AFAM ITAB
Agriculture, Food
& Animal Management

Industry Training Priority Report 2025

Prepared by AFAM

Working with the agriculture, food and animal management sectors in NSW to understand their vocational education and training (VET) needs and challenges.

In collaboration with

Skills Insight

MINTRAC
RESPECTED LEADERS IN INDUSTRY TRAINING

Supported and funded by

NSW GOVERNMENT

AFAM acknowledges that First Nations peoples have been living on and caring for Country for thousands of years. This is respected in our values and the way we work.

AFAM works in collaboration with Skills Insight and MINTRAC.

AFAM is supported and funded by the NSW Government.

Table of Contents

Executive summary

The future of our industries depends on a robust vocational education and training (VET) system that supports the current workforce and the next generation of workers into key roles. The NSW-based Agriculture, Food and Animal Management (AFAM) Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB) has worked closely with stakeholders to gather insights on skills needs, understand industry challenges and recognise opportunities. These insights have been instrumental in shaping the recommendations and priorities for the NSW Government contained in the *Industry Training Priority Report 2025*.

The breadth of the industries we cover is extensive – animal care and management; meat, poultry and seafood processing; racing and breeding; broadacre cropping; aquaculture and wild catch; livestock farming; food, beverage and pharmaceutical; ecosystem management, conservation, landscaping and gardening; and horticulture. Despite the diversity of these industry sectors, common themes emerge among stakeholders about workforce shortages and industry training priorities.

Looking ahead, it is clear that new directions and pathways need to be taken, in consultation with our stakeholders, in order for the NSW VET system to meet our industries' skills needs. After extensive stakeholder engagement, our conversations have revealed many of the industries covered by AFAM consistently experience barriers to accessing training, while TAFEs and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) struggle to deliver programs viably.

As such, critical priorities include enhancing training accessibility, especially in regional NSW, and reviewing the funding mechanisms behind VET. As many of these industries rely on non-TAFE delivery (especially meat processing), there needs to be special consideration of the support for training delivery outside the TAFE sector. Addressing workforce readiness and foundational skills should be another focus moving forward, as well as encouraging new entrants to the workforce. Additionally, upskilling existing workers to supervise and manage new entrants and build business capability is an area of need.

Upskilling in technology and innovation is pivotal to the future success of our industries, as is improving skills in biosecurity and animal welfare capabilities. To support the transition to a net zero economy, there must be a focus on building skills in sustainability and environmental management. Lastly, strengthening quality and safety to meet regulatory demands for skills in food safety, quality assurance and traceability throughout the supply chain is essential.

By addressing these priorities and seizing on opportunities for improvement, VET in NSW will be in a stronger position to deliver effective outcomes, equipping workers with the skills they need to be part of a thriving workforce – today and into the future.

Introduction

As one of 10 NSW Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs), AFAM provides independent advice on the VET needs of our industries to the NSW Government. AFAM's Industry Training Priority Report 2025 outlines the current issues, opportunities and priorities for VET in NSW, based on stakeholder input. The report was prepared for Training Services NSW as a key deliverable of AFAM's ITAB contract.

To inform our insights, AFAM and its partner MINTRAC, engaged with a wide range of stakeholders between 2021 and 2025. Our stakeholder engagement process included consultation with Formal Industry Training Committees, direct stakeholder engagement, regional roundtable meetings, industry forums and leveraging of existing consultative infrastructure.

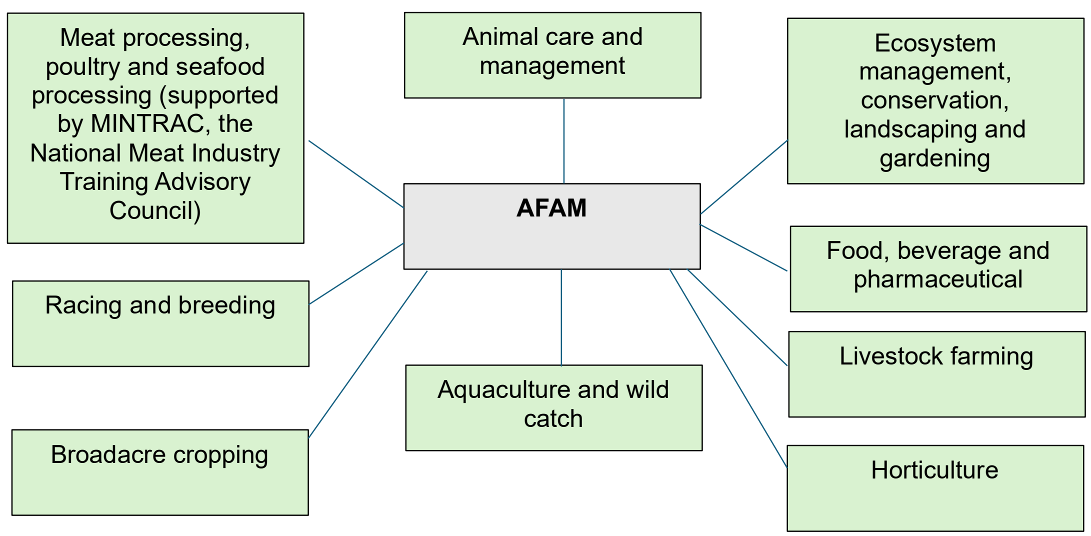
For a glossary of acronyms and abbreviations contained in this report, see Appendix B.

About AFAM

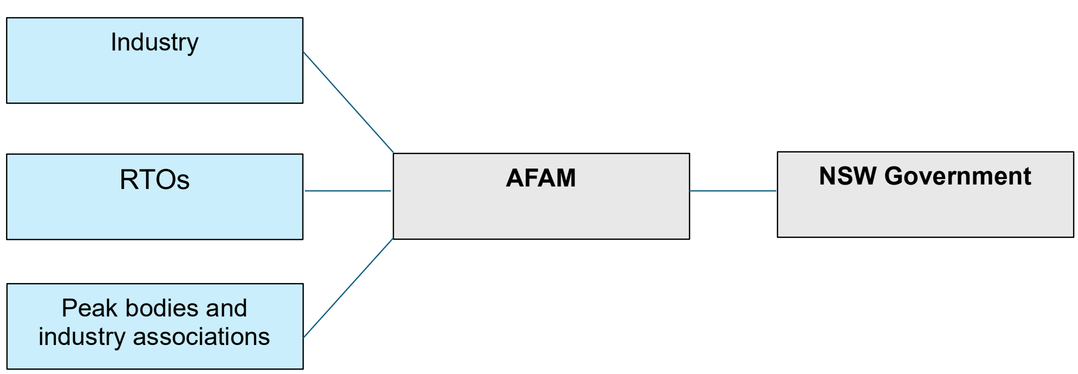
The Agriculture, Food and Animal Management (AFAM) Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB) was formed by a consortium led by Skills Insight and MINTRAC (the National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council), enabling greater collaboration with the meat processing industry and the industries Skills Insight works with at a national level. AFAM collaborates with industry and RTOs to advise the NSW Government on training and skills needs.

Our stakeholders

As part of our ITAB role, AFAM consults with the following industries across NSW:



We collaborate with industry, RTOs and peak bodies to advise the NSW Government on training and skills needs.



Stakeholder engagement process

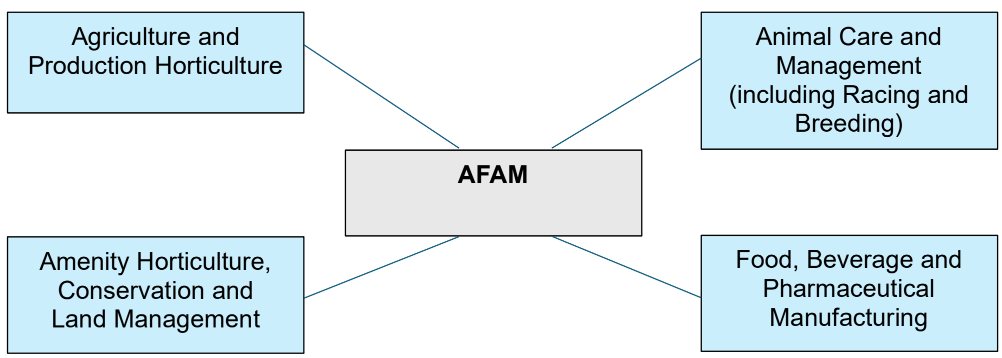
AFAM and MINTRAC consulted with a broad range of stakeholders across industries over the past four years. The aim was to gather specific, timely and comprehensive input from industry, in order to identify priority solutions for current and future skills and training needs.

The scope of stakeholder engagement included:

- Formal Industry Training Advisory Committees for larger industries
- Direct stakeholder engagement
- Regional roundtable meetings
- Industry forums
- Leveraging existing consultative infrastructure.

Formal Industry Training Advisory Committees

Formal committees consisted of representatives from industry, unions and local RTOs, who met biannually.



The meat (MINTRAC) and aquaculture and wild catch (Fisheries Industry Training Council) sectors were covered using existing consultative networks.

Direct stakeholder engagement

For sectors not requiring a formal committee, direct stakeholder engagement at a business level was undertaken. Consultations occurred on a one-on-one or small informal group basis.

Direct and ongoing engagement allowed stakeholders to:

- Identify current and future skills gaps and workforce development needs
- Ascertain barriers and opportunities for training, particularly for apprenticeships and traineeships

- Gather and share intelligence
- Communicate and promote government-funded programs and initiatives
- Inform employers about funded training opportunities and how to access them
- Gather feedback and validation for service strengths and areas for improvement
- Promote training pathways that lead to qualifications.

A summary of findings was provided to Training Services NSW through monthly or bi-monthly reporting.

Regional roundtable meetings

Roundtables brought together employers, RTOs, schools, unions and local government representatives to highlight skills issues affecting regional areas, as well as employment pathways and opportunities. Some meetings involved cross-sector representation. Given more resources, AFAM would have increased the scope of these regional roundtables to develop location-based solutions.

Industry forums

AFAM and MINTRAC consulted with stakeholders via industry forums. An example was the Food, Beverage and Floristry Industry Collaboration Reference Group (ICRG), facilitated by TAFE NSW. The forum included employer representation, strengthening collaboration between training bodies and industry.

RTO Forums

MINTRAC has been successfully hosting RTO forums for the meat, poultry and seafood processing industries. Stakeholders involved report that this RTO Forum remains central to collaboration, consultation, and industry engagement, and the Forum has attracted capacity audiences. Given more resources and time, AFAM would explore the potential for similar forums in other sectors, given the value of this work.

Leveraging existing consultative infrastructure

Where possible, AFAM tapped into existing networks and partnerships to engage with stakeholders – for example, the meat-processing industry through MINTRAC.

MINTRAC uses a multi-layered, collaborative approach to reach stakeholders. This includes RTO and forum engagement, industry surveys, representation on industry forums, union engagement, workplace consultations, structured partnerships, collaboration with peak industry bodies, and other capacity-building initiatives. MINTRAC’s approach ensures training and workforce development activities are industry-led, inclusive and continuously evolving.

Industry profiles

Animal care and management

The animal care and management (ACM) sectors are crucial for protecting the welfare of domestic, working, exhibited, and wildlife animals. The sectors have a diverse workforce, including veterinary nurses, animal care technicians, and assistance dog trainers, who provide vital hands-on care and address broader animal welfare issues. VET is fundamental to the industry's ability to adapt to changing needs, making sure workers have the necessary skills to thrive.

In addition to looking after animals directly, the ACM workforce helps with NSW's food supply chain by ensuring the health and welfare of production animals, maintaining food safety, managing biosecurity threats, and supporting international trade through disease prevention. By improving animal husbandry and reducing injury and disease, the sector plays a key part in boosting productivity and public health. ACM professionals also have important roles within local councils for the control and regulation of animals.

Veterinary practices in NSW were significantly affected by natural disasters in recent years, with 60 per cent of practices in flood-affected areas of NSW and Queensland closing during the March 2022 floods, compounded by an increase in companion animal ownership after the COVID epidemic. This highlights a need for rebuilding the workforce and enhancing the knowledge and skills for responding to natural disasters. Existing veterinary workforce issues include associated staff shortages in veterinary nurses. The sector is impacted by long hours, high customer demands, and mental health concerns among some workers.

At the industry level, it is not possible to quantify and locate the broader ACM workforce due to its under-representation in the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC). An example is for Farriery, for which reliable numbers are impossible to ascertain due to poor ANZSIC industry identifications, but which is clearly in shortage in NSW. According to available figures, almost 300 farriers are engaged in the horticulture industry in NSW, which is fairly obviously inaccurate. These data issues lead to significant disadvantages for stakeholders in demonstrating evidence to support industry needs.

Key trends

There is a growing focus on animal welfare and a public desire for professionals with formal training. Unregulated sectors like pet grooming face challenges from unskilled competition and a lack of access to quality training in dispersed markets. The workforce is diverse, including roles in vet nursing and assistance dog training, with a consistent need for hands-on, skilled care.

Potential VET impact

The sector requires VET to provide up-to-date qualifications that meet evolving industry standards and address broader welfare concerns. These are currently being reviewed by Skills Insight JSC. A training package gap has been identified with radiation and diagnostic imaging for veterinary nursing.

Labour force characteristics

Top employing occupations

ANZSCO 6 Code	Occupation title	Industry employment (2025)	NSW total employment (2025)	Industry proportion of NSW total employment	Median age (2021)	Skill level
361311	Veterinary nurse	5224	5599	93%	29	3
234711	Veterinarian	3697	4349	85%	40	1
512299	Practice managers nec*	330	1769	19%	46	2
542111	Receptionist (general)	294	24565	1%	39	4
361199	Animal attendants and trainers nec*	207	1891	11%	30	4
542114	Medical receptionist	148	26439	1%	44	4
361115	Kennel hand	126	616	20%	25	4
131112	Sales and marketing manager	72	54500	0%	42	1
531111	General clerk	70	81736	0%	46	4
311413	Life science technician	67	936	7%	38	2

* 'nec' stands for 'not elsewhere classified'. Nec categories are designed to make a classification complete and exhaustive of all observations in scope. Adequately described, specific responses are coded to nec categories in instances where a suitable substantive category is not included in the classification (source: Australian Bureau of Statistics).

