



## **Skill Assessment Pilots Evaluation**

Final Evaluation Report  
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

June 2024

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## **Glossary**

ACS – Australian Computer Society

AITSL – Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

ANMAC – Australian Nursing & Midwifery Accreditation Council

ANZSCO – Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations

APC – Australian Pharmacy Council

CAANZ – Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand

CPA – Certified Practising Accountant Australia

EA – Institute of Engineers Australia

EAP – Employability assessment provider

DEWR – Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

IPA – Institute of Public Accountants

JSA – Jobs Skills Australia

KPI – Key performance indicator

MSI – Migrant skills incentives

OCANZ – Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand

OQU – Overseas qualification unit

SAP – Skills Assessment Pilot

TRA – Trades Recognition Australia

VET – Vocational Education and Training

VETASSESS – Vocational Education and Training Assessment Services

# Executive Summary

## Pilot 1 | Faster Migrant Skills Assessments

Offered fast-tracked skills assessments for onshore migrants who had already submitted and paid for an application in a priority occupation and were awaiting an outcome.

**3,977 applicants** equivalent to approx. 54% of the total target (7,300) in line with the Department's internal forecasting about Pilot 1 demand, that were based on previous skill assessment demand

**34% Female** **89%** were found 'suitable'  
**54% Male<sup>1</sup>** **11%** were found 'unsuitable'

**64%** of participants were assessed by three Assessing Authorities – EA, TRA and CPA

Applications were processed within **3 business days** (median time) <sup>1</sup> Remainder of respondents' gender was unspecified

### Visa outcomes

**77%** intend or had already used their skills assessment outcome to apply for a different visa

**77%** transitioning from a temporary to permanent visa

### Employment outcomes

**93%** were employed (at the time of the survey), compared to **86%** (at the time received outcome)

**37%** working in a different job than when they received their skills assessment

**24%** now working in an occupation which was aligned to their skills assessment

**54%** reported earning more after receiving a skills assessment outcome

### Economic outcomes

**80%** were skilled in occupations that had been deemed to be in short supply

**6%** would not have completed a skills assessment in the absence of Pilot 1

**39%** reported improved prospects and increased overall sense of stability and security

**Earnt \$5,204 more** as a result of receiving a fast-tracked skills assessment outcome, on average

Implementation

Effectiveness

Impact

## Pilot 2 | Skills Assessment Opportunities for Migrants

Offered onshore migrants who resided in Australia on specific family, partner, humanitarian visas, with a free and fast-tracked skills assessment.

**283 applicants** equivalent to approx. 4% of the total target (7,300) below the Department's forecast expectations about Pilot 2 demand, that were based on a mix of previous skill assessment demand and industry anecdotes

**61% Female** **54%** were found 'suitable'  
**39% Male<sup>1</sup>** **46%** were found 'unsuitable'

**89%** of participants were assessed by three Assessing Authorities – APC, EA and TRA

Applications were processed within **4 business days** (median time) <sup>1</sup> Remainder of respondents' gender was unspecified

### Employment outcomes

**84%** were employed (at the time of the survey), compared to **59%** (at the time received outcome)

**44%** working in a different job than when they received their skills assessment

**31%** now working in an occupation which was aligned to their skills assessment

**69%** working in a job aligned to skills assessment (at the time of the survey), compared to **56%** (at the time received outcome) overall

**48%** reported earning more after receiving a skills assessment outcome

### Economic outcomes

**99%** were skilled in occupations that had been deemed to be in short supply

**25%** would not have completed a skills assessment in the absence of Pilot 2

**72%** reported improved employment and career prospects

**Earning \$12,500 more per year<sup>2</sup>** (or \$241 per week) as a result of receiving a free and fast-tracked skills assessment outcome, on average

<sup>2</sup> Assumes the individual remains employed in the same job for the full year

## Pilot 3 | Employability Assessments

Offered onshore migrants who previously received a suitable skills assessment outcome in a priority occupation with a free employability assessment and access to subsidised training.

**229 applicants** equivalent to approx. 3% of the total target (7,300) significantly below the Department's forecast expectations, that were based on a combination of previous skill assessment completions, industry anecdotes and publicly available data sources surrounding the underutilisation migrants with recognised skills

**15% Female** **74% Male<sup>1</sup>**

**88%** of participants were assessed by three Assessing Authorities – EA, VETASSESS and TRA

**One quarter (or 26%)** of applicants withdrew their application <sup>1</sup> Remainder of respondents' gender was unspecified

### Employment outcomes

**93%** were employed (at the time of the survey) compared to **89%** (at the time received outcome)

**40%** working in a different job than when they received their employability assessment

**16%** now working in an occupation aligned to their skills assessment

**72%** were working in a job that was not aligned to their skills (at the time of the survey)

**66%** reported having a better understanding of the employment system after participation in Pilot 3

**43%** reported earning more after receiving a skills assessment outcome

### Economic outcomes

**96%** were skilled in occupations that had been deemed to be in short supply

Limited impact on participants as the key barriers to securing employment in line with skills assessment extend beyond employability skills, including:

**Hiring practices of employers favour local experience**

**Complexity of the system presents navigation challenges**



**Not understanding the subtleties of their occupation**

# Executive Summary - Context

## Background

Skill assessments allow prospective migrants to demonstrate they have the skills, qualifications and experience necessary to meet Australian occupational standards. The primary purpose of receiving a skills assessment outcome is to support a skilled visa application, however it also represents a requirement for registration in some occupations.

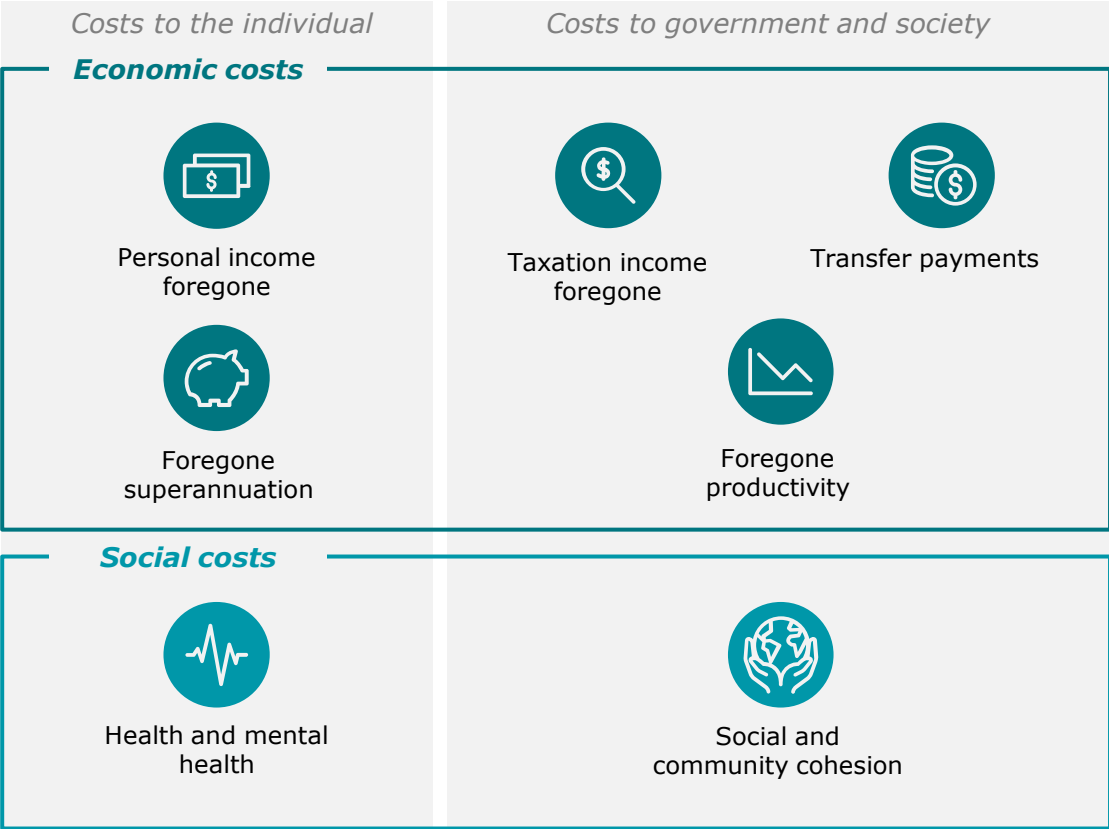
Australia has benefited from its migration program spanning many decades. The contribution of these migrants to Australia’s economy and society has been significant for a number of key reasons:

-  Nearly half of all permanent arrivals to Australia have been part of the skilled migration program, providing a major source of talent for Australia’s skilled workforce.
-  Migration has supported Australia’s population growth. The combination of first and second-generation migrants now account for almost half of the Australian population.<sup>1</sup>

Research into skills utilisation of permanent skilled migrants found that nearly one in every four permanent skilled migrants were working beneath their skill level.<sup>2</sup> The costs of skill underutilisation relate to productivity lost when migrants are employed below their skill level or not employed at all. In parallel, there exists social costs to migrants being employed below their skill level (Figure i).

In this context, the Australian Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR; the Department) in 2022 established three Skills Assessment Pilots (SAP; the Pilots), which sought to enable increased migrant participation in the labour market at levels commensurate with their existing skills. In turn, the SAP are intended to assist in addressing skill shortages and help enable broader social and economic outcomes for migrants.

Figure i.i: Costs of skill underutilisation



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024)

# Executive Summary - Context

## Background (cont.)

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The three SAP are:

- **Pilot 1 (February – June 2022):** Faster Migrant Skills Assessments, offered fast-tracked skills assessments for [onshore migrants](#) who had already submitted and paid for an application in a priority occupation and were awaiting an outcome.
- **Pilot 2 (February 2022 – February 2024):** Skills Assessment Opportunities for Migrants, offered onshore migrants who reside in Australia on specific [family, partner, humanitarian and secondary skilled visas](#), with a free and fast-tracked skills assessment.
- **Pilot 3 (September 2022 – February 2024):** Employability Assessments, which offered onshore migrants who previously received a suitable skills assessment outcome in a priority occupation (and held a specific visa) with a free employability assessment and access to subsidised training.

Further detail regarding each pilot can be found on [page 15](#).

Deloitte Access Economics was engaged in 2022 to undertake an independent evaluation of the SAP. The evaluation has focused on producing formative and summative insights regarding each Pilot:

- **Implementation** – *Have the Skills Assessment Pilots been implemented as planned?*
- **Effectiveness** – *Are the Skills Assessment Pilots achieving their intended outcomes?*
- **Impact** – *What difference has the Skills Assessment Pilots made?*

In order to support the assessment of the Pilots against these evaluation domains a set of key evaluation questions that further specify the scope of the evaluation were defined (see [page 17](#)). Program Logic models were also developed to describe the inputs, activities and outputs of each Pilot (see Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report, Appendix E).

In developing the findings and recommendations as part of the evaluation, primary and secondary data sources were utilised, including:

### *Primary data sources*

- Interviews with Assessing Authorities and an Employability Assessment Provider (31 interviews in total)
- Point-in-time and longitudinal surveys of Pilot participants (1,460 responses in total across the three Pilots)<sup>a</sup>
- Administrative data related to the Pilots
- Interviews with Pilot participants who withdrew during the process (6 in total)

### *Secondary data sources*

- Analysis of publicly available data and research.

**A summary of the key findings and results across the Pilots is provided on page 5, with more detailed findings and conclusions on the slides that follow.**

<sup>a</sup> Please note this does not represent unique survey respondents (i.e., includes longitudinal respondents more than once)

# Executive Summary – Key Findings Pilot 1

## **Implementation:** *To what extent was Pilot 1 implemented as planned?*

- The evidence suggests that Pilot 1 was implemented effectively – successfully, enabling participating Assessing Authorities to fast-track eligible skill assessments across a broad array of occupations and geographies.
- Uptake of Pilot 1 was relatively strong, enabled by the fact that the Pilot mirrored existing assessment processes, and involved applicants who were already on their skills assessment journey.
- Assessing Authorities were able to meet processing time Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), generally representing an improvement on prior processing times.

## **Effectiveness:** *To what extent has Pilot 1 achieved its intended outcomes?*

- Pilot 1 appears to have achieved its objective of supporting participants who receive suitable skills assessment outcomes to transition to skilled, often permanent visas, while exhibiting improved employment outcomes and filling skilled vacancies of occupations in national shortage.

## **Impact:** *What difference has Pilot 1 made?*

- There are indications the Pilot has been associated with higher participant earnings after receiving a skills assessment outcome, facilitated by the acceleration of their transition to roles in line with their qualifications.
- Obtaining a suitable skills assessment outcome was associated with an increased chance of securing a job matching one's assessed skills.
- Improved social wellbeing, including an overall sense of personal stability and security, was identified as an important additional benefit.

## **Conclusions: Pilot 1**

Overall, Pilot 1 was successful in its implementation, having been rolled out rapidly with a clear set of guidelines and systems, and was successful in its ability to reduce application processing times. Uptake was understandably strong, as the Pilot targeted applications which were already in progress.

Outcomes for migrants involved in the Pilot were also good, however it is unclear the extent to which the fact that applications were fast tracked contributed significantly to these outcomes. This is because a small number Assessing Authorities had average processing times lower than the Pilot's KPI target and the Pilot occurred at a period of tight labour market conditions. However, on balance evidence does suggest that the Pilot was successful in mobilising Assessing Authorities to clear backlogs of skill assessment applications.

Areas of improvement for consideration in similar future programs include:

- Given that funding was reportedly sufficient (in part due to the high numbers in the Pilot) and some Assessing Authorities were already meeting the Department's processing time KPI, in future there may be scope to further investigate alternative funding design. Although, this would require more detailed analysis on cost and how this varies across different contexts.
- Given that funding was reportedly sufficient (in part due to the high numbers in the Pilot) and small number Assessing Authorities were already meeting the Department's processing time KPI, in future there may be scope to further investigate alternative funding models for the fast-track component given Assessing Authorities varied processes and challenges in meeting KPI processing timeframes. Although, this would require more detailed analysis on cost and how this varies across different contexts.
- Considering ways to support shortening the time between when applications are first submitted, and when they become 'assessment ready' (i.e. with all documents in place) which can be significant, and is often the main driver of delays for individual applications.

The Pilot has nonetheless shown that in times of high volumes of skills assessment applications, it is possible for Government to work with Assessing Authorities to support faster processing.



# Executive Summary – Key Findings Pilot 2

## **Implementation:** *To what extent was Pilot 2 implemented as planned?*

- The evidence suggests that Pilot 2 was procedurally implemented effectively, however lower than anticipated uptake represented key challenges, meaning participation was concentrated among certain Assessing Authorities (and therefore occupations). In response to low uptake, the Department undertook a series of promotional activities.
- Assessing Authorities were able to meet processing time Key Performance Indicator's (KPIs) and generally this was an improvement on prior processing times.
- The extent to which funding was viewed as sufficient varied, Assessing Authorities with higher caseloads generally agreed that funding was sufficient while those with low caseloads noted funding was not sufficient.

## **Effectiveness:** *To what extent has Pilot 2 achieved its intended outcomes?*

- Pilot 2 participants exhibited improved employment outcomes, including transition from unemployment to employment and obtaining positions matching their assessments.
- Pilot 2 had a relatively high share of applicants receiving 'unsuitable' outcomes, suggesting that some participants may have not applied for a skills assessment if it was not available for free, alternatively may highlight the additional barriers these visa holders face to undertaking a skills assessment.
- The Pilot had a large share of female participants largely reflecting the visa eligibility criteria for the Pilot targeting family, partner and secondary skilled visa holders.
- Pilot 2 participants were trained in high-demand occupations however given low uptake, the contribution to addressing skills shortages is likely to have been minor.

## **Impact:** *What difference has Pilot 2 made?*

- There are indications that Pilot 2 has been associated with higher participant earnings and improved employment circumstances after receiving a skills assessment outcome.
- The evidence suggests that for many participants, involvement in Pilot 2 (and the outcomes that followed) may not have occurred in its absence.

- Participants attributed receiving a skills assessment outcome with a higher sense of social wellbeing, particularly noting an enhanced sense of future employment and career prospects and confidence.

## **Conclusions: Pilot 2**

While implemented successfully from a procedural standpoint, Pilot 2 faced challenges in generating the expected levels of uptake. These included:

- Uncertainty among prospective applicants around the value of a skills assessment for purely employment purposes (rather than migration purposes), especially during a period of high demand in several occupations included in the Pilot.
- The eligibility criteria which limited participation to certain visas.
- Difficulty reaching the intended cohort from a marketing perspective.

Nonetheless, for those involved in the Pilot, it appears to have produced benefits that would not have otherwise occurred. These include improved employment outcomes, higher earnings potential and improved social wellbeing.

Areas of improvement for consideration in similar future programs include:

- Adopting a more nuanced approach to program settings across Assessing Authorities, supported by consultation around what would be most suitable given the Assessing Authority's specific occupational contexts and potentially through an individually negotiated process – which may be feasible given the relatively small number of Assessing Authorities involved.
- Addressing potential unintended effects of the 'free' nature of the skills assessment. With a relatively high share of 'unsuitable' skills assessment outcomes under Pilot 2, there is reason to think that less than ideal investment was made by applicants in understanding the purpose and requirements of the process in advance.

Pilot 2 nonetheless showed that for some, skills assessment application fees represent a barrier. Removal of that barrier (via government support) has the potential to unlock and bring forward economic and social benefits.

# Executive Summary – Key Findings Pilot 3

## Key findings: Pilot 3

### **Implementation:** *To what extent was Pilot 3 implemented as planned?*

- Procedurally, the evidence suggests that the Pilot was implemented effectively, though the ability to communicate the intent, value proposition and processes around Pilot 3 represented a challenge.
- Uptake in Pilot 3 was lower than anticipated, and similar to Pilot 2, this meant participation was concentrated among a small number of Assessing Authorities (and therefore occupations). In response to low uptake, the Department did undertake promotional activities and loosened eligibility criteria.
- Views varied on the extent to which funding was sufficient, where (similar to Pilot 2) levels of uptake influenced the extent to which costs were able to be covered, in particular the upfront costs of preparing for the Pilot.

### **Effectiveness:** *To what extent has Pilot 3 achieved its intended outcomes?*

- Participants reported improved employability skills and a better understanding of gaps in these skills, however among survey respondents, employability skills were often not identified as a key barrier to securing employment.
- Surveyed Pilot 3 participants exhibited on average slightly improved employment outcomes over time following the Pilot, however relatively few transitioned to jobs in line with their qualification, which suggests that the benefit of receiving an employability skills assessment may have been marginal.
- Assessing Authorities indicated that the Pilot had led them to consider how they could better support migrants after receiving a skills assessment outcome.
- The relatively concentrated uptake across a small number of Assessing Authorities and occupations resulted in Pilot 3 being focused toward males.

