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# AFAM ITAB

Agriculture, Food  
& Animal Management

March 2025

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This month AFAM ITAB has been actively engaged with industry, employers, jobs and skills councils and registered training organisations across a number of forums to identify training needs, issues and challenges.

The importance of industry feedback to inform reforms of NSW Apprenticeships and Traineeships and priority skills will be critical to the outcomes of AFAM's work this year.

If you have any feedback, questions or would like to discuss the skills or training needs of your workforce or industry, please don't hesitate to [contact me](#).

Best wishes,  
Ben  
Executive Officer

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# Have Your Say - Industry Responses on NSW apprenticeships

AFAM ITAB, in partnership with MINTRAC, is undertaking extensive industry stakeholder engagement to develop a NSW industry response to the [Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System - Skills for tomorrow: Shaping the future of Australian apprenticeships report](#) and the NSW review of the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act which guides accessibility of training in NSW.

AFAM has contracted Michael Williams to do extensive stakeholder engagement and write this report. If you want to speak with Michael, please contact Ben at [afamitab@skillsinsight.com.au](mailto:afamitab@skillsinsight.com.au).

Alternatively, you can complete this [Microsoft form](#) to provide your feedback or arrange to speak directly with Ben from AFAM at [afamitab@skillsinsight.com.au](mailto:afamitab@skillsinsight.com.au) or Mark Wadsworth from MINTRAC at [mwadsworth@mintrac.com.au](mailto:mwadsworth@mintrac.com.au) by emailing them with your interest.

**Feedback closes 5pm Friday 4 April 2025.**

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## Share Your Feedback - Proposed NSW Primary Industries Workforce Strategy

The NSW Government is calling on stakeholders to provide feedback on the development of an industry-wide strategy designed to create a more resilient and skilled NSW primary industries workforce.

The proposed Strategy aims to generate outcomes that support and build the workforce necessary for delivering profitable, sustainable, and innovative agriculture, forestry and fishing industries in NSW, now and in the future.

The proposed Strategy recommends:

1. A shared vision for government, industry and stakeholders to work towards.
2. Three key priority areas for government and industry to concentrate their actions:
  - Improving business management, adaptability and innovation.
  - Fostering a diverse workforce accessible across NSW.
  - Careers and capabilities in primary industries.
3. A pathway to delivering NSW primary industries workforce outcomes by clearly articulating key actions to guide prioritisation, decision-making and investment by government and stakeholders.

You can read the [Proposed NSW Primary Industries Workforce Strategy 2025-2030](#) and share your insights and feedback by [completing the survey](#). The survey closes **Wednesday 30 April 2025**.

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# Engagement Activities

## Visit to Guide Dogs NSW/ACT

The high retention rate of staff and high completion rate of learner training are important factors aligned with focus areas of the National Skills Agreement.

AFAM, together with Stakeholder Engagement Manager Jess Cleary from Skills Insight JSC, visited [Guide Dogs NSW/ACT](#) Guide Dog Centre in Western Sydney this month to investigate the success of their training programs. As well as enjoying a tour of the grounds and puppy cuddles, discussions also took place regarding transferrable skills across industries.

The diversity of job roles at Guide Dogs include strong links between the skills required in other industries such as agriculture, aged care and disability support. The programs delivered onsite train transferable skills aligned with these priority industries such as animal breeding, husbandry, care for health and wellbeing, and livestock observation.

We're very grateful for the opportunity to visit.



(L-R) Sharon Zammit, Jess Cleary (with black labrador puppy), Ben Holmes (with golden labrador puppy), Melinda Bowden.

## **Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance (MISA) Food and Beverage Focus Group**

The Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance (MISA), the Jobs and Skills Council supporting the FBP Training Package, ran a focus group on 3 March 2025 to help shape the future of Australia's manufacturing workforce. AFAM provided stakeholder input during the focus group contributing towards the development of their 2025 Manufacturing Workforce Plan.

MISA's intention is to develop a practical, future-focused roadmap that outlines actionable solutions to equip industry with the future capacity, skills and workforce it needs to thrive.

The Workforce Plan will explore how manufacturing can support national priorities, including:

- clean manufacturing and Australia's net zero targets
- circularity and the closed loop economy
- technological and digital transformation needed for manufacturers to maintain a competitive edge
- supply chain vulnerabilities and sovereign capability

For more information visit the [MISA website](#).

## **Skills Insight Stakeholder Forum**

AFAM attended the Skills Insight Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) Stakeholder Forum this month. The JSC met with representatives from across the industries they support along with industry training and skills advisory body representatives. As part of the event, breakout groups worked to refine priorities for a JSC action plan based on industry needs.

The forum was a valuable opportunity to network and consult with other industry stakeholders and gain perspectives from a range of industry sectors. Ben was also able to hear and consider national industry feedback which will help inform the ITAB response to the [Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System - Skills for tomorrow: Shaping the future of Australian apprenticeships report](#).

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# Mid North Coast Industry Employer and School Forums

In partnership with Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP) and the Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABS), AFAM would like to invite employers to participate in a forum to represent your industry and build valuable connections with schools. This is a great opportunity for industry to showcase the career pathways and job opportunities in regional and rural areas and connect with careers advisors and teachers in local schools (spaces are limited).

At each of the Forums, employers and local experts will discuss:

- platforms for industry and schools to build stronger connections to strengthen careers, work experience and work placement programs
- the transfer of knowledge about local market trends, skill shortages, skill gaps, employment opportunities and future skills needs
- strengthening school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.

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

**Note:** currently there is no AFAM industry representation for Taree. Please consider registering your interest for this location.

