



AFAM ITAB

Agriculture, Food
& Animal Management

September 2025

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Thank you to those stakeholders who met for consultations and provided feedback to inform the draft AFAM ITAB Industry Training Priorities report and industry response to the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive Scheme. The draft reports will be available for discussion and endorsement by key stakeholders from the Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITAC) before finalising the submissions to the NSW Government.

AFAM continues to collect and investigate industry feedback on training needs, issues and challenges across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations. Please contact Ben if you would like to discuss your workforce development skills and vocational education and training needs at bholmes@skillsinsight.com.au.

Best wishes,
Ben
Executive Officer

Congratulations to NSW Farmers and other NSW stakeholders in a win for regional students

NSW Farmers and other NSW stakeholders have successfully advocated the need for support for equitable access to training for students from regional, rural and remote areas of NSW. The State and Federal Government have responded to advocacy efforts announcing a \$10 million funding allocation to help regional TAFE apprentices and trainees with travel and accommodation costs for students required to travel more than 110km round trip to attend training.

The funding is part of the Albanese and Minns Governments wider investment of almost \$150 million in funding to strengthen the skilled workforce across NSW.

Australian Apprenticeship Priority List: consultation closing soon

The Australian Apprenticeship Priority List (the Priority List) identifies occupations eligible for apprenticeship incentives provided by the Australian Government. [The Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System](#) (the Strategic Review), published in January 2025, recommended revising the 'gateway' to the Incentive System, that is, the methodology behind the Priority List, to better align with Australia's economic and social objectives.

Consultation is now open to gather views on possible options for the new Priority List methodology. Consultation outcomes will help inform the development of a more robust, transparent and responsive Priority List that supports critical skills needs and delivers better outcome for apprentices, employers and the broader economy.

The following occupations have been proposed for removal from the Priority List on the basis of "not representing value for money or demonstrable public benefit":

- 351111 baker
- 351112 pastry cook
- 351211 butcher or smallgoods maker
- 61112 horse trainer
- 361311 veterinary nurse
- 362411 nurseryperson
- 362511 arborist
- 362711 landscape gardener
- 362712 irrigation technician
- 363214 senior piggery stockperson.

Stakeholders are strongly encouraged to make submissions providing evidence that demonstrates alignment of the occupation with the national priority through regulatory, licensing, integrity, welfare and safety requirements related to the occupation and the economic and social public benefit of the occupation.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations has prepared a discussion paper that includes questions to guide submissions. **Consultation closes 17 October 2025.**

[Learn more](#) and [download the discussion paper](#).

Have your say: NSW Apprenticeship & Traineeship Act Review

NSW Training Services has initiated a review of the Apprenticeship & Traineeship (A&T) Act. The aim of the Review is to strengthen the A&T framework by making it easier to navigate, more flexible, and better matched to the real-world needs of priority industries. It's also about improving outcomes, especially for young people in regional NSW, and making sure the system supports more apprentices and trainees to complete their training and step into long-term, rewarding careers.

The A&T Act Review is focused on modernising the legislative framework guided by 5 key reform directions:

1. Strengthening protections and safeguards
2. Making responsibilities clearer for employers and training providers
3. Giving learners more flexible training options
4. Supporting learner progress and successful outcomes
5. Modernising and simplifying the system.

The NSW government want to hear from industry on what's working well, what could be improved, and how the system can better meet the needs of participants across the state.

There are two ways to provide your feedback:

1. [Download the consultation paper](#) summarising the themes for reform and questions for feedback and [provide a written submission](#), **closing 11.59 pm Friday 17 October 2025**. Submit your response by emailing the team at: ATActReview@det.nsw.edu.au.

2. Complete an anonymous survey for apprentices, trainees, training organisations and employers:

- [Apprentices and trainees survey](#)
- [Training Organisation survey](#)
- [Employer survey](#)

The anonymous surveys **close 11:59 pm Friday 31 October 2025**.

If you have any questions or need support to participate in the consultation, please contact ATActReview@det.nsw.edu.au

For more information visit the [Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act \(2001\) Review webpage](#).

Engagement activities

70th NSW Training Awards

AFAM attended the gala ceremony for the NSW Training Awards at the Sydney Town Hall on 11 September. The transformative power of vocational education and training was highlighted by the finalists and winners at the event demonstrating the achievement of excellence in their chosen field. A diverse demographic of learners and trainers included mature-aged, gender diverse and First Nations individuals sharing their personal career pathway journey and their stories of resilience in the face of adversity. A range of high-quality training providers and industry employers also celebrated success in their vocational education and training experience. It was great to see stakeholders from AFAM-supported industries represented as finalists and receiving awards from regional locations across agriculture, distilling and meat processing sectors. Congratulations to all finalists and award winners.

Regional visits

AFAM continues to meet with stakeholders throughout NSW to hear directly from industry about their VET needs and challenges. This informs industry-led advice from AFAM ITAB to the NSW Government about VET and skills related matters. Recently

AFAM attended the AgQuip Field Days, visited Gunnedah citrus orchards and attended the [Made and Grown Future of Food Conference](#) on biotechnology. The conference was an opportunity to discover more about emerging technologies and the future industry skills needs which are largely aligned with existing distilling, dairy and sugar production skilled workers. AFAM also attended the [Regional Industry Education Partnerships](#) (RIEP) agriculture program in the Hunter. It was great to meet so many students who have developed skills in horticulture through the program and were grateful for the opportunity to experience and understand an authentic industry workplace.