### **Impact:** *What difference has Pilot 3 made?*

- Overall, the evidence suggests that the Pilot had a relatively limited financial and economic impact on participating migrants as the barriers to securing employment in line with qualifications extend beyond those associated with employability skills.
- Pilot 3 participants have a better understanding of the employment system in Australia and report that the employability skills assessment process enhanced their sense of wellbeing.
- Pilot 3 participants were trained in skilled high-demand occupations however given low uptake in the Pilot in parallel to the potentially limited impact of receiving an employability skills assessment and training, the contribution to addressing Australia's skills shortages is likely to be limited.

## Conclusions: Pilot 3

Similar to Pilots 1 and 2, procedurally, Pilot 3 was implemented effectively through the guidelines, materials, systems and support provided by DEWR. However, similar to Pilot 2, encouraging uptake represented a key challenge. The employment outcomes, notably transitions to new roles in line with skills assessment, under Pilot 3 also do not match those observed under Pilots 1 and 2, though this is likely to be due in part to a different type of cohort participating in Pilot 3.

While Assessing Authorities widely agreed that the intent of Pilot 3 was important, some components of the design of the Pilot did not align well with their occupations, such as the skill level or whether the occupation was regulated (e.g. required registration). Further consultation and input into the design of the Pilot would have been beneficial as opposed to the more general approach adopted.

# Executive Summary – Key Findings Pilot 3

## Conclusions: Pilot 3 (cont.)

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The value of an employability assessment was also unclear for many participants, and the process was relatively involved, with several steps required for applicants.

One of the key limiting factors around the Pilot was that employability skills were not often identified by Assessing Authorities or participants as the key barrier to securing employment in line with their qualifications. Instead, some of the key challenges faced by migrants include:

- Employers' hiring practices and attitudes favour local references and experiences and disadvantage those without an Australian network.
- Not understanding the subtleties of their nominated occupation.
- Regardless of how well functioning systems and processes may be, the nature of this cohort means that the need for system navigation persists, which is made even more challenging by the opacity and complexity of the system and processes of professional registration and job seeking.

In considering similar programs to Pilot 3 in future, the Department should take into account some of these additional barriers (beyond employability skills), where investment in addressing them in concert may help produce the overarching aims that were set for Pilot 3.

# Executive Summary – Concluding Remarks

The Pilots were able to achieve their objectives to differing degrees of success.

Pilot 1 (the key objective of which was to accelerate eligible migrants' participation in the Australian workforce in priority occupations) was able to realise faster processing times and support improved employment outcomes for participants, noting that a high proportion were already employed. The Pilot demonstrated that when there exists a large backlog of skill assessment applications, Government can work with Assessing Authorities to support faster processing.

For Pilot 2 the key objective was also to accelerate migrants' participation in the Australian workforce. Here, the evidence suggests that the Pilot resulted in positive employment and social outcomes that otherwise would have not occurred for a share of participants. And for those participants who received an unsuitable outcome, some benefit came through the provision referrals from Assessing Authorities to relevant training to improve skills in their nominated occupation.

Pilot 3 appears to have achieved its overarching objective to a lesser degree, i.e., to enable migrants with a suitable skills assessment outcome in a priority occupation to secure employment that is commensurate with their skill level. Here, a range of factors outside of employability skills appear to be acting as barriers.

Beyond the progress towards the overall SAP policy objectives, there also exists broader value to testing and piloting a new program or intervention as it helps to identify roadblocks and make adjustments before implementing larger-scale interventions in future. In addition, Assessing Authorities frequently noted how participation in the Pilots strengthened their relationship with the Department.

Looking across the three pilots, there some themes which emerged with a degree of consistency, and can be used to inform the design of similar future programs.

## Eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria posed challenges in supporting uptake for Pilots 2 and 3. Assessing Authorities often described them as very narrow, noting in particular the limits set around visa type, occupation and the purpose of the assessment. This highlights the importance of engagement and testing to inform eligibility criteria.

## The approach to engaging with Assessing Authorities

Across all Pilots, the specific circumstances of an individual occupation (and the Assessing Authority) had a significant influence on outcomes.

The nuances of each occupational context mattered. This highlights the challenge in developing settings that adequately suit every context. There may, therefore, be a case to consider a negotiated approach to engaging with Assessing Authorities (when a relatively small number of Assessing Authorities are involved).

## The diversity of barriers faced by skilled migrants

A number of barriers and challenges remain for migrants undertaking a skills or employability assessment, and in attempting to participate in suitable work, including:

- A frequently cited challenge in the assessment process was in applicants obtaining all the required documentation. Here, a case management system was suggested by Assessing Authorities as an effective – albeit resource-intensive – support mechanism.
- A lack of central navigational support for migrants when engaging with the migration, settlement and employment system was also identified as a key barrier, especially for those who were not supported by a migration agent.
- Employers' cultural attitudes and hiring practices were said favour local references and experiences and disadvantage those without an Australian network.

## Funding considerations

Across the Pilots, the sufficiency of funding was typically related to the scale of uptake with an individual Assessing Authority. This was said to be largely a result of the initial costs associated with setting up the Pilots' systems and processes, as well as the resources required to promote the Pilot. In future, in instances where program participation levels are uncertain, it may be more suitable to include a fixed funding amount, as well as a variable component linked to the number of assessments.

## Value for money considerations

Overall, the post program outcomes observed among migrants involved in the Pilots were good, with most maintaining or entering employment. However, due consideration should be given to the return on government investment that can be attributed to the specific intervention. For example, while Pilot 1 was able to reduce processing times, beyond this the extent to which the fast-tracking of applications supported future employment and earnings outcomes is less clear.

Care should also be taken in the context of supporting free services a proportion of those receiving free and fast-tracked assessments under the Pilots would have been willing to pay for them, and that there can be implications for application withdrawal rates.



# 1 | Context to this evaluation

# Evaluating the Skill Assessment Pilots

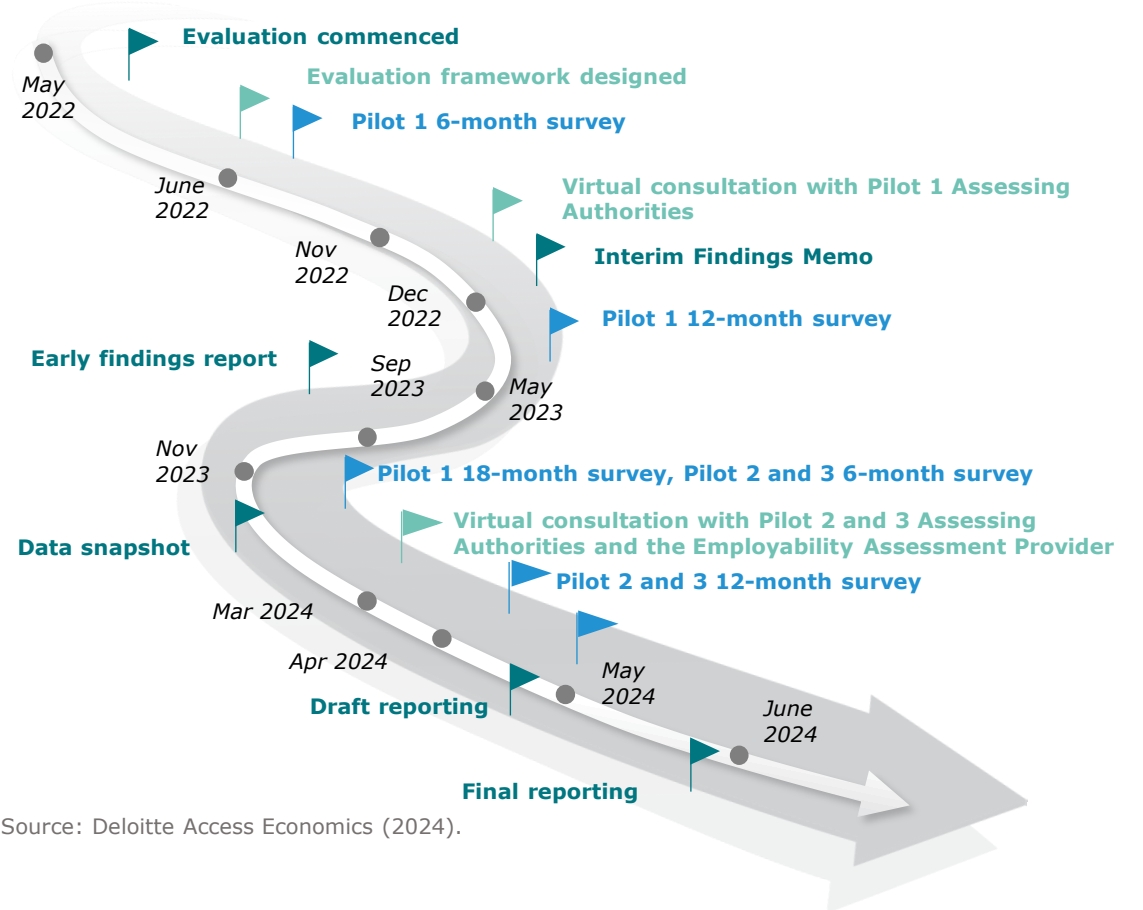
## Background to this report

Deloitte Access Economics has been engaged by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to undertake an independent evaluation of Skills Assessment Pilots (SAP) in 2022.

The SAP represent a unique intervention by DEWR seeking to enable increased migrant participation in the labour market at a level that is commensurate with their skills. In turn, this is intended to assist in addressing skill shortages and help enable broader social and economic outcomes for migrants.

The key milestones in the path to evaluating SAP are presented in Figure 1.1. Across the course of the evaluation, the evaluation plan and framework, data collection process and stakeholder engagement approach were designed and implemented in collaboration with DEWR.

Figure 1.1: Evaluation milestones



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024).

# Features of Skills Assessment Pilots

**Table 1.1:** Overview of the three pilots included under the Skills Assessment Pilots initiative

	<b>Pilot 1 - Faster Migrant Skills Assessments</b>	<b>Pilot 2 – Skills Assessment Opportunities for Migrants</b>	<b>Pilot 3 – Employability Assessments</b>
<b>Description</b>	Fast-tracked skills assessments for onshore migrants who had already submitted and paid for an application in a priority occupation and were awaiting an outcome.	Offered onshore migrants who resided in Australia on specific family, partner, humanitarian or secondary skilled visas, with a free fast-tracked skills assessment.	Offered eligible onshore migrants in a priority occupation, with a free employability assessment and access to subsidised training to gain the employability skills required to participate in the Australian job market.
<b>Objective</b>	Fast-track skills assessments for eligible onshore migrants to accelerate their participation in the Australian workforce in priority occupations.	Fast-track free skills assessments for eligible onshore migrants to accelerate their participation in the Australian workforce, and refer those applicants who receive a not suitable outcome to relevant training to improve their skills for their nominated occupation.	Provide onshore migrants who have already received a suitable skill assessment with employability assessments and relevant follow-up training.
<b>Commencement and end date</b>	28 February – 17 June 2022.	28 February 2022 – 29 February 2024.	26 September 2022 – 29 February 2024.
<b>Payments</b>	Payments to Assessing Authorities to fast-track skills assessments for eligible migrants to accelerate their participation in the Australian workforce in priority occupation. Alongside, an administration fee to cover reporting costs to DEWR.	Payments to Assessing Authorities to provide free and fast-tracked skills assessments for eligible migrants to accelerate their participation in the Australian workforce <u>and</u> refer those applicants who receive a not suitable outcome to relevant training to improve their skills for their nominated occupation. Alongside, an administration fee to cover reporting costs to DEWR.	Payments to Employability Assessment Designer and Employment Assessment Provider (EAP), the latter also receives a training reimbursement fee. Alongside, a referral fee to Assessing Authorities.
<b>Eligibility</b>	Applicant must have already submitted and paid for, while residing in Australia, a skills assessment in a priority occupation and is yet to receive the outcome of their skill assessment application.	Applicant must hold an eligible visa, have never undergone a skills assessment, be residing in Australia at the time they submitted their application (which must be after the 28th of February) and must have skills directly relevant to a priority occupation.	Applicant must have already received a suitable skills assessment in a priority occupation area.
<b>Engagement from participants</b>	None	In some instances, the Pilot required participants to self-identify eligibility.	Requires participants to invest time into engaging with the EAP and provide a 20% co-contribution to training.

Source: Deloitte Access Economics, based on information provided by DEWR. Note: The program will target migrants who have a qualification and or skills directly relevant to occupations that are eligible for skilled migration and identified by the Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) (formerly known as the National Skills Commission) as being in shortage and depending on the Pilot, soft, moderate and/or strong demand.



# 2 | Evaluation Design & Methodology



# Evaluation Framework



The SAP evaluation framework, comprising of evaluation questions and program logics Pilot 1, 2 and 3 (see Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report, Appendix E), was developed collaboratively with DEWR and underpins the set of data collected, evidence analysed and findings developed. The evaluation framework considers the SAP Pilots both independently and holistically and were informed by a wide range of inputs, including:

- The evaluation domains contained within the Request for Proposal.
- Co—design workshops completed between Deloitte Access Economics and DEWR.
- Additional workshop completed with the 'Industry Critical Friends'.

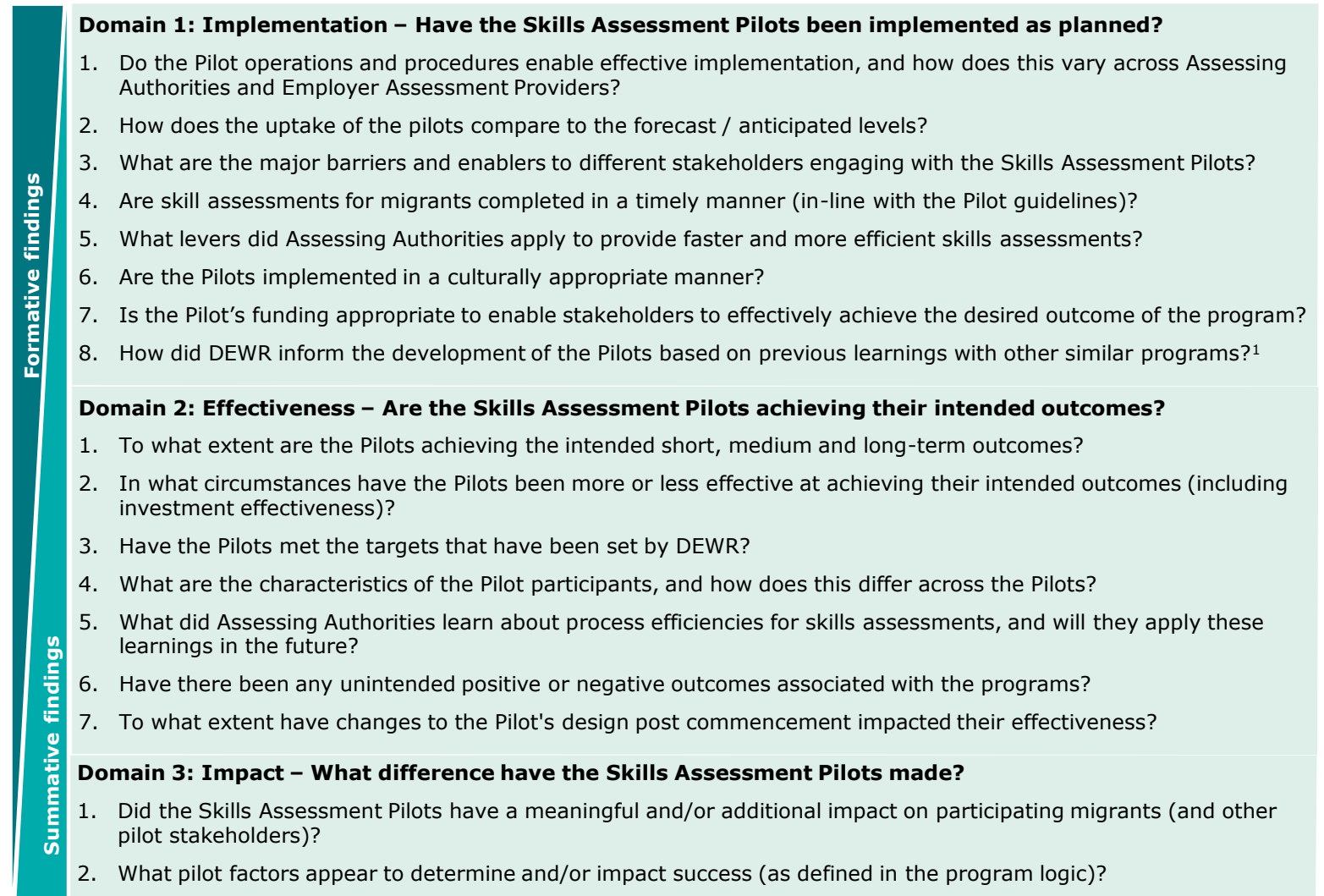
## Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions were developed in line with the scope and focus of the evaluation and contain both formative and summative elements (Figure 2.1).

## Program Logics

Three program logic models were developed to establish the inputs activities and outputs of SAP as well as the short to long term outcomes to be enabled by the Pilot. The program logics set out how each pilot will influence change, providing a causal representation of what each pilot will do and the outcomes it is expected to achieve. The program logics for Pilot 1-3 are presented in the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix E).

Figure 2.1: Evaluation questions arranged by domain

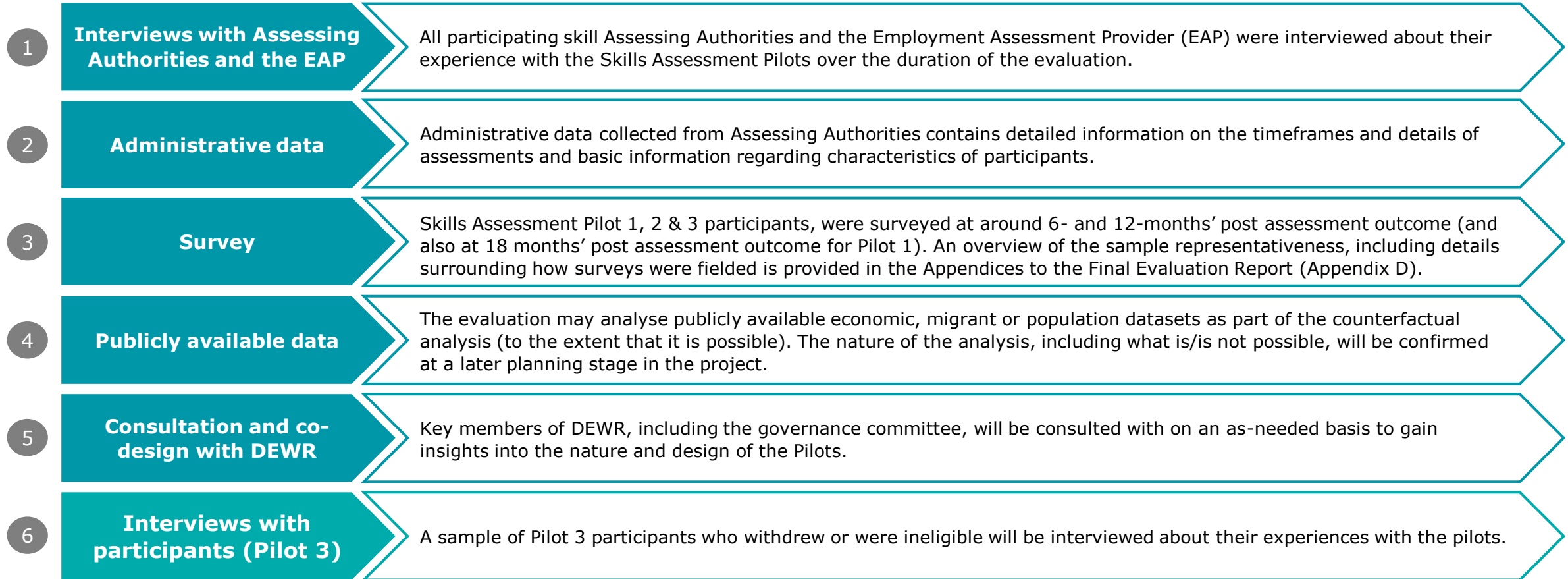


Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024)

# Evaluation data sources

The evaluation utilises a broad range of quantitative and qualitative datasets to address the evaluation questions. Each source provides only partial answers to the evaluation questions and possess their own strengths and limitations.

