



AFAM ITAB

Agriculture, Food
& Animal Management

March 2026

In this newsletter

- [Engagement activities](#)
- [Remote Jobs and Economic Development grants now open](#)
- [1000 Public Sector Apprentices and Trainees Program - opportunity in Albury or Henty](#)
- [Joint investment to support First Nations VET in NSW](#)
- [2026 Skills Conference – Registrations open](#)
- [Farms of the Future Mobile Learning Centre](#)
- [Smart and Skilled update](#)
- [Continuing Apprentices and Trainees Placement Service \(CAPS\)](#)
- [AgSkilled 3.0](#)
- [Jobs and Skills Councils \(JSC\) project updates](#)
- [NSW grants, opportunities and scholarships](#)

Welcome to the March AFAM newsletter. With a busy start to the year and a number of national initiatives underway that will shape training and workforce outcomes for industry in NSW, including the Ag Trade Apprenticeship Qualification and VET Workforce Blueprint projects, AFAM encourages stakeholders to contact Ben to discuss your skills and training priorities at bholmes@skillsinsight.com.au.

Best wishes,
Ben
Executive Officer

Engagement activities

Wagga Wagga regional visit

In February, AFAM attended the Skills Insight roundtable and networking event for the [VET Workforce Project](#) in Wagga Wagga, contributing to discussions that explored place-based training issues linked to the third area of system reform in the [NSW Skills Plan](#). Participants highlighted the importance of strengthening the VET workforce and its career pathways to support productivity, quality standards and worker safety, while also improving inclusion and addressing workforce shortages.

During the workshop Ben connected with Jo Marshall from the Australian Agricultural Centre (ACC). The ACC's mission is to deliver the skills and training farmers require, and give young people the chance to experience life on a farm. They discussed the

development of regional training initiatives including those helping to increase the participation of underrepresented groups. Women in Ag is a focus for the ACC empowering women with skills in agricultural science, animal husbandry, wool science, tractors, quads, chainsaws and more.

While in Wagga Wagga, AFAM also toured the TAFE campus and their baking facilities that support learners through a hybrid training model. The site showcases practical applications of innovative technology including infra-red safety scanners to help reduce workplace injuries and retarder cabinets that reduce the typical hours of baking operations through controlled environmental conditions. These approaches reflect how training environments continue to adapt to meet evolving industry needs.

AFAM also visited the TAFE Primary Industries Centre in Wagga Wagga, where school students undertake gap training through farm safety programs linked to Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS). Programs covering two- and four-wheel vehicles, tractors and machinery support safe transitions into primary production, while a shearing school delivers targeted skills training aligned with regional workforce demand.



Top left: Participants at the Vet Workforce Blueprint workshop. **Top right:** Jo Marshall from the Australian Agriculture Centre with Ben Holmes from AFAM. **Bottom left:** L-R: Ben, Commercial Cookery Teacher (Riverina) Jack Stratford, Bakery Teacher (Orange) Simon Pomeroy, Commercial Cookery Teacher (Wagga Wagga) Fiona Bance. **Bottom right:** Pictured in front of farm vehicle safety training equipment L-R: AgSkilled 3.0's Sonia Stevenson, Head Teacher Agriculture Ana Ingold, Ben Holmes.

Remote Jobs and Economic Development grants now open

Grants for the third round of the Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program are now open as the Australian government expands the program with a further \$299 million investment over four years to create an additional 3,000 jobs. Eligible employers can apply for funding to create new roles that communities want and need across [Remote Australia Employment Service \(RAES\) regions](#). Jobs can be part-time, full-time or casual and offer flexibility to support personal, family and community obligations.

Applications close on 7 April 2026.

Review eligibility and program details through the [National Indigenous Australians Agency website](#).



1000 Public Sector Apprentices and Trainees Program - opportunity in Albury or Henty

The NSW Government has opened round three of the 1000 Public Sector Apprentices and Trainees Program, with applications available until June 2026. The program continues to create valuable entry pathways into public sector roles, supporting skills development across a range of industries.

A current opportunity is available for a trainee undertaking the Certificate III in Earthworks, with a focus on Conservation and Ecosystems Management, based in Albury or Henty. Individuals interested in applying can find further details and submit their application by visiting the [Public Sector Apprentices and Trainees Program](#).

Joint investment to support First Nations VET in NSW

The NSW and Australian Governments are working together with Aboriginal training and community organisations to deliver a \$100 million investment in First Nations vocational education and training (VET) across NSW. This investment focuses on improving access to training, strengthening participation and supporting better outcomes for First Nations learners through delivery that reflects community priorities and builds stronger connections between training and employment.

The investment will support more culturally appropriate training, stronger partnerships between providers and communities, and clearer pathways into jobs. It will also build capability within the training system to better respond to the needs of First Nations learners and support more coordinated, place-based approaches to delivery.

[Read the media release.](#)

2026 Skills Conference – Registrations open

Registrations are now open for the 2026 Skills Conference, which will take place on Tuesday 16 June in Sydney. The event brings together leaders across vocational education and industry to explore priorities for a responsive and future focused skills system.

This year's speaker lineup includes the NSW Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, The Hon. Steve Whan, and the Executive Director for Skills Insight Jobs and Skills Council, Joshua Rayner. Joshua will join a panel discussion on Industry Led Skills Reform: Closing the Gap Between Policy and Practice, offering insights on how industry leadership can strengthen skills development and training outcomes.

To find out more and register, visit the [Skills Conference website](#).



