



AFAM ITAB

Agriculture, Food
& Animal Management

June 2026

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As the AFAM ITAB contract moves to MINTRAC ([see ITAB update below](#)), Skills Insight extends its gratitude to all NSW stakeholders who have engaged in the work of the ITAB since 2021. Thank you for supporting the work of the AFAM ITAB, contributing to a stronger VET system in NSW.

Best wishes,
Ben
Executive Officer

AFAM ITAB contract update

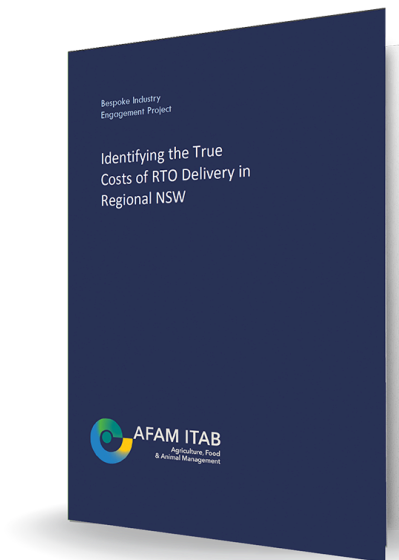
The AFAM ITAB contract has been awarded to [MINTRAC](#) (National Meat Industry Advisory Council Limited) for the next 18 month period to provide the continuation of AFAM ITAB services. Skills Insight were pleased to support the MINTRAC bid and will work with them over the next few weeks to ensure a smooth handover and transition. Skills Insight wishes both MINTRAC and NSW stakeholders all the best as the work continues to support industry needs and improve VET outcomes in NSW.

MINTRAC will be contacting stakeholders to facilitate effective communications into the new contract period.

New AFAM report - Identifying the true costs of RTO delivery in regional NSW

A new report from AFAM examines the range of costs of delivering vocational education and training (VET) in regional NSW, showing that the true cost of training delivery in these areas are often additional, significantly higher, and more volatile than in metropolitan areas. It aims to inform more effective funding and policy settings by identifying the main cost drivers that affect registered training organisation (RTO) viability and access to training in regional NSW.

[Learn more and download the report](#)



