

## Communique

### Skills Insight JSC Stakeholder Forum, 19 March 2025

The first Skills Insight JSC Stakeholder Forum meeting for 2025 was held at the Novotel Melbourne Airport, on Wednesday 19 March 2025. Present at the meeting were Forum representatives, guests and observers.

All participants were welcomed and there was an acknowledgement of Country. The Chair welcomed new representatives and guests attending the Forum meeting for the first time.

### Key JSC updates

An overview of key JSC updates was provided to support and frame discussions. The presentation summarised key points from:

- published recommendations from major reports with potential impact on Skills Insight's work
- current research activity and potential future actions
- priority areas for industry leadership in the skills sector, based on engagement findings.

Forum discussions focused on:

- concerns about VET funding models and their impact on industry
- the need to better inform industries/sectors/enterprises unfamiliar with the VET system
- the critical role of technical skills and knowledge transfer
- inclusive recruitment and retention strategies for women in male dominated occupations and First Nations peoples
- the impact of casual employment on training uptake.

Participants raised concerns about a tendency in the skills system to prioritise reporting over action and called for a stronger focus on translating existing evidence into practical outcomes. In response, a subcommittee of key stakeholders has been established to support the Skills Insight Board in influencing policy and driving change by identifying priorities, addressing gaps, and promoting targeted action.

The Forum discussed issues with recommendations 2.4 and 4.2 of the Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System, regarding workplace culture. They highlighted the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive environment to improve training outcomes and retention, especially in male-dominated industries where bullying can occur. While workplace culture is influenced by multiple actors, JSCs were encouraged to focus on enabling access to practical tools, developing employer training guides, and ensuring leadership training supports positive cultural change.

## Breakout sessions

This Forum meeting included breakout sessions to allow for greater participation in discussions and for identification of issues in specific industry sectors. The discussions have been summarised and will be used as guides to develop action plans.

Issues raised in the breakout sessions included:

- The importance of attraction, retention and re-attraction, and the JSCs role to support this industry priority through leadership and management training that includes relevant skills for developing business workforce programs and ensuring that activities of the JSC have potential to improve attraction and retention.
- Addressing jurisdictional barriers and inconsistent state systems that restrict workforce development, particularly when RTOs can't operate across borders.
- More sustainable VET funding models, including linking to national priorities such as biosecurity and food security, to ensure long-term training relevance and access.
- Improving data collection mechanisms that fall short due to rigid classifications and poor engagement, resulting in underrepresented sectors, limited recognition of emerging industries and occupations, and poor workforce planning.
- Concerns of gaps between industry skill needs and the current VET system, especially around TAFE's lack of industry-relevant training and limited visibility of qualification offerings.
- The potential for a quality-focused brokerage model that could improve outcomes by prioritising high-standard, industry-aligned delivery, supported by full cost transparency.
- The need to improve navigation of the VET system for employers and learners.
- The potential to standardise and improve accreditation processes which are critical to address inconsistent training quality and formally recognise workplace-acquired skills.
- A clear need for flexible, accessible training, particularly foundational courses (Cert I/II), and a greater supply of qualified trainers.
- The importance of incorporating a range of practices into more generic (rather than specialist) qualifications, such as traditional practices and permaculture.
- Cross-sector collaboration to tackle shared workforce and operational challenges, with innovation opportunities in tech adoption, new business models, and overcoming regulatory barriers.

## **Activity Prioritisation Framework and project approvals**

Skills Insight presented its draft Activity Prioritisation Framework and project approvals process, designed to align funded initiatives with government and industry priorities across regions and sectors.

Forum members expressed the need for more detail regarding how prioritisation and project decisions are made, particularly the roles of the Forum, Board, and stakeholders in proposal development. Skills Insight committed to clarifying the process.

## **Workforce Plan**

The Forum received a high-level overview of the Workforce Plan, confirming a draft will be released soon. In response to September 2024 feedback, the Plan has shifted to a continuous planning model with an annual 'deep dive' into a key topic to maintain stakeholder engagement and deliver ongoing value.

Members stressed the need for Skills Insight to focus on where it can add the most value, with occupational safety to remain a core theme rather than a standalone topic. Biosecurity was discussed as a potential future deep dive, prompting calls for better coordination with existing initiatives and agencies to avoid duplication. The Forum recommended revisiting and reprioritising deep dive topics for a more strategic and aligned approach.

Members also queried the potential for co-investment to boost project impact. Skills Insight advised this is not currently being pursued due to existing industry levies and regulatory constraints, but noted the position could be reconsidered if recommended by the Forum.

The chair of the Forum thanked all the participants for their ideas, discussion and commitment to skills development and to working with the JSC on important issues.

**Meeting closed at 3.25pm**

**Next meeting: Wednesday 17 September 2025**