jurisdictions to deliver a high-quality, responsive and accessible VET system that supports Australians to obtain the skills they need to prosper.

The Outcomes Framework will allow governments and other stakeholders to track, monitor and respond to changes over the life of the NSA. It will help guide strategic decision-making by Skills Ministers and drive progress against the outcomes and national priorities within the NSA.

The Outcomes Framework will be published on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website.

National Foundation Skills Strategy

Skills Ministers agreed to a National Foundation Skills Strategy, a key deliverable under the NSA. The Strategy identifies critical initial actions to be undertaken, which will strengthen the foundation skills sector, including establishing nationally agreed high-level principles for foundation skills assessment, a foundation skills workforce analysis, and strengthening the architecture of the foundation skills sector. A key focus is that people seek and receive foundation skills support, and the initial actions include communication activities to encourage the uptake of foundation skills training.

The Strategy will be made available on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website.

National Priorities Deep Dive: Delivering Housing Supply

Skills Ministers have a shared goal to ensure delivery of the skills needed to support housing supply. BuildSkills Australia and Jobs and Skills Australia provided Ministers with analysis of workforce requirements to achieve the ambitions of the National Housing Accord. Skills Ministers discussed ways the VET system can contribute further to increase participation and improve productivity of the residential construction sector.

Apprentice Wellbeing

In recognition of the vulnerability that some apprentices face in their workplaces, Skills Ministers agreed to focus on measures to ensure apprentices and trainees are safe and respected at work.

Skills Ministers committed to strengthening the National Code of Good Practice for Australian Apprenticeships, as part of its current refresh, to clearly explain the responsibilities of employers of apprentices and trainees and prioritise their obligations to ensure a safe workplace.

Ms Anna Booth, Fair Work Ombudsman spoke with Skills Ministers about the role of the Fair Work Ombudsman in relation to apprentice and trainee wellbeing. Skills Ministers also agreed all relevant regulatory bodies should explore options to work collaboratively to better enforce training, safety and employment standards for apprentices and trainees.

Ongoing operation of the VET system

Skills Ministers progressed a number of other important items, including:

- noting work on the National TAFE Network is still progressing and agreeing to finalise the Multilateral Implementation Plan for Ministers to consider in the first quarter of 2025.
- agreeing an updated Constitution for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, including new Objects of the Company, to provide the flexibility necessary to address the changing needs of the VET sector.

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