Engagement activities

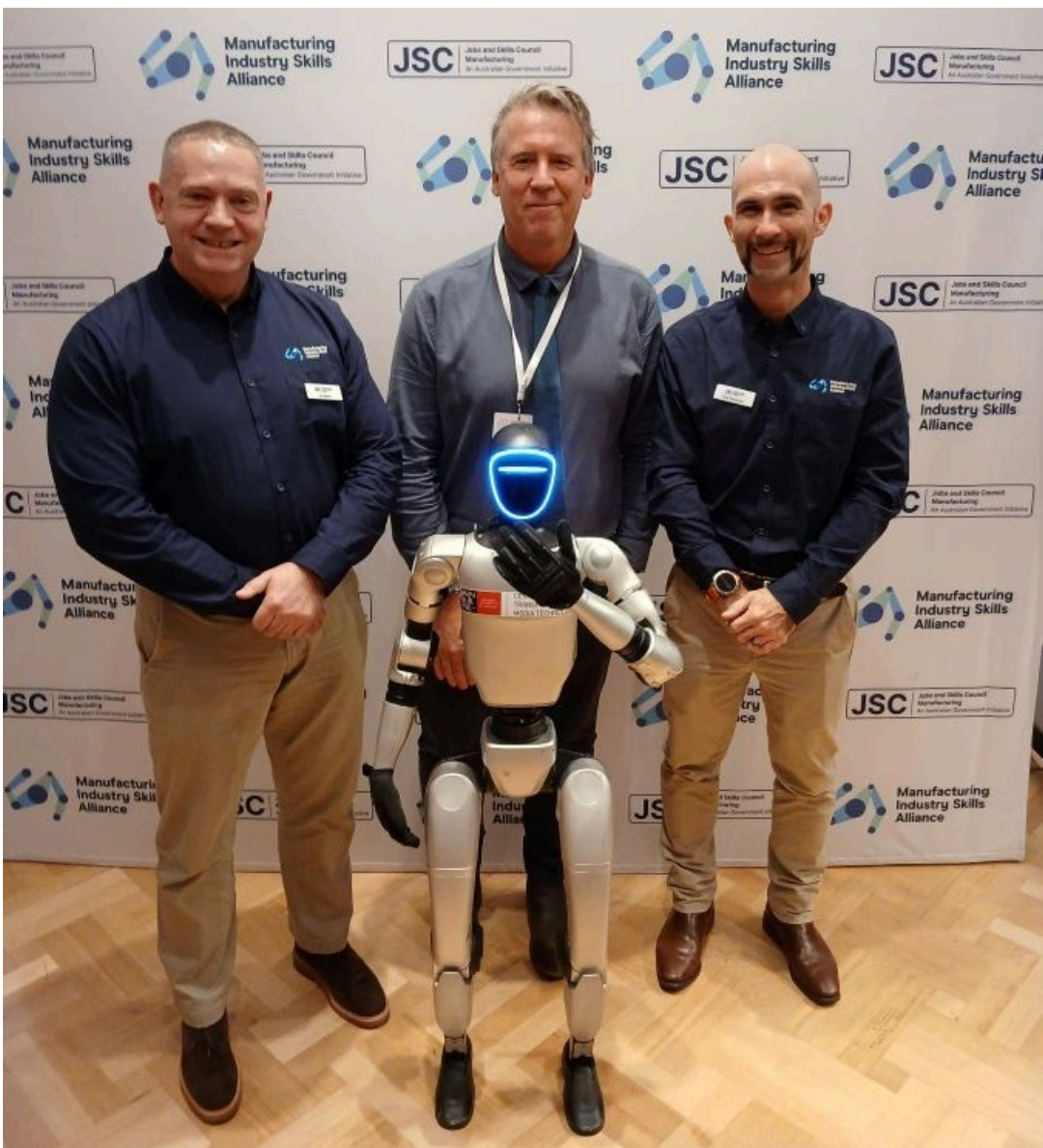
Recent industry engagement activities provided insights into factors influencing workforce development, training outcomes and future skills needs across a range of sectors. The Commonwealth Bank Farms in Focus webinar highlighted that time constraints and access to specific advice were the main barriers to adopting new technologies and practices as identified by 50 per cent of producers surveyed. Only 7 per cent reported a lack of knowledge or access to training as a barrier. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research webinar on place-based and culturally responsive VET for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners highlighted the importance of culturally safe environments, strong community relationships, acknowledgement of trauma, and increased participation of First Nations staff and mentors in supporting successful learner outcomes.

The Skills Conference hosted by the Apprenticeship Employment Network NSW & ACT provided an opportunity to engage in discussions on apprenticeship and traineeship reforms. Conversations with the Catholic Schools Office team included their insights into the value of School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) including the social factors that can influence student participation and completion rates.

At the 2026 National Manufacturing Workforce Forum, Ben connected with Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance Industry Engagement Partners Matt Sweetman and Ian Martin where they discussed the future of Australian manufacturing, workforce capability and productivity. Forum participants identified training and supporting new entrants as the leading strategy for strengthening sovereign capability, while closer collaboration between industry and education providers was recognised as essential for developing skilled workforce solutions. The forum also highlighted the need to reshape perceptions of manufacturing from "dirty, dusty and dangerous" to "smart, secure and sustainable".



Ben Holmes with Sarah Dicker and Michael Kelly of the Catholic Schools Office SBAT team.



Smart and Skilled update

Changes to the 2026–27 Smart and Skilled program aim to improve planning certainty and funding allocation and include increased notice periods for contract arrangements to assist RTO delivery planning. The Department will continue to prioritise funded training in critical skills areas, including agriculture and agrifood, apprenticeships and traineeships, and National Skills Agreement priorities such as the VET workforce, foundation skills and Closing the Gap. Fee-free places will be limited from 1 July, while support for fee-free apprenticeships and traineeships will continue.