The occupations formally listed in shortage are:

- Veterinary nurse (nationally and NSW)
- Veterinarian (nationally and NSW)
- Farriers (nationally and NSW)
- Practice managers nec (NSW only)
- Animal attendants and trainers nec (NSW only)
- Kennel hand (NSW only)
- Sales and marketing manager (nationally and NSW)

Demographics

Class code	Class	Total employment (NSW)	Female	Part-time	First Nations	Requires assistance with core activities	Australian citizen
6970	Veterinary services	10885	88%	37%	1.8%	0.8%	91%

Location

Class code	Class	Major cities NSW	Inner regional NSW	Outer regional NSW	Remote NSW	Very remote NSW	Proportion living in RRR*
6970	Veterinary services	5500	2280	544	26	6	34%

* ‘RRR’ refers to regional, rural and remote areas.

Aquaculture and wild catch

NSW’s reputation for high-quality seafood is underpinned by a dedicated and skilled aquaculture and wild-catch workforce. With operations stretching from the Far North Coast to the South Coast, and from inland hatcheries to commercial fishing fleets in almost every coastal town, seafood businesses play a vital role in regional, rural, and remote economies. The industry has a reputation for producing safe, high-quality products using sustainable methods and rigorous environmental and biosecurity practices.

The NSW seafood industry comprises 2 main production sectors: aquaculture and wild-catch.

Aquaculture involves the controlled cultivation of aquatic organisms, including fish, molluscs, and crustaceans. This encompasses breeding, raising, and harvesting within managed marine, brackish, or freshwater environments like ocean enclosures and land-based ponds and tanks. The NSW Government has recently approved an Inland Aquaculture Strategy that seeks to almost triple the value of the industry, which is likely to require approximately 500 new jobs in the next few years. Species farmed in NSW include Sydney rock oysters, Pacific oysters and mussels.

Wild-catch fisheries harvest marine and freshwater species directly from their natural habitats in the oceans, rivers, and lakes. These operations range from small-scale artisanal fishing to large commercial fleets, using methods like trawling, longlining, netting, trapping, and hand-gathering. Key wild-caught species in NSW include tuna, prawns, rock lobsters, and abalone.

Both sectors use evolving technologies and traceability systems that offer consumers detailed information about seafood provenance and production methods. This supports new government legislation on country of origin labelling for seafood in hospitality settings.

Meanwhile, advances in research and development support environmental sustainability, aquatic animal health management, breeding programmes, carbon emissions reduction, and regulatory compliance. The workforces in both sectors therefore share many transferable skills.

The sectors are struggling to develop a formal training culture outside of regulated training requirements. The wild-catch sector is dominated by owner operators. Forecast industry growth will require a skilled workforce, however, access to non-mandated training is limited. Skills in technology, traceability, sustainable harvest and production, biosecurity, and managing environmental disasters are emerging priorities. Targeted short courses for the oyster industry include priority work health and safety (WHS) and technical skills in shucking, husbandry, forklift operation and the maintenance of equipment. The seafood industry also has specific regulatory and licensing requirements, including vessel operation, food safety and the new Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) WHS safety management systems requirements, which are designed to improve industry safety and productivity, and have added a new training requirement for employers.

Key trends

There's a strong focus on sustainable production and biosecurity, as well as a push to increase domestic seafood production to reduce reliance on imports. Technology is increasingly used for traceability and managing farms.

Potential VET impact

NSW government strategies, such as the NSW Land Based Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy, highlight the need for VET to provide training that supports industry growth, particularly in land-based farming. Training must cover best practice management, environmental regulations, and new technologies.

Labour force characteristics

Top employing occupations

ANZSCO 6 Code	Occupation title	Industry employment (2025)	NSW total employment (2025)	Industry proportion of NSW total employment	Median age (2021)	Skill level
899212	Fishing hand	1078	1282	84%	51	4
121111	Aquaculture farmer	246	264	93%	48	1
231211	Master fisher	89	109	82%	40	2
621111	Sales assistant (general)	49	164904	0%	27	5
832115	Seafood packer	45	209	22%	34.5	5
131112	Sales and marketing manager	42	54500	0%	42	1
142111	Retail manager (general)	41	74688	0%	42	2
831313	Seafood process worker	38	253	15%	39	5
741111	Store person	34	52143	0%	37	4

551211	Bookkeeper	32	23297	0%	51	3

The only occupation formally listed in shortage is:

- Sales and marketing manager (nationally and NSW)

Previous lists included:

- Fishing hand (NSW and nationally)
- Aquaculture farmer (NSW and nationally)
- Master fisher (national only)
- Seafood packer (nationally only)
- Retail manager (general) (national only)
- Seafood process worker (NSW and nationally)

The discrepancy between the current and previous list has raised concerns among stakeholders about the reliability of the data. There are other occupations with workforce shortages, however, these occupations may not be listed at appropriate ANZSCO/OSCA Skill Levels to be included in shortage lists. Industry feedback suggests there are likely to be increasing workforce shortages across the industry. As mentioned earlier, the NSW Land Based Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy aims to almost triple the current workforce size.

Demographics

Class code	Class	Total employment (NSW)	Female	Part-time	First Nations	Requires assistance with core activities	Australian citizen
0200	Aquaculture, nfd*	150	47%	62%	4.7%	2.3%	97%
0414	Fish trawling, seining and netting	< 5	-	-	-	-	-
0410	Fishing, nfd*	935	0%	28%	3.1%	1.2%	93%
0413	Line fishing	5	0%	0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
0202	Offshore caged aquaculture	145	64%	52%	0.0%	0.0%	64%
0201	Offshore longline and rack aquaculture	755	41%	67%	7.4%	2.2%	88%
0203	Onshore aquaculture	165	52%	59%	7.7%	0.0%	89%
0419	Other fishing	70	0%	42%	0.0%	0.0%	96%
0412	Prawn fishing	60	0%	40%	6.0%	0.0%	93%
0411	Rock lobster and crab potting	40	0%	13%	0.0%	0.0%	94%

* 'nfd' stands for 'not further defined'. NFD codes are designed to facilitate processing by allowing inadequately described or non-specific responses to be coded to a broader level of the classification, rather than be lost altogether. NFD codes are not a formal part of the classification (source: ABS).

Location

Class code	Class	Major cities NSW	Inner regional NSW	Outer regional NSW	Remote NSW	Very remote NSW	Proportion living in RRR
0200	Aquaculture, nfd	34	41	45	0	0	72%
0414	Fish trawling, seining and netting	-	-	-	-	-	-
0410	Fishing, nfd	258	395	72	0	0	64%
0413	Line fishing	0	3	0	0	0	100%
0202	Offshore caged aquaculture	102	16	0	0	0	14%
0201	Offshore longline and rack aquaculture	135	345	140	0	0	78%
0203	Onshore aquaculture	26	56	40	0	0	79%
0419	Other fishing	21	18	16	0	0	62%
0412	Prawn fishing	13	33	0	0	0	72%
0411	Rock lobster and crab potting	4	21	0	0	0	84%

Broadacre cropping

Broadacre cropping is a significant part of NSW's agricultural industry, contributing substantially to both domestic food production and export revenue. This type of farming is typically large-scale, with a focus on dryland agricultural production. Crops grown in this sector include cereal and coarse grains, oilseeds, pulses, and pasture/fodder crops.

Crops such as rice and cotton are also cultivated in areas of NSW where there is access to water for irrigation. Sugar cane production is included in this sector due to its significant similarities in industry structure and workforce requirements with traditional broadacre cropping operations.

Ongoing shortages of skilled workers persist, among strong forecast growth in demand. There is a heavy reliance on seasonal workforces and demand for casual and contract labour, while there are limited opportunities for ongoing careers. Negative perceptions about the repetitive nature of the work limits attraction and retention of skilled workers.

The industry faces competition for labour, especially skilled machinery operators, from the mining industry. The industry is also impacted by external factors such as climate change, natural disasters and in the past, by the COVID-19 epidemic. Government changes in policy for migrant workers may further exacerbate the lack of seasonal workers.

Stakeholders recognise a need to improve secondary school education programs, including teacher professional development, to showcase the complexity of food value chains and its technological advancements.

Key trends

The industry is characterised by large-scale dryland production and is heavily influenced by climate variability. The workforce is ageing, and there is a need to attract and retain younger workers.

Potential VET impact

Training needs to focus on advanced skills in sustainability, irrigation, soil health, boomspray and chemical application to prevent spray drift, and pest management to improve productivity and manage environmental challenges.

Labour force characteristics

Top employing occupations

ANZSCO 6 Code	Occupation title	Industry employment (2025)	NSW total employment (2025)	Industry proportion of NSW total employment	Median age (2021)	Skill level
121214	Grain, oilseed or pasture grower	1825	2767	66%	55	1
121411	Mixed crop and livestock farmer	1010	6426	16%	58	1
721111	Agricultural and horticultural mobile plant operator	358	2121	17%	42	4
121216	Mixed crop farmer	300	743	40%	52	1
121000	Farmers and Farm Managers nfd	244	5926	4%	55	1
121217	Sugar cane grower	175	189	93%	66	1
841213	Grain, oilseed or pasture farm worker	147	242	61%	37	4
121200	Crop farmers nfd	141	629	22%	51	1
733111	Truck driver (general)	131	53866	0%	49	4
121211	Cotton grower	111	140	79%	50	1

The occupations formally listed in shortage are:

- Agricultural and horticultural mobile plant operator (regional shortage only)
- Truck driver – general (nationally and NSW)

Demographics

Class code	Class	Total employment (NSW)	Female	Part-time	First Nations	Requires assistance with core activities	Australian citizen
0152	Cotton growing	355	21%	15%	8.2%	1.7%	88%
0159	Other crop growing nec	205	21%	33%	3.4%	2.9%	95%
0150	Other crop growing, nfd	-	-	-	-	-	-
0149	Other grain growing	5265	27%	24%	2.3%	1.1%	98%
0146	Rice growing	< 5	-	-	-	-	-
0151	Sugar sane growing	150	19%	31%	2.2%	4.0%	98%

Location

Class code	Class	Major cities NSW	Inner regional NSW	Outer regional NSW	Remote NSW	Very remote NSW	Proportion living in RRR
0152	Cotton growing	34	27	425	143	10	95%
0159	Other crop growing nec	41	225	104	5	6	89%
0150	Other crop growing, nfd	-	-	-	-	-	-
0149	Other grain growing	139	790	3281	671	13	97%
0146	Rice growing	-	-	-	-	-	-
0151	Sugar cane growing	15	252	0	0	0	94%

Ecosystem management, conservation, landscaping and gardening

Ecosystem management, conservation, landscaping, and gardening services are crucial for maintaining natural habitats and built environments, and ensuring social, economic, and ecological stability. This stability is essential for food production, clean drinking water, fibre, building and manufacturing materials, carbon storage, soil, air and water filtration, pollination, flood and storm protection, and recreational spaces. These are key industries in the transformation to net zero.

The workforce in this sector cares for and restores vast natural areas, bushlands, and waterways, as well as Indigenous protected areas, coastal land and seascapes, national and state parks, private and public gardens, sporting grounds, and green spaces throughout NSW. The Indigenous Rangers Program is helping to increase employment opportunities for First Nations people and contributing to the growth of work in these sectors.

Forecast NSW employment demand is dominated by arborist and landscape construction/gardeners. While there is no doubt about these being high areas of demand, stakeholders are clear that given government strategies, community expectations and key priorities such as Climate Smart and Nature Positive movements, all occupations should be in high demand.

This sector is supported by vocational qualifications in amenity horticulture, arboriculture, landscaping, pest management, conservation and ecosystem management, parks and gardens, sports turf management, and irrigation. Skills Insight JSC is currently looking into the possibility of merging some of these qualifications.

Key trends

This sector is experiencing steady growth, driven by a global and local focus on climate change mitigation and the restoration of damaged landscapes. The priority skills in this area are increasingly focusing on the use and management of plants and water in built environments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander custodianship of ecosystems and protected areas. There's a growing demand for workers in areas like bush regeneration and environmental restoration.

Potential VET impact

The NSW government's focus on environmental protection creates a need for VET qualifications in areas such as conservation and ecosystem management, providing clear career pathways for new entrants. A priority for this sector is developing culturally appropriate training tools and techniques and trainer capacity through focusing on partnerships with First Nations enterprises and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

Labour force characteristics

Top employing occupations

ANZSCO 6 Code	Occupation title	Industry employment (2025)	NSW total employment (2025)	Industry proportion of NSW total employment	Median age (2021)	Skill level
362211	Gardener (general)	4395	8633	51%	48	3
841411	Garden labourer	3674	7299	50%	45	5
899311	Handyperson	2290	16154	14%	53	5
362212	Arborist	1342	2245	60%	37	2
362213	Landscape gardener	854	8645	10%	33	3
361114	Zookeeper	541	624	87%	30	3
234314	Park ranger	407	619	66%	48	1
362311	Greenkeeper	312	4981	6%	46	3
531111	General clerk	249	81736	0%	46	4
149913	Facilities manager	225	13729	2%	49	2

The occupations formally listed in shortage are:

- Arborist (nationally and NSW)
- Landscape gardener (nationally and NSW)
- Zookeeper (NSW only)
- Park ranger (NSW only)

Increased demand for all occupations is expected as part of the transformation to net zero, including work on nature positivity.

