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**December 2024**

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As 2024 comes to a close, AFAM would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who volunteered their time to provide advice and information about skills needs, industry challenges and workforce development opportunities throughout the year. Your contributions are instrumental to shaping AFAM's initiatives and consultations.

It's been a big year for Vocational Education and Training (VET) with the significant review of the NSW VET system, focused on identifying strengths, gaps and opportunities for improvement in skills development and training, to support students and workforce. Thanks to the AFAM stakeholders who contributed their ideas at various roundtable sessions and through written submissions and surveys.

The NSW Skills Plan, released on 3 December, is the NSW Government's action-based response to the NSW VET Review. We look forward to providing you with updates on the plan's implementation throughout 2025.

We would like to wish you and your family a happy festive season and look forward to working with you in the new year. Please note that the AFAM office will be closed from 20 December 2024 through to 13 January 2025.

Best wishes,  
Ben

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# Engagement Activities

Last month, AFAM attended the MINTRAC RTO Trainer Network Forum in Sydney. It was a great event, during which attendees shared and discussed matters relating to industry workforce training issues and challenges. We were also given an update on the Essential Meat Processing Skills project and informed about a range of RTO audit tools and resources now available from MINTRAC.



AFAM Executive Officer Ben Holmes with Mark Wadsworth, Industry Training & Engagement Lead from MINTRAC

AFAM also attended the Jobs and Skills Australia roadshow event held in Sydney during November. Professor Barney Glover AO, Commissioner of Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) presented and facilitated panel conversations relating to the [Better Together – Jobs and Skills report](#) with the theme of the day being 'Inclusive participation'.

A great discussion was had on the role of education and training, the benefits of tripartite and community centric goals for all people and the need to support each individual and child to reach their full potential.

Findings from the JSA Better Together Jobs and Skills report include:

- significant economic and employment benefits for VET graduates. Nationally, graduates experience a median income uplift of \$11,800, with apprentices, trainees, and graduate diploma/certificate holders seeing even higher increases of \$25,800 and \$23,700, respectively.
  - First Nations graduates achieving a median income increase of \$13,000, while female graduates see a 17% rise in employment rates.
  - VET qualifications reducing reliance on income support and improving employment outcomes, with 84% of graduates employed within a year of completing their studies.
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# Upcoming Meetings

The following online Industry Training Advisory Committee (ITAC) meetings have been scheduled for early next year:

- Animal Care and Management and Racing and Breeding (ACM and RGR ITAC) **Wednesday 5 February 2025**
- Agriculture and Production Horticulture (APH ITAC) **Monday 17 February 2025**
- Amenity Horticulture, Landscaping, Conservation and Land Management (AHLCLM ITAC) **Monday 3 March 2025**
- Food, Beverage and Pharmaceutical (FBP ITAC) **Wednesday 12 March 2025**

If you are interested in representing your industry training and skills needs, please contact Ben Holmes, AFAM ITAB ([bholmes@skillsinsight.com.au](mailto:bholmes@skillsinsight.com.au)) after 13 January 2025 to be considered for inclusion.

There are also plans for AFAM to visit Tamworth and the Mid North Coast regions in March and May respectively. More details will be available in the new year.

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## Smart and Skilled Update

### **New training plan proposal and process for school based apprentices and trainees**

School based apprenticeships and traineeships (SBATs) provide students with the opportunity to attain a nationally recognised Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification and their Higher School Certificate (HSC) while gaining valuable work skills and experience through paid employment. Training Services has worked closely with stakeholders to streamline the application process, and a new Training Plan Proposal (TPP) has been created specifically for SBATs. This document brings SBATs in line with other apprenticeships and traineeships under the Act.

Read more about the proposal and process plus other news in the [November update](#).

### **NSW Skills List Management Policy Updated**

The policy outlines the criteria used to assess qualifications for inclusion and/or removal from the NSW Skills List and the two approaches for adjusting the NSW Skills List - through department-initiated changes and proposals from stakeholders.

[Learn more](#) and [download policy version 3.2](#)

### **New email address for customer service enquiries**

Training Services NSW had changed its name to Training Services in a realignment within the department. The new email address for customer service enquiries is [TSCust.Service@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:TSCust.Service@det.nsw.edu.au). Please update your records accordingly.

Read the [December update](#).

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# NSW Skills Plan 2024 - 28: Building Skills and Shaping Success

The NSW Skills Plan, the first since 2008, is a strategic plan that provides the NSW Government's action-based response to the NSW VET Review. The plan was released on 3 December and includes the NSW Government's ongoing commitments under the National Skills Agreement.

The NSW Skills Plan is underpinned by a new system stewardship approach that represents a shift in how the NSW Government and key VET system stakeholders work together to deliver on system reforms, strategic priorities and key actions.

The 5 strategic priorities outlined in the report aim to better support learners, industry, the VET workforce and system agility. The 5 strategic priorities are to:

1. Target skilling responses to government priorities. This includes critical skill areas including agriculture and agrifood, construction-infrastructure and housing, net zero and energy transition, digital and cyber, the care and support economy and advanced manufacturing.
2. Improve equitable outcomes, pathways and access for students
3. Strengthen industry and employer partnerships and skill systems governance
4. Build and support the NSW VET teaching workforce
5. Drive system responsiveness and innovation

Learn more about the plan and strategic priorities by visiting the [NSW government website](#).

