



## Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council

**The Hon Brendan O'Connor MP**  
Minister for Skills and Training

**The Hon Blair Boyer MP**  
**South Australia**  
Minister for Education, Training and Skills

**The Hon Felix Ellis MP**  
**Tasmania**  
Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth

**The Hon Dianne Farmer MP**  
**Queensland**  
Minister for Training and Skills Development

**The Hon Paul Kirby MLA**  
**Northern Territory**  
Minister for Business, Jobs and Training

**The Hon Simone McGurk MLA**  
**Western Australia**  
Minister for Training, Water and Youth

**Mr Chris Steel MLA**  
**Australian Capital Territory**  
Minister for Skills

**The Hon Gayle Tierney MLC**  
**Victoria**  
Minister for Training and Skills

*Senior officials observed the meeting for the New South Wales Government*

# COMMUNIQUE

## MEETING OF FEDERAL, STATE AND TERRITORY SKILLS MINISTERS

Federal, State and Territory Skills and Training Ministers met in Brisbane today to progress key skills sector reforms and vocational education workforce challenges, aimed at strengthening the quality of vocational education and training and tackling the nations skills shortages now and over the longer term.

### National Skills Agreements and Reform Opportunities

As of January 2023, the Federal, State and Territory governments began delivery of 180,000 Fee-Free TAFE and vocational education places made available under the 12-month Skills Agreement. The places available are in areas of national priority, such as care sectors, digital and technology, tourism and hospitality, construction and agriculture. First Nations Australians, young people (17-24), people with disabilities, and women studying in non-traditional fields are a priority.

Skills Ministers discussed reform opportunities under the proposed five-year National Skills Agreement (NSA) to be negotiated in 2023 and commence in January 2024, and will provide States and Territories with longer term funding security. Discussions were framed by the Vision and Guiding Principles for a new NSA which were endorsed by National Cabinet prior to the Jobs and Skills Summit in September 2022, and strengthened by priorities agreed to by Skills Ministers in November 2022.

Skills Ministers received a tour of the new Robotics Lab and Cyber Security training facilities at TAFE South Bank, Queensland campus and lunch prepared by students, demonstrating the variety of career paths available through quality vocational education and training.

The Federal, States and Territories are also working together on projects to be funded under the TAFE Technology Fund, investing in upgrading essential TAFE infrastructure.

### Job and Skills Australia Establishment

Skills Ministers discussed progress to establish the permanent Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), as a national leader in data analysis and labour market insights. Feedback received through submissions in the public consultation process will continue to inform the development of legislation, engagement protocols and operational elements.

In 2023, JSA will develop the evidence base needed to respond to changing skills and labour needs in the economy, through a new national study of adult literacy and numeracy and a capacity study on the emerging workforce needs for Australia's transition to a clean energy economy. The clean energy study will support workforce planning to build a strong and vibrant clean energy sector and deliver energy transition and the transformation to a net zero economy by 2050.

Skills Ministers discussed the importance of their shared interest in JSA to ensure that analysis considers State and Territory intelligence and serves the nation's priorities.

## Industry Engagement Reforms and Jobs and Skills Councils

Skills Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to work together to support the implementation of industry engagement reforms, including the establishment of Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs).

This is a fundamental improvement in industry engagement with the VET sector and will work to deliver better outcomes for employers, workers, learners and the economy.

Skills Ministers endorsed the *Jobs and Skills Councils Integrity Framework*. Skills Ministers have a key role as the stewards of the VET sector in driving the quality and integrity of JSCs. The Integrity Framework will be made publicly available on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website.

Skills Ministers agreed to convey to the JSCs the expectation that they ensure their boards recognise the need to reflect gender balance and the diversity of the Australian population, and that the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations review the Program Guidelines for JSCs related to governance (clause 9 of the guidelines) to reflect these expectations going forward.

Skills Ministers endorsed temporary oversight of the Training and Assessment (TAE) and Foundation Skills (FSK) Training Packages by the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. The Commonwealth will work with States and Territories, and VET industry stakeholders to consider longer-term arrangements for the critically important vocational education sector, both in the context of broader skills reforms and the new industry engagement arrangements.

## VET Data Reforms

VET data reforms aim to provide more timely information-rich data on the VET sector and address the current lag of publication of this data. Skills Ministers endorsed proposed changes to the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (NVETR) Act*, to support timely updates to VET data arrangements in order to remain responsive to the needs of jurisdictions and data users.

## Quality Reforms

Skills Ministers discussed the progress and next steps for measures to support and improve quality across the VET sector, including revisions to the Standards for Registered Training Organisations, and acknowledged the deep engagement and valuable feedback received from the sector.

Skills Ministers agreed to a new commencement date of 1 January 2025 for the revised Standards, which will enable the Standards and related regulatory requirements to be further tested with the sector to ensure the sector is prepared for strengthened Standards and the revised approach supports uniformly high quality training delivery as soon as possible.

## Training Package Content

Skills Ministers expressed their shared concern regarding the Responsible Service of Alcohol units of competency and noted that work is being expeditiously progressed to amend those products to ensure courses do not include any material that is potentially unlawful or offensive.

Skills Ministers agreed that industry will be required to further review the unit in consultation with community groups, industry stakeholders and training providers. Skills Ministers also commissioned the development of cultural competency resources for training product developers.

## Measures to Address Workforce Pressures

The Ministers for Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory shared successful local workforce initiatives in their jurisdictions. The Hon Dianne Farmer MP (QLD), presented on the new workforce strategy covering employment transitions, building a skilled workforce, ensuring local solutions, supporting First Nations Australians and moving towards clean energy. Mr Chris Steel MLA (ACT), presented on barriers to attracting students into VET through a lens of industry consultation, and opportunities to address these barriers through partnerships with higher education providers and using micro-credentials.

Skills Ministers were briefed on progress and welcomed the review of Australia's migration system, *A Migration System for Australia's Future*, and discussed opportunities for the Commonwealth, States and Territories to work together to ensure the migration program and delivery of training are complementary. The Review aims to develop a strategy for migration, informed by the discussions and outcomes of the Jobs and Skills Summit with a particular focus on how the migration program complements Australia's jobs and skills agenda. The Review Panel is considering submissions and their final report is expected in early 2023.

Skills Ministers noted progress on the development of a VET Workforce Blueprint, including the establishment of a Steering Group to provide expertise, with a draft Blueprint to be delivered in the second half of 2023.

To engage on a range of Skills Reform matters, including reading the published Jobs and Skills Councils Integrity Framework, visit the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website or reach out to your State or Territory Skills Minister.

**FRIDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2023**

## **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

### **Minister O'Connor (Commonwealth):**

Erin Smith  
0458 950 010  
erin.smith@dewr.gov.au

### **Minister Boyer:**

Nadine De Bono  
0487 878 077  
Nadine.DeBono@sa.gov.au

### **Minister Ellis:**

Jessica Sargent  
0415 936 933  
jessica.sargent@dpac.tas.gov.au

### **Minister Farmer:**

Nicola Field  
0497 940 285  
Nicola.Field@ministerial.qld.gov.au

### **Minister Kirby**

Will Zwar  
0483 197 842  
William.zwar@nt.gov.au

### **Minister McGurk**

Tegan Sapwell  
0448 502 065  
Tegan.Sapwell@dpc.wa.gov.au

### **Minister Tierney**

Mike Dolan  
0474 909 471  
Mike.dolan@minstaff.vic.gov.au

### **Minister Steel:**

Anton Gallacher  
0422 574 108  
anton.gallacher@act.gov.au