In response to high levels of withdrawal in Pilot 3, Deloitte Access Economics in partnership with DEWR and Wallis adjusted the data collection plan in mid-2023 to incorporate interviews with Pilot 3 participants who withdrew or were ineligible to gain a deeper understanding of the lower than anticipated participation rates across Pilot 3.



Note: DEWR and Deloitte Access Economics will discuss any potential implications to the interview plan in the event that more Assessing Authorities are added to the Pilots.



# 3 | Pilot 1: Faster Migrant Skills Assessments

Fast-tracked skills assessments for onshore migrants in priority occupations



# Implementation of Pilot 1

The following section draws on interviews with Assessing Authorities and analysis of program data.

# Implementation of Pilot 1 | Key Findings



3 | Pilot 1:  
Faster  
Migrant Skills  
Assessments

| The evidence suggests that Pilot 1 was implemented effectively and efficiently - successfully enabling participating Assessing Authorities to fast-track eligible skill assessments across a broad array of occupations and geographies.

In interviews, Assessing Authorities consistently remarked positively on the support that was made available to them, and on the utility of the Pilot guidelines and procedures.

*"The guidelines were clear and well thought out, the main challenge operationalising these guidelines as each Assessing Authority had to do something differently. And at times the Department could've used simple and direct language so nothing was open to our own interpretation" – Assessing Authority*

Notwithstanding this, Assessing Authorities did note that the initial period from program announcement to implementation was rapid, and while achievable, required diversion of resources and did not always allow sufficient time for consultation. In future initiatives, the Department may consider affording additional time to Assessing Authorities to engage and implement the program.

*"Ultimately the process was incredibly rushed and we needed to set up contracts, implement the Pilot in our organisation and find resources to deliver the Pilot in a very tight labour market" – Assessing Authority*

Assessing Authorities agreed that the Migrant Skill Incentives (MSI) system was fit-for-purpose, although reported that it lacked some of the desired flexibility. Assessing Authorities noted that the system was generally intuitive to use, but that it could be overly restrictive in not allowing users to extract data from the system or modify records where a minor mistake was identified.

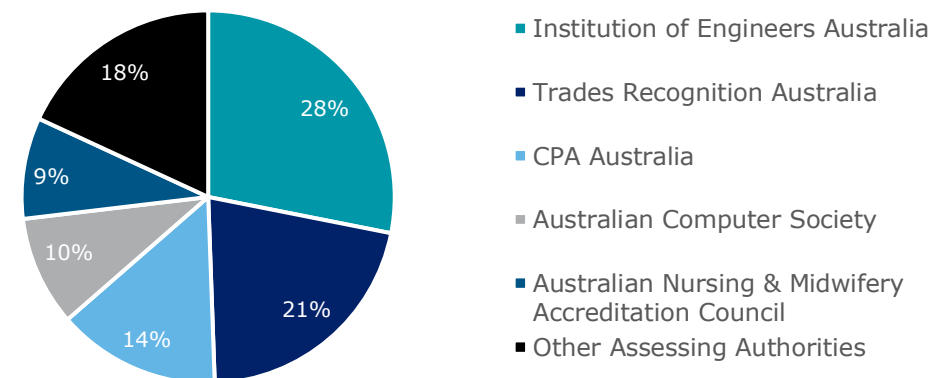
*"Once a small error was made, which given the number of applications we needed to submit, of course happened several times, you could not go back and edit that field you needed to contact the Department to get it updated – which was quite time consuming" – Assessing Authority*

| Uptake of Pilot 1 was relatively strong, enabled by the fact that the Pilot mirrored existing assessment processes, and involved applicants who were already on their skills assessment journey.

Pilot 1 had a combined 3,977 participants, equivalent to approximately 54% of the total target for all three Pilots (7,300), in line with the Department's internal forecasting about Pilot 1 demand, that were based on previous skill assessment demand.<sup>a</sup> There was however variation in the volume of applicants across Assessing Authorities, with nearly two-thirds of applicants (or 64%) from three Assessing Authorities (Chart 3.1). This may reflect the eligibility criteria for the Pilot, where a number of priority occupations were associated with these Assessing Authorities. Other Assessing Authorities had very few eligible applicants, including a small number which indicated they had no eligible applicants.

For further information surrounding the implementation of Pilot 1, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A).

**Chart 3.1:** Pilot 1 participants by Assessing Authority (% of applications submitted for assessment)



Source: Department of Employment and Workforce Relations (2024) (n=3,977). Note: Other Assessing Authorities includes: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Australian Pharmacy Council, Vocational Education and Training Assessment Services, Institute of Public Accountants, Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, Australian Physiotherapy Council, Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Institute of Managers and Leaders, Speech Pathology Association of Australia, Australian Society of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy and Surveying & Spatial Sciences Institute.

<sup>a</sup> Pilot 1-3 was re-scoped from 9,500 to 7,300 in 2023.

# Implementation of Pilot 1 | Key Findings



3 | Pilot 1:  
Faster  
Migrant Skills  
Assessments

| *Assessing Authorities were able to meet processing time Key Performance Indicator's (KPIs) which generally represented an improvement on prior processing times.*

A core component of Pilot 1's effectiveness is the extent to which skills assessment outcome processing times have been sped up. According to the operational guidelines, Assessing Authorities should aim to process applications from the 'Assessment ready date' to a 'Date Skills Assessment Outcome Notified to Applicant' within 15 business days on average.

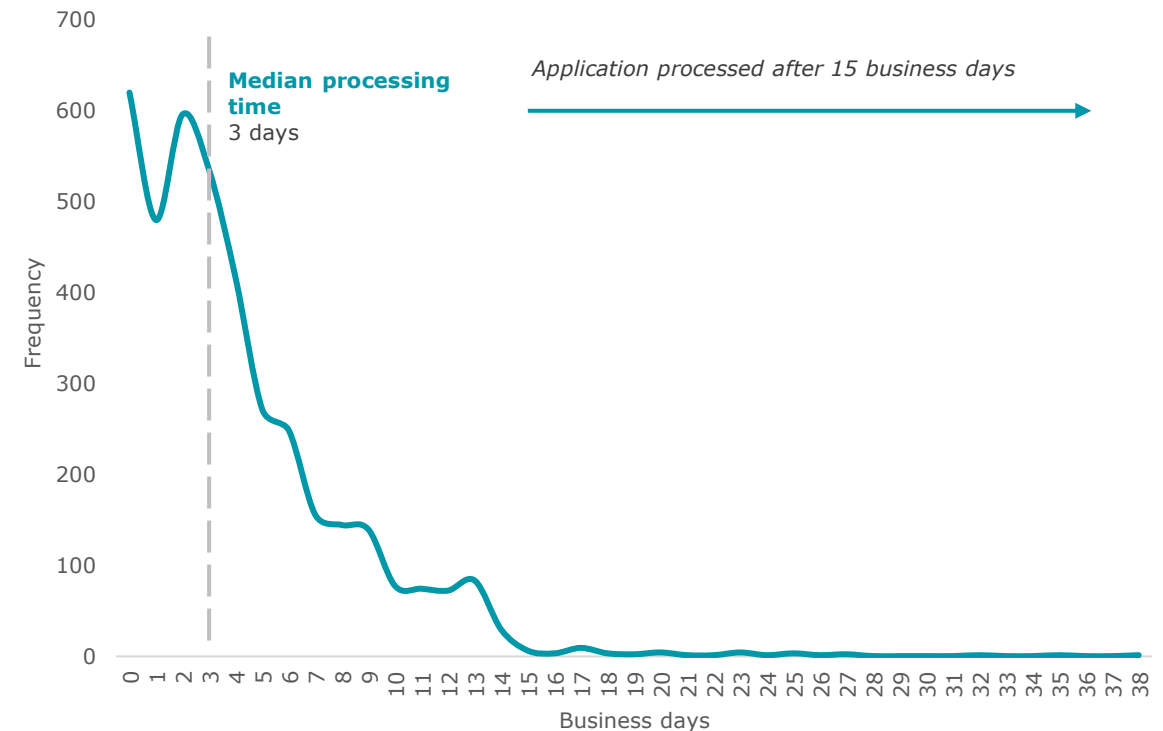
The data reveals:

- Overall, 99% of applications in Pilot 1 were processed from 'Assessment ready' to 'Date Skills Assessment Outcome Notified to Applicant' within 15 business days (Chart 3.2).
- All Assessing Authorities recorded an average processing time from 'Assessment ready' to 'Date Skills Assessment Outcome Notified to Applicant' within 8 business days, effectively meeting the Department's Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of 15 business days on average.
- The median processing time was 3 business days across all Assessing Authorities, suggesting there may be scope to adjust the KPI settings.
- Over a quarter (or 28%) of Pilot 1 applicants were notified of their skills assessment outcome within 1 business day of becoming 'Assessment ready', with 16% of these processed the day of being 'Assessment ready'.
- The maximum period between becoming 'Assessment ready' to 'Date Skills Assessment Outcome Notified to Applicant' was 38 business days.

In a small number of instances however, organisations may have met the set KPIs without implementing any meaningful changes, as based on interviews some Assessing Authorities were already processing skill assessments within the KPIs prior to the introduction of Pilot 1. While it shouldn't be expected that all activity under an intervention be additional, in future the Department may consider how this could be minimised by adjusting KPIs for organisations with lower average processing times.

For further information surrounding the skill assessment processing times of Pilot 1, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A).

**Chart 3.2:** Number of business days for application to be processed



Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2022)

Note: Analysis considers public holidays which occurred over the period between an application being 'assessment ready' and 'date skills assessment outcome notified to applicant' based on the location of the Assessing Authority's head office. Analysis considers whether the assessment ready date occurred before or after the commencement date of Pilot 1, adding an additional business day if the 'assessment ready' date occurred after the contract commencement date.

# Implementation of Pilot 1 | Key Findings

Assessing Authorities implemented several strategies to fast-track applicants. These included bringing on additional resources, streamlining internal systems and restructuring their teams to generate efficiencies. Of these strategies, Assessing Authorities most commonly employed additional contract or temporary staff to increase the resources at their disposal and associated throughput. To a lesser extent, Assessing Authorities reviewed their internal processes and were able to simplify and/or streamline their workflows to reduce processing times, although most organisations indicated that their processes were already relatively efficient. Assessing Authorities who made changes to their internal processes indicated that they planned to maintain these approaches to performing skills assessment in the future, suggesting that Pilot 1 facilitated internal learning for some Assessing Authorities.

Assessing Authorities with pre-established fast-tracking processes were well equipped to meet the processing times KPIs but highlighted that it could be challenging to refund participants. That is, these Assessing Authorities noted that while they understood the necessity to refund applicants, it could be administratively complicated and time consuming to re-contact, explain the situation to and then refund these individuals.

*"While we knew why we had to refund applicants, it was administratively burdensome to get in contact with all the applicants and explain why we needed to refund them" – Assessing Authority*

For further information surrounding the implementation of Pilot 1, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A).

*| There was strong uptake in Pilot 1 across a broad range of Assessing Authorities, occupations and geographies.*

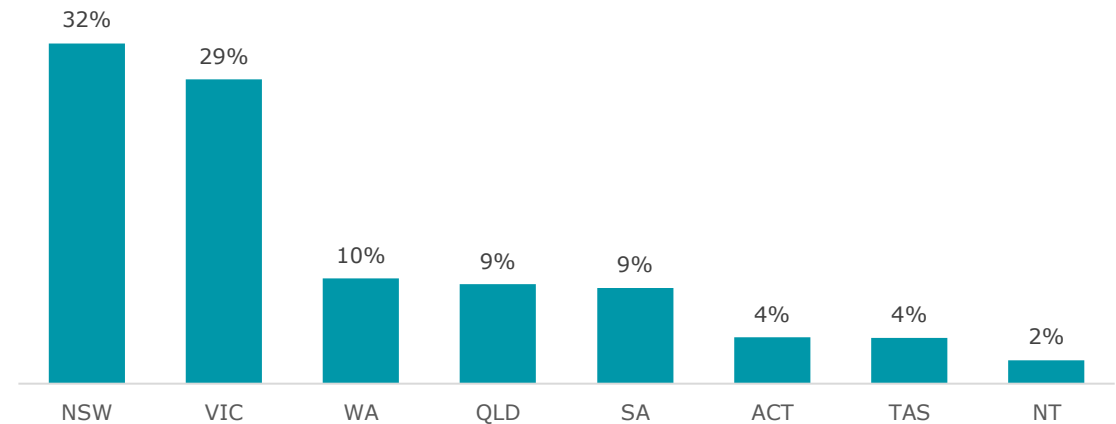
More than half (54%) of applicants were male, with the remainder either female (34%) or gender was unspecified (12%).

Pilot 1 had participants from 80 different countries, with the most common nationalities including India (37%), followed by Nepal (14%) and China (8%). This

source market distribution appears to be broadly consistent with participation in the overall permanent skilled migration system.

The geographic spread of participants is broadly consistent with the distribution of the Australian population, with 61% of applicants from New South Wales and Victoria (Chart 3.3).

**Chart 3.3:** Location of Pilot 1 participants by State and Territory, Australia



Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2022) (n=3,969)  
Note: Postcode mapping is based on the Australian Census (2021)

For further information surrounding the characteristics of Pilot 1 participants and implementation of Pilot 1 please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A).



# Effectiveness of Pilot 1

The following section draws on interviews with Assessing Authorities, program data, 6-month, 12-month and 18-month survey data and publicly available evidence.



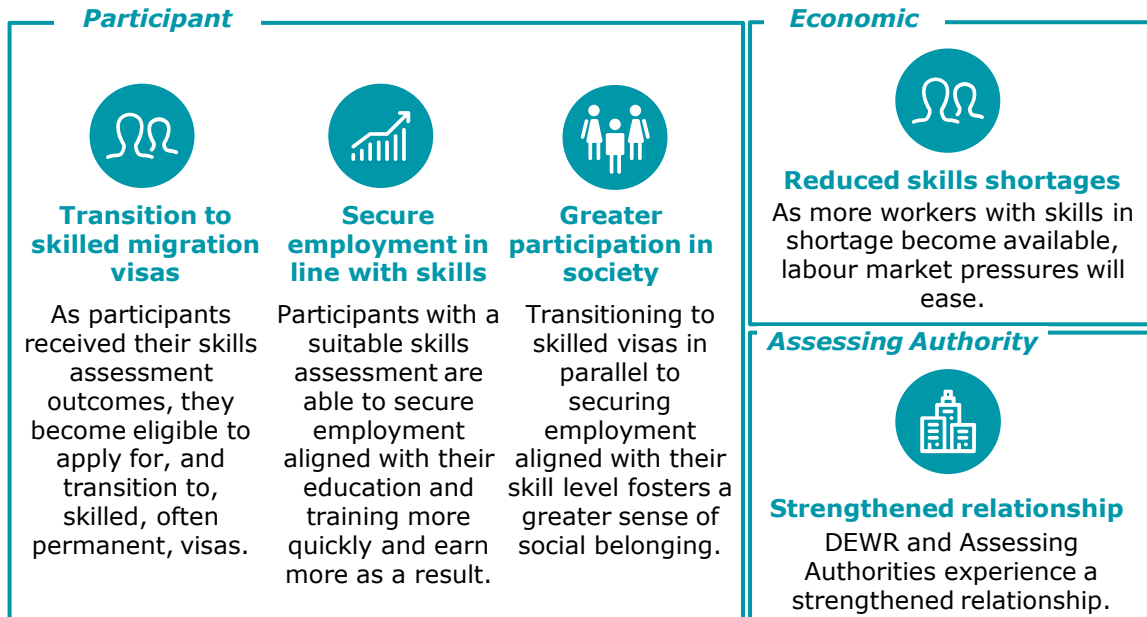
# Effectiveness of Pilot 1 | Key Findings



3 | Pilot 1:  
Faster  
Migrant Skills  
Assessments

Figure 3.1 helps to frame the participant and economic outcomes against which the effectiveness of Pilot 1 has been considered.

**Figure 3.1:** Participant, economic and Assessing Authority outcomes informing the effectiveness of Pilot 1



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024)

*| Pilot 1 appears to have achieved its objective of supporting participants who receive suitable skills assessment outcomes to transition to skilled, often permanent visas, while exhibiting improved employment outcomes and filling skilled vacancies of occupations in national shortage.*

Pilot 1 supported 3,977 applicants to receive a fast-tracked skills assessment outcome. Approximately 89% of Pilot 1 participants achieved a 'suitable' skills assessment outcome which is a requirement for several visa subclasses such as a General Skilled Migration visa. Demonstrating the Pilot was effective enabling participants to more quickly apply for skilled visas and secure employment in line with their qualifications as a result of receiving a fast-tracked skills assessment.

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Most surveyed participants (77%) either expressed the intention to or had already utilised their skills assessment outcomes for various visa applications, notably transitioning (or planning to transition) from temporary to permanent skilled visas (Chart 3.4). Longitudinal analysis shows a rising success rate among respondents who have successfully pursued new visas using their skills assessment outcomes, increasing from 14% (at 6 months) to 46% (at 18 months).