Harriet Bell of Good Growers with the students of the regenerative market gardening RIEP program.

Smart and Skilled update

NSW Fee Free Programs update

Fee Free places have been fully allocated for Semester 2, 2025. Waivers are expected to be developed for identified courses in Semester 1, 2026.

Fee-Free apprenticeships and traineeships extended

A plan to build support for apprenticeships and traineeships into the NSW skills system by offering fee-free apprenticeships and traineeships for a longer period was announced as part of the 2025-26 NSW Budget, providing greater certainty for apprentices, trainees, for their employers, and for providers.

As a result, the department has confirmed a two-year extension of current fee-free apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements **until 30 June 2027**.

This means NSW apprentices and new entrant trainees undertaking a traineeship qualification specified on the NSW Skills List, who commence their apprenticeship or traineeship qualification with a Smart and Skilled provider by 30 June 2027, will continue to access their training free with no fee. Their training is fully subsidised by the NSW Government.

2025-26 Smart and Skilled Targeted Priorities Prevocational and Part Qualifications (TPPPQ) Program now open

The TPPPQ program is now open for Smart and Skilled providers to deliver funded, targeted training for short courses and part qualifications that align with the 6 critical skills areas of the [NSW Skills Plan](#) (includes agriculture and agrifood). The program is designed to respond to changing economic conditions and skills needs of NSW industries and is allocated to priority groups and industries across all regions and local skills needs.

The primary aim of the program is to fund training that is:

- Prevocational: supports jobseekers seeking to train, retrain, or upskill with the skills they require to gain employment and may include foundational skills, language, literacy and numeracy units from a qualification
- Pre-apprenticeship/Pre-traineeship: assists jobseekers to progress to further training (e.g. an apprenticeship or traineeship or a full qualification under Smart and Skilled)
- Targeted Skills: supports small businesses and priority groups by providing a pipeline of skilled workers.

The Program also supports, to a lesser extent, improving the capability of existing workers looking to upskill to meet changing needs at work.

Priority Student cohorts include jobseekers, disadvantaged groups, young people seeking pre-apprenticeship or pre-traineeship training in order to obtain an apprenticeship or traineeship and people seeking pre-employment support and/or extra learning support (i.e. foundation skills training).

Priority Industries include agriculture and agrifood and advanced manufacturing (includes food, beverage and pharmaceutical) across all NSW regions.

Industry identified training added to AgSkilled 3.0 endorsed course list

A selection of new units of competency have been added to the AgSkilled 3.0 endorsed course list.

Livestock industry:

- [AHCLSK228 Muster and move livestock](#). This unit of competency complements current livestock handling units.

Beekeeping industry:

- [AHCBEK409 Rear queen bees](#). The unit applies to experienced beekeepers (commercial beekeepers) who exercise judgement to complete a range of specialist activities requiring a thorough understanding in honey production.

AFAM encourages stakeholders to consider identifying specific skills needs that are not covered by the available list of units. A proposal that additional units be considered for

endorsement requires a supporting industry business case. Please contact AFAM or your local AgSkilled provider to investigate the process.

Throughout the 2024-25 financial year, the AgSkilled 3.0 program resulted in the following:

- 2,311 graduates from 105 endorsed skillsets
- 770 courses delivered across 33 endorsed training providers over 188 training locations to predominantly upskilling existing workers (89%) and (11%) jobseekers
- expenditure trends included a shift toward the livestock sector (56%) followed by grains (24%), production horticulture (16%) and fibre (cotton 4%).
- regional distribution of training access and delivery was dominant in the New England/North West, followed by Central West, Far West and Orana, and the Riverina
- high demand training windows occur seasonally in November and February.

The AgSkilled training pillars of production, technology and safety are the core skills delivered with a smaller provision for business and management skills.

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

Extension of Educational Pathways Program

The NSW Government has committed to the ongoing funding of the Educational Pathways Program (EPP) as announced by Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, Steve Whan, during National Skills Week. The program engages high school students in a range of careers pathway experiences, including in vocational education and training (VET), job readiness workshops and school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.

The EPP is made up of 8 individual [initiatives](#) that all participating schools have access to for delivering expert guidance, industry experience, hands on learning, and pathways for rewarding careers. It is an innovative program designed to improve education and career outcomes for young people by introducing NSW public high schools students to a range of vocational training and employment pathways.

The Educational Pathways Program was launched as a pilot in 24 schools in 2020. As a result of the successful pilot phase, the program is now being delivered in 183 government high schools across 11 regions of NSW.

Learn more about the [educational pathways program](#).



NSW Skills Plan updates

The NSW Skills Plan provides the NSW Government's action-based response to the NSW VET Review and includes ongoing commitments under the National Skills Agreement. It 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 plan focuses on three areas of skills reform including funding for priority skills and outcomes, a strong and stable TAFE, and planning for local skills.

