

Australian Government priorities for Skills Insight: statement of response

This document outlines the ways Skills Insight is responding to the Statement of Expectations issued by the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, and the Hon Andrew Giles MP, Minister for Skills and Training.

It outlines Skills Insight's commitment to addressing the priorities set out by the Ministers and details the steps Skills Insight is taking to deliver on the Government's vision for the Jobs and Skills Council program and its impact for industry, workers, learners and communities.

Delivering the priorities for all Jobs and Skills Councils

Productivity, adaptability and inclusion

Skills Insight will continue to support Australia's productivity objectives by strengthening the availability, relevance and accessibility of skills and training across the industries we serve. We do this by listening to stakeholders, building evidence, and translating that evidence into practical products and actions. We adopt a holistic approach that recognises accessible, high-quality education and training as central to a virtuous cycle of workforce and industry development, supporting professionalisation, continuous improvement, and the attraction and retention of a diverse, resilient workforce. Our strategic workforce planning and strong stakeholder engagement, including with First Nations peoples and communities, underpin this work and align with the Government's priorities under the Closing the Gap National Agreement and for regional, rural and remote Australia.

Recent examples include our [workforce planning](#) and industry intelligence work, and research to better understand [what drives training supply](#) and [how training packages are used in practice](#), so that improvements are grounded in real-world delivery conditions.

Equity, including gender segregation and other barriers

Skills Insight will continue to address system inclusivity and equity challenges, including those experienced in gender-segregated industries. Our workforce planning and project development will continue to consider barriers to participation and completion, and the training pathway choices that drive segregation and exclusion. We will also use, collect and advocate for improvements in intersectional, disaggregated data and evidence to inform workforce planning and to better understand how different barriers intersect. This work is informed by guidance from Jobs and Skills Australia and from tripartite representatives across our sectors, reflecting our role in supporting shared national analysis and solutions. We will ensure that priority cohort perspectives are not treated as an add-on but embedded in the way we design engagement and validate priorities.

AI and broader digital transformation

Skills Insight will reflect the impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) and broader digital transformation in our workforce planning analysis, including emerging and changing skills needs within the industries we support. Where relevant, we will incorporate data, digital and AI learning outcomes in training product design and review, aligned to industry and learner needs. We will actively contribute our industry intelligence, including through cross-Jobs and Skills Council collaboration coordinated by Future Skills Organisation, to national work such as the [National AI Skills Report](#).

Qualification Reform and streamlined, future-ready training products

Skills Insight will continue to embed [Qualification Reform](#) principles in training product updates to support streamlined, relevant and future-ready qualifications. This includes reducing duplication, aligning content with current and emerging workforce needs across jurisdictions, and responding proactively to industry and learner expectations. We will also continue to contribute to cross-system design and implementation work, including through structured cross-Jobs and Skills Council collaboration and advice to the national Skills and Industry Advisory Committee on qualification reform settings and practical implementation.

Delivering priorities specific to Skills Insight (including challenges and achievements)

Food security and sovereign capability

Skills Insight will continue to align our work with the National Skills Agreement priority of developing Australia's sovereign capability and food security. This includes supporting sovereign capability across the agribusiness, food and fibre value chains and related supply chains that contribute to priority industries, such as construction, through capabilities in areas like forest management and harvesting, and timber, wood and building solutions. Our approach is to strengthen the evidence base on workforce needs across the agribusiness and food value chain, and then turn that evidence into specific projects that improve pathways, capability and training responsiveness. We have provided industry intelligence to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to aid the development of the National Food Security Policy and will continue to work with the Department as policy and implementation arrangements progress.

A concrete example is our work progressing the development of an [Agriculture Trade Apprenticeship](#), aimed at establishing a viable, sustainable and nationally recognised trade pathway and associated training products. We are also progressing work that supports biosecurity capability through skills-focused review activity aligned to workforce needs, stakeholder input and the broader goals of Australia's sovereign capability and food security.

Biosecurity is integral to protecting Australia's unique ecosystems and to safeguarding food security. The cross-industry, cross-JSC *Biosecurity Skills Review Project* that Skills Insight is leading will support future workforce development and training initiatives aligned with the National Biosecurity Strategy. Workshops underway as part of the [Flock Safe Project](#) are also

piloting a way of systematically upskilling and reskilling an industry workforce with the necessary to prevent biosecurity incursions.