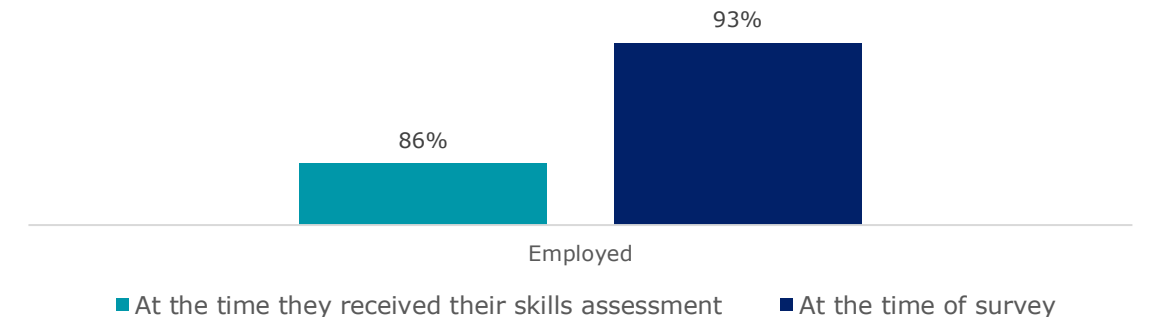
**Chart 3.4:** 'Have you used your skills assessment outcome to apply for a different visa?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=190)

At the time of survey, nearly all respondents (93%) report being gainfully employed (Chart 3.5).

**Chart 3.5:** Survey respondents' employment status

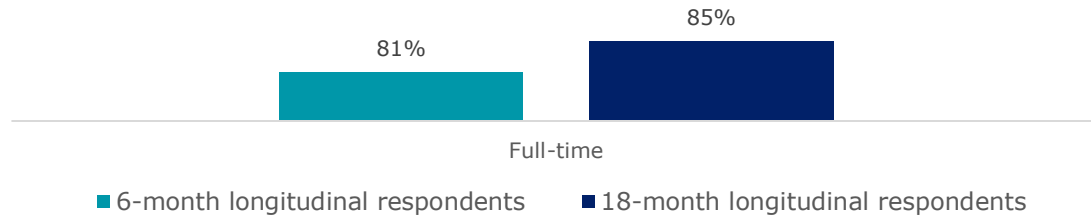


Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n= 190)

# Effectiveness of Pilot 1 | Key Findings

Interestingly, comparing respondents' status in employment to 6-month survey, reveals that while the employment rate has remained relatively consistent, the share of respondents working full-time has increased from 81% to 85%, with the remainder working part-time (Chart 3.6).

**Chart 3.6:** Longitudinal employed survey respondents' status in employment at 6-months and 18-months



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n= 160)

Among those employed, 37% were working in a different job to when they received their skills assessment outcome, and around a quarter (24%) were now working in an occupation that was aligned to their skills assessment outcome (Chart 3.7).

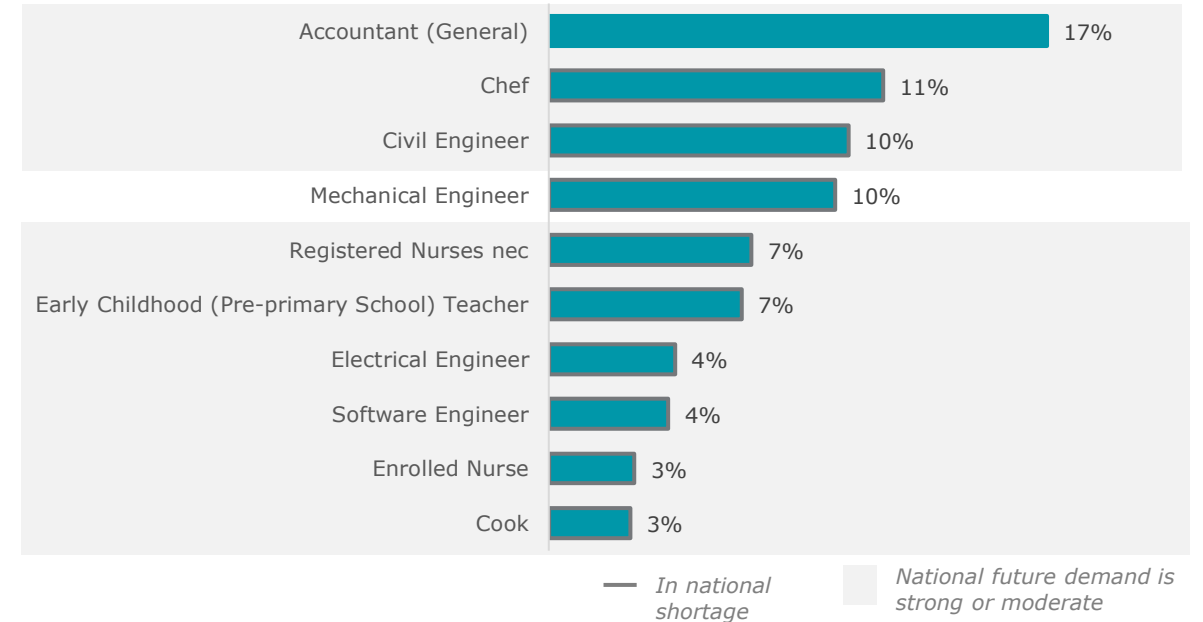
**Chart 3.7:** 'Are you in the same job as at the time of skills assessment and is it aligned with your skills assessment outcome?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n= 237)

Among Pilot 1 participants who underwent skills assessments and were deemed suitable, 80% received assessments in occupations currently facing national shortages (Chart 3.8).

**Chart 3.8:** Top 10 occupations Pilot 1 participants received skills assessment outcomes for, by skill shortage and future demand rating



Source: Department of Employment and Workforce Relations and Jobs and Skills Australia (2024) (n=3,217) Note: The 2022 SPL reported future national demand in a different way to following years, therefore Pilot 2 and 3 report national demand in a different manner.

Importantly, it should be noted that the outcomes described above may have been achieved to some extent in the absence of the Pilot, as participants were already involved in the application process, but benefited from a faster assessment. That said, 6% of Pilot 1 participants indicated they would not have completed a skills assessment, 20% would have applied for a different visa, 7% would have pursued a different job, and 4% would have left Australia had their application not been fast-tracked.

For further information surrounding the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes associated with Pilot 1, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A).



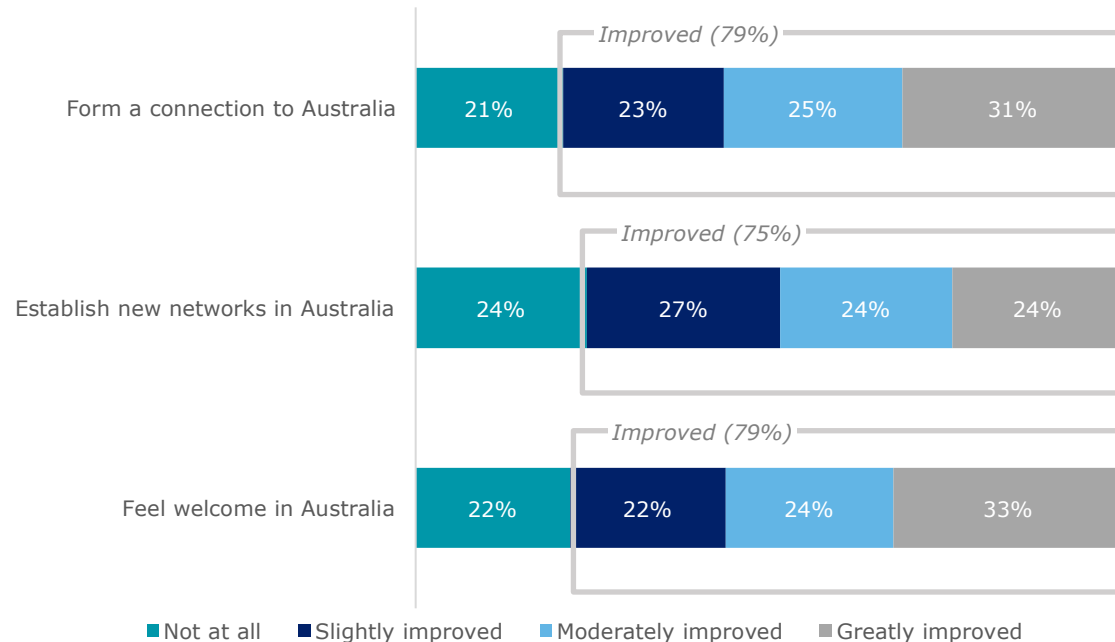
# Effectiveness of Pilot 1 | Key Findings

| While participants generally reported a high sense of social wellbeing in Australia, a significant majority noted that the skills assessment process had enhanced this.

In general, survey respondents expressed a strong sense of belonging in Australia, with widespread agreement on their connection to the country and their experiences in establishing new networks. A substantial majority of respondents attributed a strengthened connection to Australia, the formation of new networks, and a heightened sense of belonging to the skills assessment process (Chart 3.9).

For further information surrounding the social outcomes associated with Pilot 1, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A).

**Chart 3.9:** 'To what extent did participating in the skills assessment process help you to...'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=190), excludes respondents who indicated 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say'.

| Assessing Authorities indicated that a further benefit of Pilot 1 was that it strengthened the relationship with the Department.

Pilot 1 has supported a good working relationship between Assessing Authorities and the Department. This has the potential to both help Assessing Authorities receive advice on specific issues they are facing, and the Department to maximise policy outcomes being sought via Assessing Authorities, enabled by more frequent engagement with Assessing Authorities and simply establishing a point of contact within these organisations.

*"The impact of the Pilot on our relationship with the Department cannot be underestimated. The Pilot significantly enhanced our working relationship and as a result, we engage a lot more frequently with the Department" – Assessing Authority*

For further information surrounding the strengthened relationship between Assessing Authorities and the Department associated with Pilot 1, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A).

## Bringing forward benefits, labour displacement effects and improvements in employment outcomes

It is important to note that given Pilot 1 only covered the costs associated with fast-tracking skills assessment outcomes, the Pilot can only be linked with bringing forward the benefits connected with receiving a skills assessment outcome. However, it is important to recognise that bringing forward the benefits associated with a skills assessment outcome, particularly employment benefits, could potentially increase the competitiveness of the job market.

Critically too, naturally we would expect participants employment outcomes to improve overtime, particularly for this cohort as it is well evidenced that migrants' outcomes in the labour market, despite often being worse than the local workforce, improve overtime.<sup>1</sup>



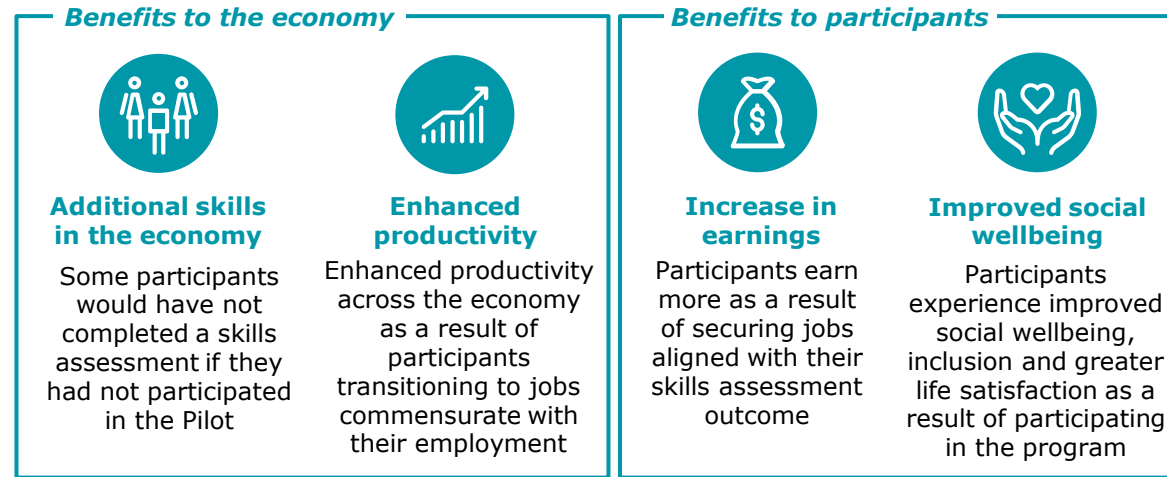
# Impact of Pilot 1

The following draws on 6-month, 12-month and 18-month survey data and publicly available evidence.

# Impact of Pilot 1 | Key Findings

Figure 3.2 helps to frame the outcomes against which the impact of Pilot 1 has been considered.

**Figure 3.2:** Outcomes informing the impact of Pilot 1



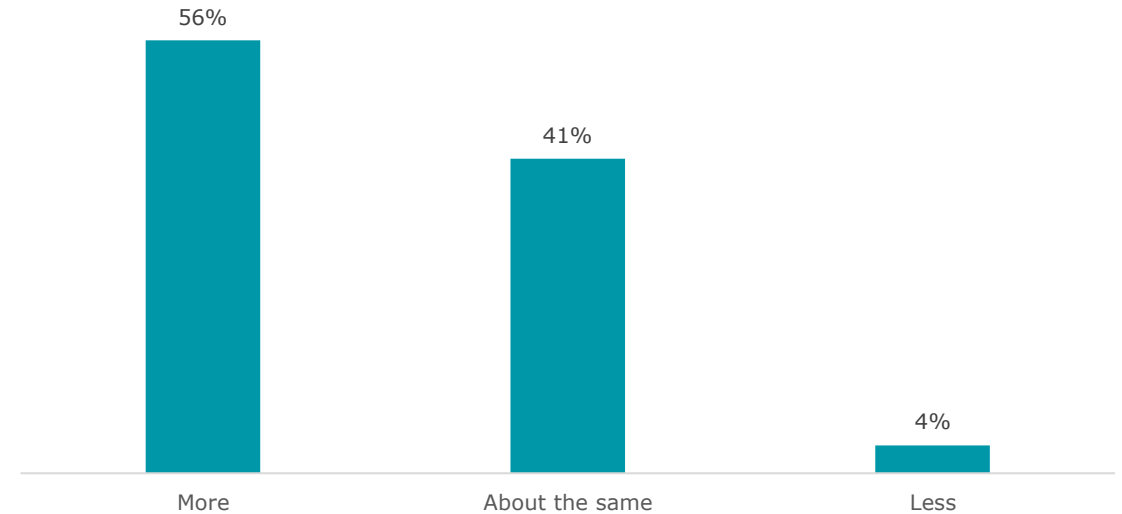
Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024)

| *There are indications that the Pilot has been associated with higher participant earning potential after receiving a skills assessment outcome, facilitated by the acceleration of their transition to roles in line with their qualifications.*

Among survey respondents with suitable skills assessments, 56% report higher incomes, 41% are earning about the same and 4% reported earning less (Chart 3.10). Among respondents earning more, 22% reported experiencing increases of 20% or more.

More than half (56%) of respondents initially unemployed at the time of their skills assessment have since transitioned to paid employment. While 63% remain in the same job as when they received their skills assessment, more than half of this cohort (or 51%) now earn more than before. For further information surrounding the impact of Pilot 1 on participants earnings, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A).

**Chart 3.10:** 'Do you earn more or less money now than you did at the time you received a skills assessment?'



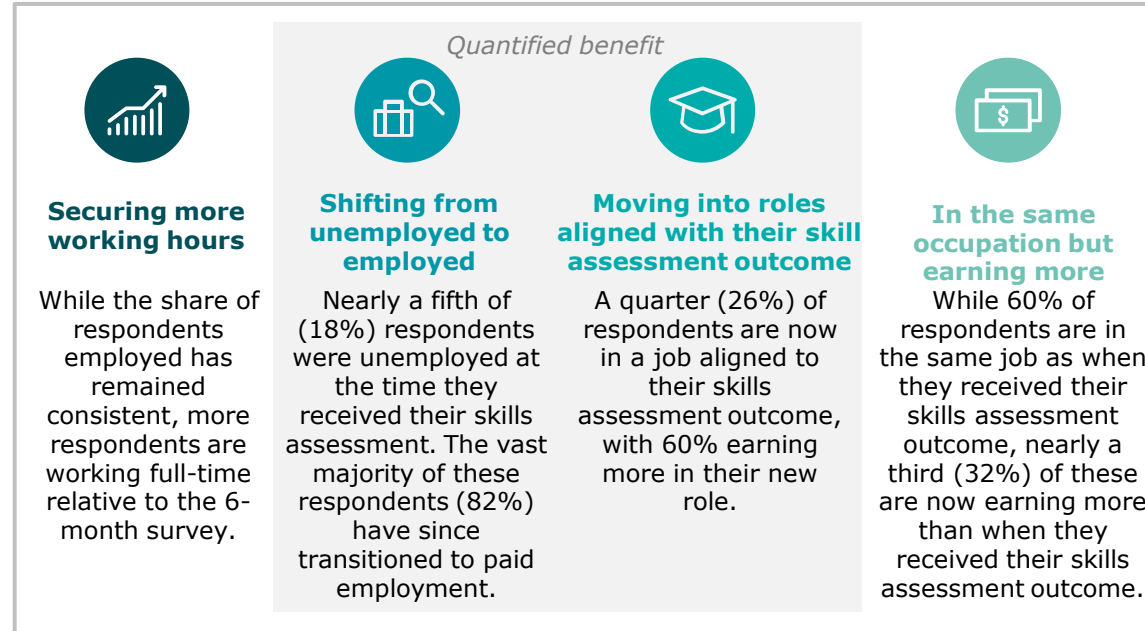
Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=138) excludes respondents who selected 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say'

| *Obtaining a suitable skills assessment outcome was associated with an increased chance of securing a job matching one's assessed skills.*

For those who would've still pursued a skills assessment outcome regardless of their assessment being fast-tracked, there still exists other benefits of participating in the Pilot. These benefits primarily relate to 'bringing forward' the benefits associated with a skills assessment outcome, which relate to changes in employment circumstances, and as a result an increase in earnings. Figure 3.3 below outlines the benefits Pilot 1 participants have experienced as a result of receiving their skills assessment outcome. These benefits are based on outcomes observed in the analysis of the Pilot 1 6-month, 12-month and 18-month surveys. The below analysis only considers respondents who received a suitable skills assessment outcome, in other words respondents for which the Pilot 'worked' for.