- **Taree Date: Tuesday 27th May Time: 9am – 1pm**
- **Port Macquarie Date: Wednesday 28th May Time: 9am – 1pm**
- **Coffs Harbour Date: Thursday 29th May Time: 9am – 1pm**

Employers are invited to [register interest in attending](#). ALL interested attendees MUST register their interest individually). This event is not suitable for RTOs.

Once you register your interest to attend, your spot will be confirmed via email and a calendar invite.

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

We look forward to your support of this event to build connection and partnerships between schools and industry. For further information contact Ben at AFAM [afamitab@skillsinsight.com.au](mailto:afamitab@skillsinsight.com.au)

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# Public Stakeholder Consultation - Inform the OSCA Maintenance Strategy

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) are seeking feedback from users of the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) to inform the OSCA maintenance strategy via the [ABS Consultation Hub](#).

This consultation will inform an ongoing maintenance strategy for OSCA, which will determine the timing of updates and the framework for prioritising submissions. OSCA informs many of Australia's important decisions involving statistical outputs and labour market analysis. Your input can help the ABS to provide high quality, timely and relevant classification updates.

You are invited to provide feedback on:

- key components that should underpin maintenance timing for each new update
- barriers to implementation
- the framework for prioritising submissions.

To have your say complete the [OSCA Maintenance Strategy Questionnaire](#) and learn more [about OSCA](#).

Consultation **closes 4 April 2025**.



# AgSkilled Update

The following units of competency have been requested for AgSkilled endorsement for availability in April.

- AHCLSK205 Handle Livestock using basic techniques
- AHCWOL309 Prepare wool based on its characteristics
- AHCWOL317 Press wool for a clip
- AHCWOL318 Perform shed duties
- AHCLSK368 Comply with industry animal welfare requirements.
- AHCWHS302 Contribute to workplace health and safety processes
- AHCWRK318 Comply with industry quality assurance requirements
- MEMPE004 – Use fabrication equipment

If endorsed, training in the above units will **need to be completed by 31 May 2025**.

For more information and to access funded training talk to your AgSkilled provider or contact Ben at AFAM [afamitab@skillsinsight.com.au](mailto:afamitab@skillsinsight.com.au)

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



# Smart and Skilled Update

NSW Fee Free Tranche 2 (January to June 2025) enrolments in priority qualifications have now closed for private and community providers due to the success of the current round against targets and the available budget.

It is expected NSW Fee Free (Tranche 2) places will be available again for Semester 2 and will be released after Smart and Skilled contracts for 2025-26 are accepted.

A reminder that a list of core fee free qualifications which will be available for each of the following semesters has been established to provide some more predictability about what courses will be eligible for fee free places in the future as listed below:

- AHC20116 Certificate II in Agriculture
- AHC20122 Certificate II in Agriculture
- AHC30116 Certificate III in Agriculture
- AHC30122 Certificate III in Agriculture
- AHC40116 Certificate IV in Agriculture
- AHC40122 Certificate IV in Agriculture
- AHC41019 Certificate IV in Agribusiness
- AHC41024 Certificate IV in Agribusiness
- AHC50116 Diploma of Agriculture
- AHC50122 Diploma of Agriculture
- BSB40320 Certificate IV in Entrepreneurship and New Business
- TAE40122 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment
- TAE50122 Diploma of Vocational Education and Training

Apprenticeship and traineeship qualifications are not affected by the NSW Fee Free arrangements for Semester 1, 2025. Fee free apprenticeships and traineeships remain in place for eligible students who commence training with a Smart and Skilled provider up until 30 June 2025.

If providers have any questions, please contact your Regional Provider Support Manager or Ben at [afamitab@skillsinsight.com.au](mailto:afamitab@skillsinsight.com.au)

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## NSW/ACT AgriFutures Rural Women's Award Finalists Announced

Congratulations to the three women from regional NSW who have been named finalists in the NSW/ACT AgriFutures Rural Women's Award. These inspiring women have founded their own organisations and businesses, significantly contributing to the prosperity of regional and rural communities in NSW:

- Carol Mudford from Dubbo, founder of sHedway, a community-led initiative providing mental health and suicide prevention support in the shearing industry
- Dimity Smith from Tamworth, founder GRO Rural and GRO Events Group, innovative businesses connecting agricultural and rural communities, industries, and professionals across Australia
- Katelyn Wall from Nemingha, co-founder of award-winning beekeeping and pollination business Wall's Honey Co.

The 2025 NSW/ACT winner will be announced on Friday 2 May and will then compete with other six state winners. The National Winner and Runner-Up will be announced on Tuesday 9 September 2025 at Australian Parliament House in Canberra. Learn more about the [Rural Women's Award](#).

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# Jobs and Skills Councils (JSC) Project Updates

**Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance (MISA) JSC** is developing their 2025 Workforce Plan. 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 Stages:

- [Veterinary Nursing Skills and Qualification Review](#)
- [Flock Safe Project](#)

Development Stage:

- [Rural Operations Project](#) (this project has been paused while qualification reform work takes place)
- [VET Workforce Project](#)
- [Community based aquaculture training tools](#)
- [Career Pathways for Agricultural Trades](#)

Broad Consultation Underway:

- [Worker Safety Induction Pilot](#)

Consensus Gathering:

- [Essential Meat Processing Skills](#)

Finalised:

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

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.

[Boarding scholarships for isolated students](#): assists eligible students from rural areas who are required to board to attend NSW public specialist high schools – including agricultural boarding schools.

[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.

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

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

[Living away from home allowance](#): assists eligible NSW families whose children must board away from home to access secondary education.

[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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AFAM works in collaboration with Skills Insight.



AFAM is supported and funded by the NSW Government.

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