Demographics

Class code	Class	Total employment (NSW)	Female	Part-time	First Nations	Requires assistance with core activities	Australian citizen
7310	Building cleaning, pest control and gardening services, nfd	35	28%	33%	13.3%	0.0%	81%
7313	Gardening services	12805	14%	51%	3.7%	2.1%	92%
0420	Hunting and trapping	480	0%	26%	9.4%	0.0%	94%
8922	Nature reserves and conservation parks operation	3500	24%	20%	8.2%	0.7%	95%
8921	Zoological and botanical gardens Operation	1790	37%	36%	2.6%	1.1%	92%

Location

Class code	Class	Major cities NSW	Inner regional NSW	Outer regional NSW	Remote NSW	Very remote NSW	Proportion living in RRR
7310	Building cleaning, pest control and gardening services, nfd	20	6	0	0	0	23%
7313	Gardening services	7704	4023	575	20	4	37%
0420	Hunting and trapping	31	26	25	9	5	68%
8922	Nature reserves and conservation parks operation	1163	883	415	15	19	53%
8921	Zoological and botanical gardens operation	981	262	52	0	0	24%

Food, beverage and pharmaceutical manufacturing

Australia's food, beverage and pharmaceutical (FBP) industries contribute to the nation's food security, health and wellbeing. Many of the larger businesses in this industry operate in regional communities for the mutual benefits of direct employment and strengthening local economies. The FBP value chains encompass stakeholders including up and down-stream suppliers, farmers and raw materials suppliers, traders, and retailers, who are often linked in cooperative and collaborative relationships to provide consumers with products and services.

Following the events and experiences of COVID-19, there was national and NSW recognition of the importance of sovereign capability on all of these sectors, and especially in pharmaceutical manufacturing. There have been considerable efforts to build this capability, but results have been relatively slow and workforce shortages remain a factor.

This industry faces challenges in attracting and retaining employees. The rapid development of technologies like automation, robotics, and biotechnology is outpacing the availability of skilled workforce and working to disincentivise potential industry entrants due to job uncertainty.

Employers often rely on on-the-job training, especially for temporary workers or migrant workers whose visas may not align with the time needed to obtain formal qualifications. Larger employers are more likely to combine employment with formalised training programs, which are often in-house programs.

Emerging biotechnology manufacturing is currently reliant upon tertiary skills and as the industry starts to increase scope, the future skills are considered transferable from existing workforces such as dairy and sugar cane processing.

Key trends:

The NSW food, beverage, and pharmaceutical manufacturing industry is becoming more automated to increase productivity and efficiency, while also focusing on developing premium, high-value products, improving biosecurity, and strengthening supply chains.

Potential VET impact:

To meet industry needs, VET must provide training that addresses skills shortages, particularly in food safety and quality control, and upskills the workforce in new technologies such as robotics and data analysis to support the shift towards advanced manufacturing.

Labour force characteristics

Top employing occupations

ANZSCO 6 Code	Occupation title	Industry employment (2025)	NSW total employment (2025)	Industry proportion of NSW total employment	Median age (2021)	Skill level
621111	Sales assistant (general)	3910	164,905	2%	27	5

351111	Baker	4980	8625	58%	38	3
831199	Food and drink factory workers nec	1935	2795	69%	44	5
832114	Meat packer	2200	3075	72%	36	5
831311	Meat process worker	1205	1495	81%	38	5
133512	Production manager (manufacturing)	2025	11,930	17%	47	1
831312	Poultry process worker	905	1170	77%	40	5
721311	Forklift driver	1725	19,810	9%	44	4
741111	Store person	1710	52,145	3%	37	4
131112	Sales and marketing manager	1685	54,500	3%	42	1

The occupations formally listed in shortage are:

- Baker (nationally and NSW)
- Sales and marketing manager (nationally and NSW)

Demographics

Class code	Class	Total employment (NSW)	Female	Part-time	First Nations	Requires assistance with core activities	Australian citizen
1100	Food product manufacturing, nfd	9965	33%	10%	1.1%	0.9%	71%
1110	Meat and meat product manufacturing, nfd	50	27%	42%	0.0%	0.0%	72%
1111	Meat processing	6200	30%	21%	5.0%	0.8%	68%
1112	Poultry processing	3800	48%	21%	3.7%	0.6%	66%
1113	Cured meat and smallgoods manufacturing	880	46%	20%	0.9%	1.8%	71%
1120	Seafood processing	280	51%	1%	1.8%	0.0%	60%
1130	Dairy product manufacturing, nfd	120	38%	18%	0.0%	0.0%	72%
1131	Milk and cream Processing	690	28%	19%	1.6%	0.7%	90%
1132	Ice cream manufacturing	380	44%	38%	1.6%	0.8%	80%

1133	Cheese and other dairy product manufacturing	2045	38%	22%	1.9%	0.6%	90%
1140	Fruit and vegetable processing	825	63%	14%	1.6%	0.6%	84%
1150	Oil and fat manufacturing	380	60%	0%	1.0%	0.8%	77%
1160	Grain mill and cereal product manufacturing, nfd	30	23%	14%	0.0%	0.0%	94%
1161	Grain mill product manufacturing	1500	26%	10%	4.4%	0.5%	87%
1162	Cereal, pasta and baking mix manufacturing	1935	35%	23%	1.8%	0.7%	86%
1170	Bakery product manufacturing, nfd	135	57%	49%	3.2%	0.0%	80%
1171	bread manufacturing (factory based)	11830	52%	41%	2.1%	0.9%	77%
1172	Cake and pastry manufacturing (factory based)	2520	68%	47%	1.5%	0.4%	75%
1173	Biscuit manufacturing (factory based)	1245	59%	28%	0.5%	1.7%	86%
1174	Bakery product manufacturing (non-factory based)	5570	80%	60%	3.4%	0.9%	86%
1180	Sugar and confectionery manufacturing, nfd	0	0%	0%	0.0%	0.0%	0
1181	Sugar manufacturing	160	9%	20%	3.3%	0.0%	92%
1182	Confectionery manufacturing	1345	27%	33%	1.3%	0.6%	88%
1190	Other food product manufacturing, nfd	10	24%	0%	0.0%	0.0%	64%
1191	Potato, corn and other crisp manufacturing	660	35%	5%	0.8%	0.0%	84%
1192	Prepared animal and bird feed manufacturing	1530	21%	11%	4.5%	1.3%	89%
1199	Other food product manufacturing nec	3805	30%	17%	1.2%	0.6%	69%

1210	Beverage manufacturing, nfd	90	54%	37%	0.0%	0.0%	82%
1211	Soft drink, cordial and syrup manufacturing	2550	51%	14%	1.3%	0.5%	85%
1212	Beer manufacturing	1830	51%	27%	1.0%	0.5%	89%
1213	Spirit manufacturing	180	59%	36%	2.3%	0.0%	86%
1214	Wine and other alcoholic beverage manufacturing	3415	62%	29%	2.3%	0.7%	85%
1840	Pharmaceutical and medicinal product manufacturing, nfd	110	49%	13%	0.0%	0.0%	67%
1841	Human pharmaceutical and medicinal product manufacturing	7945	64%	13%	0.4%	0.4%	76%
1842	Veterinary pharmaceutical and medicinal product manufacturing	640	60%	10%	2.3%	1.2%	88%

Location

Class code	Class	Major cities NSW	Inner regional NSW	Outer regional NSW	Remote NSW	Very remote NSW	Proportion living in RRR
1100	Food product manufacturing, nfd	3483	486	110	4	0	15%
1110	Meat and meat product manufacturing, nfd	47	20	3	0	0	33%
1111	Meat processing	1764	4962	1323	32	3	78%
1112	Poultry processing	2875	882	1192	0	0	42%
1113	Cured meat and smallgoods manufacturing	1092	58	4	0	0	5%
1120	Seafood processing	177	73	27	0	0	36%
1130	Dairy product manufacturing, nfd	75	38	7	0	0	38%
1131	Milk and cream processing	458	194	21	0	0	32%
1132	Ice cream manufacturing	190	180	3	0	0	49%
1133	Cheese and other dairy product manufacturing	1198	250	536	0	0	40%

1140	Fruit and vegetable processing	1254	542	70	0	0	33%
1150	Oil and fat manufacturing	295	71	31	0	0	26%
1160	Grain mill and cereal product manufacturing, nfd	16	5	6	0	0	41%
1161	Grain mill product manufacturing	639	547	468	0	0	61%
1162	Cereal, pasta and baking mix manufacturing	2025	100	17	0	0	5%
1170	Bakery product manufacturing, nfd	74	14	6	0	0	21%
1171	Bread manufacturing (factory based)	6153	1453	393	14	5	23%
1172	Cake and pastry manufacturing (factory based)	1387	266	52	0	0	19%
1173	Biscuit manufacturing (factory based)	707	121	18	0	0	16%
1174	Bakery product manufacturing (Non-factory based)	2630	978	161	6	0	30%
1180	Sugar and confectionery manufacturing, nfd	0	0	0	0	0	0
1181	Sugar manufacturing	114	221	0	0	0	66%
1182	Confectionery manufacturing	2160	632	40	0	0	24%
1190	Other food product manufacturing, nfd	6	4	0	0	0	40%
1191	Potato, corn and other crisp manufacturing	613	26	3	0	0	5%
1192	Prepared animal and bird feed manufacturing	556	734	197	6	0	63%
1199	Other food product manufacturing nec	3241	369	90	0	0	12%
1210	Beverage manufacturing, nfd	71	16	5	0	0	23%
1211	Soft drink, cordial and syrup manufacturing	2076	279	160	0	0	17%
1212	Beer manufacturing	1360	348	95	3	0	25%
1213	Spirit manufacturing	109	53	11	0	0	37%
1214	Wine and other alcoholic	1295	847	1216	3	0	61%

	beverage manufacturing						
1840	Pharmaceutical and medicinal product manufacturing, nfd	64	9	0	0	0	12%
1841	Human pharmaceutical and medicinal product manufacturing	5129	192	17	0	0	4%
1842	Veterinary pharmaceutical and medicinal product manufacturing	346	73	16	0	0	20%

Horticulture

Horticulture in NSW is a diverse industry that involves planting, growing, and harvesting fruits, nuts, vegetables, and nursery products. Production happens in outdoor fields or in under-cover and sheltered environments like glasshouses and polytunnels. These systems provide or enable modified growing conditions and protection from pests and adverse weather.

As with similar industry sectors, horticulture often relies on seasonal, casual and contract labour, making it difficult to attract workers or to demonstrate career pathways. There are opportunities to look at work patterns for those within the industry to see if better solutions may be available, rather than trying to simply recruit for task-based occupations. Training that provides workers the opportunity to work across a variety of industry sectors and support transitions between industries and workplaces may help to meet seasonal demands for those sectors.

Key trends

Horticulture is becoming more technologically advanced, moving away from traditional ‘market garden’ mentalities. Businesses are adopting precision agriculture and data monitoring systems to remain competitive. Production occurs in both outdoor and protected environments.

Potential VET impact

The AgSkilled program is a key government initiative providing fee-free training to help workers in this sector adapt to new technologies and sustainable farming practices. There is demand for training in production, business, technology, and safety skills.

Labour force characteristics

Top employing occupations

ANZSCO 6 Code	Occupation title	Industry employment (2025)	NSW total employment (2025)	Industry proportion	Median age (2021)	Skill level

				of NSW total employment		
121213	Fruit or nut grower	2172	2399	91%	56	1
121221	Vegetable grower	1566	1676	93%	50	1
841412	Horticultural nursery assistant	993	1592	62%	40	5
721111	Agricultural and horticultural mobile plant operator	522	2121	25%	42	4
841212	Fruit or nut picker	447	566	79%	34	5
121215	Grape Grower	428	704	61%	56	1
841211	Fruit or nut farm worker	353	421	84%	41	5
142111	Retail manager (general)	330	74688	0%	42	2
121216	Mixed crop farmer	324	743	44%	52	1
121000	Farmers and farm managers nfd	301	5926	5%	55	1

The only occupation formally listed in shortage nationally is:

- Agricultural and horticultural mobile plant operator (regional shortage only)

Stakeholders indicate that the occupation figures alone provide an incomplete view of horticulture, as they do not consider the ageing workforce and the heavy reliance on temporary and visa labour. Lack of information available through labour hire also results in a misleading picture.