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# NSW Ambassadors of VET Meet the Minister

The winners of this year's NSW Training Awards, have taken part in a five-day Professional Development Week to become ambassadors of vocational education and training (VET) and inspire the next generation of learners.

As part of their training, the award winners honed their communication, social media and interview skills, and met with the NSW Minister for Skills, TAFE, and Tertiary Education, Steve Whan at NSW Parliament where they shared with him their VET journeys to date.

Congratulations to the award winners.



# NSW Training Awards 2025

## Applications Now Open

Do you have an outstanding Vocational Education and Training or School Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship student at your school or workplace?

Know of a teacher, trainer, organisation or business that demonstrates best practice in VET?

Applications for the 2025 NSW Training Awards, celebrating its 70th anniversary next year, are now open. Conducted by Training Services, the awards are a great way to receive recognition for the effort that individuals, Employers and Registered Training Organisations put into VET.

[Learn more](#) and [apply today](#).



# Jobs and Skills Councils Project Updates:

**Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance (MISA) JSC's [2024 workforce plan](#)** outlines the skills and training opportunities and challenges for manufacturing. Snapshots of the food manufacturing workforce can be found on pg. 28 and pharmaceutical manufacturing on pg. 31.

**Skills Insight JSC** currently have both training package and research projects underway in various stages. To learn more and provide input please follow the links below.

Development Stage:

- [Rural Operations Project](#) (this project has been paused while qualification reform work takes place)

Broad Consultation Underway:

- [Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Workforce Insights Project](#)
- [Worker Safety Induction Pilot](#)

Broad Consultation Complete:

- [Essential Meat Processing Skills Project](#)

In final stages:

- [Exploring Training Demand Supply Challenges Project](#)
- [From Training Package to Training Delivery](#)
- [Livestock Operations Project](#)
- [Shearing and Wool Classing](#)

Finalised:

- [Training Support Materials for Meat Processing Project](#)

Other Projects Underway:

- [ANZSCO review project](#) – OSCA launched this week.
- [Qualification reform](#) – watch the video on the project webpage.



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## NSW Grants, Opportunities and Scholarships

The following grants, opportunities and scholarships are available to employers and vocational learners. Follow the links for more information.

**[Aboriginal Business Advisory Initiative](#)**: support for existing Aboriginal owned and operated businesses to grow and diversify their business. Book a call and be referred to a Business Connect Advisor for free, tailored independent advice in one-on-one sessions.

**[Barranggirra](#)**: to provide end to end support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners through culturally appropriate mentoring to ensure successful retention and completion of training and improved post-training employment outcomes.

[Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Grant](#): the grant adopts a number of strategies to develop and support First Nations people through the creation of training and employment opportunities.

[Free Training for Veterans](#): to broaden their career opportunities and help transition to civilian life after service, veterans and their partners will have access to free training.

[Free Workshops: Supervising your apprentice or trainee](#): free workshops for employers and supervisors of apprentices or trainees in the workplace held across NSW.

[OCHRE Opportunity Hubs](#): aim to provide First Nations young people with the confidence and knowledge to follow a supported pathway between school and further education and/or employment through partnerships with schools, coordination of local opportunities, mentoring, support and more.

[Resources to Assist in Supervising Your Apprentice or Trainee](#): a series of videos and resources are available.

## Other Grants and opportunities:

[Free Support to Help Create Mentally Healthy Workplaces](#): SafeWork NSW has a range of programs, tools, and resources available to help on the journey to create mentally healthy workplaces.

### Food Rescue Rebates

The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is working to reduce good quality food suitable for human consumption from being disposed to landfill. The rebates are part of a suite of organics programs available to support NSW to halve organics waste to landfill by 2030.

**Amount:** Up to \$2,000 per rebate with a total funding pool of up to \$800,000

**Status:** Open, ongoing until 30 June 2027, until funding is expended, or at the EPA's discretion.

**Seafood Innovation Fund** - The NSW Government is offering low interest loans up to \$500,000 to assist commercial fishers and aquaculture farmers to identify and address risks to their business, improve permanent assets and infrastructure, ensure long term productivity and sustainable use of the marine, estuarine and land-based environment.

Seafood Innovation Fund loans are available to businesses within the seafood sector in NSW.

**Amount:** Loans are up to \$500,000 for 100% of the net, GST exclusive cost of eligible works.

**Status:** Open, until funding is expended.

### Living Carbon Grants

NSW Government is investing \$5 million in Living Carbon grants to assist eligible applicants in delivering carbon abatement through planting projects in 3 regions in NSW:

- the Riverina Local Land Services region
- the North Coast Local Land Services region
- the MidCoast Local Government Area.

**Amount:** Successful applicants will receive up to \$200,000 of grant funding, and the landholder is expected to commit funding and/or in-kind contributions to complete the project.

**Status:** Open. Closes 30 April 2025.

Find information about these and all available grants and funding opportunities on the [NSW Government website](#).

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