Net zero and land, water and ecosystem capability (including Ranger pathways)

Skills Insight will support Australia's net zero transition by engaging with employers and unions to identify emerging skills needs in land, water and ecosystem management and reporting. A key feature of our approach is recognising that capability in land and sea management is inseparable from Country and community leadership, particularly in regions where these roles are most concentrated and most critical. We will continue to promote workforce development activity aligned to net zero initiatives, including pathways relevant to Rangers and other land and sea management cohorts. This includes emerging opportunities in sectors such as seaweed farming to generate carbon credits through abatement of emissions from cattle herds, circular economy systems to reduce waste and regenerate natural systems, and other activities that build resilient local and regional economies. We will monitor and draw on recent inquiries that highlight the potential for these emerging industries and regional development opportunities, so that skills and training responses are evidence-based and future-focused.

Equity challenges in regional, rural and remote (RRR) Australia – with a focus on training delivery constraints

Stakeholders continue to report structural barriers to accessing training in regional, rural and remote areas, including limited local provision, thin markets for specialist delivery, travel and accommodation burdens, and disruption from seasonal and climate impacts. Skills Insight will keep elevating these constraints in workforce planning and use our convening role to support coordinated solutions that improve accessibility and outcomes. In doing so, we will emphasise that access to education, training and employment is a fundamental right and a critical economic and social driver for regional, rural and remote communities. Skills Insight will support coordinated and practical solutions for small businesses to access VET while navigating significant operational, financial, and regulatory pressures.

We are also progressing targeted work that explicitly focuses on these constraints, including policy and decision-making issues that shape the feasibility and sustainability of regional, rural and remote delivery, and broader analysis of training demand and supply challenges that affect whether training products translate into training on the ground.

Through the *Regional, Rural and Remote VET Policy Decision-Making project* we are also progressing targeted work that explicitly focuses on these constraints, including policy and decision-making issues that shape the feasibility and sustainability of regional, rural and remote delivery, and broader analysis of training demand and supply challenges that affect whether training products translate into training on the ground. The [VET Workforce Project](#) is developing industry-led strategies to improve attraction and retention of a suitably skilled VET workforce capable of training workers for industries we support.

The impacts of thin markets are evident in industries such as pulp and paper manufacturing, where the absence of formal training pathways has limited access to nationally recognised qualifications. The [Mapping Workplace Training to PPM Qualifications Project](#) aims to bridge

the gap between existing in-house training and nationally recognised qualifications, building a case for a formal skills recognition pathway.

The [Tree Allocation Partnership Project](#) is exploring a solution to address the critical need for access to trees required to complete training in manual tree felling. Central to this work is the development of mechanisms to establish partnerships between registered training organisations (RTOs) and organisations able to facilitate access to suitable sites, supporting safe, compliant and consistent training delivery.

Entry-level access and pathways: agricultural trade apprenticeship and other pathway development

Skills Insight will enhance entry-level access and strengthen long-term career pathways across our sectors by developing an agricultural trade apprenticeship, informed by industry, union and jurisdictional input. Alongside this, we are progressing pathway-oriented projects in other sectors to address identified workforce risks and safety and capability needs.

In the [textiles, clothing and footwear](#), racing and breeding, and [landscaping](#) sectors, skills reviews are underway to identify and map the job roles, skills needs and gaps in training provision at a national level. Findings will inform the design of training products and other workforce planning considerations so that careers are more visible and supported, and industry can access the skilled workforce it needs.

Simulated learning modules have been developed as part of a project to develop a [Worker Safety Induction Program](#) for the meat industry, supporting consistent, high-quality safety induction for new and transitioning workers. The pilot will test how simulated learning can improve workforce readiness, build safety capability from day one and support safer entry into the industry, with findings informing potential broader rollout and application across other high-risk sectors.

Support for Jobs and Skills Australia

Skills Insight will support Jobs and Skills Australia by assisting in consultations to voice industry perspectives and ensure they inform national analysis and recommendations, and by collaborating where appropriate to take forward recommendations and advance shared priorities, particularly where our stakeholder networks can support grounded insights and testing of options.

Advancing First Nations interests: approach, commitments and practical actions

Skills Insight treats Closing the Gap National Agreement priorities as a standing focus and approaches First Nations work on the basis that First Nations people and communities are economic leaders and partners. [Our core commitment](#) is to move beyond consultation toward First Nations-led design and shared decision-making (within program requirements), while ensuring consent, cultural safety and appropriate recognition of knowledge.