Farms of the Future Mobile Learning Centre

The NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development Farms of the Future Mobile Learning Centre is delivering Agtech workshops and education across regional NSW to bring practical, hands-on learning directly to producers. The initiative supports primary producers with expert demonstrations and advice to improve on-farm connectivity and increase technology adoption.

Workshops provide an opportunity for producers to build capability in Agtech applications, including drone-related training that supports safer and more efficient operations. Participants may be able to access financial support through the [\\$1000 SafeWork New South Wales Small Business Rebate](#), which assists primary producers to strengthen work health and safety practices on farms.

Learn more and submit an expression of interest to bring the Mobile Learning Centre to your region through the [mobile learning centre webpage](#).



Smart and Skilled update

Financial cap allocations 2026 to 2027

Training Services has advised that financial caps for 2026 to 2027 will remain broadly in line with 2025 to 2026 levels, where providers meet key performance benchmarks. Providers need to reach at least 30 per cent of their financial cap by 28 February 2026 and maintain a satisfactory performance classification to retain their allocation.

From 2026 to 2027, a single financial cap will apply to both commencing and continuing students. This replaces the current split cap model and is intended to give providers greater flexibility while strengthening accountability. Providers can request cap transfers across regions and programs to meet demand, although transfers into the Sydney region remain excluded. Training Services will continue to monitor utilisation and may adjust caps where funding is underused.

NSW Skills List updated version 16.2

Version 16.2 of the NSW Skills List and the Smart and Skilled Qualification Prices and Fees Schedule is now in effect for training starting from 1 January 2026. The update includes training package revisions in manufacturing and Australian meat processing, changes to vocational training orders to support more apprenticeship and traineeship pathways, and price adjustments for a small number of qualifications.

The 2025 to 2026 pricing changes apply from 1 January 2026, with Certificate IV in Wool Classing applying from 2 April 2026. Read the updated [NSW Skills List](#) and access the [Smart and Skilled Qualification Prices and Fees Schedule](#).

Continuing Apprentices and Trainees Placement Service (CAPS)

The Continuing Apprentices and Trainees Placement Service is a free support for NSW apprentices and trainees to continue their training when their employment is disrupted. The service connects individuals with new employers and provides practical assistance

to help them remain on track to complete their qualification, supporting both learners and industry to retain critical skills.

Employers can access a pool of apprentices and trainees who have already commenced training and are ready to continue developing their skills in the workplace. This supports workforce stability and helps employers respond to changing business needs.

[Learn more about CAPS.](#)

AgSkilled 3.0

AFAM encourages stakeholders to review the range of short courses and individual units available through the AgSkilled program to support identified workforce training needs. The program offers targeted opportunities across cropping, livestock, agronomy, agricultural technology and digital capabilities, machinery operations, safety, supervision and business management, allowing organisations to build capability in key areas.

Training is available until May, with the program remaining open until June 2026. Stakeholders can explore available options and enrol promptly to ensure training is completed within the required timeframe.

Visit the [AgSkilled website](#) to learn more, or contact Ben at AFAM bholmes@skillsinsight.com.au for further information.



Jobs and Skills Councils (JSC) project updates

Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance (MISA) JSC continues to work with the food and beverage industry to support workforce development across manufacturing. This year's Manufacturing Industry Workforce Plan is underway, complemented for the first time by four sector-specific Workforce Plans, including a dedicated plan for the food and beverage industry.

Australia's Food Manufacturing Capability and Future Needs project has received approval from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. This project will assess current and future capability, supporting national priorities in food security and sovereign capability while identifying what the sector will need through to 2050.

Engagement is also continuing with baking and distilling industry bodies to progress

training-focused project proposals. For more information, contact Ian Martin ianm@manufacturingalliance.com.au or visit manufacturingalliance.org.au/.

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

Project Planning:

- [Ag Trade Apprenticeship Qualification](#)
- [Mapping Licensing and Regulatory Considerations](#) (in Animal Care and Management)
- [Retail Butchery and Smallgoods](#)

Development Stage:

- [Community-based Aquaculture Training Tools](#)

Broad Consultation:

- [Attraction and Retention Guidance](#)
- [Flock Safe Project](#)
- [Landscaping Skills Review](#)
- [Rural Operations](#)
- [Veterinary Nursing Skills and Qualification Review](#)

Consensus Gathering:

- [Vet Workforce Project](#)

Finalisation:

- [Worker Safety Induction Pilot](#)



NSW grants, opportunities and scholarships

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

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

[Barranggirra](#): to provide end to end support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners through culturally appropriate mentoring to ensure successful retention and completion of training and improved post-training employment outcomes.

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

[Conservation Partners Grants](#): financial assistance for landholders managing conservation agreement areas to improve the biodiversity value of their properties.

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

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

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

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

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

[OCHRE Opportunity Hubs](#): aim to provide First Nations young people with the confidence and knowledge to follow a supported pathway between school and further education and/or employment through partnerships with schools, coordination of local opportunities, mentoring, support and more.

[Resources to Assist in Supervising Your Apprentice or Trainee](#): a series of videos and resources are available.

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

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

Please feel welcome share this newsletter with anyone you think might be interested.

If you have been forwarded this email and would like to stay up to date with news from NSW AFAM ITAB, you are welcome to subscribe to our mailing list.

Subscribe

**Skills
Insight**

AFAM works in collaboration with Skills Insight.





AFAM is supported and funded by the NSW Government.

Copyright © 2025 Skill Insight Ltd, All rights reserved.

AFAM NSW ITAB

bholmes@skillsinsight.com.au

PO Box 7133, East Ballina, NSW 2478

[Unsubscribe](#) from the AFAM newsletter list.