Learn more in the [Smart and Skilled update 5 May 2026](#)

Trade Pathways Program

The NSW Government's Trade Pathways for Experienced Workers program helps eligible workers gain a formal trade qualification. The program aligns with findings from the 2025 [AFAM Industry Training Priorities report](#), which identified upskilling current employees and recognising existing capability as key priorities across several sectors.

Workers aged over 21 years may be eligible if they can demonstrate at least three years of current industry experience and qualify for Recognition of Prior Learning for a minimum of three units. Phase one is now open for people working in landscape construction who have industry skills and experience but have not completed the AHC30921 Certificate III in Landscape Construction. The Management Edge (TME) RTO has been approved to deliver this qualification under the program, and enrolments must be finalised by 31 August 2026, with training to start by 30 September 2026 and finish by 31 May 2027.

Phase two is scheduled for release in July/August 2026 and will include qualifications across agriculture, horticulture, arboriculture, beekeeping, irrigation, parks and gardens, sports turf, wool handling, meat processing and baking. Enrolments will remain open until April 2027, with training to commence by 31 May 2027 and conclude by September 2028. The EOI process to identify approved RTO providers is currently in the finalisation stage.

View the list of qualifications approved for delivery in the [Smart and Skilled update 26 May 2026](#)

Learn more about the [Trade Pathways for Experienced Workers program](#)

AgSkilled 3.0

Recently Training Services New South Wales, through the AgSkilled program, funded a series of wool harvesting pilot training programs to build the next generation of shearers and wool handlers. Australian Agricultural Training Company delivered the training in partnership with industry investment, with additional support from Australian Wool Innovation.

Twenty-eight young learners completed the training across two remote locations, with 14 students attending near Clare in the Western Riverina and Murray region and another 14 training at Coolringdon in the Cooma and Monaro region. Participants gained practical, entry-level skills through six nationally recognised units covering animal welfare, workplace health and safety, wool handling, equipment preparation and basic shearing and crutching.

Grace Armstrong from Culcairn, who secured a campout role after attending the Clare program, said, *'I thought that shearers in the shed could teach me all I need to know but I got a rude awakening. Trainers show you what you need to know and how to look after your body, which are really valuable lessons.'* Local producers Jess and Sam

Scott highlighted the value of delivering training where it's needed – where the work is. Jess commented that the shearing school helped address workforce shortages in remote areas where contractors can travel up to 500 kilometres for work, while Sam noted the training supports ongoing employment opportunities and helps workers build skills they can use across different regions.

Learn more about [AgSkilled](#)



Students gaining practical, hands-on skills during the wool harvesting pilot training program.



L-R: Students Jack Waters, Harry Litchfield, Lachlan Miners, Jane Miners, Riley Thompson

Australian Meat Processing (AMP) Commissioner Information Bulletin (CIB) update

In CIB 769, multiple traineeship vocations have been updated with a summary of changes listed below. AFAM has submitted advice to the department, through the collaborative partnership with MINTRAC, to update the Bulletin describing the structural arrangements for apprenticeships and traineeships in this vocation following recently released AMP training package updates and qualification reforms.

The Meat Processing – Food Services traineeship vocation is varied to delete the following qualification pathway:

- AMP20117 Certificate II in Meat Processing (Food Services)

The Meat Processing – General traineeship vocation is varied to: add a new qualification pathway:

- [AMP20126 Certificate II in Meat Processing](#)

delete the following qualification pathways:

- AMP50221 Diploma of Meat Processing
- AMP60122 Advanced Diploma of Meat Processing

The Meat Processing - Meat Retailing traineeship vocation is varied to update the qualification and the nominal full-time term:

- [AMP20426 Certificate II in Meat Retailing](#)

The following traineeship vocation is repealed and the qualification pathway deleted: Meat Processing - Abattoirs

- AMP20316 Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)

All other Vocational Training Orders remain unchanged. [Learn more about CIB 769](#)

Farm Safety Week

National Farm Safety Week will run from 19 to 25 July 2026 with the theme 'Set the Standard: Show 'em how it's done'. The campaign highlights the role every person on farm plays in shaping safe practices, recognising that everyday decisions influence those around us. This year's campaign encourages farmers, workers and families to lead by example, speak up about the small decisions that affect safety, and demonstrate what safe, practical farming looks like in day-to-day operations.