# Impact of Pilot 1 | Key Findings

**Figure 3.3:** The benefits of receiving a skills assessment outcome on participants earnings



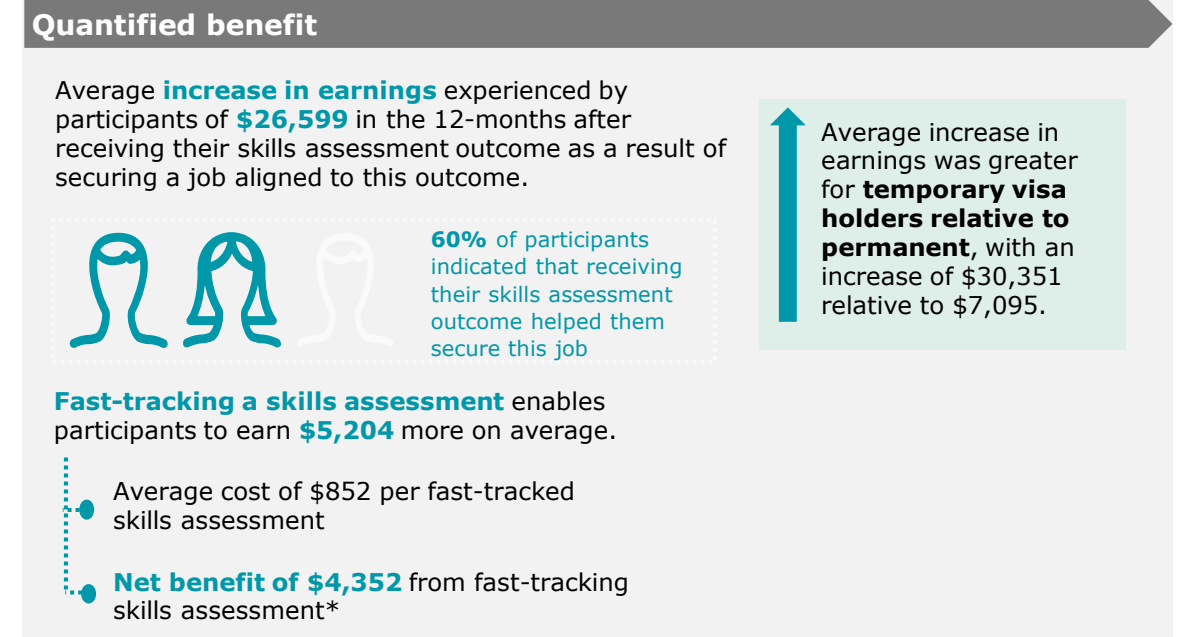
Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024). Please note this is based on the Pilot 1 6-month and 12-month surveys to enable comparisons across Pilots.

Survey data reveals that approximately 26% of respondents (75 of 294 respondents who provided consent) who received a suitable skills assessment outcome and were already employed found occupations aligned to their skills assessment, and, within this cohort, 60% reported increased earnings. On average, these participants earned an additional \$26,599 in the 12 months following their outcome, with 60% crediting their skills assessment outcome for helping them secure employment or support job applications, resulting in an approximate impact of \$16,051 per participant in the year after receiving their outcome.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> This figure has been derived from the average increase in earnings of receiving a suitable skills assessment outcome, estimated to be \$26,599, with a 95% confidence interval of \$17,764 to \$35,434. Please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A) for further detail on how these figures were derived.

Pilot 1, offering a fast-tracked skills assessment as opposed to a free skills assessment, significantly reduced the time between the 'Assessment Ready Date' and 'Date Skills Assessment Outcome Notified to Applicant' by approximately 6 weeks, leading to an average increase in earnings of \$5,204<sup>b</sup> (noting an average cost of \$852 per fast-tracked skills assessment). Figure 3.4 summarises the quantified benefits associated with receiving a fast-tracked skills assessment outcome.

**Figure 3.4:** The quantified benefits associated with receiving a fast-tracked skills assessment outcome on participants earnings



Source: Deloitte Access Economics based on responses to the Pilot 1 6-month and 12-month surveys.  
\* Note that the net benefit quantified is not intended to be a full Cost Benefit Analysis, and as such, some benefits may not be captured in this figure, such as the benefits to employers and Assessing Authorities, as well as the broader societal benefits.

For further information surrounding the impact of receiving a skills assessment outcome on participants earnings, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A).

<sup>b</sup> 95% confidence interval of \$3,790 to \$6,617

# Impact of Pilot 1 | Key Findings

| Improved social wellbeing, including an overall sense of personal stability and security, was identified as an important additional benefit.

Figure 3.5 further illustrates some of the ways that receiving a fast-tracked skills assessment outcome positively influenced respondents and their families.

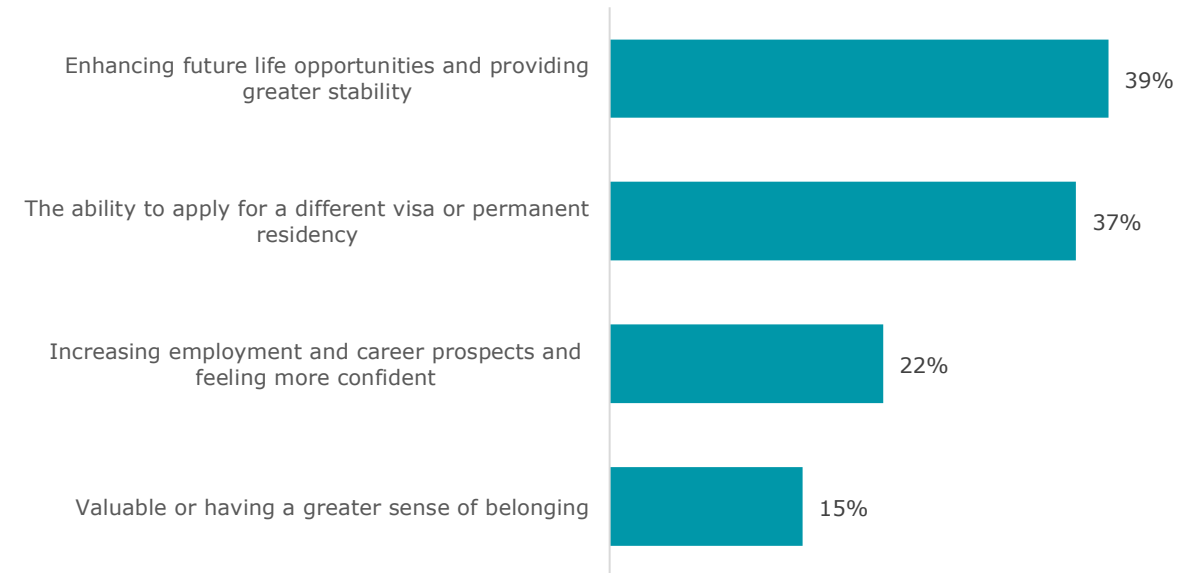
**Figure 3.5:** Participants survey responses to 'what difference the skills assessment outcome made to the participant or their family'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024)

Respondents linked obtaining a skills assessment outcome to several positive impacts on their lives and their families'. Two in five (or 39%) survey respondents mentioned that receiving a favourable skills assessment outcome had improved their prospects and increased their overall sense of stability and security (aligning with the academic literature) as well as providing the opportunity to obtain permanent residency, enabling them and their families to establish a more permanent presence in Australia (Chart 3.11).

**Chart 3.11:** 'What difference, if any, did your skills assessment outcome make to you or your family'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=79), the percentages do not add up to 100%, as some responses align to multiple categories

For further information surrounding Pilot 1's impact on participants social wellbeing including in academic literature, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A).



# Pilot 1 conclusions



*There are indications that the policy objectives of Pilot 1, to prioritise and fast-track skills assessments for eligible migrants to accelerate their participation in the Australian workforce in priority occupations, resulted in positive outcomes that contributed value to both participants and the Australian economy.*

While the evidence shows that most participants had already secured employment in a role commensurate to their skill level prior to their skills assessment outcome, the economic value in Pilot 1 is defined by incremental, yet accelerated, improvements, such as quicker transitions to permanent visas, increased wages or extended working hours.

These outcomes could result from the Pilot's success, or it could be circumstantial or a combination of both. Pilot 1 participants who received a suitable skills assessment outcome had so in 2022, at a time when Australia experienced relatively favourable labour market conditions.

Areas of improvement for consideration in similar future programs include:

- Given that funding was reportedly sufficient (in part due to the high numbers in the Pilot), and some Assessing Authorities were already meeting the Department's processing time KPI, in future there may be scope to further investigate levels of funding per fast-tracked application for some organisations. Particularly given the variation across Assessing Authorities in performing skill assessments, with some requiring written or practical exams while others primarily require documentary evidence. Therefore, not all organisations face the same challenges to performing these assessments and this has implications on the time required to process applications. Although this would require more detailed analysis on cost and how this varies across different contexts.
- Alternatively, DEWR may wish to consider whether the KPIs for processing times (both from the assessment ready date and for the entire processing time period) could be set with consideration of an Assessing Authority's historical performance in order to both incentivise changes for already quick Assessing Authorities and

support a better return on investment for Government.

- Considering ways to support shortening the time between when applications are first submitted, and when they become 'assessment ready' (i.e. with all documents in place) which can be significant and is often the main driver of delays for individual applications.

The Pilot has nonetheless shown that in times of high volumes of skills assessment applications, it is possible for Government to work with Assessing Authorities to support faster processing.

For more in-depth analysis of Pilot 1, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix A).





# 4 | Pilot 2: Skills Assessment Opportunities for Migrants

Free and fast-tracked skills assessment for specific family, partner and humanitarian visa holders



# Implementation of Pilot 2

The following draws on Assessing Authority interviews and program data analysis.

# Implementation of Pilot 2 | Key findings



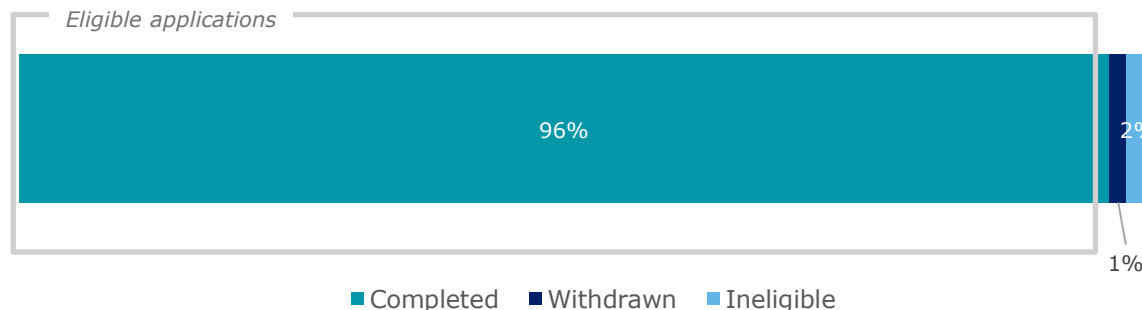
*The evidence suggests that Pilot 2 was implemented effectively, however lower than anticipated uptake represented a key challenge, and meant participation was concentrated among certain Assessing Authorities (and therefore occupations).*

Pilot 2 appears to have been implemented effectively, with most Assessing Authorities remarking positively on the level of support provided by DEWR and utility of the guidelines and procedures. Notwithstanding this, Assessing Authorities noted the complexity of eligibility criteria for Pilot 2 and indicated that clarification was sometimes required (and suitably provided by DEWR).

A number of Assessing Authorities noted that Pilot 2's guidelines could have better emphasised that the Pilot was not associated with skills assessments for migration purposes earlier in the guidelines to reduce confusion. However, it should be noted that the Pilot's guidelines clearly stated that the skills assessment outcome letter was not intended to support visa applications and would need to be tailored accordingly Pilot participant (under the 'Outcome Letter' heading).

Pilot 2 had a total of 283 applicants, equivalent to approximately 4% of the total participation target for all three Pilots (7,300), below the Department's forecast expectations about Pilot 2 demand, that were based on a mix of previous skill assessment demand and industry anecdotes.<sup>a</sup> Among the applications (283), the vast majority of applicants (96%) completed their skills assessment with the remainder either withdrawn (1%) or deemed ineligible (2%) (Chart 4.1).

**Chart 4.1:** Pilot 2 application status breakdown



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=283) <sup>a</sup> Pilot 1-3 was re-scoped from 9,500 to 7,300 in 2023.

Key factors identified leading to lower-than-expected participation in Pilot 2 were:

- The value of a skills assessment for only employment purposes not being well-understood among potential applicants.
- Eligibility criteria which limited participation to those on specific family, partner, humanitarian visas as well as secondary entrants to skilled visa holders.
- The shortage nature of eligible occupations meaning Assessing Authorities received few applications for eligible occupations.
- While the Department undertook extensive promotional activities, there were challenges reaching the intended cohort. Many Assessing Authorities noted that the primary approach to promote the Pilot was emailing previous applicants to share within their networks.

*"In a typical year, we'd only receive a handful of applicants in these occupations that were eligible for the Pilot anyway" – Assessing Authority*

*"The approach to identifying applicants over relied on putting out the information and hoping that the right people would find it" – Assessing Authority*

A small number of Assessing Authorities, particularly those which require a written exam, highlighted that the design of the Pilot did not align with their assessment structure. For example, one interviewed Assessing Authority requires applicants to complete several written exams with some only available to complete twice a year. Given this Assessing Authority agreed to participate in the Pilot towards the end of 2023, there was not sufficient time to complete the entire assessment process, which meant they were not able to support any participants through the Pilot. Other Assessing Authorities did allow for a greater exam capacity or frequency to support the delivery of the Pilots.

Consistent with Pilot 1, while Assessing Authorities agreed that the MSI system was fit-for-purpose, it lacked some of the desired flexibility.

For further information surrounding the implementation of Pilot 2, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).

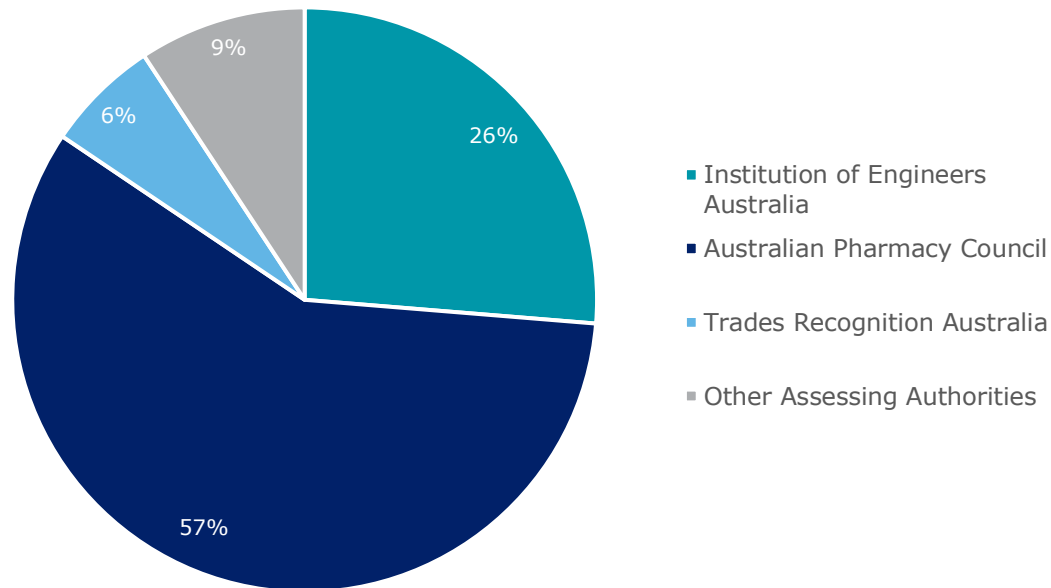
# Implementation of Pilot 2 | Key findings



4 | Pilot 2:  
Skills  
Assessments  
Opportunities  
for Migrants

Reflecting these challenges around uptake, applications for the Pilot were highly concentrated across three Assessing Authorities (and their associated occupations) – the Australian Pharmacy Council, the Institution of Engineers Australia and Trades Recognition Australia – responsible for assessing 89% of submitted Pilot 2 applications (Chart 4.2).

**Chart 4.2:** Pilot 2 participants by Assessing Authority (% of eligible applications submitted for assessment)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2024) (n= 274) Note: Other Assessing Authorities includes Australian Nursing & Midwifery Accreditation Council, Vocational Education and Training Assessment Services, CPA Australia, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Australian Computer Society, Institute of Public Accountants, CAANZ, Speech Pathology Association of Australia, Australian Dental Council, Australian Community Workers Association, Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, Australian Society of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy, Geospatial Council of Australia.  
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| Assessing Authorities were able to meet processing time Key Performance Indicator’s (KPIs) and generally this was an improvement on prior processing times.

Both stakeholder consultations and program data suggest that Assessing Authorities were able to meet the 15-day processing time KPI, with a median processing time of 4 business days. This appeared to be supported by the lower than anticipated uptake in the Pilot, with Assessing Authorities indicating that applications could be identified and prioritised with minimal impact on applications outside the Pilot and limited change to existing systems or processes.

The data indicates:

- Overall, 96% of applications in Pilot 2 were processed from the ‘Assessment Ready Date’ to ‘Date Skills Assessment Outcome Notified to Applicant’ within 15 business days – the Department’s key performance indicator (KPI) for Pilot 2.
- All Assessing Authorities achieved an average processing time from ‘Assessment Ready’ to ‘Date Skills Assessment Outcome Notified to Applicant’ within 12 business days, effectively fulfilling the Department’s KPI of 15 business days on average.
- The median processing time across all Assessing Authorities was 4 business days, although this duration varied between 1 and 13 days, across different Assessing Authorities (Chart 4.3). Suggesting there may be scope to adjust the KPI settings, particularly for some Assessing Authorities, to align more closely with their specific processing capabilities and potentially streamline the overall assessment process.
- The majority of participants (or 76%) of Pilot 2 participants received notification of their skills assessment outcome within 5 business days of ‘Assessment Ready’. The maximum interval between ‘Assessment Ready’ and the ‘Date Skills Assessment Outcome Notified to Applicant’ was 92 days.

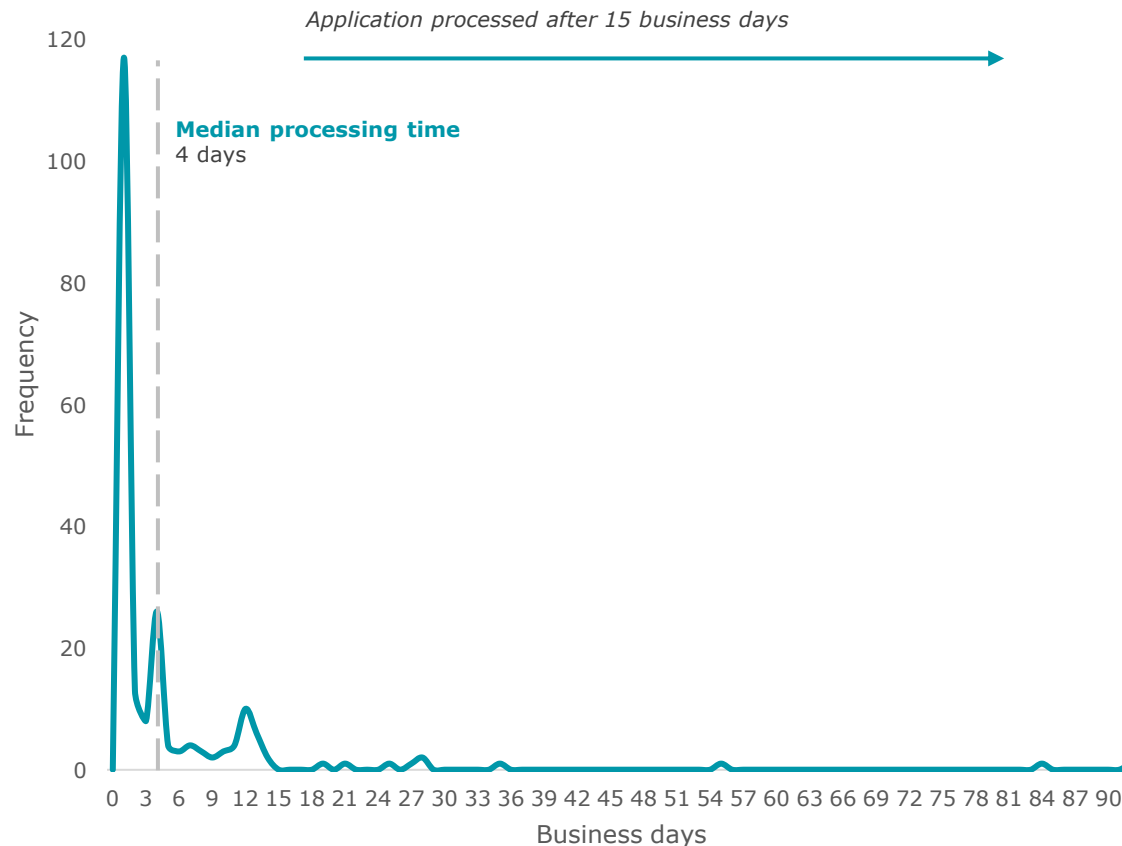
For further information surrounding Pilot 2’s skill assessment processing times, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).