Demographic

Class code	Class	Total employment (NSW)	Female	Part-time	First Nations	Requires assistance with core activities	Australian citizen
0134	Apple and pear growing	200	23%	12%	2.0%	0.0%	83%
0133	Berry fruit growing	1635	27%	13%	1.6%	1.4%	57%
0136	Citrus fruit growing	880	18%	11%	2.4%	1.1%	82%
0115	Floriculture production (outdoors)	280	47%	30%	0.0%	1.1%	87%
0114	Floriculture production (under cover)	-	-	-	-	-	-
0130	Fruit and tree nut growing, nfd	840	20%	15%	0.9%	2.2%	81%
0131	Grape growing	1065	17%	11%	1.5%	1.8%	87%
0132	Kiwifruit growing	< 5	-	-	-	-	-

0120	Mushroom and vegetable growing, nfd	10	34%	18%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
0121	Mushroom growing	385	35%	15%	1.1%	1.1%	71%
0110	Nursery and floriculture production, nfd	20	62%	29%	0.0%	9.1%	94%
0112	Nursery production (outdoors)	1425	48%	31%	2.8%	3.4%	92%
0111	Nursery production (under cover)	60	75%	28%	3.0%	2.9%	90%
0137	Olive growing	125	26%	17%	0.0%	5.0%	89%
0529	Other agriculture and fishing support services	2450	21%	7%	3.1%	0.7%	87%
0139	Other fruit and tree nut growing	2105	19%	13%	1.8%	1.7%	88%
0135	Stone fruit growing	155	21%	14%	0.0%	2.4%	91%
0113	Turf growing	225	26%	17%	2.8%	1.4%	95%
0123	Vegetable growing (outdoors)	1465	21%	11%	1.3%	1.8%	80%
0122	Vegetable growing (under cover)	270	19%	10%	1.1%	0.7%	55%

Location

Class code	Class	Major cities NSW	Inner regional NSW	Outer regional NSW	Remote NSW	Very remote NSW	Proportion living in RRR
0134	Apple and pear growing	16	65	75	5	0	90%
0133	Berry fruit growing	109	1025	54	0	0	91%
0136	Citrus fruit growing	20	80	435	56	0	97%
0115	Floriculture production (outdoors)	215	214	17	0	0	52%
0114	Floriculture production (under cover)	-	-	-	-	-	-
0130	Fruit and tree nut growing, nfd	97	373	126	5	0	84%
0131	Grape growing	73	181	462	27	0	90%
0132	Kiwifruit growing	-	-	-	-	-	-
0120	Mushroom and vegetable growing, nfd	0	16	0	0	0	100%
0121	Mushroom growing	509	107	6	0	0	18%

0110	Nursery and floriculture production, nfd	18	14	0	0	0	44%
0112	Nursery production (outdoors)	1077	994	188	4	0	52%
0111	Nursery production (under cover)	87	15	0	0	0	15%
0137	Olive growing	18	37	34	0	0	80%
0529	Other agriculture and fishing support services	702	1522	1210	101	18	80%
0139	Other fruit and tree nut growing	90	1151	266	43	0	94%
0135	Stone Fruit Growing	14	85	24	0	0	89%
0113	Turf growing	181	158	19	0	0	49%
0123	Vegetable growing (outdoors)	1099	983	270	71	0	55%
0122	Vegetable growing (under cover)	133	301	19	0	0	71%

Livestock farming

The livestock industry in NSW plans, organises, controls, coordinates, and carries out farming operations to breed and raise livestock. This is done for the production of breeding stock, meat, and other products, including those from the dairy, egg, and honey value chains.

This sector includes both specialist farms that focus on one type of animal, such as sheep or beef cattle, and mixed farms that raise a variety of animals or combine livestock with crop production. Across the state's livestock industries, shared challenges and opportunities have emerged concerning climate variability, structural changes, evolving consumer expectations, and innovative approaches to boost productivity.

This sector faces ongoing challenges with the attraction and retention of skilled workers, with forecast strong growth in demand and competition for talent with mining for often higher wages. Employers often prefer short, targeted training in specific skill sets or micro-credentials over formal qualifications. A lack of training access in regional areas, seasonal worker availability, and a low level of formal education among owner-operators add to the challenges.

Key trends

The livestock industry is responding to climate variability and evolving consumer expectations. There is a need for innovation to support increased productivity. The workforce includes both specialist and mixed-crop farms. There is a move towards more intensive livestock production systems such as feed-lotting.

Potential VET impact

The NSW government's skills plan prioritises the agrifood sector, and VET needs to deliver training that addresses the challenges of structural change and climate variability, while also supporting the adoption of innovative practices.

Labour force characteristics

Top employing occupations

ANZSCO 6 Code	Occupation title	Industry employment (2025)	NSW total employment (2025)	Industry proportion of NSW total employment	Median age (2021)	Skill level
121312	Beef cattle farmer	11324	11884	95%	65	1
121411	Mixed crop and livestock farmer	4824	6426	75%	58	1
121322	Sheep farmer	4794	5118	94%	61	1
121317	Mixed livestock farmer	3739	3970	94%	60	1
121313	Dairy cattle farmer	1666	1755	95%	50	1
841511	Beef cattle farm worker	1472	1696	87%	45	4
121321	Poultry farmer	941	1213	78%	47	1
121000	Farmers and farm managers nfd	869	5926	15%	55	1
121300	Livestock farmers nfd	864	2276	38%	60	1
841515	Sheep farm worker	693	786	88%	37	4

None of the top employing occupations in livestock farming are listed as experiencing national or NSW shortages. However, skill level 1 occupations may not have been assessed. Stakeholders note that these figures are used in isolation and do not incorporate concerns about the ageing workforce.

Demographic

Class code	Class	Total employment (NSW)	Female	Part-time	First Nations	Requires assistance with core activities	Australian citizen
0142	Beef cattle farming (specialised)	13470	34%	39%	1.5%	2.5%	98%
0143	Beef cattle feedlots (specialised)	220	30%	21%	4.6%	0.0%	96%
0193	Beekeeping	810	34%	47%	3.7%	0.9%	92%
0160	Dairy cattle farming	185	3%	97%	3.3%	1.6%	92%
0180	Deer farming	-	-	-	-	-	-
6620	Farm animal and bloodstock leasing	180	-	-	-	-	100%
0145	Grain-sheep or grain-beef cattle farming	6065	26%	22%	1.6%	1.2%	98%
0199	Other livestock farming nec	515	68%	64%	3.4%	5.3%	95%
0190	Other livestock farming, nfd	10	53%	0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
0192	Pig farming	500	36%	29%	2.2%	3.3%	88%
0172	Poultry farming (eggs)	1035	26%	62%	5.5%	1.1%	88%
0171	Poultry farming (meat)	735	23%	35%	5.6%	1.1%	81%
0170	Poultry farming, nfd	505	19%	53%	7.1%	0.7%	82%
0522	Shearing services	655	20%	7%	9.2%	0.7%	94%
0141	Sheep farming (specialised)	6750	30%	30%	2.1%	1.9%	97%
0140	Sheep, beef cattle and grain farming, nfd	210	33%	24%	2.0%	0.0%	98%
0144	Sheep-beef cattle farming	3650	29%	26%	1.7%	2.0%	98%

Location

Class code	Class	Major cities NSW	Inner regional NSW	Outer regional NSW	Remote NSW	Very remote NSW	Proportion living in RRR
0142	Beef cattle farming (specialised)	706	5717	5876	288	74	94%
0143	Beef cattle feedlots (specialised)	6	43	123	15	5	97%
0193	Beekeeping	58	383	126	8	3	90%
0160	Dairy cattle farming	456	1440	883	3	0	84%
0180	Deer farming	-	-	-	-	-	-
6620	Farm animal and bloodstock leasing	-	-	-	-	-	-
0145	Grain-sheep or grain-beef cattle farming	63	989	3742	912	26	99%
0199	Other livestock farming nec	54	175	101	20	23	86%
0190	Other livestock farming, nfd	0	4	0	0	0	100%
0192	Pig farming	5	189	125	10	0	98%
0172	Poultry farming (eggs)	458	503	260	0	0	62%
0171	Poultry farming (meat)	576	175	125	3	0	34%
0170	Poultry farming, nfd	195	266	141	0	0	68%
0522	Shearing services	40	431	410	57	8	96%
0141	Sheep farming (specialised)	145	2148	3180	619	252	98%
0140	Sheep, beef cattle and grain farming, nfd	3	41	123	27	3	98%
0144	Sheep-beef cattle farming	81	1095	1969	209	85	98%

Meat, poultry and seafood processing

The NSW meat, poultry, and seafood processing industries include processing, wholesaling, retail, and export operations that supply domestic and international markets. This industry group also covers cured meat and smallgoods manufacturing. Workers in these industries process, grade, and package meat, poultry, fish, and shellfish, while adhering to strict food safety, quality control, and compliance regulations. The sector is vital for both domestic and international food supply, with a significant proportion of its output being exported.

There is a reliance on migrant workers and low levels of educational attainment can be a barrier to adopting new technologies. The industry is also challenged by attracting and retaining a workforce in regional areas, promoting training as a product of employment and incentives to compete for employees.

The meat industry is supported by a high percentage of enterprise RTOs, and additional and more stable support is needed for them to ensure sustainable delivery.

Key trends

There is a strong focus on biosecurity, compliance and food safety, as well as the adoption of new technologies for processing and traceability. There is a persistent challenge with labour shortages, particularly for skilled roles like butchers and smallgoods operators, which can impact productivity. Food security is seen as a major national priority identified in the National Skills Agreement.

Potential VET impact

VET has a critical role in addressing the workforce shortages by providing formal training in food safety, quality control, and compliance regulations. The NSW Food Authority's regulations around food safety and handling create a continuous need for skills development. Training is essential for ensuring workers can meet the strict hygiene and biosecurity standards required by both government authorities and export markets. MINTRAC is examining whether there are current skills gaps in automation and robotics, sustainability and circular economy, advanced biosecurity and food safety tech, and smart packaging and supply chain innovation.

Labour force characteristics

Top employing occupations

ANZSCO 6 Code	Occupation title	Industry employment (2025)	NSW total employment (2025)	Industry proportion of NSW total employment	Median age (2021)	Skill level
832114	Meat packer	2141	3074	70%	36	5
831311	Meat process worker	1153	1493	77%	38	5
831312	Poultry process worker	893	1169	76%	40	5
721311	Forklift driver	459	19810	2%	44	4
741111	Storeperson	434	52143	1%	37	4
831211	Meat boner and slicer	393	489	80%	35	4
133512	Production manager (manufacturing)	383	11929	3%	47	1
811211	Commercial cleaner	331	42383	1%	48	5
351211	Butcher or smallgoods maker	316	4146	8%	42	3
841514	Poultry farm worker	303	1027	30%	39	4

The occupations formally listed in shortage are:

- Meat boner and slicer (nationally and NSW)
- Butcher or smallgoods maker (nationally and NSW)

Stakeholders do not agree with this assessment and report ongoing difficulties in attracting and retaining workers, particularly without structured mentoring and career progression. Workforce shortages have been reported and described as a key trend, bringing into question the reliability of these figures in making decisions.

Demographics

Class code	Class	Total employment (NSW)	Female	Part-time	First Nations	Requires assistance with core activities	Australian citizen
1113	Cured meat and smallgoods manufacturing	880	46%	20%	0.9%	1.8%	72%
1111	Meat processing	6200	30%	21%	5.0%	0.8%	69%
1112	Poultry processing	3800	48%	21%	3.7%	0.6%	66%
1120	Seafood processing	280	51%	1%	1.8%	0.0%	61%

Location

Class code	Class	Major cities NSW	Inner regional NSW	Outer regional NSW	Remote NSW	Very remote NSW	Proportion living in RRR
1113	Cured meat and smallgoods manufacturing	1086	52	4	0	0	5%
1111	Meat processing	1733	4792	1314	32	3	78%
1112	Poultry processing	2868	883	1192	0	0	42%
1120	Seafood processing	178	73	24	0	0	35%

Racing and breeding

The racing and breeding industry in NSW covers racing authority operations, racehorse and greyhound breeding, ownership and training, and racetrack and race club operations. Workers in this sector are skilled in training, nutrition, and biomechanics to care for dogs or horses actively participating in racing, keeping them physically healthy and preventing injury. Main activities also include operating racing stables, kennels, courses or tracks, administering racing clubs, providing riding or harness driving services, and horse or greyhound training for racing.

Regional industry centres such as Scone and the Southern Highlands have developed industry-driven training programs to attract new entrants to industry, with some targeted success for priority cohorts of First Nations workers. Smaller enterprises, such as those in greyhound and harness racing, have limited access to training and workforce attraction programs. The absence of a designated training centre in NSW is a significant issue, leading to a reliance on on-the-job training in the equine sector and no formal training in the greyhound sector. A lack of recognition of the economic significance of the equine industry limits access to funded training aligned with the regional skills priorities of the *NSW Skills Plan 2024–28*.

Key trends

The industry is seeing renewed interest and investment, but also faces challenges related to health and safety risks and a high level of informal training. There is a growing need for skilled workers in training, nutrition, and biomechanics to ensure animal welfare.

Potential VET impact

VET qualifications are crucial for providing formal training that addresses WHS, animal welfare concerns and recognised skills shortages. The need for formal qualifications is highlighted by the industry's reliance on informal training, which can pose a barrier to professional development and impact on licensing administration in this occupation, which is close to fully regulated across all occupations.

Labour force characteristics

Top employing occupations

ANZSCO 6 Code	Occupation title	Industry employment (2025)	NSW total employment (2025)	Industry proportion of NSW total employment	Median age (2021)	Skill level
841516	Stablehand	1531	2061	74%	27	5
361112	Horse trainer	826	1328	62%	41	3
121316	Horse breeder	590	693	85%	50	1
452318	Dog or horse racing official	258	297	87%	47	3
452413	Jockey	234	281	83%	29	3
362311	Greenkeeper	195	4981	4%	46	3
531111	General clerk	99	81736	0%	46	4
362211	Gardener (general)	84	8633	1%	48	3
512111	Office manager	71	45361	0%	49	2
361111	Dog handler or trainer	61	636	10%	40	3

The occupations formally listed in shortage are:

- Horse trainer (nationally and NSW)

- Dog or horse racing official (NSW only)
- Dog handler or trainer (NSW only)

The racing and breeding industry face shortages in a number of occupations, such as track riders, stable hands, stud managers and horse trainers, which are not formally recognised.

Demographic

Class code	Class	Total employment (NSW)	Female	Part-time	First Nations	Requires assistance with core activities	Australian citizen
9120	Horse and dog racing activities, nfd	15	39%	36%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
9121	Horse and dog racing administration and track operation	505	26%	24%	3.2%	2.4%	92%
0191	Horse farming	2430	66%	39%	3.4%	1.4%	86%
9129	Other horse and dog racing activities	2170	33%	41%	4.1%	1.6%	87%

Location

Class code	Class	Major cities NSW	Inner regional NSW	Outer regional NSW	Remote NSW	Very remote NSW	Proportion living in RRR
9120	Horse and dog racing activities, nfd	4	10	5	0	0	79%
9121	Horse and dog racing administration and track operation	488	85	9	0	0	16%
0191	Horse farming	366	1019	377	0	0	79%
9129	Other horse and dog racing activities	1384	917	175	0	0	44%

Significant environmental influences

There are several environmental influences impacting the current skills and training climate.

