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June 2025

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Thanks to stakeholders from the Northern Inland and Central West regions who provided feedback on industry training priorities during a recent visit. AFAM would like to hear from all stakeholders across the state, particularly small and medium enterprises, who wish to provide feedback on training needs, issues and challenges across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations. To arrange a consultation visit or meeting, please contact me at bholmes@skillsinsight.com.au

Best wishes,
Ben
Executive Officer

Engagement activities

AFAM conducted a regional industry training priorities engagement across the Northern Inland region including meeting representatives from AMPS Agribusiness, Armidale Council, Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School, New England/North West Employment, Regional Development Australia, Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP), Regional Livestock Exchange, Training Services Regional Office TAFE NSW Tamworth, and Tocal College.

A range of skills needs for the region were identified in areas including biosecurity, livestock, meat, horticulture, Agtech and machinery operations. Common challenges include access to training, foundational work readiness and engaging young people into workforce development programs and training.



AFAM Executive Officer Ben Holmes with Regional Manager Naomi Spark and Training Services Manager Bede Maher from Training Services NSW Tamworth Office.

Celebrating AgSkilled

AFAM met with the AgSkilled team this month identifying the success and effectiveness of the program in meeting a variety of industry training needs. One of the success stories is the AgSkilled funded use of the Harvest Operations short course by Tocal College that achieved 9 out of 12 job outcomes for participants who went on to contribute to the productivity of local enterprises for the remainder of last year's harvest season. With Farm Safety Week coming up in July it's good to remember that AgSkilled funded training is available for programs such as Emergency Australia's First Aid Training which include nationally recognised units of competency like HLTAID013 Provide First Aid in Remote or Isolated Site.

SBAT success

AFAM has been exploring industry support for the delivery of Certificate III level qualifications as school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SBAT). Recently, school student Annabel Wales, who was unable to access an agricultural program at her school, has demonstrated great outcomes for a young learner. Annabel enrolled in the Certificate III in Agriculture as an SBAT and has been awarded a NSW Farmers Scholarship in recognition of her commitment to studies at TAFE. She also extended her learning by participating in the World Angus Expo and Forums hosted by Angus Australia across Tamworth, NSW and Brisbane, Qld respectively. Congratulations Annabel!



Annabel receiving support for the Agricultural Certificate courses at Goulburn TAFE from NSW Goulburn Branch chair Stan Moore.

Smart and Skilled update

Course pricing review: Diploma of Applied Agronomy

Eligible RTO providers should be aware of the successful outcome of a Training Services qualification pricing review where the Smart and Skilled prices and fees for the *AHC51920 Diploma of Applied Agronomy* have been adjusted to accommodate the resourcing requirements of delivery and the skills demands of this occupation to address industry workforce shortages.

Industry feedback for NSW apprenticeships and traineeships update

AFAM ITAB submitted a report to NSW Training Services on behalf of stakeholders who provided valuable feedback during consultations on NSW apprenticeships and traineeships reform. Key findings reveal the need to improve support and communications between stakeholders including learners, employers, registered and group training organisations (RTO/GTO) and apprenticeship connect Australia providers (ACAP).

Access to training across different locations including regional, rural and remote areas reveal challenges related to travel, accommodation and safety. Industry recognises the value of on the job experience that is associated with apprenticeships and traineeships and the outcomes for skilled workers entering career pathways. Thank you to everyone who provided feedback.

NSW apprenticeships and traineeships 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.

Several Vocational Training Orders were updated in CIB 757 Agriculture, Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management - apprenticeships and traineeships. Qualifications updated include:

Agriculture – Shearing

- [AHC21325 Certificate II in Shearing](#)
- [AHC32925 Certificate III in Shearing](#)

Agriculture - Wool Classing

- [AHC41325 Certificate IV in Wool Classing](#)

Agriculture - Wool Clip Preparation

- [AHC33025 Certificate III in Wool Clip Preparation](#)

Agriculture - Wool Handling

- [AHC21425 Certificate II in Wool Handling](#)
- [AHC33125 Certificate III in Advanced Wool Handling](#)

In the most recent [CIB 762](#), one vocation is reinstated and two traineeships are varied:

Horticulture – Landscape Construction traineeship vocation is reinstated to add the following qualification:

- [AHC42021 Certificate IV in Landscape Construction Management](#)

The Agriculture - Feedlot Operations traineeship vocation is varied to update the following qualification code:

- [AHC33325 Certificate III in Feedlot Operations](#)

The Horticulture – Landscape Design traineeship vocation is varied to remove the following qualification:

- AHC42421 Certificate IV in Landscape Design
-

Apprenticeship and Traineeship Head Start Initiative

The Apprenticeship and Traineeship Head Start program provides opportunities for employers to fill workforce gaps. The program is an initiative of the Educational Pathways Program (EPP). The EPP is designed to introduce senior NSW public high school students to a range of pre-vocational training and employment pathways.

The Program works with Group Training Organisations (GTOs) to improve awareness of VET and employment pathways for eligible school students in years 10-12. This year 13 GTOs are facilitating course delivery in 14 vocations including landscaping and horticulture. The program aims to:

- increase awareness of educational pathways and industry engagement opportunities
- increase the take up of pre-apprenticeships or pre-traineeship training
- help students remain at school
- increase the uptake of SBATs or apprenticeship or traineeship contracts.

The program provides students with:

- Fee-free pre-vocational training in 3-4 nationally recognised units of competency
- Work experience opportunities with a host employer
- Credit that can be used towards a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship (SBAT), or an apprenticeship or traineeship.

By offering work experience opportunities, employers can play a vital role in shaping the future workforce while reaping the benefits of fresh talent and a stronger community presence.

For more information visit the [NSW Government website](#) and download the [employer information pack](#).



Jobs and Skills Councils (JSC) project updates

Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance (MISA) JSC is developing their 2025 Workforce Plan following input from over 150 stakeholders.

Approved project in initial stages:

- To review the impact of training delivery of baking qualifications on the industry

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

Initial Stages:

- [Attraction and Retention Guidance](#)
- [Concept for an Ag Trade Apprenticeship](#)
- [Veterinary Nursing Skills and Qualification Review](#)

Development Stage:

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

Broad Consultation:

- [Career Pathways for Agricultural Trades](#)
- [Flock Safe Project](#)
- [Worker Safety Induction Pilot](#)

Finalisation:

- [Essential Meat Processing Skills](#)
- [Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Workforce Insights \(report published\)](#)

Other projects underway:

- [Qualification reform](#)
- [Workforce Plan](#)



NSW grants, opportunities & scholarships

The following grants, opportunities and scholarships are available to employers and vocational learners. With the recent drought in southern regions of the state, primary producers might consider applying for the [Natural Disaster Relief Loan](#): primary producers directly affected by a declared natural disaster may be eligible for a low interest loan of up to \$130,000 to support recovery.

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.

[Continuing Apprentices and Trainees Placement Service \(CAPS\)](#): CAPS helps apprentices and trainees find jobs or continue with their qualification when their training contract ends before completion.

[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.

[Fee-Free training for agriculture, forestry and fishing](#): giving broad access to government-subsidised training and high-level courses in targeted priority areas.

[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 for Apprentices](#): an allowance is available to eligible full and part-time apprentices and school-based apprentices during the first 3 years of training who need to move away from home in order to start or remain in an apprenticeship.

[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.

[Women in trades](#): Resources available to attract women into trades for industry and educators.

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.

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

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