# Implementation of Pilot 2 | Key findings



4 | Pilot 2:  
Skills  
Assessments  
Opportunities  
for Migrants

**Chart 4.3:** Business days between 'Assessment Ready Date' and 'Date Skills Assessment Outcome Notified to Applicant'



Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2024) (n=274)  
 Note: Analysis considers public holidays which occurred over the period between an application being 'assessment ready' and 'date skills assessment outcome notified to applicant' based on where the Assessing Authority's head office is located.

Assessing Authorities applied several strategies to implement the Pilot. These included bringing on additional resources, streamlining or introducing new internal systems and diverting existing resources. Of these strategies, Assessing Authorities with lower caseloads commonly diverted existing resources, often keeping these teams insular from broader assessment teams to minimise the need to upskill the entire team.

Meanwhile Assessing Authorities with larger caseloads often utilised a combination of employing additional contract or temporary staff or introducing new or modifying existing systems to identify and take carriage of Pilot applications. Some of the Assessing Authorities who hired resources noted that the additional contract or temporary staff were not often required given lower than anticipated caseloads. Assessing Authorities who also participated in Pilot 1 often were able to leverage the same infrastructure to deliver Pilot 2, given the similar nature of the two Pilots.

| *The extent to which funding was viewed as sufficient varied.*

Among Assessing Authorities with higher caseloads, there was a consensus that the funding was sufficient to cover resources required to deliver the Pilot. Assessing Authorities who received few or no eligible applications noted that the funding was not sufficient as it was tied to providing skill assessment outcomes however, these organisations were still required to respond to enquiries and promote the Pilot which was often described as resource-intensive.

*"The most time-consuming part of the Pilot was responding to 'Am I eligible' enquiries as people would see 'free skills assessments' and want to check if they were eligible with reading the eligibility criteria" – Assessing Authority*

Despite this, the bulk of Assessing Authorities signaled that participation in the Pilot was still worthwhile to further the Department's objectives.

For further information surrounding the implementation of Pilot 2 and funding sufficiency, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).



# Effectiveness of Pilot 2

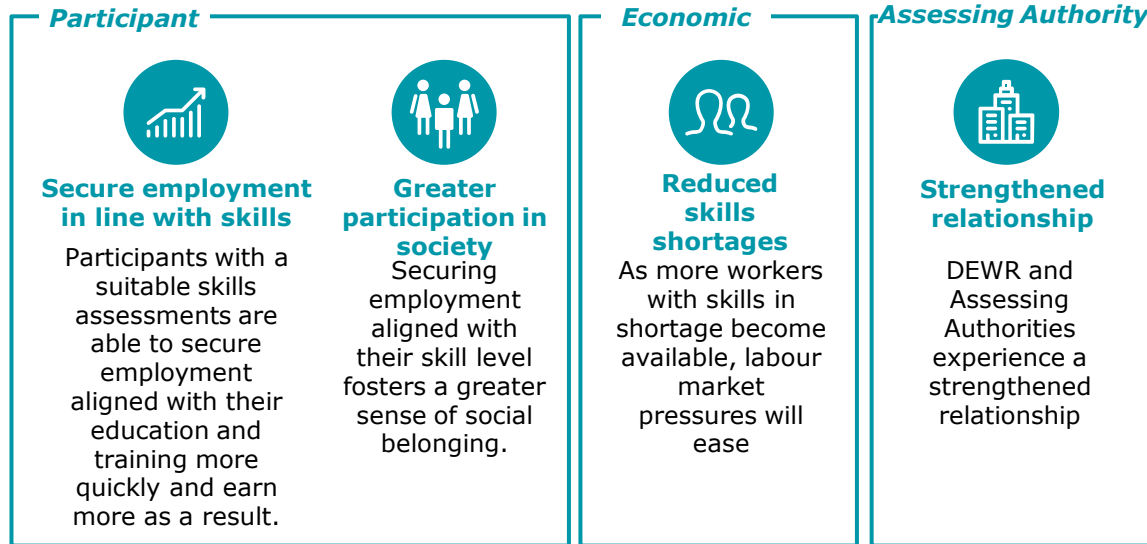
The following draws upon Assessing Authority interviews, program data, publicly available data, 6-month and 12-month survey data.

# Effectiveness of Pilot 2 | Key findings



Figure 4.1 helps to frame the participant, economic and Assessing Authority outcomes against which the effectiveness of Pilot 2 has been considered.

**Figure 4.1:** Participant, economic and Assessing Authority outcomes informing the effectiveness of Pilot 2



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024)

| Pilot 2 participants exhibited improved employment outcomes, including transitions from unemployment to employment and obtaining positions matching their assessments.

Pilot 2 supported 272 applicants to receive a free and fast-tracked skills assessment outcome. At 12-months, 84% of respondents were gainfully employed, a notable increase from the 59% employed when first receiving their skills assessment outcome (Chart 4.4). While we would expect some improvement in employment outcomes over time naturally, this suggests that receiving a skills assessment may have supported some respondents to secure employment. Interestingly, since receiving their outcomes, 62% of those initially unemployed had moved into paid employment.

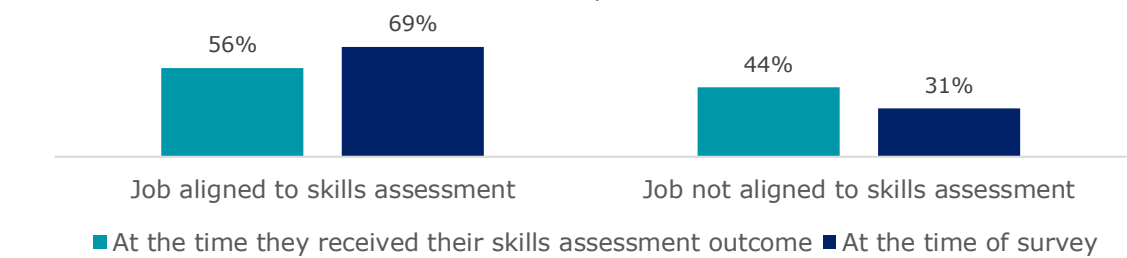
**Chart 4.4:** Survey respondents' employment status (12-months)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=74)

Of the respondents who were employed at the time of the survey, 13% of respondents were now employed in roles that aligned with their skills assessment relative to at the time they received their skills assessment outcome (Chart 4.5). Furthermore, among those who changed jobs since receiving their skills assessment outcome, a substantial 71% are now working in a role that aligns with their skills assessment.

**Chart 4.5:** Survey respondents' alignment to skills at the time they received their skills assessment outcome and the time of the survey



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=59)

Among the cohort of survey respondents who received a suitable skills assessment and were employed at the time of survey, 65% reported that their assessment outcome supported with securing a job or aiding their job application.

As with Pilot 1, some caution should be taken in fully attributing the outcomes above to participation in Pilot 2, as some improvement in employment outcomes could be expected for some over time in the absence of the Pilot.

For further information surrounding the employment outcomes associated with Pilot 2, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).



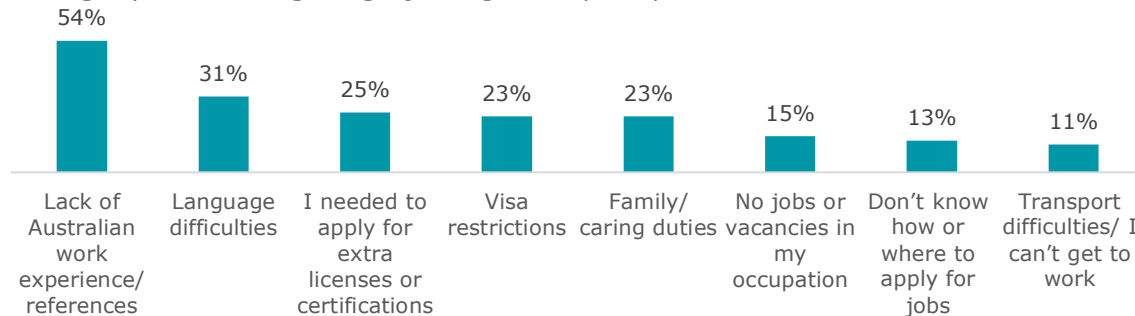
# Effectiveness of Pilot 2 | Key findings

| Pilot 2 had a relatively high share of applicants receiving 'unsuitable' outcomes, suggesting that some participants may have not applied for a skills assessment if it was not available for free.

A relatively high share (46%) of applicants received an 'unsuitable' skills assessment outcome, for example when compared to Pilot 1 (89%). While this may be associated with the type of cohort applying for skills assessments being more likely to face barriers to employment (see below), it suggests some applicants may not have applied for a skills assessment outcome had it not been available for free. This result is consistent with survey results which indicate a quarter of respondents (or 25%) would not have submitted a skills assessment if it was not free and fast-tracked. The finding is also consistent with observations in the VET sector, for example, where free training can reduce an individual's incentive to assess its expected net value and what would practically be involved – with negative implications for training outcomes like completions. Alternatively, it may further highlight some of the barriers to completing a skills assessment faced by this cohort of migrants, notably gathering appropriate documentary evidence.

Some of the top barriers faced to securing employment voiced by participants were lack of local work experience or references (54%), followed by language barriers (31%) and the requirement for additional licenses or certifications (25%), (Chart 4.6).

**Chart 4.6:** 'Based on your experience in the Australian job market, what are some of the challenges you've faced getting a job aligned to your qualifications?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=61). Note: Percentages total more than 100% as respondents can select more than one answer. Given all participants were eligible to work, 'visa restrictions' may refer to employed mandated restrictions.

Furthermore, some of top barriers faced by non-skilled migrants in completing a skills assessment identified by Assessing Authorities included:

- Meeting English language requirements
- Evidence of qualifications undertaken or previous employment
- Fees
- Difficulty understanding the skill assessment criteria
- Understanding what it means to work in Australia

In response to these barriers, Assessing Authorities do provide some concessions with respect to fees and evidence provided, particularly for humanitarian visa holders. For further information surrounding the barriers faced by migrants in securing employment commensurate with their qualifications in Australia, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).

| Pilot 2 participants were trained in skilled high-demand occupations however given low uptake, the contribution to addressing Australia's skills shortages is likely to have been minor.

Almost all (or 99%) Pilot 2 participants who underwent a skills assessment were deemed suitable received assessments in occupations currently facing national shortages. This result is largely a function of the eligibility criteria of the Pilot. Among this group, four in five (80%) participants received assessments for occupations that are not only in short-supply at the time the program was operating, but also projected to experience demand in-line with the economy average. However, given the low uptake in the Pilot, the overall contribution to reducing skill shortages is likely to be minor. For further information surrounding the alignment of Pilot 2 participants to occupations deemed to be in national shortage, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).



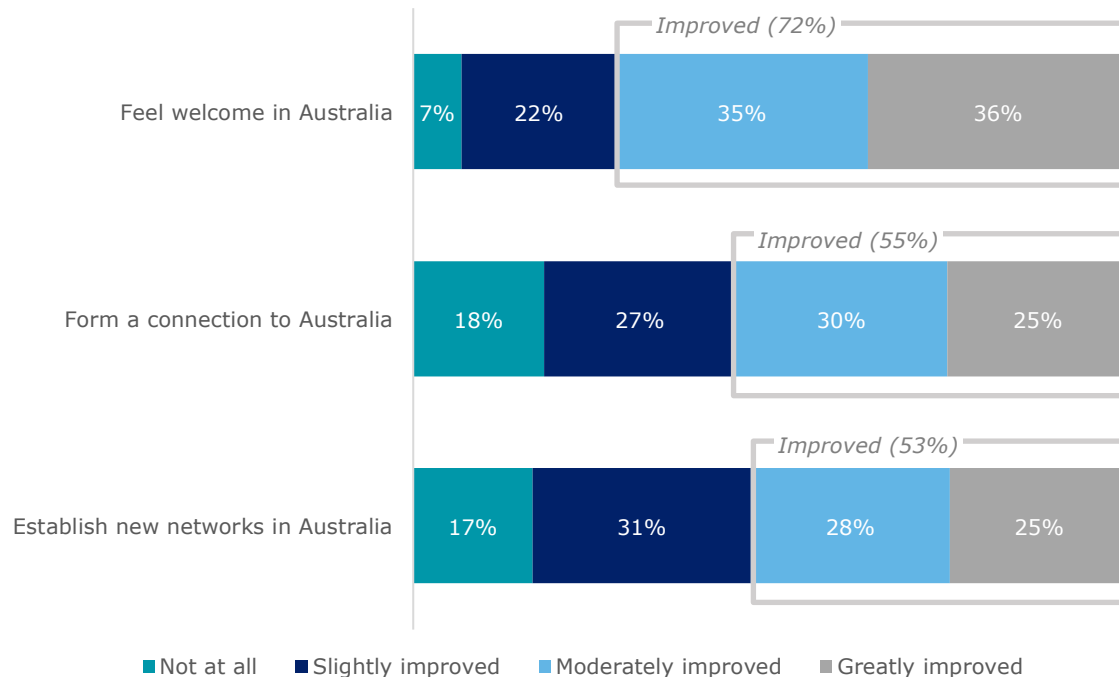
# Effectiveness of Pilot 2 | Key findings



| While participants already reported a strong sense of social wellbeing in Australia, many noted that the skills assessment process had enhanced this.

A significant share (72%) reported that participating in the Pilot enhanced their sense of belonging in Australia, while 55% agreed it improved their sense of connection to Australia and 53% indicated it had helped to establish new networks (Chart 4.7). A further 84% reported that participating in the skills assessment process had enhanced how they felt about their place and future in Australia. For further information surrounding the social outcomes associated with Pilot 2, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).

**Chart 4.7:** 'To what extent did participating in the skills assessment process help you?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=74), excludes respondents who selected 'don't know'  
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| The Pilot had a large share of female participants largely reflecting the visa eligibility criteria for the Pilot.

The bulk of participants in the Pilot were female, largely representing the fact that half held a family or partner visa or were secondary skilled visa holders – visas which are more typically held by women. For further information surrounding the characteristics of Pilot 2 participants, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).

| Assessing Authorities indicated that involvement in Pilot 2 strengthened their relationship with DEWR.

Consistent with Pilot 1, all Assessing Authorities reported that participating in the Pilot has strengthened the relationship between Assessing Authorities and the Department. Assessing Authorities highlighted that participation in the Pilot has increased the frequency of contact with the Department in addition to their comfort reaching out to the Department with queries.

For further information surrounding the strengthened relationship between Assessing Authorities and the Department, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).



# Impact of Pilot 2

This section combines program data and the 6-month and 12-month survey data with publicly available evidence.

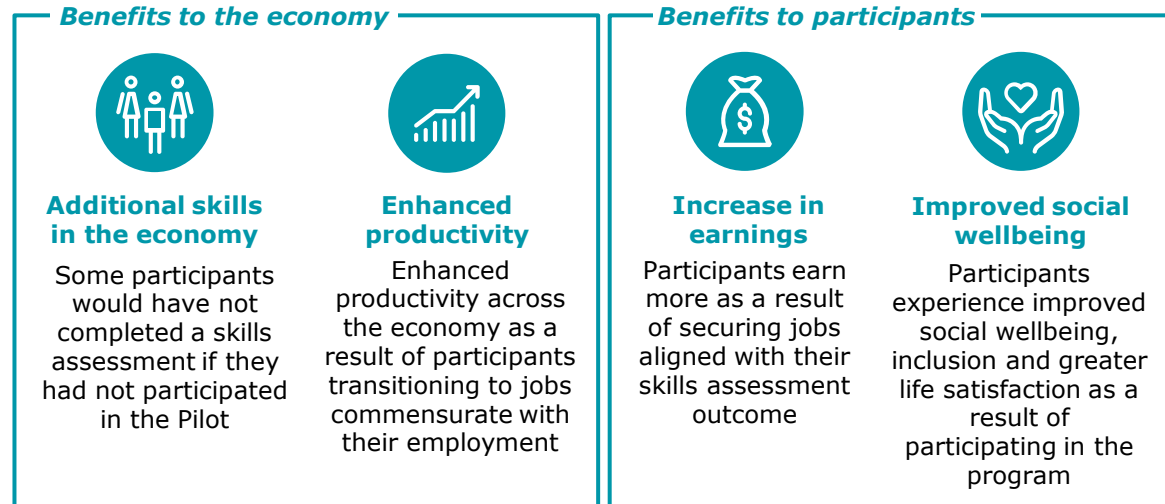
# Impact of Pilot 2 | Key findings



4 | Pilot 2:  
Skills  
Assessments  
Opportunities  
for Migrants

Figure 4.2 helps to frame the outcomes against which the impact of Pilot 2 has been considered.

**Figure 4.2:** Outcomes informing the impact of Pilot 2

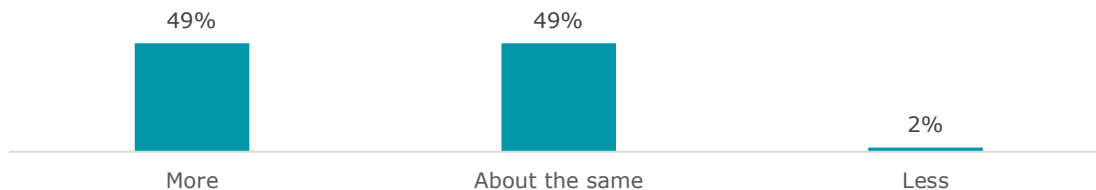


Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024)

| There are indications that Pilot 2 has been associated with higher participant earning potential and improved employment circumstances after receiving a skills assessment outcome.

