



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 Gayle Tierney MLC

Victoria

Minister for Skills and TAFE

Ms Jodie Hanns MLA

Western Australia

Parliamentary Secretary for Skills and TAFE

The Hon Blair Boyer MP

South Australia

Minister for Education, Training and Skills

The Hon Jo Hersey MLA

Northern Territory

Minister for Education and Training

Senior officials observed the meeting for Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

22 August 2025

COMMUNIQUE

MEETING OF FEDERAL, STATE AND TERRITORY SKILLS MINISTERS

Federal, state and territory Skills Ministers met today in Sydney to collaborate on improvements to the vocational education and training system that will lift productivity and act as a critical enabler of inclusion and economic equality for individuals. Skills Ministers discussed the importance of digital and technology skills, including AI technologies. Skills Ministers also discussed the importance of ensuring a high-quality VET system, with TAFE at the centre, to support the skills acquisition individuals require to navigate a changing economy. Skills Ministers recognise the importance of improving foundational supports for apprentices and trainees to promote productivity in the skills sector and wellbeing in the workforce.

Skills and training essential to productivity

Skills Ministers reaffirmed the critical role of vocational education and training and in driving national productivity and individual opportunity. Over 5 million Australians use VET each year to build the skills they need for work¹ and Jobs and Skills Australia are projecting that over 90% of future employment growth over the next 10 years will be in occupations requiring post-secondary qualifications.

While recent reforms achieved through the National Skills Agreement (NSA) have laid solid foundations, Ministers agreed there's more to do. Collaboration across the tertiary sector - with industry, business and advocacy partners - will be essential to ensure every Australian can access the skills they need—whether they're starting out, changing careers, or upskilling for the future. Skills Ministers also agreed to do more to lift the capacity of VET to support workforce to upskill in Artificial Intelligence and to also support VET and TAFE systems to leverage the benefits of these advancements.

Ministers discussed the strengths of the VET system and reforms already underway that will support further productivity gains, including:

- The increased flexible Commonwealth funding provided to States through the NSA to support the operation of their funded VET systems,
- Free TAFE which is supporting access to training in areas of national priority,
 - New standards for VET qualifications to lift the relevance and value of VET qualifications for learners and employers,
 - TAFE Centres of Excellence which are driving innovation, and
 - The commitment to develop a more joined up tertiary education system (see below).

Skills Ministers committed to accelerating efforts to increase the adaptability and resilience of our workforce, better matching skills to labour market needs, leveraging the benefits of Adult Community Education and supporting people to upskill and reskill in an ongoing process of lifelong learning.

Skills Ministers agreed the electrical and construction industries are critical to required growth in the skilled workforce required to enable the net zero transformation and address housing and construction needs. Skills Ministers also committed to maximising inclusive participation which will mean a fair go and ensure we leave no one behind.

¹ NCVER 2024, [Total VET students and courses 2023](#), NCVER, Adelaide.

Joined-up Tertiary Education System

Our nation's economic growth and labour productivity are all dependent on a high-quality skills, training and education system.

A more joined-up tertiary education system, where our VET and higher education sectors are better aligned and work together to address labour market need, will further drive the benefits our tertiary sector gives our nation, whether it be through enhancing knowledge and skills attainment, minimising skills mismatches or improving the quality of our human capital and workforce.

Skills Ministers agreed that joined-up tertiary education is about creating a seamless system which puts the learner and labour market at the centre.

Skills Ministers welcomed the announcement of the development of a dedicated Tertiary Roadmap to be delivered by the Australian Tertiary Education Commission, working closely with Jobs and Skills Australia, and the Departments of Employment and Workplace Relations, and Education, and States and Territories as joint stewards of the national system.

The Tertiary Roadmap will identify the next steps to make it easier for students to move between pre-accredited training, VET and higher education and set up the tertiary system to support students to gain qualifications matched to Australia's future skills needs. The Tertiary Roadmap will be supported by the establishment of a Tertiary System Advisory Council, including representatives from each state and territory.