NSW Government policies

The *NSW Skills Plan 2024–28* is a key policy driver. It aims to target skills investment in priority sectors, including agriculture and agrifood, and improve equitable outcomes for students. The Smart and Skilled program also provides government-subsidised training for in-demand skills, while the AgSkilled program specifically supports training for agricultural workers to help them adapt to industry changes and improve productivity through innovations in best practice.

Workforce shortages

Skilled worker shortages are a significant issue across all industries. This is exacerbated by an ageing workforce, a lack of new entrants, concerns about Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital (LLND) skills of entry-level and migrant workers, and competition with other sectors that offer better workplace conditions, such as mining. The average age of the workforce is 55. Many self-employed owner-operators lack formal training, particularly in small enterprises.

Work perceptions

Shortages are also impacted by a perception that some careers are 'unskilled' and limited to manual labour. Improvement is required in strengthening the perception of the value of VET, career pathways and development programs, work experience opportunities, foundational and pre-vocational skills development leading to apprenticeships and traineeships for skilled employment. Stakeholders are attempting to showcase the diversity of careers, enabling transitions for career pathways progression to skilled employment, but have limited resources and opportunities, especially in regional NSW.

Technology and innovation

The increasing use of technology, from precision agriculture in broadacre cropping to traceability systems in seafood, is creating a demand for a more digitally skilled workforce. VET is adapting by incorporating training in data analysis, automation, and tech-driven management systems.

Climate change and sustainability

Fluctuating weather patterns and a global focus on sustainability are driving a need for skills in areas like environmental management, biosecurity, water-use efficiency and carbon accounting. There are also changing conditions affecting animal and plant species, pests and weeds, and extreme weather events. This affects all sectors within AFAM's coverage, creating new job roles and opportunities for upskilling.

Maintaining and augmenting the current workforce

There are many industries competing for the available workforce, and VET has a critical role in promoting these sectors as viable career paths, offering clear progression, and providing training that aligns with the expectations of new entrants. School-based curriculum, career advice and knowledge of the industries are important for sparking initial interest, and AFAM industries struggle to compete in this environment.

Barriers to delivering or accessing training

Many of the industries covered by AFAM find it hard to access training, while TAFEs and RTOs struggle to deliver programs viably. Safe, effective and productive workers are developed through competency journeys which include training, workplace practice and experience. These journeys may take many roads, but there are too many dead ends, roadblocks and detours in the current system.

Research published by Skills Insight in 2025 supports these industry concerns. *Exploring Training Demand and Supply Challenges* highlighted the disconnect between latent demand and inadequate training provision, leaving industry without the skilled workforce it needs.[1]

Regional, rural and remote (RRR) access

The industry sectors covered by AFAM are predominantly located in regional, rural and remote NSW. The distribution of workplaces across the state mean that it is often seen as more difficult to offer training and assessment programs that attract reasonable learner volumes in regions and to move between workplaces for training and assessment purposes.

Barriers to training are intensified in RRR areas. RTOs face difficulties offering training in these locations due to dispersed clients and additional costs for travel and attracting trainers. In the industries covered by AFAM, there are often requirements for capital investment in stock, major equipment and/or land, or a reliance on employers to provide access to workplaces for training. Working with live animals and plants is a daily year-round business with diverse seasonal operations, which is mismatched with the standard rhythm of education delivery in Australia.

Developing operational campuses for agribusiness, food, animal and environment care training is expensive, and requires students to be campus-based, adding to expenses related to travel, accommodation and finding available workplace experience with external employers. This is in addition to the significant initial capital investment costs and ongoing costs of upgrading equipment with innovations in best practice and technologies. Relying on delivery within employer workplaces add to training expenses and minimises capacity to use economies of scale, as well as adding to insurance and administrative costs.

There is a lack of access to appropriate funding, investment and finance in regional NSW to address issues. Not only is the cost of money higher in regional NSW than urban NSW, but the competition for the limited available funds is intensified. Training and education are not considered to be priorities for private investment outside of specific employer investment for internal employee training. This does little to assist with the capital investment needed to develop facilities, equipment and other training requirements for agribusiness, food, animal and environment care industries.

[1] "Exploring Training Demand, Supply and Challenges." Skills Insight. Accessed September 29, 2025. www.skillsinsight.com.au/project/exploring-training-demand-supply-challenges

These issues are too often overlooked as a byproduct of ‘thin markets’, rather than being identified as a denial of access to VET, which according to the *NSW VET Review Final Report June 2024* ‘is critical to the future of our communities and our economy’. The Final Report notes that ‘marketisation and competition policies within the VET system over the last decade have not delivered on the promise of a smart and skilled workforce’. One of the barriers to improvement of access to regional, rural and remote NSW is the acceptance of the ‘thin market’ excuse, which is a term that can be defined by decision-makers in ways that hinder delivery, and has brought limited industry benefits or effective policy approaches to improved training delivery over decades.

The over-reliance by funding and RTO decision-makers on class volumes and costs of delivery is impacting NSW’s ability to support industry growth strategies, especially in regionally based areas. There is a notable lack of consideration of industry sectors’ safety, significance to state and local economies, importance for priority cohorts and contributions to addressing indirect social and economic priorities such as climate change, net zero and food sovereignty and quality.

In estimating the returns of training, there is more to be considered than the direct costs of delivery and direct returns from funding or full-fee income. The problem is exacerbated when the NSW Government adopts an industry growth strategy (such as the recent NSW Land Based Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy), which is then impeded by the lack of training delivery necessary to achieve that growth.

There has been considerable improvement in EdTech, understanding of universal design of learning principles and delivery options. These advances benefit all learners and VET deliverers are able to use these improvements to increase delivery and lower costs in urban VET programs, improving return on investment (ROI). As a result, the definitions of ‘thin markets’ continue to disadvantage regional NSW because of the comparisons with viability and ROI in urban delivery and the ways that the definition of ‘thin market’ can be manipulated.

Even where training may be offered, that training is often unlikely to suit the needs of local employers. As an example, SFI Seafood Industry Training Package delivery is currently severely restricted in NSW. A group of aquaculture employers are seeking training, but the sole NSW-based provider can only viably deliver specific units within SFI and cannot deliver units which are specific to the aquaculture practices used by these employers. The available qualification has all of the relevant units which could be delivered under the packaging rules, but the RTO cannot viably deliver the additional range of electives that would be needed, given they have limited access to trainers and training resources, and funding or funding security.

Funding and policy

Current VET funding mechanisms and policies are creating roadblocks in delivering training, as outlined below.

- **Volatile funding and government policy:** The VET sector is subject to a multitude of policy and funding changes at federal, state, and territory levels which have a detrimental effect on training decisions and can make it difficult for RTOs to plan long-term investments.
- **Inadequate funding for RTOs:** The overall funding for VET is substantially different from the university and school sectors. Funding can fluctuate based on government priorities, providing RTOs with a reduced incentive to invest in qualifications with low enrolment numbers, especially where initial or additional training resources need to be developed.
- **High regulatory burden:** Administrative and regulatory burdens significantly impact RTO viability and investment, which in turn drives supply decisions and directly impacts enrolment numbers.
- **Misalignment of national, state and local priorities**: The inconsistency of priorities can cause difficulties in access to apprenticeships, traineeship and incentives. This can also lead to confusion and added bureaucracy, or discouragement from engaging with the training process.

Training and resources

Barriers at a TAFE-level are impacting training delivery and accessibility, as follows.

- **Trainer shortages:** There is a widespread shortage of trainers. The requirement for trainers to hold both training qualifications and relevant industry experience makes it difficult to source appropriate staff. There is considerable reliance on part-time staff due to lack of available options and the need to maintain industry currency, which also impacts access to trainers, especially in RRR NSW.
- **Inconvenient and costly training:** The cost of maintaining facilities, and updating equipment and technology for practical training and assessment is a barrier for many RTOs. The cost and expertise required to develop and maintain training materials also pose a significant challenge for RTOs, particularly in an uncertain market. Professional development of staff is also costly.
- **Issues with training materials:** Training and assessment materials are sometimes considered outdated or too general by industry, and RTOs do not always have the capacity to update content with industry advancements and technologies. Updating training packages leads to reviews of training resources, which often require further revising, adding to costs of delivery.
- **Inadequate delivery of food and fibre curriculum in school-based learning**: There is limited course availability of elective learning areas in work studies, work education, primary industries and agriculture subjects, despite Australian Curriculum version 9 reform in capabilities and priorities involving work and enterprise embedded in content (and not as a separate layer of curriculum).

- **Availability of RTOs**: In some industries, such as seafood, pork and aquaculture, there are not enough RTOs to meet industry demands for training, particularly training designed to address local employer needs.
- **Access to technology**: The delivery of digital skills poses an additional challenge through access to the technology that is being rapidly adopted by industry advancements and the demand for qualified trainers and assessors. To be qualified, the VET system requires trainers and assessors to be knowledgeable on, and maintain industry currency relating to, the skills they are delivering. Digital and automation skills delivery requires trainers who understand the technology in the context of the industry in which they are delivering training. However, it remains a challenge for RTOs to find suitable candidates with industry, VET and pedagogical proficiency when the broader market has needs for:
    - Developers looking to continue improving the technology and to expand range of use and access to markets.
    - Sales and marketing workforces to demonstrate and persuade businesses to invest in the technology.
    - On-site trainers for specific brand products to provide immediate training to incorporate the technology on-site.
    - Maintenance, repair and improvement staff to address issues and meet purchaser requirements.

All these requirements are seen by digital and automation creators, wholesalers and retailers as essential to sales and further product development, leading to strong competition for an expert workforce. In this highly competitive market, RTOs struggle to compete for access to the technology and to trainers. This can be somewhat addressed by using workplace learning, as workplaces may often already have access to the technology prior to RTOs.

Engagement and perception

The perceptions around TAFE and a lack of engagement with employers and potential entrants is creating barriers.

- **Complexity of the VET system:** The multi-stakeholder nature of VET has created an environment that stakeholders find challenging to understand and navigate. Employers often find VET terminology complicated and laden with sector-specific jargon.
- **Lack of employer engagement:** Many employers lack the time, resources, or understanding of VET's value to engage with it. They may also be unaware that a qualification or Skill Set for a particular role even exists.
- **Reliance on informal learning:** Employers may rely on informal, on-the-job learning rather than formal VET training, as it is seen as too difficult, costly, and inconvenient.
- **Difficulty attracting workers:** A general lack of attraction and retention of workers to a particular industry can make it difficult to generate enrolments for VET qualifications. The reputation of an industry, including safety and working conditions, is important for attracting young workers.
- **Poor results from careers and transition programs**: Careers expos and individual career taster programs have limited connectivity with training, extension and employment opportunities that enable transitions into skilled employment pathways.
- **Challenges for specific learner cohorts:** Supporting participation from cohorts such as learners with low language, literacy, and numeracy (LLN) skills or people for whom English is a second language requires different approaches and additional resources.

Priorities

Critical training priorities

Based on extensive stakeholder consultation, AFAM has identified the following critical training priorities.

Review access to training	To ensure everyone in NSW, especially those in regional NSW, have access to education and training to become safe, effective and productive workers.
Review VET funding	To more accurately reflect the true cost of delivery, including a fundamental redesign of VET funding for regional NSW.
Address workforce readiness and foundation skills	To improve employability skills (starting at school level), as well as LLND skills, especially among entry-level and migrant workers.
Attract new entrants	Promote career pathways and change the perception of careers that are currently viewed as 'unskilled' or manual in order to attract new entrants into the workforce.
Upskill in technology and innovation	To adapt to evolving industry changes driven by technology and innovation. This includes adopting new technologies and improving skills in data collection, digital management systems, robotics, and automation.
Enhance biosecurity and animal welfare capabilities	To address increasing biosecurity risks and a growing public demand for animal welfare standards, training is critical for improving skills in biosecurity and compliance across all sectors.
Promote sustainability and environmental management	To support the transition to a net zero economy and to build skills in environmental management, including carbon accounting and resource efficiency.
Strengthen quality and safety	To meet market and regulatory demands for skills in food safety, quality assurance, and traceability throughout the supply chain.

Given the diversity of industry sectors covered by AFAM, it would be reasonable to expect little unanimity on training priorities. Yet, after extensive stakeholder engagement, key themes emerge in all sectors, especially about workforce shortages, attraction and retention, technology and innovation, management and leadership (seen as a need for increasing professionalisation), and workforce readiness and foundation skills.

The main priority remains increasing access to VET training, underpinned by appropriate ongoing funding, as well as the availability of RTOs and suitably qualified trainers. There needs to be clear access to information about programs (which requires collaboration between government, industry and RTOs), and this must be delivered in ways that benefit both employers and workers.

Decision-making should be motivated by the industries' need for safe, effective and productive workers, rather than on volume of enrolments and questionable demand indicators. In NSW, there are government growth strategies for various industries, such as the NSW Land Based Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy, which should result in additional use of VET. Yet, in the aquaculture example, the strategy did not include specific considerations of the need for VET training and has not resulted in aquaculture being identified as a priority program by the NSW Department of Education or by TAFE NSW.

As mentioned earlier, research published in 2025 by Skills Insight outlines these issues in detail. A key finding of the *Exploring Training Demand and Supply Challenges* report was that low enrolment numbers do not equate to a lack of need for training delivery. Rather, a range of factors may cause qualifications to not be delivered where they are needed. Complex issues inhibit training supply and affect demand, including VET policies, funding, investment decisions, regulation, information flows, labour supply, business decisions and training viability considerations. These factors are intensified in regional, rural and remote Australia.[2]

Skills priorities

While skills priorities can vary by industry sector, specific product offerings and location, there are commonalities that have been reported by stakeholders.