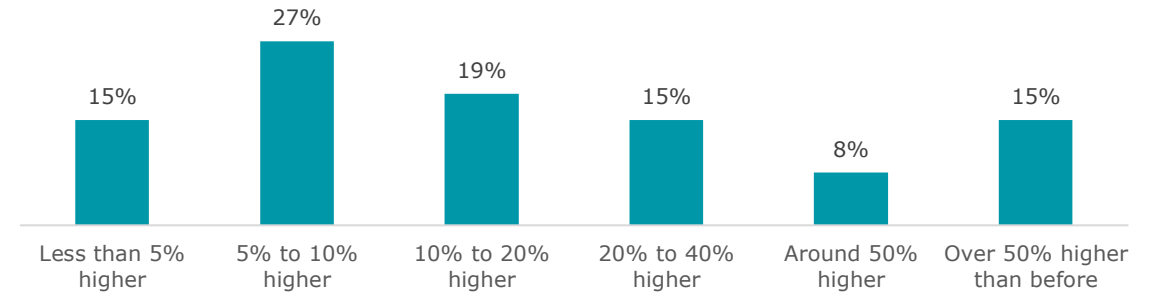
Among survey respondents with suitable skills assessments, 49% reported higher incomes (Chart 4.8), with 23% experiencing increases of 50% or more (Chart 4.9).

**Chart 4.8:** 'Do you earn more or less money now than you did at the time you received a skills assessment outcome?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=56) excludes respondents who selected 'prefer not to say' or 'don't know'.

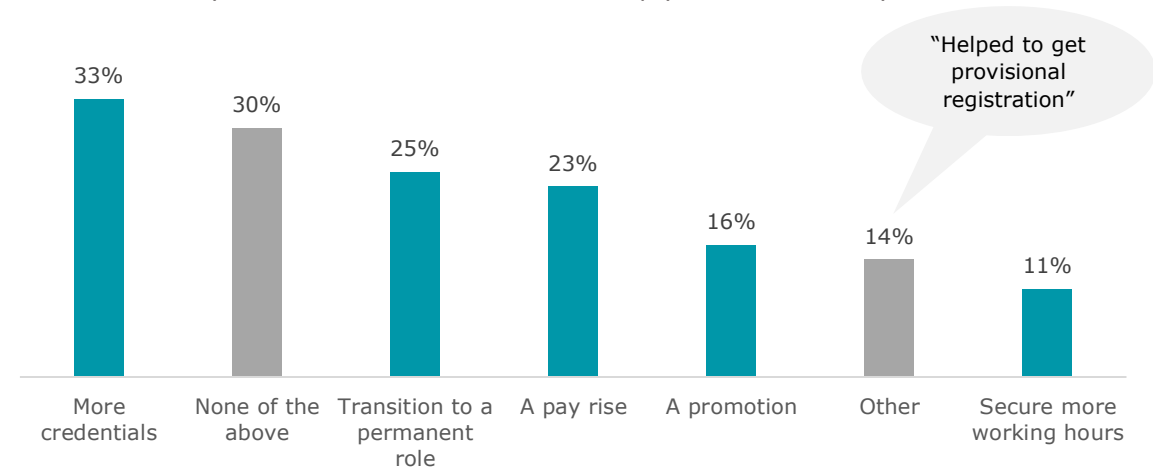
**Chart 4.9:** 'As a percentage, how much higher is your average monthly income now than at the time you received a skills assessment outcome?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=26) excludes respondents who selected 'prefer not to say' or 'don't know'.

Notably, 23% of respondents utilised their skills assessment outcome to negotiate a pay rise, while others used their outcome to secure a promotion (16%), obtain more working hours (11%) or transition into a more permanent position (25%) (Chart 4.10).

**Chart 4.10:** 'Did your skills assessment outcome help you to achieve any of the below?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=57)

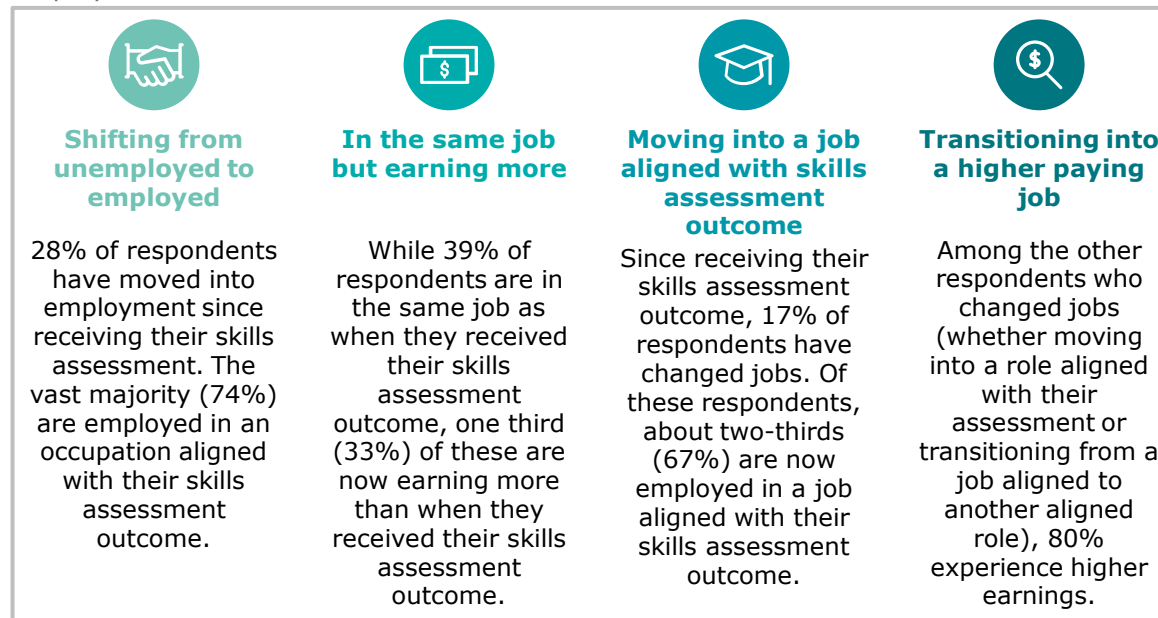
# Impact of Pilot 2 | Key findings



4 | Pilot 2:  
Skills  
Assessments  
Opportunities  
for Migrants

Improved employment circumstances were derived through four distinct pathways, shifting from unemployment to employment, staying in the same occupations but earning more, moving into a job aligned with their skills assessment outcome and transitioning to a higher paying job (Figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.3:** The benefits of receiving a skills assessment outcome on participants employment circumstances



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024).

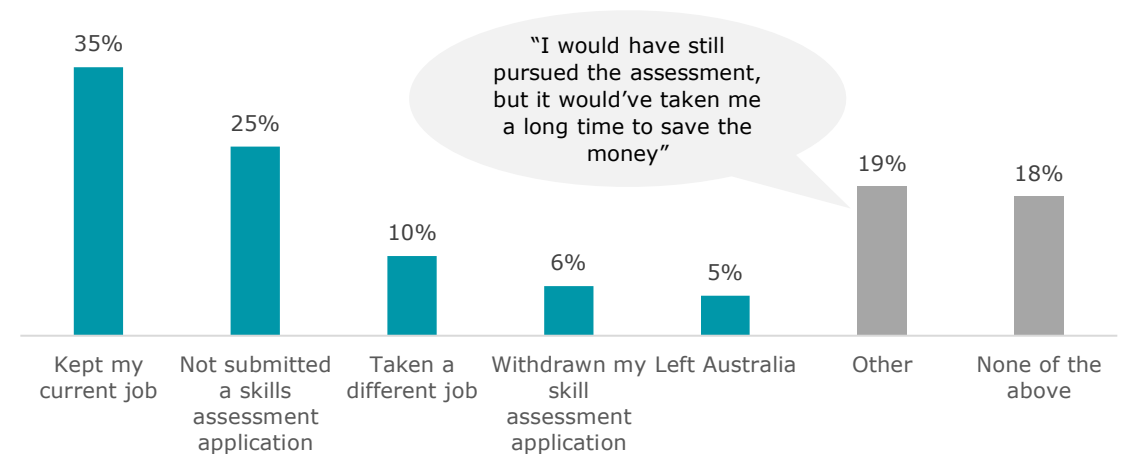
For respondents who transitioned into a job aligned with their skills assessment outcome, it is estimated that participants were able to earn \$241 more on average each week as a result.

For further information surrounding the impact of Pilot 2 on participants earnings, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).

*The evidence suggests that for many participants, involvement in Pilot 2 (and the financial and social outcomes that followed) may not have occurred in its absence.*

Some participants would not have completed a skills assessment if they had not participated in the Pilot. These participants represent additional skills to the economy as a result of the program. According to the survey, 25% of the 274 Pilot 2 participants (or 70) who received a skills assessment outcome indicated they would not have completed a skills assessment if it were not free and fast-tracked. A further 35% would have kept their current job, withdrawn their skills assessment application (6%) or taken a different job (10%) had their application not been free and fast-tracked (Chart 4.11).

**Chart 4.11:** 'Imagine that your skills assessment would have cost \$900 and took 8 weeks to complete instead of 3 weeks. Which of the following actions, if any, would you have taken?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2024) (n=77) Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% as respondents can select multiple response options.

For further information surrounding the financial and social outcomes that may not have occurred in the absence of Pilot 2, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).

# Impact of Pilot 2 | Key findings



| Participants attributed receiving a skills assessment outcome with a higher sense of social wellbeing, particularly noting an enhanced sense of future employment and career prospects and confidence.

Figure 4.4 illustrates some of the ways that receiving a free and fast-tracked skills assessment outcome positively influenced respondents and their families.

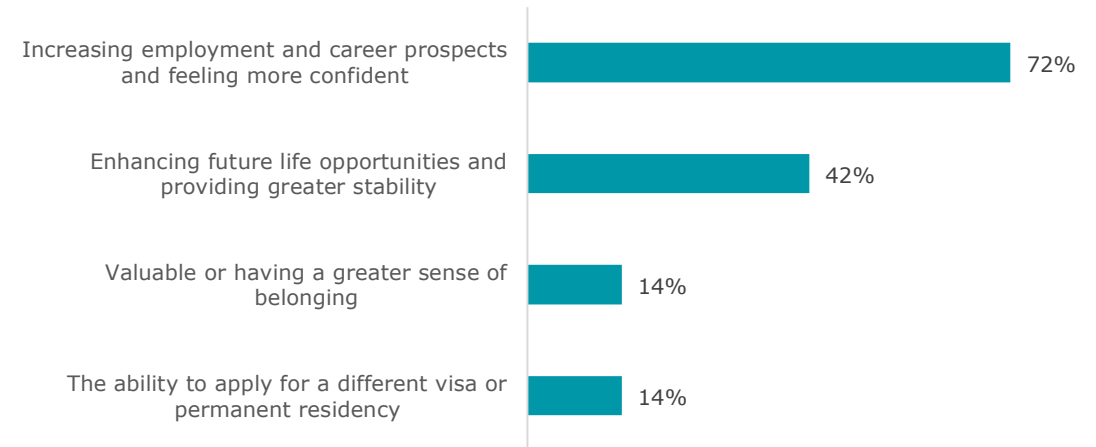
**Figure 4.4:** Participant survey responses to 'what difference the skills assessment outcome made to the participant or their family'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024)

Survey respondents attributed receiving a skills assessment outcome with a variety of positive influences on their lives and those of their families. More than two-thirds (72%) of respondents reporting that receiving a skills assessment outcome increased their employment and career prospects, followed by enhanced future life opportunities (42%) or having a greater sense of belonging (14%) (Chart 4.12).

**Chart 4.12:** Categorisation of responses to 'what difference, if any, did getting your skills assessment outcome make to you or your family?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=50)

Migrants facing underemployment frequently grapple with substantial stressors that affect their mental and emotional states. The social ramifications of over-qualification among migrants are challenging to quantify but stem from their inability to apply their chosen expertise and secure meaningful employment. As various studies have noted, this circumstance is associated with adverse mental health outcomes, marked by persistent feelings of sadness, depression, and loneliness.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, poorer mental health can significantly reduce labour market participation highlighting the intricate relationship between mental wellbeing and employment.<sup>2</sup> Stressors like underemployment or over-qualification, which may lead to feelings of unfulfillment, adversely affect migrants' mental health, diminishing their motivation to seek and maintain employment, thereby compounding labour market challenges. Attaining permanent residency can offer the stability and security needed to address these stressors potentially enhancing migrants' mental health and, in turn, their labour market outcomes.

For further information surrounding Pilot 2's impact on participants social wellbeing including in academic literature, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).

# Pilot 2 conclusions



*For Pilot 2 the key objective was also to accelerate migrants' participation in the Australian workforce, but in this instance through free and fast-tracked skills assessments. Here, the evidence suggests that the Pilot resulted in positive employment and social outcomes that otherwise would have not occurred for a share of participants. For those participants who received an unsuitable outcome, some benefit came through the provision referrals from Assessing Authorities to relevant training to improve skills in their nominated occupation.*

While implemented successfully from a procedural standpoint, in contrast to Pilot 1, Pilot 2 faced challenges in generating the expected levels of uptake. These challenges included:

- Uncertainty among prospective applicants around the value of a skills assessment for purely employment purposes (rather than migration purposes), especially during a period of high demand for labour in several occupations included in the Pilot.
- The eligibility criteria which limited participation to certain visas.
- Difficulty reaching the intended cohort from a marketing perspective.

Nonetheless, for those migrants involved in the Pilot, it appears to have produced benefits that would not have otherwise occurred, such as improved employment outcomes, higher earnings potential and improved social wellbeing.

Areas of improvement for consideration in similar future programs include:

- Adopting a more nuanced approach to program settings across Assessing Authorities, supported by consultation around what would be most suitable given the Assessing Authority's specific occupational contexts, and potentially through an individually negotiated process – which may be feasible given the relatively small number of Assessing Authorities involved.
- While the Department required Assessing Authorities to provide clear information surrounding gaps to receiving a 'suitable' outcome, there may be further

consideration to addressing potential unintended effects of the free nature of the skills assessment. With a relatively high share of 'unsuitable' skills assessment outcomes under Pilot 2, there is reason to think that less than ideal investment was being made by applicants in understanding the purpose and requirements of the process in advance.

Pilot 2 nonetheless showed that for some, skills assessment application fees represent a barrier, and the removal of that barrier (via government support) has the potential to unlock economic and social benefits.

For more in-depth analysis of Pilot 2, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix B).



# 5 | Pilot 3: Employability Assessments

Free employability assessments and access to subsidised training for eligible migrants with a 'suitable' skills assessment.



# Implementation of Pilot 3

The following draws upon Assessing Authority interviews, withdrawn participant interviews and the Department's program data.



# Implementation of Pilot 3 | Key findings

*| Procedurally, the evidence suggests that the Pilot was implemented effectively, though communicating the intent, value proposition and processes around Pilot 3 represented a challenge.*

Pilot 3 appears to have been implemented effectively, with most Assessing Authorities and the Employability Assessment Provider (EAP) indicating that the guidelines were easy to understand and where further clarification was required, DEWR was quick to provide further guidance. Assessing Authorities highlighted that the pre-prepared materials, templates and information packs were helpful in supporting implementation of the Pilot.

*"While there was a lot of information to understand, particularly given our limited role in delivering the Pilot, the guidelines were clear and easy to understand. Where we needed to clarify things, DEWR were and quick to provide a response" – Assessing Authority*

In tandem, DEWR published factsheets (in 20 different languages), introduced a webpage and presented at various information sessions and forums attended by potential applicants. Despite these efforts, Assessing Authorities still reported that they fielded a high number of enquiries about the Pilot that did not lead to applications and found communicating its purpose and process challenging. For example, Assessing Authorities indicated that applicants often thought the employability assessment was intended to help support job-search or provide workplace training – this message was echoed in withdrawn participant interviews.

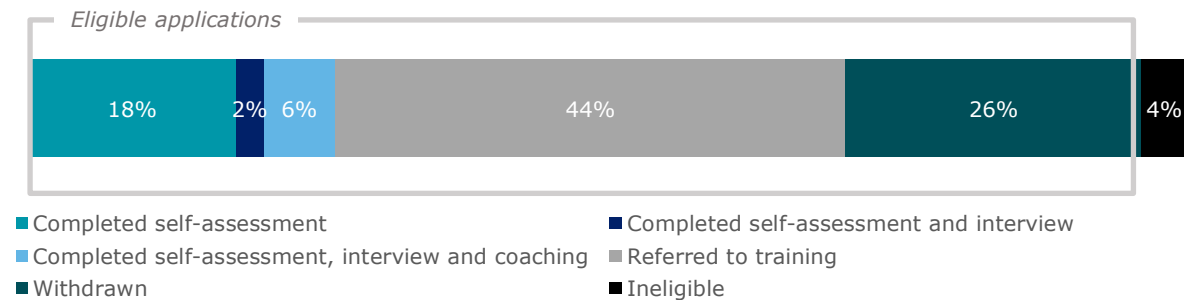
This is reflected in the relatively high share (26%) of applicants who chose to withdraw their application – which is higher than Pilot 1 (0%) and Pilot 2 (1%).

For further information surrounding the implementation of Pilot 3, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix C).

*| Uptake in Pilot 3 was lower than anticipated, and similar to Pilot 2, this meant participation was concentrated among a small number of Assessing Authorities (and therefore occupations).*

Pilot 3 had a total of 229 applicants, equivalent to approximately 3% of the total participation target for Pilot 1-3 (7,300), significantly below the Department's forecast expectations, that were based on a combination of previous skill assessment completions, industry anecdotes and publicly available data sources surrounding the underutilisation migrants with recognised skills.<sup>a</sup> More than half of applicants who had not withdrawn (53%) had completed more than one stage of the Pilot – consisting of self-assessment, followed by an interview and coaching session (Chart 5.1). Where additional training was identified as required, applicants are referred to additional employability skills training – with 44% of applicants referred to training. Among participants who were referred to training, 63% enrolled into training – below the enrolment of participants in training KPI target of 70%.

**Chart 5.1:** Pilot 3 application status breakdown



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=229)

A key factor leading to lower-than-expected participation in Pilot 3 was the difficulty reported by Assessing Authorities in being able to identify suitable applicants, attributing this to:

- The in-demand nature of some eligible occupations, where securing a job was not difficult at the time, meaning an employability assessment was not necessary.
- The eligibility criteria limiting participation to those on specific skilled, family, partner, humanitarian visas who had received a 'suitable' skills assessment.
- A lack of fit between the employability skills training suggested, which was often perceived as too basic (despite being identified by industry as the common skills gaps in these occupations), and some of the more highly skilled occupations included who often held tertiary level qualifications – sometimes from Australian universities.

<sup>a</sup> Pilot 1-3 was re-scoped from 9,500 to 7,300 in 2023.

# Implementation of Pilot 3 | Key findings



As earlier noted, more than a quarter (26%) of applicants withdrew from the Pilot. According to Assessing Authorities, this was commonly attributed to the employability skills training offered, which despite being developed in consultation with industry, was described as foundational in nature and often not relevant to highly skilled participants. Interviews with withdrawn participants confirmed these findings, with participants reporting that the skills gaps identified and referrals to training were often not relevant. This suggests that employability skills training did not enhance migrants' overall career prospects or support their employment journey.