The [Community-Based Aquaculture Training Tools Project](#), being led by the Aboriginal Sea Company, in partnership with Skills Insight, builds Australia's food security and sovereign capability by creating culturally appropriate accredited training that enables remote First Nations communities to develop sustainable aquaculture enterprises (particularly black-lip oyster farming) while strengthening local skills, employment pathways, and long-term community-led seafood production.

Governance and representation

We maintain permanent First Nations representation within our stakeholder leadership architecture and actively support First Nations participation across our industry engagement structures, including through our advisory arrangements.

Cultural capability and organisational readiness

First Nations-developed cultural capability training is mandatory for staff. This supports more consistent cultural competence, improves the quality and safety of engagement, and reduces the risk of harm through poorly designed consultation or inappropriate application of cultural knowledge.

Recognition and protection of First Nations knowledge

We recognise that durable outcomes require proper respect for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property. We include provisions in our terms of engagement so that First Nations experts' intellectual contributions are appropriately recognised and can be remunerated where appropriate, consistent with consent, cultural protocols and Jobs and Skills Council program guidelines.

On-Country pathways and fit-for-purpose delivery

We continue to support work that strengthens on-Country delivery settings and resources, including developing training and assessment resources designed to meet the needs of First Nations learners (and usable more broadly). This sits directly alongside the Government's priorities for net zero capability, land and sea management, and equitable access in regional and remote Australia, including through programs such as the Indigenous Rangers Program and related initiatives.

Building durable partnerships and shared decision-making

In 2026, we will deepen formal partnerships with First Nations organisations to support shared decision-making and sustained collaboration, consistent with the Government's expectations. This includes formal partnership agreements that support community-led training and workforce initiatives, such as the [Community-based Aquaculture Training Tools Project](#) and other projects which we will continue to develop with First Nations partners. We will also continue to advocate for settings that enable First Nations leadership, ownership and decision-making, because Closing the Gap outcomes require program and system settings that support First Nations-led solutions.

How we will work: stronger tripartite advice, inclusion and accountability

Stakeholder interests and challenges

Across our engagement, stakeholders have highlighted a consistent set of interests and pressure points that are shaping workforce supply, skills needs and training outcomes. Key themes include:

- **Training delivery constraints:** thin markets in regional, rural and remote Australia; provider capacity; access to workplaces for practical training; travel, accommodation and connectivity barriers; and challenges sustaining consistent delivery.
- **Workforce attraction and retention:** competition for labour, ageing workforces in some occupations, and the need for better entry-level pathways and supervision capability.
- **Quality, relevance and usability of training products:** clearer pathways, streamlined qualifications, assessment settings that work in real workplaces, and faster responsiveness to changing job roles.
- **Capability for emerging priorities:** net zero, land and sea management, biosecurity, digital uplift and AI impacts on tasks and skills.
- **Equity and participation barriers:** gender segregation, cost and time barriers for learners, and the need for culturally safe and locally appropriate delivery models (including for First Nations communities).
- **Access to and use of robust industry data:** the need for timely, reliable and sector-relevant industry-sourced data, working in tandem with Commonwealth and state and territory datasets, to inform effective skills analysis, workforce planning and industry response. Enhanced data sharing and integration will underpin more responsive and evidence-based decisions for current and emerging workforce needs.

A core mechanism for delivery in 2026 will be the establishment of improved industry engagement mechanisms. These are designed to strengthen tripartite leadership and improve the quality, legitimacy and usability of sector advice by creating a structured pathway for evidence and stakeholder intelligence to inform priorities, workforce planning and training product work.

This model is deliberately inclusive. Skills Insight will ensure under-represented voices are present and influential in advisory structures, including First Nations peoples and other underrepresented cohorts, and stakeholders from regional, rural and remote communities. We will strengthen our discipline for how we capture and use input, and how we report back on what we heard and what changed as a result.



Skills Insight is a Jobs and Skills Council funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Skills Insight has a collaborative partnership with ForestWorks and MINTRAC to support stakeholder engagement activities and JSC projects within the following industries:

ForestWorks:

Meat, poultry and seafood
processing

MINTRAC:

Forestry, timber, paper,
fibre and furnishing.