Efforts to rebuild a strong, resilient and future focused TAFE include the NSW TAFE [Paid to Learn Program](#) which is supporting the expansion of the VET teacher workforce. The program offers skilled and qualified industry experts the opportunity to gain the *Certificate IV in Training and Assessment TAE40122* (TAE) qualification and become a TAFE NSW Teacher through the 14-week full time Paid to Learn program.

The focus of planning for local skills has been initiated with the establishment of a regional skills planning model following the Riverina Pilot at Wagga Wagga. Outcomes from the Riverina Pilot include the plan to coordinate existing programs, embed community-based decision making evidenced by regional data, simplified funding models to target regional retention of youth, enhancing pathways for engagement and retention, accessible and relevant training, supporting collaborative programs and addressing regional skills shortages. A follow-up forum to develop the strategies for the region will occur in early 2026 with the expectation of transferring the refined model to other regions across NSW.

Commissioner Information Bulletin (CIB) updates

CIB 764 update Agriculture, Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management - apprenticeships and traineeships includes five apprenticeship vocations designated, one traineeship vocation varied and four traineeship vocations repealed.

The following apprenticeship vocations are designated:

Horticulture - Arboriculture – Arborist Works Coordinator – Apprenticeship

- [AHC30824 Certificate III in Arboriculture \(Works Coordinator\)](#)

Horticulture - Arboriculture – Climbing – Apprenticeship

- [AHC30824 Certificate III in Arboriculture \(Climbing Arborist\)](#)

Horticulture - Arboriculture – Crane Specialist – Apprenticeship

- [AHC30824 Certificate III in Arboriculture \(Crane Specialist\)](#)

Horticulture - Arboriculture – Elevated Work Platform (EWP) – Apprenticeship

- [AHC30824 Certificate III in Arboriculture \(Elevated Work Platform – EWP Arborist\)](#)

Horticulture - Arboriculture - Environmental Arborist – Apprenticeship

- [AHC30824 Certificate III in Arboriculture \(Environmental Arborist\)](#)

The Horticulture - Arboriculture traineeship vocation is varied to remove the *AHC30824 Certificate III in Arboriculture* qualification pathway.

The following traineeship vocations are repealed and the associated qualification pathways removed:

- Horticulture - Arboriculture – Arborist Works Coordinator – Traineeship
- Horticulture - Arboriculture – Climbing – Traineeship
- Horticulture - Arboriculture – Elevated Work Platform (EWP) – Traineeship
- Horticulture - Arboriculture – Environmental Arborist (Habitat Protection and Creation) – Traineeship

All other VTOs remain unchanged.

Jobs and Skills Councils (JSC) project updates

Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance (MISA) JSC have published their [2025 Workforce Plan](#) (WFP). This month they launched the 'Make it ManuFACTuring' campaign to reshape public perceptions of manufacturing. The initiative targets young Australians, showcasing the industry as modern, innovative, and future-focused and it aims to inspire career interest and boost apprenticeship uptake.

The baking industry review project has been discontinued on the basis that there was insufficient industry support for the project as it was initially scoped with further discussion with Baking Industry Association, and with other industry stakeholders, occurring to develop opportunities for future projects.

There has been initial meeting and discussion with the National Distilling Institute (RTO) and the Australian Distilling Association on the submission process for review of the following qualifications:

- Certificate III in Food Processing (Distilling)
- Certificate IV in Artisan Fermented Products
- Skillset in distilling

These qualifications were developed by the two aforementioned organisations to provide industry specific training in the most recent review of the FBP training package. With the benefit of a number of years of delivery, the opportunity has arisen to further refine the content of the course to better reflect industry needs in this rapidly growing sector of the beverage industry.

Skills Insight JSC recently launched their [Workforce Plan 2025-2026](#) and data dashboard. The data dashboard brings together workforce, occupation, and training data to provide an overview of 13 industry groups. It highlights demographics, employment trends, top employing occupations, and VET activity. Industry-specific webpages are in development and will be available in the coming months.

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

Development Stage:

- [Attraction and Retention Guidance](#)
- [Community-based Aquaculture Training Tools](#)
- [Rural Operations](#) (project recommencement in planning)
- [Veterinary Nursing Skills and Qualification Review](#)
- [VET Workforce Project](#)

Broad Consultation:

- [Career Pathways for Agricultural Trades](#)
- [Flock Safe Project](#)

Finalisation:

- [Essential Meat Processing Skills](#)
- [Worker Safety Induction Pilot](#)

Other projects underway:

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



NSW grants, opportunities & scholarships

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

[2026 Hay Inc Rural Education Program](#): An opportunity for young people to gain new agricultural skills, education and experience in industry.

[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.

[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.

[Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal: Strengthening Rural communities – Small and Vital Program](#): gives small remote, rural and regional communities the opportunity to access funds for a broad range of initiatives that directly and clearly benefit local communities including education and training. There are two tiers of Small & Vital funding available. **Current applications close 4 December 2025.**

[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.

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

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AFAM NSW ITAB
bholmes@skillsinsight.com.au

PO Box 7133, East Ballina, NSW 2478

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