National Centre for Vocational and Education Research (NCVER)

Professor the Hon Verity Firth AM, Board Chair, and Mr John King, Managing Director, NCVER provided an update to Skills Ministers on the approach to organisational renewal and the progress NCVER has made in closing the gap between the Statement of Members Expectations and NCVER's Statement of Intent. Skills Ministers recognised the critical role of the NCVER as the national VET data custodian and emphasised the importance of the renewal work in ensuring the organisation meets their expectations in providing high-quality and accessible data, insight, and services to the VET sector.

Generative Artificial Intelligence Capacity Study

Mr David Turvey PSM, Executive Director, Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), provided Skills Ministers with key insights and recommendations from JSA's [*Generative Artificial Intelligence Capacity Study: Our Gen AI Transition: Implications for Work and Skills*](#) that was released on 14 August 2025.

Skills Ministers discussed the key findings on the impact of Gen AI, including:

- Gen AI is more likely to augment jobs than replace them,
- Gen AI adoption varies across industries,
- Impact will vary across occupations, industries, regions, and groups of people, and
- VET will have a role in ensuring the workforce has the right skills to use Gen AI.

Digital Compact

The Hon Steve Whan MP, New South Wales Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education presented NSW's Digital Skills and Workforce Compact, including current initiatives and findings. Skills Ministers were encouraged to promote continued engagement with the Compact and with Future Skills Organisation's Digital Knowledge Exchange.

Future Apprenticeships and Traineeships Workplan

Australia needs a strong pipeline of skilled workers to help navigate major workforce transitions, including in defence, clean energy, housing, and care and support industries. Skills Ministers discussed approaches to the issue of supply of training to address continued skills shortages, particularly in trade-related occupations, where apprenticeships are the main pathway to employment.

Skills Ministers further reiterated the importance of increasing apprenticeship commencements and completions in priority areas. Skills Ministers agreed to the Future Apprenticeships and Traineeships Workplan, which identifies strategic priorities for targeted national action. These include ways to lift commencements, retentions and completions; strengthen employer and training quality; and maximise the shared stewardship of the system to meet industry's needs.

Ministers acknowledged the role industry and businesses should play in investing in workforce training and development and highlighted the importance of TAFE and industry collaborating to drive solutions to critical workforce shortages.

National Code for Australian Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Strong working relationships between employers and their apprentices or trainees are essential to improving retention and stronger completion outcomes. Skills Ministers endorsed an updated National Code of Good Practice for Australian Apprenticeships and Traineeships, which provides guidance for employers. It emphasises the importance of workplace wellbeing and workplace health and safety obligations. It also provides key information regarding mental health, inclusion and diversity in the workplace.

The refreshed National Code will be published on the apprenticeships.gov.au website and will take effect from 1 January 2026. It will be accompanied by a library of existing guidance and resources for employers, apprentices, and trainees, compiled across Commonwealth, state, and territory governments.

Domestic, Sexual and Family Violence: building awareness and competence across the workforce

The Hon Blair Boyer MP, South Australian Minister for Education, Training and Skills, acknowledged release of the report of South Australia's Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. Skills Ministers noted the importance of the VET sector as a mechanism to embed domestic, family and sexual violence awareness and competence across the workforce.

Skills Ministers also noted the work HumanAbility, the Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) with responsibility for the care and support sector, was undertaking to review key qualifications across the community services, aged care, disability, early childhood, mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors. Skills Ministers highlighted the important opportunity these projects presented to ensure graduates have the skills required to identify and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence.

National TAFE Network

Skills Ministers congratulated the National TAFE Network Committee on its inaugural meeting held on 20 August 2025. The National TAFE Network Committee will act as a representative body, ensuring the views of all participating jurisdictions and their TAFEs are reflected. The National TAFE Network Committee consists of Chair Ms Mary Faraone (Holmesglen Institute of TAFE, Victoria), Ms Celia Murphy (TAFE NSW), Ms Fiona Champion (TAFE SA), Ms Josephine Andersen (CIT, ACT), Mr Michael Hamilton

(Charles Darwin University, NT) and Ms Vicki Wilkinson (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Commonwealth).

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