Technological skills

The increasing adoption of agricultural and manufacturing technologies – including automation, robotics, AI (artificial intelligence), the Internet of Things (IoT), drones and specialised precision farming equipment – is creating demand for new skills in digital literacy and numeracy, data analysis, and the operation and maintenance of new systems. Examples include graduates who are not exposed to new digital capacities in agricultural machinery or who lack the skills to manage data from new technologies. This will require current, ongoing and upskilling training.

Managers and supervisors require upskilling in data management and analysis (including big data) to inform decision making and monitoring of farm, food, manufacturing and business practices, including finance, systems, productivity and environmental modelling. Monitoring, control and maintenance of technological systems will be an in-demand skill as technologies continue to emerge. Programs such as the NSW Farms of the Future program will continue to remain a priority into the future alongside the need for formal training and improvements in on-farm connectivity to increase the adoption of new technologies.

Management and leadership skills

There is a strong demand for skills in leadership, human resources, and business management, particularly as the ageing workforce transitions into these roles. Labour gaps exist in supervision, communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. Issues with transitioning existing workers to management roles include people management concerns in the promotion of safe and inclusive working environments; cultural, social and legislative responsibilities; and issues with anti-discrimination, fair work and worker safety.

[2] "Exploring Training Demand, Supply and Challenges." Skills Insight. Accessed September 24, 2025. www.skillsinsight.com.au/project/exploring-training-demand-supply-challenges

Foundation and work-readiness skills

Our conversations with stakeholders revealed new workers, especially school leavers, often lack foundational and work-readiness skills, which ultimately underpin workforce participation and productivity. Foundation skills include LLND and employability skills. Traditional work-readiness skills can include soft skills such as communication skills, leadership skills, conflict-resolution skills, time-management skills and teamwork skills. Psychological work-readiness skills include a positive attitude, self-efficacy, self-esteem, resilience and life satisfaction.[3]

Priority microskills

A range of industry sectors identify specific microskills priorities. These include skills in WHS; welding; tractor, truck and quad bike operation; telehandler use, forklift handling, knife sharpening, confined spaces, working at heights, and machinery small motor mechanical maintenance.

Priority career skills include adaptability, time management, management skills, financial, technology, science and numeracy. The AgSkilled workforce training program, which provides industry-aligned training to agricultural workers, is a significant step forward in developing these skills across the agriculture and production horticulture industries. However, the annual funding cycles create limitations.

Emerging skills demand

Emerging skills demand is likely in food safety, animal welfare, meat inspection, quality assurance and biosecurity-related skills/capability development. This includes technical knowledge in areas like biosecurity preparedness, response and recovery.

Controlling and monitoring quality assurance and regulatory compliance operations throughout complex food value chains involves a range of stakeholders. There's also an emerging need for skills in sustainable and regenerative farming practices, contingency planning and emergency response due to climate change and natural disasters.

While there are generally VET units associated with these areas of emerging demand, there may be a need to promote further uptake of units as electives and for upskilling skill sets that can be undertaken without limitations (such as skill set units needing to be within a single qualification).

Priority skill sets include the agricultural chemical skill set, which helps achieve regulatory requirements but requires ongoing updating due to changing standards. Skill sets used by First Nations training programs are becoming increasingly popular. Specific skill set training for niche occupations, such as thoroughbred barrier and gap attendant, or as career entry points, such as introduction to arboriculture, are being actively promoted by industry stakeholders. Animal welfare officer, meat processing core and game harvester short courses are priorities in the meat sector, and post-harvest seafood processing (especially

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[3] Department of Education, Skills and Employment. *Utilising Soft Skills Training to Enhance Work Readiness*. Canberra: Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Accessed September 24, 2025. https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/13734/utilising-soft-skills-training-enhance-work-readiness/26723/utilising-soft-skills-training-enhance-work-readiness/pdf

food safety and quality assurance), along with knife skills. Existing and new workers with specific qualifications in some small and medium enterprises require upskilling in customer service, product knowledge and teamwork.

Upskilling existing workers in skill sets may be more easily managed by employers during seasonal industry training windows and reduces productivity issues, with staff undertaking training.

Systemic priorities

AFAM identified the following systemic priorities and changes needed to enhance the NSW VET system's effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs of workers, industry and the broader community.

VET funding review and improved access to VET

Stakeholder feedback suggests the current funding cycles for programs such as Smart and Skilled, Fee-free TAFE courses, and AgSkilled, make it difficult for RTOs to retain skilled staff, plan course delivery, update and develop new resources and market courses for industry enrolment. Uncertainty around funding also presents challenges for businesses to complete longer-term business plans, which are essential to access finance and business support.

Access to VET is more restricted in regional, rural and remote locations. This is often associated with funding cycles, mismatched delivery with industry seasonal operations, dispersed markets, trainer shortages and resource costs of delivery.

RTO viability – in terms of financial stability and capacity to operate sustainably and deliver quality VET services – is a critical concept when considering access to VET. This applies to TAFE NSW, private and enterprise RTOs, which all have accountabilities for viability in differing ways. It may be easier to create viability by delivering high-volume courses, but this comes at a substantial cost to smaller industry sectors, those with niche skills and regulatory requirements, and those dispersed across the regions of NSW.

Data and decision making

Concerns were raised at MINTRAC RTO Forums regarding the poor quality and accuracy of data used by State Training Authorities (STOs) to make funding, skill priority, and course decisions. This issue raises doubts about the reliability of data informing government policy, with NSW data also considered questionable.

Several industries, including meat processing, have flagged concerns about low enrolments being seen as low demand, potentially affecting small but critical occupations. The same has been observed with some of the leadership qualifications at Certificate IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma levels.

In its *2025–2026 Workforce Plan*, Skills Insight reports:

'Government funding of vocational education and training (VET) typically responds to identified workforce needs based on retrospective data: funding what was in demand yesterday rather than proactively investing in emerging or strategically critical occupations. This reactive approach can leave growth areas under-funded and overlooks the true costs of

sustaining training delivery for small but essential occupations that underpin major industries. It also creates a vulnerability: when training for critical but low-volume roles, such as saw technicians or wool classers, is not adequately funded, the risk of workforce shortfalls increases. These gaps can compromise the stability of broader economic systems, including housing, food security, and trade. A more forward-looking and viability-adjusted funding model would better align VET investment with current and future needs and support a resilient economy.'

Stakeholders have indicated support for a substantial review of the ways decisions are made, RTO viability, funding arrangements and investment opportunities, as current funding systems do not meet industry needs. Programs such as AgSkilled have had success in delivering formal training of critical and foundational skills for workers, but more must be done if workers are to have access to the range of skills needed to be safe, effective and productive workers, now and into the future. Skill sets, microcredentials and short-form training can deliver immediate industry needs which are essential when there are workforce shortages, but there does need to be longer-term planning. Potentially more RTOs would deliver skill sets if availability of funding was clearer or more readily available.

Qualifications reform

Stakeholders are supportive of, but uncertain about, qualifications reform. Almost all of the qualifications for industries covered by AFAM have had full Training Package reviews since 2017, and other targeted changes when required. This has helped provide currency and flexibility, but has resulted in considerable disruption for RTOs and added compliance administration to trainer workloads.

Stakeholders are concerned about the potential disruption that could be caused by the current qualification reform process. While supportive of the directions of the reform process, they have less confidence in the implementation of reform and what that might mean for qualifications within their industries.

Stakeholders accept that Training Package modernisation and updating is keeping qualifications aligned with industry practice, although they have suggested that greater focus on skill sets and upskilling is required.

Trainer quality and supply

Stakeholders support the current work on improving the VET workforce and this remains a priority issue. There is a significant challenge with a shortage of quality VET trainers who have the skills required by the industry. VET trainers in these fields are often casual or part-time workers, or are required to travel extensively to deliver training programs, which has an impact on attraction and retention. Variability in the quality of RTO training delivery is directly related to the quality and experience of VET trainers and has an impact on RTO viability.

An industry stakeholder priority is to have VET delivery that suits local needs, especially given the highly regional and diverse nature of products in these industry sectors. This produces tension between having multiple electives in qualifications, which adds to system complexity, and having on scope the VET units required to meet local employer and worker needs. Some RTOs working with employers have expressed the preference to retain the flexibility, while others have trouble delivering multiple options for viability reasons.

Access to apprenticeships and traineeships

Access to apprenticeships and traineeships is a training priority for AFAM industries. Stakeholders believe that apprenticeships and traineeships, particularly in ‘earn while you learn’ models, provide significant advantages for current industry training in attraction and long-term retention. They also provide greater depth of skills, more availability of electives which allow for flexible course design to suit local employer needs, and access to incentives to support training.

Some employers face challenges in effectively hosting and mentoring apprentices and trainees, given business size and availability of suitable staff. However, recent changes to the apprenticeship network models, group training organisations and JSC development of employer guides are helping to bridge this gap.

Apprenticeships and traineeships can help with attraction and retention, and the promotion of VET pathways. Stakeholders believe that access to apprenticeships and traineeship can help improve low enrolment and completion rates. Stakeholders are asking for additional qualifications to be recognised as apprenticeships or to become apprenticeships, including the move to create a new agriculture apprenticeship that is recognised for smallgoods manufacturing.

Given the Federal Government’s use of the term ‘Australian apprenticeship’ to cover both apprenticeships and traineeships, and the various definitions around Australia, it is important to define the terms in NSW. Recent inquiries have revealed confusion with the Department as to the precise nature of these types of training, and the correct approach to recognising which qualifications should be recognised as trades.

Some stakeholders have raised the inconsistency that exists between the Skills Priority List and the Smart and Skilled funded list. As noted earlier, there is considerable concern about the evidence and data that leads to these inconsistencies.

Attraction, retention and pathways

Employers emphasised the importance of structured entry pathways supported by site visits, work placements, and industry exposure events. These opportunities are often irregular and difficult to support, and greater certainty and focus could benefit industry.

Stakeholders report ongoing difficulties in attracting and retaining workers without structured mentoring and career progression programs, in addition to formal training plans. A priority for stakeholders is to consider skills and training more holistically to include skills development, training, work experience, mentoring and career progression.

Pre-employment programs in NSW (Trade Pathways Project) delivered across regions demonstrated positive outcomes, with participants progressing into apprenticeships and employment.

RTO forums involving industry, ITABs and JSCs

MINTRAC has been successfully hosting RTO forums for the meat, poultry and seafood-processing industries. These forums have attracted capacity audiences and stakeholders involved say they are central to collaboration, consultation, and industry engagement.

These forums have identified the need for improved support for assessment and training resources, LLN tools and digital learning platforms. Enterprise RTOs have suggested there are opportunities for stronger alignment between workplace training and accredited training requirements.

Resources, tools, platforms and alignments have costs that impact RTO viability. In particular, a Griffith University Research Paper, entitled *Training product translation: Good practices in learning resource development,* highlights the complexity and potential costs associated with these activities, illustrating the potential impact on RTO viability.[4]

There are other RTO industry forums within the NSW AFAM industries, but these tend to be within TAFE NSW or for RTOs only. More funding would be required for ITABs to run these across other industries, but RTO stakeholders see this as a priority, supported by industry participants. This may help industry drive the access to training that specifically meets skills needs.

VET in Schools

Stakeholders support greater focus on VET in Schools, including taster programs, improved school curriculum and effective work placement experiences covering AFAM industries. However, stakeholders are increasingly concerned about both the levels of qualifications being delivered and the timeframes of delivery. VET in Schools is seen as important for attraction and retention, and for having family and teacher support during a critical time for training.

Requests to AFAM for approval of VET in Schools training programs often relate to Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level 3 qualifications. Stakeholders have expressed concern about using this level of qualification in a school environment in industries which have higher risk profiles in terms of worker safety, biosecurity and quality and traceability standards. This is potentially exposing learners aged 15 to 17 years with little or no On Country or workplace experience to new environments.

In addition, significant proportions of the training (we have had applications with more than 50 per cent of units for qualifications) are built into training plans, even though training delivery and work experience is limited to no more than 2 days per week during term. There appears to be an attitude that things can be classroom taught and immediately assessed, instead of allowing practice, experience and the development of ongoing competency. The assessment should not be whether someone can do a task once, but whether they are

[4] Hodge, Steven, Anne Jones, Melinda Waters, Hugh Guthrie, Training Product Translation Project, and Griffith University. “Training Product Translation Project,” 2024. https://skillsinsight.com.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Training-product-translation-Good-practices-in-learning-resource-development.2025-1.pdf

competent at the task in a variety of work situations, usually with evidence collected across time.

Stakeholders are uncomfortable about supporting these applications, but see no real alternatives when they are struggling to find workers and are being told that this is the training proposed and in the absence of approval, lower-level training will not be offered.

There are important reasons why industry supports Certificate I and II qualifications, but these reasons are then overridden by RTO delivery preferences (often VET in Schools is delivered through an RTO partnership). The lure to the learner of being able to potentially enter an occupation at a higher wage level is also a factor. While there is a great deal of discussion about career pathways, the ones that are actually developed by industry through Training Package projects, which include Cert I to Cert II and onwards, are routinely disregarded by decision-makers external to industry.

Unfortunately, once a qualification has been approved for a student as a VET in Schools program, that qualification becomes available for others. AFAM rejected one application where an individual student should probably have been approved because the student had been brought up in the relevant work environment and had been assessed as suitable for entry at Certificate II level by a competent trainer. The reason for the rejection was that the qualification would not have been suitable for other students, and there was no way of approving for one and not for others.

