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AFAM ITAB

Agriculture, Food
& Animal Management

February 2025

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If you haven't already done so, remember to complete the Occupation Shortage List Stakeholder Survey as mentioned in the [January news alert](#). The Stakeholder Survey is **open until Friday 7 March 2025 at 5pm** (AEDT). For more information and to have your say visit the [Jobs and Skills Australia website](#).

As International Women's Day is coming up on 8 March 2025, we acknowledge the importance of the contributions and leadership of women in our industries, and the benefits diversity brings to productivity and safety in the workplace.

AFAM is currently in discussions with Training Services NSW about its role for 2025, including contributions to the Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship System and the recommended amendments to the NSW Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001. We will provide more details as soon as discussions are finalised.

Best wishes,
Ben
Executive Officer

Engagement Activities

In a busy start to the year, AFAM met with a range of stakeholders at Industry Training Advisory Committee (ITAC) meetings, workshops, forums, on-site consultations and more. Ben met with the the Landscaping, Animal Care and Baking industries and heard about common challenges including skilled worker shortages and skills gaps partly due to low retention rates of apprentices and trainees and lack of training completions.

Stakeholder Engagement Workshop and National ITAB Forum

AFAM attended a Stakeholder Engagement Workshop and a National ITAB Forum, both hosted by Skills Insight Jobs and Skills Council (JSC). The workshop was an opportunity to build upon existing collaborative relationships with the JSC and partner organisations MINTRAC and ForestWorks. AFAM recognises the importance of connecting stakeholders to the project work of the JSC and qualification reform process. You can learn more about the [projects currently being undertaken](#) below.

The National ITAB Forum was a two day event in Melbourne bringing together the industry skills and training advisory bodies from each of the states and the Northern Territory. Training issues and challenges relating to industry employer and learner needs were shared from different state perspectives. Solutions and strategies to engage stakeholders, action change and improve outcomes within the VET sector were also discussed in line with current projects, industry stewardship and qualification reform work from Skills insight.



Stakeholder Engagement Workshop



Participants at the National ITAB Forum

Industry & School Forums - Expressions of Interest Invited

Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP) together with Industry Training Advisory Bodies, invite you to express your interest in attending Industry & School Forums across the Mid North Coast in Taree, Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour. The aim of these forums are to link local Industry and school key contacts (Careers Advisors, Principals and other key staff) and provide a platform for industry and schools to discuss local market trends, skill shortages, skill gaps and school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.

Dates for the Forums are as follows - you can express interest to attend in more than one location:

- **Taree, Tuesday 27 May 9am - 1pm**
- **Port Macquarie, Wednesday 28 May 9am - 1pm**
- **Coffs Harbour, Thursday 29 May 9am - 1pm**

Employers are invited to [register your interest](#) in attending. **All** interested attendees **MUST** register their interest individually.

Sessions on the day will include Region overviews by Regional Development Australia, an Employer panel, School panel, speed meet session, supporting work placement and how to get involved with a School-based Apprenticeships & Traineeships (SBAT) session. Morning tea and lunch will be provided.

Note, these forums are not suitable for RTOs.

Smart and Skilled Update

Fee Free Arrangements – January to June 2025

NSW Fee Free enrolments are now open. For the next two years, NSW Fee Free will consist of Tranche 2 (which is a continuation of the arrangements in place in 2024) and the new NSW Fee Free Construction Tranche. To help providers better plan with greater predictability around fee free courses, a core set of qualifications will remain on the Tranche 2 priority list for the remainder of the initiative including agriculture and agribusiness qualifications. This does not mean there are unlimited places for these courses, but it does mean they will be on the NSW Fee Free Tranche 2 list for each semester over the next two years. These and the full list of qualifications available for fee free can be found in the [Smart and Skilled update](#).

Smart and Skilled Fee Free arrangements for January to June 2025 remain unchanged for:

- Fee free Apprenticeships and Traineeships
- Fee exempt students (Aboriginal students and students with a disability and their dependants)
- All three categories for Fee Free Scholarships students – Eligible students undertaking a qualification up to and including Certificate IV:
 - Concession eligible aged between 15 to 30 years
 - A person aged between 15 to 30 years who is or was in Out of Home Care
 - A person who is experiencing or has experienced domestic and family violence
- A refugee or asylum seeker on one of the specified visas listed in the Smart and Skilled Fee Administration Policy undertaking a qualification up to and including Certificate IV.

If you have any questions regarding NSW Fee Free, please contact your Regional Provider Support Manager or [Ben at AFAM](#).

NSW Skills List Updated – Version 15.2

The NSW Skills List has been updated to Version 15.2. This update covers changes due to training package updates, ASQA extensions to qualification transition periods, updates to Vocational Training Orders and updated tags for NSW Fee Free qualifications.