Learn more and get involved by visiting the [Farmsafe Australia website](#)

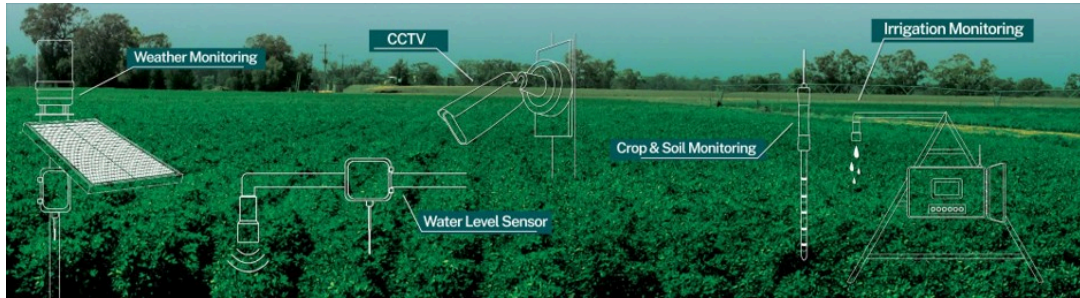
Free AgTech Fundamentals workshops

Agtech Fundamentals is an introductory workshop for farmers keen to learn how Agtech and connectivity solutions can be used on farm to accelerate productivity and profitability. Delivered by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, the workshops cover topics including connectivity, data, sensors and on-farm technology to help businesses improve productivity and support informed decision-making.

Mara and Anthony Grills from AMG Grazing in Waverley used agtech solutions to strengthen business operations and gain valuable insights for their enterprise. The

case study highlights the practical benefits producers can achieve by adopting the right technology for their needs. [Read about their experience.](#)

[Learn more and register for upcoming workshops](#)



Jobs and Skills Councils (JSC) project updates

Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance (MISA) JSC The 'Australia's Food Manufacturing Capability & Future Needs' project has commenced with preliminary analysis of data being undertaken by the MISA team. They will undertake a structured national assessment of the food manufacturing sector, examining its current footprint, capacity, and capability. A key focus of the project will be identifying where capability gaps may emerge and how technology, workforce skills, innovation, and supply chain developments may shape the sector's future needs. This includes exploring where the skills and training system may contribute to capability development, without assuming that training interventions are the sole or primary solution. The findings will support government, industry, and stakeholders by improving national visibility, informing future planning, and laying the groundwork for subsequent targeted initiatives across the food manufacturing sector.

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:

- [Biosecurity Skills Review](#)
- [Improved Training Pathways and Safety in Racing](#)

Development Stage:

- [Ag Trade Apprenticeship Qualification](#)
- [Community-based Aquaculture Training Tools](#)
- [Retail Butchery and Smallgoods](#)

Broad Consultation:

- [Landscaping Skills Review](#)
- [Veterinary Nursing Skills and Qualification Review](#)

Consensus Gathering:

- [Flock Safe Project](#)
- [Rural Operations](#)
- [Vet Workforce Project](#)

Finalisation:

- [Mapping Licensing and Regulatory Considerations](#) (in Animal Care and Management)

- [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.

[Barrangirra](#): 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.

[Bert Evans Apprenticeship Scholarships](#): support NSW apprentices to successfully complete their apprenticeship in their chosen trade. Currently valued at \$5,000 per year for up to 3 years, to a maximum of \$15,000. **Applications close 30 September 2026.**

[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](#).

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