Aligning training priorities to the *NSW Skills Plan*

The *NSW Skills Plan* identifies 6 Critical Skills Areas (CSAs) that represent NSW Government priorities and national priorities under the National Skills Agreement, covering industries with chronic and persistent shortages and those undergoing significant structural changes. AFAM works with 3 of those CSAs:

- Agriculture and agrifood
- Net zero and energy transition
- Advanced manufacturing

When considering priority industries, it is important they are identified in ways that include the whole of supply and value chains. For example, conservation and ecosystem management is an obvious industry sector involved in net zero. However, agriculture, forestry, land and water use, and food manufacturing all play critical roles in climate mitigation and in the supply chains that support net zero transition efforts.

As AFAM's industries fall within the priority industries in the *NSW Skills Plan*, there is an immediate alignment of priorities.

Priority industries

Revitalising agriculture through a skilled workforce

The future directions identified in the *NSW Skills Plan* are generally aligned with the feedback from AFAM agriculture industry stakeholders (including those in the supply and value chains). AFAM stakeholders believe that advisory boards and consultation with industry bodies already takes place through AFAM, and through other bodies including Skills Insight and MINTRAC. Stakeholders are interested to learn why the *NSW Skills Plan* has isolated this concern within agriculture, and not in the other priority industries, given the current mechanisms in place.

The *NSW Skills Plan* notes that only 20 per cent of government-funded commencements are in apprenticeships and traineeships. This is reflected in industry skills priorities in this report. Stakeholders have been supporting the development of an Ag Trade Apprenticeship as one way of addressing this. However, other priorities identified in this report – such as improved access to VET, especially in regional NSW – require action.

The Plan outlines how agricultural tertiary qualifications are lagging behind industry demand, stating:

'One major issue is that agricultural tertiary qualifications have not kept pace with industry demand and the need to ***pivot away*** *from skills useful for small farms to skills for a modern commercial operation'.*

This does not align well with the feedback provided to AFAM over several years in relation to VET qualifications (we cannot provide advice on Higher Education), and neither Skills Insight nor MINTRAC have reported this.

Before travelling down this path, the Government needs to carefully consider whether ‘pivoting away’ is a market intervention. Australian agriculture has enormous diversity, not just in product, climate and methods, but also in business types. Skills Insight has reported in previous workforce plans and industry skills forecasts that one of the barriers to reduction of units in the AHC Agriculture, Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management Training Package is the need to cover this variety, which includes major commercial operations, SME and large farms, multi-property and mixed farming, and artisanal operations, all of which have a right to operate within the market.

Stakeholders have been very strong in questioning the roles of major commercial enterprises, including major supermarkets, in attempting to distort the marketplace. There is not sufficient rationale for the NSW Government to prioritise major commercial agriculture over all other forms of agriculture, which could have very serious consequences for regional NSW communities, reduce competition and limit consumer options for goods such as artisanal, organic and permaculture products.

Reaching net zero and supporting energy transition with a skilled workforce

Increasingly, stakeholders have noted that government plans, policies and strategies relating to net zero have been focused almost exclusively on clean energy. While stakeholders accept that in order to reach targets, the energy sector will need to do the heavy lifting, there are other elements of net zero to consider, in particular conservation and ecosystem management, land and water usage and supporting infrastructure.

Agribusiness, conservation and ecosystem management, forestry and First Nations land and water rights all play critical roles in achieving net zero, not just through reduction of their own emissions, but also through climate mitigation, environmental protection and nature positivity. They are major industries in emissions mitigation, through carbon sequestration, capture and farming, and lead research and innovation efforts to reduce emissions. The best performing industries in emissions reduction since June 2005 include land use, land use change and forestry, and agriculture.

As industries whose practices and survival are critically dependent on climate conditions, and as residents of regional communities most impacted by significant natural disasters and climate change-related events, it is important to stakeholders that the role of these industries continues to be recognised in plans to transition to net zero.

First Nations people hold traditional and cultural knowledge of Country, and have much knowledge that can be shared and used in scientific, research and implementation endeavours to help steer Australia towards net zero. This knowledge and skill needs to be recognised, and, where agreed to through free, prior and informed consent by First Nations knowledge holders, shared with appropriate recognition and compensation. In the industries covered by AFAM, this knowledge is being shared with Rural Research and Development Corporations, CSIRO and other bodies, thereby improving outcomes.

There also needs to be more effective recognition that in achieving net zero, and especially in clean energy, First Nations people and communities are not just participants to be engaged with. They can and should be economic leaders and partners and the approaches of the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance should be central to reviews and development of policy. Respect should be paid to the rights of First Nations people recognised by Title and by the Courts over land and water, taking a principles approach to building relationships, rather than an apparently participatory or legalistic approach.

AFAM has been identifying whether there are skills gaps within the available training that need to be closed to address net zero. The current view of stakeholders is that the required skills training exists. However, in some cases, there is a need for greater knowledge to allow those skills to be used contextually, and to promote the uptake of relevant electives.

There is a lack of delivery of VET, especially in regional, rural and remote Australia, as well as a lack of available workforce in many instances. This has an impact on the ability to deliver place-based solutions that may accelerate Australia's move towards net zero.

Skilling for a more advanced manufacturing future

Stakeholders' concerns generally align with the *NSW Skills Plan* in these sectors, though they would potentially suggest that there should be greater focus on the delivery of training, rather than the state of qualifications in food and beverage manufacturing. The development of appropriate qualifications in pharmaceutical manufacturing is hampered by a lack of enrolments in existing qualifications.

The pandemic resulted in a greater focus on sovereign capability in manufacturing, particularly in food, beverage and pharmaceutical. However, sector growth has been slow and complex, with approvals and access to resources contributing to these difficulties.

System reforms

Funding for priority skills and outcomes

Stakeholders have identified training priorities and barriers in this report, which include a range of considerations and opportunities to address funding reforms. Outcome-based approaches with performance measurement are supported, if they align to industry need.

In particular, stakeholders support a complete review of funding and investment approaches to the delivery of VET in regional NSW, which address the true costs and barriers to delivery in each region.

This report supports the direction of achieving greater funding certainty, supporting RTO viability and capacity, and meeting the diverse needs of students.

A strong and stable TAFE

Several industries within AFAM's coverage are reliant on private and enterprise RTOs, including the meat processing industry. While a strong and stable TAFE is a worthy goal, stakeholders are extremely concerned that TAFE NSW can make decisions based on TAFE's needs, rather than NSW Government strategies and industry needs.

As an example, TAFE does not deliver aquaculture training, despite the NSW Land Based Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy. Stakeholders are very supportive of the work of Tocal College, operated by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. There are also high-performing First Nations-controlled RTOs. In any consideration of support for TAFE, the NSW Government should also acknowledge the role of other government-supported providers.

If TAFE is to be a 'strategic asset' of the NSW Government, then it needs to deliver to government strategies, and in doing so ensure the fundamental right of stakeholders to have the opportunity to access education and training, particularly in regional NSW.

Where TAFE NSW does not deliver or provides minimal delivery, it needs to be significantly easier for other public, private, enterprise and First Nations-controlled RTOs to obtain funding and support, recognising that these bodies do not have access to the enormous resources, infrastructure and economies of scale available to TAFE. This is particularly an issue for AFAM industries because of the high costs of infrastructure, land, stock, feed, equipment, technology and overheads needed to deliver training in these industries, along with the disadvantages that exist in regional NSW.

Implementing a revised operating model that is locally focussed and industry-aligned is essential, with the added importance of support for education and training delivery for regional NSW as a primary service.

Planning for local skills

This report supports place-based solutions and flexibility in skills and training to ensure local needs can be met. The *NSW Skills Plan* states:

'The state's most significant skills and training challenges are concentrated at the regional level and directly impact the strength and resilience of local communities.'

This is an important feature of the Plan that is strongly supported by stakeholders – one that has raised expectations for greater consideration of regional training access and delivery.

The reform directions outlined in the *NSW Skills Plan* are generally supported by stakeholders. However, stakeholders suggest the direction about TAFE NSW providing accessible high-quality training and localised offerings be amended to include all VET providers. This would include other public, private, enterprise and First Nations-Controlled RTOs.

Strategic priorities

Target skilling responses to government priorities

AFAM stakeholders are pleased that their industries have been recognised in the 6 CSAs, but are concerned that the targeting may be too tight, and not recognise the full supply and value chains of these industries.

For example, in recent apprenticeship reviews, questions have been raised about supporting the VET training of a range of occupations, including:

- Butcher or smallgoods maker
- Senior piggery stockperson
- Veterinary nurse
- Horse trainer
- Nurseryperson
- Arborist
- Tree worker
- Landscape gardener
- Irrigation technician

These are all roles within CSAs, but other reports have failed to identify this. In addition, there may be other compelling reasons for funding these occupations.

Veterinary nurses, for example, can play central roles in biosecurity surge responses. Horse trainers are central to major NSW industries that are fully regulated and require the highest standards of industry integrity, worker safety and animal welfare. Similarly, arborists and tree workers are critical to the distribution of power through transmission lines and to carbon sequestration in the drive to net zero, as well as having important roles in agriculture and urban parks.

Improve equitable outcomes, pathways and access for students

Removing barriers and improving wraparound support for priority cohort students across the NSW VET system, as identified in the *NSW Skills Plan*, is an important priority, as is the need to find better access to foundation skills. Stakeholders also support the priorities related to recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit pathways. This report outlines stakeholder support for and concerns about VET in Schools, with greater skills development in key and local industries an important feature.

As noted above, the priority to building ACCOs and Aboriginal-owned RTO capacity needs to be considered when planning for the system reforms regarding the roles of and budget allocations to TAFE NSW.

Strengthen industry and employer partnerships and skills system governance

Improvements in skills system governance and industry skills leadership are supported by stakeholders. The funding for the current ITAB structures has not been adequate to fully perform the variety of roles requested from Training Services NSW, and the consequence of this is that considerable time is spent on responding to government, NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and RTO requests, rather than engaging with stakeholders for industry leadership.

AFAM has found it extremely difficult to deliver regional roundtables. On the occasions where they are organised, the focus is often on the department or TAFE NSW providing information, instead of roundtable discussions to identify place-based solutions.

Industry participants in many AFAM sectors already pay significant mandatory industry levies, and are currently included in Federal Climate Smart Compacts. There are many current demands on the time and resources of businesses, which are barely able to obtain enough workforce to conduct their own business operations.

Stakeholders would encourage a pilot of a regional skills governance model, but would be concerned about the potential for such models to be dominated by larger industries (especially mining and construction) and major commercial operations (as identified in the agriculture industry section).

Build and support the NSW VET teaching workforce

Stakeholders support the focus, actions and outcomes of the *NSW Skills Plan* for the VET teaching workforce. They would add the need to ensure the inclusion of other public, private, enterprise and Aboriginal-owned and controlled RTOs, and to explore the opportunities for regional delivery using network models.

Drive system responsiveness and innovation

Stakeholder views on system responsiveness and innovation have been identified in this report, including support for qualifications reform, improved RPL and credit pathways and VET in Schools.

Many NSW enterprises operate nationally and across borders. Remodelling cross-border, multi-state and national funding, investment and delivery systems for VET training, as well as ensuring Regional Training Hubs are designed for both university and VET support may help address current access and delivery issues.

It is difficult to build tertiary harmonisation when there is limited harmonisation within VET. Moving to systems that create greater opportunities for cross-border, multi-state and national delivery will help to improve both VET delivery and VET harmonisation, as well as increase productivity through greater use of training and improved access to workforce. This is likely to require a complete re-design of the funding and investment systems supporting regional VET delivery (and a move away from ineffective ‘loading’ systems).

Future job roles and emerging skills for the next 3 to 5 years

AFAM industry stakeholders have struggled to identify the future job roles and emerging skills required to meet industry demand in the next 3 to 5 years. This is largely because of the overwhelming focus on addressing current workforce shortages and the uncertainty caused by many other current policy issues affecting industry that need attention.

The view of some stakeholders is that there may be an immediate need for new skills in areas such as carbon accounting, which may be filled and developed from fields such as science or auditing. However, these will eventually become industry-specific roles, as employers seek to use these skills for business and operations planning long-term.

There are overarching trends, which include the increasing integration of technology (including AI), a strong focus on sustainability and biosecurity, and a need for workers with digital and data analysis skills to adapt to these changes.

Major emerging occupations and skill areas in NSW

Agriculture, aquaculture, and wild catch

The agriculture, aquaculture and wild catch sectors continue their early adoption of technology, leading to a demand for:

- **Agri-tech specialists:** The NSW Government is focusing on developing skills in agriculture technology (agtech), such as drone mapping and AI. This includes roles like precision agriculture technicians, who implement and maintain advanced sensors and GPS-driven equipment.
- **Data analysts:** The increasing use of technologies like AI, robotics, and the Internet of Things (iot) is creating a demand for workers with the digital literacy and data analysis skills needed for precision farming.
- **Robotics and machinery operators:** As farms adopt autonomous tractors, harvesters, and other agricultural robots, there will be an emerging need for operators and maintenance technicians.
- **Biosecurity and environmental managers:** Due to climate change and new biosecurity risks, there is an increased need for skills in biosecurity, water-use efficiency and managing environmental disasters.

Environmental management

With a strong focus on transition to net zero, climate change and sustainability, several roles are emerging within environmental management:

- **Arborists and landscape gardeners:** There is an expected increase in demand for these occupations with the transition to a net zero economy.
- **Biosecurity and conservation professionals:** The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry employs auditors to ensure compliance with biosecurity regulations, and there is a need for roles that protect Australia from pests and diseases. The Indigenous Rangers Program is also noted as a growth area for employment.

- **Carbon accountants/auditors:** Skills in carbon accounting and sustainability are increasingly needed for environmental management.

Animal care and management (including horse and greyhound racing)

The animal care and management sector is experiencing significant demand, particularly for formally trained professionals and in the areas of animal welfare and biosecurity.