ASQA have approved extensions to superseded qualification transition periods until 31 January 2026 for the following AHC qualifications:

- AHC20720 Certificate II in Nursery Operations
- AHC21020 Certificate II in Conservation and Ecosystem Management
- AHC30620 Certificate III in Production Horticulture
- AHC30820 Certificate III in Arboriculture
- AHC31021 Certificate III in Parks and Gardens
- AHC31120 Certificate III in Nursery Operations
- AHC31319 Certificate III in Sports Turf Management
- AHC31421 Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management
- AHC32422 Certificate III in Irrigation Technology
- AHC51019 Diploma of Sports Turf Management

For more information read the [Smart and Skilled update](#) and download the [NSW Skills List Version 15.2](#) and the updated [Smart and Skilled Prices and Fees](#)

[Schedule.](#)

AgSkilled Update

The NSW Government AgSkilled workforce training program supports agricultural workers to access training and helps them adapt to evolving industry demands and opportunities.

AgSkilled funding is now available for the AHC unit **AHCINF307 Plan and Construct Conventional Fencing**.

Learn more by visiting the [NSW Department of Education website](#).



NSW Training Awards - applications open

Applications for the 2022 NSW Training Awards are now open. This is the 70th year for the awards celebrating vocational education and training (VET) in NSW and are a great way to receive recognition for the effort that individuals, employers and Registered Training Organisations put into VET.

The NSW training awards honour and reward the achievements of students, Trainers/Teachers, Registered Training Organisations and both large and medium employers. As well as providing the opportunity to celebrate achievements and hard work, entering the awards raises the profile of organisations and showcases their commitment to VET. Nominating an individual can open many doors and potentially become a steppingstone in their career.

AFAM encourages stakeholders to nominate both individuals and organisation. This is a great way to help raise the profile of industry and the value of vocational education and training programs.

Nominations close for **individuals on 14 March 2025** and close for **organisations 2 May 2025**.

More [about the awards](#), [eligibility and selection criteria](#), [how to enter](#) and [frequently asked questions](#) can be found by following the links provided.



Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System

The Australian Government has released the final report for the *Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System - Skills for tomorrow: Shaping the future of Australian apprenticeships*. The review investigated how support can be best-placed to increase the completion rate of apprenticeships and traineeships. The final report makes over 30 recommendations to support high-quality apprenticeships and ensure the Incentives System is effective and responsive to the needs of the labour market, apprentices and government.

The Incentives System provides financial support to employers, apprentices and trainees working in priority industries and is intended to encourage people to start an apprenticeship or traineeship and see it through to completion.

To download the final report or a selection of fact sheets, visit the [Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website](#).

Training Package Updates

Training Services NSW publish Commissioner Information Bulletins (CIBs) when training packages have been updated. CIBs may include training frameworks, industrial arrangements, job descriptions and licensing and regulatory requirements.

Recently published CIB updates for Apprenticeships and Traineeships in NSW:

- [CIB 757 AHC training package](#) effective 22 October 2024
 - One traineeship vocation has been designated and one vocation has been varied to update the qualification code.
 - Minor changes to Horticulture - Permaculture qualifications:
 - AHC33822 Certificate III in Permaculture - updated superseded unit codes
 - Agriculture - Production Horticulture:
 - AHC40324 Certificate IV in Production Horticulture - updated 2 Core units and 4 Elective units. Added 2 Elective units.
 - All other VTOs remain unchanged.

Jobs and Skills Councils (JSC) Project Updates:

Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance (MISA) JSC have released their [2024 Workforce Plan](#) which 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.

The baking industry has presented a Case for Change on the scheduling of specific units of competency for the Food, Beverage and Pharmaceutical Training Package. MISA has initiated the planning phase of an approved project to review the impact of training delivery of baking qualifications on the industry.

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.

Initial Stage:

- [Community based aquaculture training tools](#)
- [Veterinary Nursing Review](#)
- [Flock Safe Project](#)

Development Stage:

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

Broad Consultation Underway:

- [Worker Safety Induction Pilot](#)

Consensus Gathering:

- [Essential Meat Processing Skills Project](#)

In Final stages:

- [Exploring Training Demand Supply Challenges Project](#)
- [From Training Package to Training Delivery.](#)

Finalised:

- [Livestock Operations Project](#)
- [Shearing and Wool Classing](#)
- [Training Support Materials for Meat Processing Project](#)

Other Projects Underway:

- [Qualification reform](#) – watch the video on the project webpage.



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.

[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 Dixson 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.

[Employers funding and support](#): learn about government incentives and supports to employ and train apprentices and trainees.

[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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