- **Professionalisation of occupations:** This includes the recognition of occupations not currently classified under Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) or ANZSCO and an increasing need for qualified staff, given more stringent animal welfare standards.
- **Animal welfare and biosecurity officers:** The NSW Local Land Services graduate program is seeking graduates with qualifications in veterinary science and an interest in biosecurity and animal welfare.

Meat, seafood, food, beverage, and pharmaceutical manufacturing

The sector requires upskilling to meet new demands.

- **Food safety and quality assurance specialists:** The changing standards and need for internationally recognised and accepted certification is creating an emerging need for skills in food safety, animal welfare, and quality assurance. The National Agriculture Workforce Strategy also notes the importance of skills in supply chain tracking, food safety, and traceability.
- **Robotics and data technicians:** As manufacturing processes become more automated, the demand for workers with skills in robotics and data analysis is growing.

Looking ahead

This *Industry Training Priority Report* has sought to understand the skills and workforce requirements of the industries under AFAM's coverage, by listening to their collective voice. After taking into account comprehensive stakeholder feedback gathered over the past 4 years, it is clear that changes to the NSW VET system are critical to the future success of these industries.

Enhancing training accessibility, especially in regional NSW, reviewing VET funding, addressing workforce readiness and foundational skills, and encouraging new entrants are all key to improving the NSW VET system. Upskilling in technology and innovation, and improving skills in biosecurity and animal welfare capabilities need to be a focus. To support the transition to a net zero economy, skills in sustainability and environmental management will be crucial, while strengthening quality and safety to meet regulatory demands for skills in food safety, quality assurance and traceability throughout the supply chain is also vital.

There is no easy fix to the issues raised by stakeholders in this report. Change will take time and resources. However, the priorities raised by our stakeholders must be the focus of decision making moving forward, so that we can collaborate and work together to build a stronger VET system in NSW that truly meets industry needs.

Appendix A – Contributing stakeholders

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the stakeholders who provided valuable feedback and insights to shape the findings in this report.

Organisation	Sector Coverage	Location
TAFE NSW	All AFAM sectors	State-wide
Skills Insight	All AFAM sectors	National
Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance	FBP	National
MINTRAC	AMP	National
Business NSW	All AFAM sectors	State-wide
Service NSW	All AFAM sectors	State-wide
Australian Workers Union	All AFAM sectors	State-wide
Apprentice Employment Network NSW & ACT	All AFAM sectors	State-wide
Regional Development Australia (RDA)	All AFAM sectors	State-wide
National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (NASCA)	All AFAM sectors	State-wide
Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG)	All AFAM sectors	State-wide
Skillset GTO	All AFAM sectors	State-wide
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations DEWR	All AFAM Sectors	National
Skills Frontier	All AFAM Sectors	State-wide
IBM	All AFAM sectors	State-wide
Agriculture and Production Horticulture		
Gunnible Pastoral Company	APH	Gunnedah
Australian Training Company	APH	State-wide
Barenbrug Seeds	APH	State-wide
National Farmers Federation	APH	National
NSW Farmers	APH	State-wide
Agrifutures	APH	National
Chem Cert	APH	State-wide
Bralca	APH	State-wide
Ability Ag	APH	State-wide
Tocal	APH	State-wide
Central West Farmers	APH	Central West NSW
Ag Assist PTY LTD	APH	State-wide
FarmLink	APH	State-wide
Dairy NSW	APH	State-wide
NSW Women in Dairy	APH	Mid Coast
Australian Honeybee Industry Council	APH	State-wide

NSW Apiarist Association	APH	State-wide
Australian Native Bee Company	APH	Far North Coast NSW
AUSVEG	APH	State-wide
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development Farms of the Future	APH	State-wide
Australian Agricultural Training Company	APH	State-wide
Australian Wool Exchange	APH	State-wide
Cotton Australia	APH	State-wide
Australian Wool innovation (AWI)	APH	National
Shearing Contractors Association Australia	APH	State-wide
MacDonald and Co Woolbrokers	APH	Dubbo
Australian Eggs	APH	State-wide
RuralBiz Training RTO	APH	State-wide
Emergency Australia	APH	State-wide
Irrigation Australia	APH	State-wide
Civic Disability Services Urban Farm Project	APH	Caringbah
Urban Green Vertical Farms	APH	Barangaroo
BackTrack	APH	Armidale
Wildflowers Australia LTD Brushtop Farm	APH	Robertson
East Coast Wildflowers	APH	Mangrove Mountain
Good Growers	APH	Hunter
Phoenix Park Farm	APH	Hunter
Booma Food Group	APH	Cessnock
Nuffield International Bidgee Foods	APH	Moama
RLX Saleyards	APH	Tamworth
Elders	APH	State-wide
Nutrien Ag Solutions	APH	State-wide
Gallagher	APH	State-wide
Skytech Solutions	APH	North Coast
Costa Group	APH	State-wide
Alloura Angus Stud	APH	Yass
Food Ladder	APH	State-wide
Bilpin Cider	APH	Bilpin
Summerland Farm	APH	Alstonville
Smart Collective	APH	Southern Highlands
Pocket Herbs	APH	Far North Coast
NSW Association of Agriculture Teachers (NSWAAT)	APH	State-wide
Farrer Agricultural College	APH	Tamworth
AMPS Agribusiness Tamworth	APH	State-wide
Shoretrack	APH	Macksville
Baumgartners Accountants	APH & RGR	State-wide
Pen Rider JBS	APH	Caroona
Hort Innovation	APH	National
Amenity Horticulture, Conservation and Land Management		
Nursery and Garden Industry Association	AHCLM	State-wide
The Landscape Association	AHCLM	State-wide
Parks and Leisure Association	AHCLM	State-wide
Turf NSW and NSW Sports Turf Association	AHCLM	State-wide
NSW Golf Superintendents Association	AHCLM	State-wide
Australian Institute of Horticulture (AIH)	AHCLM	State-wide
Tree Contractors Association Australia	AHCLM	State-wide

NSW Local Land Services	AHCLM	State-wide
SAFEWORK NSW	AHCLM	State-wide
Arboriculture Australia	AHCLM	State-wide
Heiniger/Felco	AHCLM	State-wide
Aquatec Equipment	AHCLM	State-wide
Irrigation Consultant	AHCLM	State-wide
Mother Earth Nursery	AHCLM	State-wide
Rivers Edge Turf	AHCLM	Wilberforce
Botanica Nurseries	AHCLM	Silverdale
Big Flower Super Nursery	AHCLM	Ourimbah
Green Growth Planting	AHCLM	Fairfield Heights
Jim's Mowing	AHCLM	State-wide
TME Training	AHCLM	State-wide
Banyula Farm	AHCLM & APH	North Coast
Inspiration Trees	AHCLM	North Coast
Lennox Tree Care	AHCLM	North Coast
Thenford Lodge	AHCLM	Southern Highlands
RMCG Consultancy	AHCLM	State-wide
Bush Regenerator Eco Recharge	AHCLM	North Coast
Food, Beverage and Pharmaceutical		
Agrifood Innovation Institute/The Australian National University (ANU) "Made and Grown" The Future of Food.	FBP	ACT
Bakers Assn of Australia	FBP	State-wide
Manildra Group	FBP	State-wide
Young Henry's Brewing Company	FBP	Newtown
Casella	FBP	State-wide
Australian Wine Research Institute	FBP	National
Brookfarm	FBP	North Coast
Pharmaceutical Expert	FBP	State-wide
Rockwell Automation	FBP	State-wide
PPB Technology	FBP	State-wide
Australian Eggs	FBP	State-wide
Australian Institute of Food Science and Technologies	FBP	State-wide
Bake My Life	FBP	Ballina
NOWCHEM	FBP	Illawarra
Six String Brewing Company	FBP	Erina
Central Coast Industry Connect	FBP	Central Coast
Cauldron Biomanufacturing	FBP	Orange
Nourish Ingredients	FBP	ACT & Orange
Magic Valley	FBP	State-wide
Applied Training Solutions	FBP	Smithfield
National Training Organisation	FBP	Rydalmere
Integrated STEM	FBP & AMP	State-wide
Devro	FBP	Bathurst
Gumnuts Patisserie	FBP	Bowral
The famous Robertsons Pie Shop	FBP	Robertson
Botero Coffee	FBP	Maclean
Federal Department of Science and Technology	FBP	National
Australia's food and Beverage Accelerator (FaBA)	FBP	National
Plant SynBio Australia	FBP	National

Seafood Industry		
Maritime Safety and Training NSW	SFI	Newcastle
Department of Primary industries and Regional Development Fisheries	SFI	Port Stephens
Commercial Fisherman's Co-operation	SFI	Newcastle
FVMarkane11 Fishing	SFI	North Coast
River Pirate Fisheries	SFI	North Coast
Port Stephens Oyster Farmers	SFI	Port Stephens
Goodnight Oysters	SFI	Greenwell Point
Jim Wilds Oysters	SFI	Greenwell Point
Seafood Industry Australia	SFI	State-wide
NSW Fishing Industry Training Committee	SFI	State-wide
Racing and Breeding		
Racing NSW	RGR	State-wide
Greyhound Racing NSW	RGR	State-wide
Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission	RGR	State-wide
Thoroughbred Breeders Australia	RGR	Hunter
Thoroughbred Breeders NSW	RGR	State-wide
Harness Racing NSW	RGR	State-wide
Silverdale Farm	RGR	Southern Highlands
Thenford Farm	RGR	Southern Highland
Meredith Park Thoroughbreds	RGR	Southern Highlands
Godolphin Racing	RGR	Richmond/Hunter
The Loch Equine	RGR	Southern Highlands
Animal Care and Management		
Diesel and Blue Doggy Daycare	ACM	Orange
Ballina Veterinary Clinic	ACM	Ballina
Assistance Dogs Australia	ACM	State-wide
Master Farriers Association	ACM	State-wide
Australia & New Zealand Laboratory Animals Association	ACM	State-wide
Pet Industry Association of Australia	ACM	State-wide
Pets Australia	ACM	State-wide
RSPCA NSW	ACM	State-wide
Hanrob Pet Hotels	ACM	State-wide
Guide Dogs NSW & ACT	ACM	State-wide
Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia	ACM	State-wide
Veterinary Care Training Academy	ACM	State-wide
Australian Veterinary Association	ACM	State-wide
ProForge	ACM	Kurrajong
Ultimate Hoofcare	ACM	Hawkesbury
Delta Therapy Dogs/Delta Institute RTO	ACM	Earlwood
Advanced Imagery/CT Tomographer	ACM	Southern Highlands
Equinet Brand Ambassador/Farrier	ACM	Southern Highlands
Australian Meat Processing		
Casino Food Co-op	AMP	North Coast
Beak and Johnson	AMP	State-wide
Alexander Downs	AMP	State-wide
Teys	AMP	Wagga Wagga
Wingham Beef Exports	AMP	Wingham
E.C Throsby	AMP	State-wide
JBS Foods	AMP	State-wide
BE Campbell	AMP	State-wide

William Angliss	AMP	State-wide
FS Alliance	AMP	State-wide
Response Learning	AMP	State-wide
Training Solutions Australia	AMP	State-wide
Fletcher's International Exports	AMP	State-wide
Aus-Meat	AMP	State-wide
Bindaree Food Group	AMP	Inverell
AMIC National	AMP	National
AMPC	AMP	National
Aust Meat	AMP	National
Australian Chicken Meat Federation	AMP	National
Cherry St Butchers	AMP	Ballina
Australian Meat Emporium	AMP	Alexandria
Lake Village Butchery	AMP	Wagga Wagg
Wagga Meat Supply	AMP	Wagga Wagga
South City Quality Meats	AMP	Glenfield Park
Hungerford Meat Co.	AMP	Branxton
The Richmond Butcher	AMP	Richmond
South Windsor Butchery	AMP	South Windsor
Chop Butchery	AMP	Belrose
SQM Sellers Meats	AMP	Newcastle
Robert’s Meats	AMP	Singleton
Greenacre Gourmet Meats	AMP	Greenacre
Adams Family Meats	AMP	New Lambton
Beaumont St Butchery	AMP	Hamilton
Hunter Valley Meats	AMP	Hunter
Morpeth Butcher	AMP	Morpeth
Shellharbour Meats	AMP	Shellharbour
Superior Meats	AMP	Shellharbour
Keiraville Butchery	AMP	Keiraville
Albion Park Village Meats	AMP	Albion Park
Albion Park Meats	AMP	Albion Park
Hasties Meats	AMP	Woolongong
21st Century Meats	AMP	Rutherford
Mountain View Meats	AMP	Woonona
Butchers Nook	AMP	Kiama
Cleaver & Co Meats	AMP	Gwynneville
The Australian Organic Meats	AMP	Dubbo
Darling St Meats	AMP	Rozelle
Bourke St Butchery	AMP	Dubbo
Country Grocer	AMP	Unanderra
Bushs Meats	AMP	Gladesville
Illawarra Smallgoods	AMP	Illawarra

Appendix B – Glossary

Acronyms and abbreviations	
ACCO	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation
ACM	Animal Care and Management
AFAM	Agriculture, Food and Animal Management
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AMSA	Australian Maritime Safety Authority
ANZSCO	Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
ANZSIC	Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification
CSA	Critical Skills Areas
FBP	Food, Beverage and Pharmaceutical
ICRG	Industry Collaboration Reference Group
IoT	Internet of Things
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Bodies
JSC	Jobs and Skills Council
LLN	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
LLND	Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital
MINTRAC	National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council
NESA	NSW Education Standards Authority
OSCA	Occupation Standard Classification for Australia
ROI	Return on Investment
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RRR	Rural, Regional and Remote
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
STO	State Training Organisations
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WHS	Work health and safety