*"I did not feel like this training would have helped me further my career in any way, I was referred to foundational numeracy training, which I don't need as I have a Masters in Engineering" – Withdrawn participant*

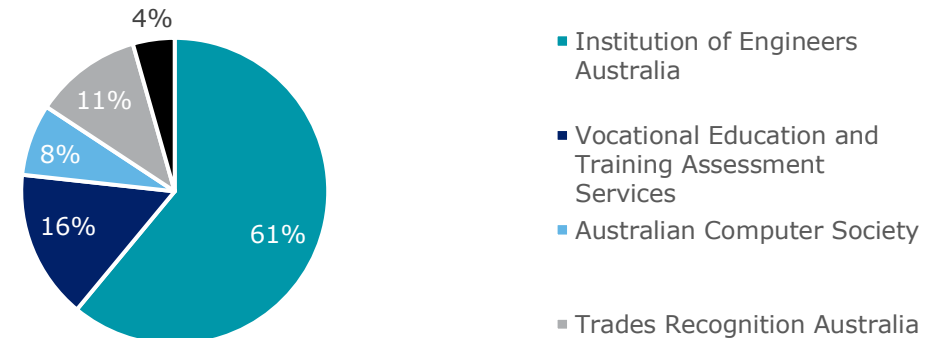
The EAP also noted that many migrants found it challenging to engage with the Pilot assessments and training as they were employed in some capacity and could not miss hours of work to engage with them. Noting that some workarounds were provided, such as providing sessions outside of normal business hours.

The challenges with Pilot 3 uptake meant that applications were concentrated across three Assessing Authorities – the Institution of Engineers Australia, Vocational Education and Training Assessment Services and Trades Recognition Australia – responsible for assessing 88% of all submitted applications (Chart 5.2).

In response to low participant uptake DEWR undertook a range of promotional initiatives and made adjustments to eligibility criteria to enhance participation in the Pilot, which appear to have supported participation towards the end of 2023.

For further information surrounding participation in Pilot 3 including the barriers and enablers to uptake, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix C).

**Chart 5.2:** Pilot 3 participants by Assessing Authority (% of eligible applications submitted for assessment)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2024) (n=159). Note: Other Assessing Authorities include Institute of Public Accountants, Australian Psychological Society and CPA Australia, Australian Nursing & Midwifery Accreditation Council, CAANZ, Australian Dental Council, Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, Australian Community Workers Association, Optometry Council of Australia, Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, Australian Society of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy, Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association.

*| Views varied on the extent to which funding was sufficient, where (similar to Pilot 2) levels of uptake influenced the extent to which costs were able to be covered, in particular the upfront costs of preparing for the pilot.*

Roughly half of Assessing Authorities indicated that the funding was sufficient given their limited role in facilitating referrals to the EAP or alternatively, reported that funding was not sufficient given the resource-intensive nature of identifying and responding to applicants' enquiries.

Meanwhile, the EAP noted that while the assessment fee was sufficient the funding did not cover the initial stakeholder consultation process, the overtime associated with providing the Pilot outside of business hours and the administratively burdensome need to regularly follow up with participants. For further information surrounding the funding sufficiency of Pilot 3 from both an Assessing Authority and EAP perspective, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix C).



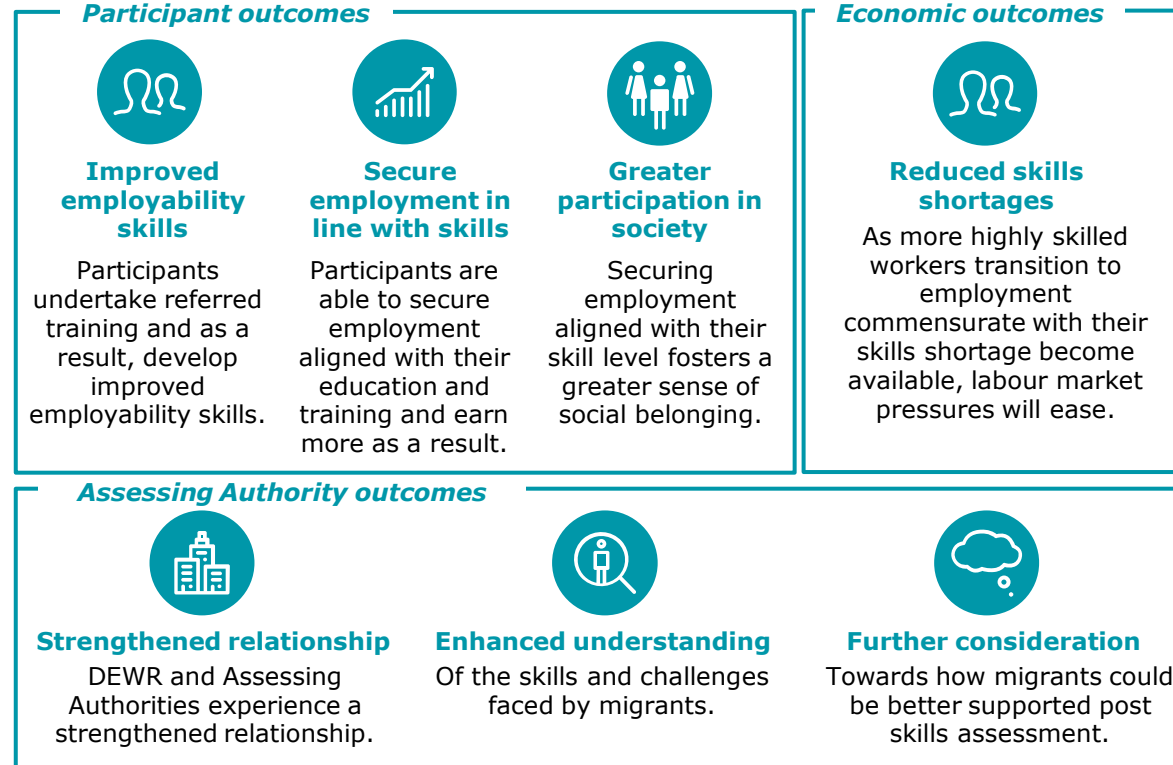
# Effectiveness of Pilot 3

The following draws upon Assessing Authority interviews, withdrawn participant interviews, program data, publicly available data, 6-month and 12-month survey data.

# Effectiveness of Pilot 3 | Key findings

Figure 5.1 helps to frame the participant, economic and Assessing Authority outcomes against, which the effectiveness of Pilot 3 has been considered.

**Figure 5.1:** Participant, economic and Assessing Authority outcomes informing the effectiveness of Pilot 2

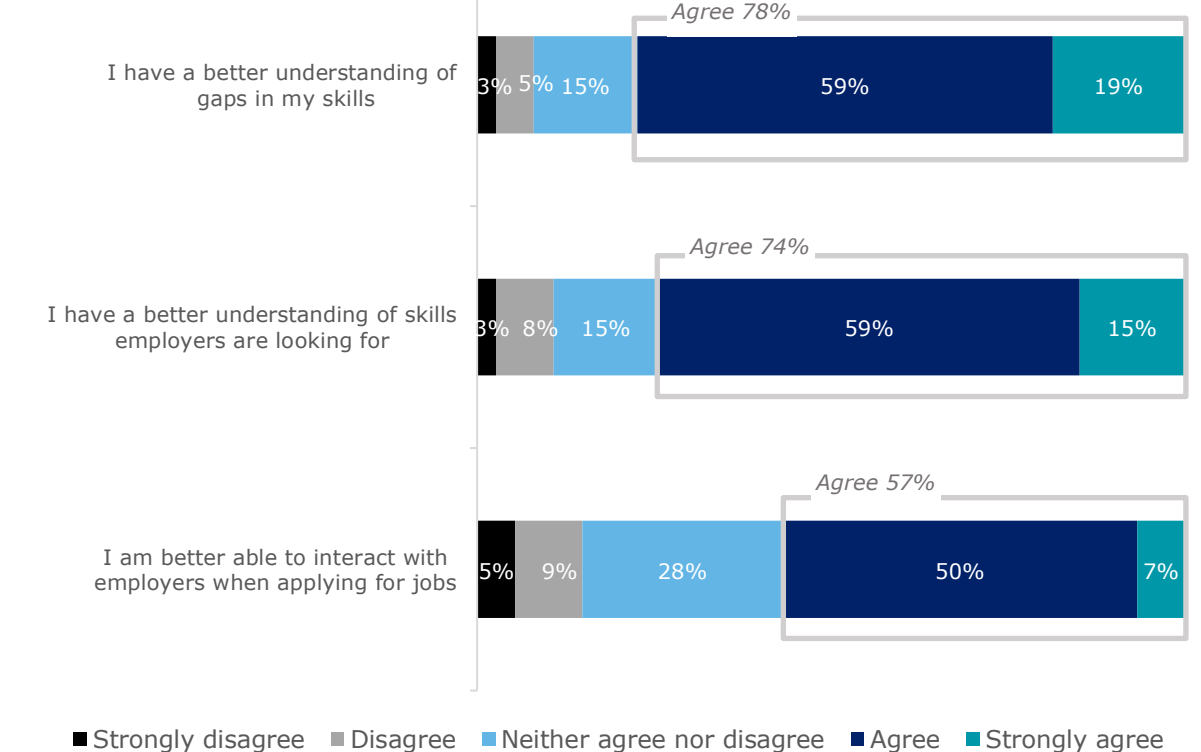


Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024)

| Participants reported improved employability skills and a better understanding of gaps in these skills, however among survey respondents, employability skills were often not identified as a key barrier to securing employment.

Four in five (78%) survey respondents reported having a better understanding of the gaps in their skills following participating in the employability skills assessment (Chart 5.3).

**Chart 5.3:** Extent to which respondents agree with the following statements



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=75), excludes respondents who selected 'don't know'.

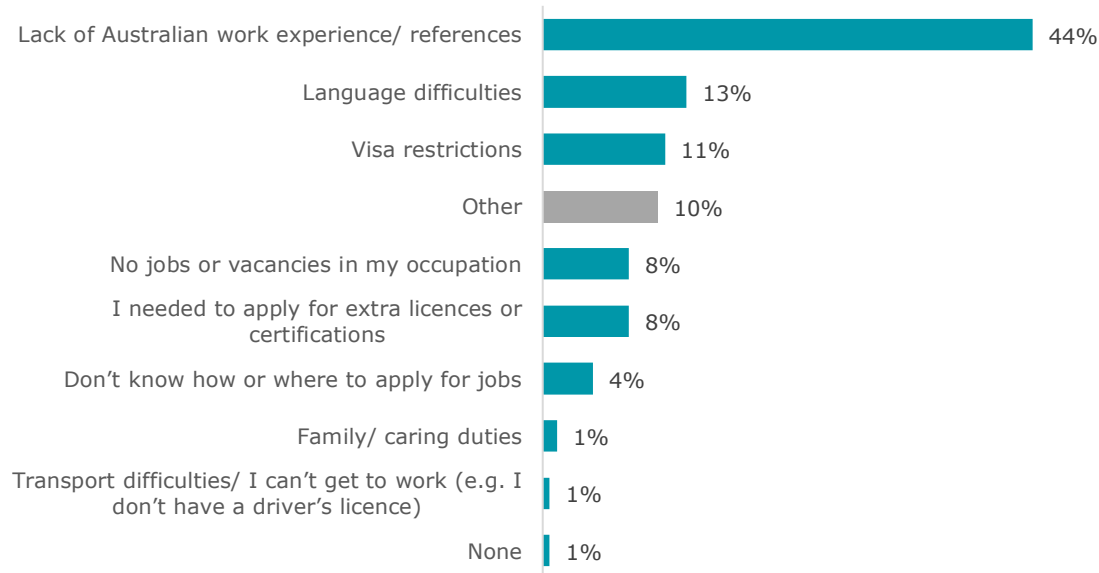
Further, among survey respondents who were referred to training, the vast majority reported improvements in employability skills. The top three employability skills respondents reported an improvement in was learning (80%), planning and organising (76%), and problem solving (74%).

# Effectiveness of Pilot 3 | Key findings



Despite reported improvements in employability skills, gaps in soft skills is not often identified as a key barrier to employment. The top barrier to employment identified by survey respondents was a lack of Australian work experience/ references (44%), followed by language difficulties (13%) and visa restrictions (11%) (Chart 5.4).

**Chart 5.4:** 'Based on your experiences in Australia, what are some of the challenges you've faced to getting a job aligned to your qualifications or skills?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=73), excludes respondents who selected 'don't know'.  
Note: Percentages sum to more than 100% as respondents can select more than one option.

Similarly, withdrawn participants consistently noted lack of local networks and work experience as key barriers to securing a job in line with their skills.

*"A key barrier for me has been not knowing anyone who can refer me to a job or vouch for my previous experience" – Withdrawn participant*

For further information surrounding the barriers faced to securing employment, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix C).

| Surveyed Pilot 3 participants exhibited on average slightly improved employment outcomes over time following the Pilot, however very few transitioned to jobs in line with their skills which suggests that the benefit of receiving an employability skills assessment may have been marginal.

At the time of the 12-month survey, respondents' employment outcomes slightly improved since they received an employability skills assessment. At the time of the survey, a higher share of respondents were employed (93%) relative to the time they received their employability skills assessment (89%) (Chart 5.5), with 4% of respondents transitioning from employment to unemployment after receiving an employability skills assessment.

Given a small increment in the share of employed respondents, in tandem to the fact that some improvement in employment circumstances is expected to occur naturally over time, it is likely that the Pilot was not effective in supporting applicants to secure employment.

**Chart 5.5:** Survey respondents' employment status (12-month survey)



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=82), excludes respondents who selected 'prefer not to say'.

At the time of the survey, 60% were employed in the same job as when they completed their employability skills assessment. The remaining 40% were employed in a different job (Chart 5.6).

**Chart 5.6:** 'Are you in the same job as when you completed your employability skills assessment?'

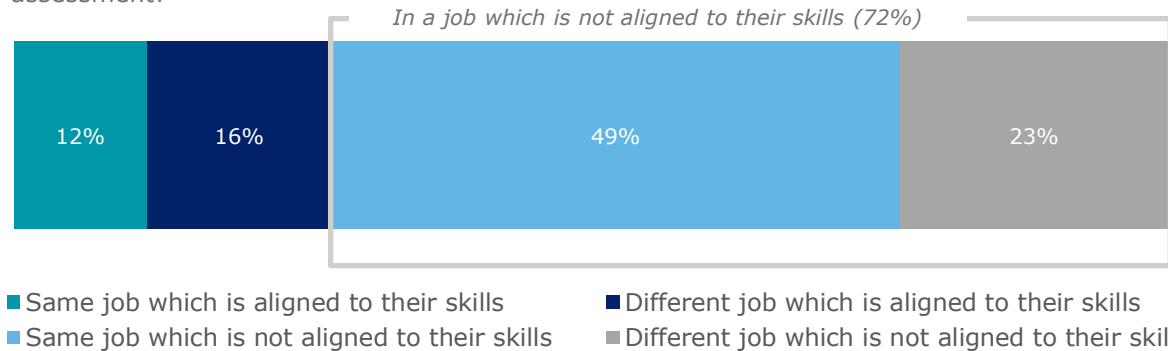


Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=70)

# Effectiveness of Pilot 3 | Key findings

Consistent with findings that few respondents were in a different role, among participants who were still employed at the time of the 12-month survey, 72% were still employed in a job which was not aligned to their skills and experience (Chart 5.7). Among the remaining 28% of respondents, 12% had already secured a job in line with their skills and 16% had recently secured a job aligned to their qualifications. Signalling that the Pilot was not effective in supporting applicants to secure employment commensurate with their skills.

**Chart 5.7:** 'Are you in the same job as when you completed your employability skills assessment?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=69)

For further information surrounding the employment outcomes associated with Pilot 3, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix C).

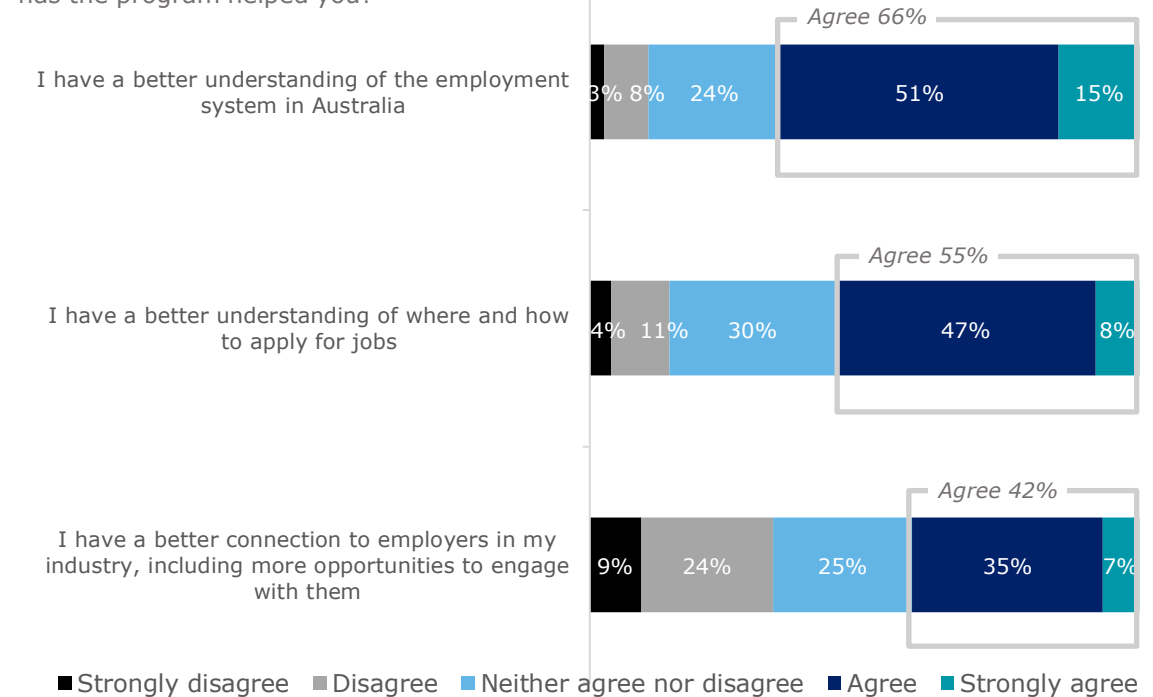
*| The relatively concentrated uptake across a small number of Assessing Authorities and occupations, resulted in a gender bias under Pilot 3 towards males.*

The majority of applicants were male (74%), with the remaining 26% of applicants were either female (15%) or gender was unspecified (11%). The higher representation of male applicants is a reflection of the predominately male-dominated Assessing Authorities with the highest caseloads. For example, the engineering industry – responsible for 61% of applicants in the Pilot – has one of the lowest female representations, with one in eight (13%) representing female engineers.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the other Assessing Authorities with high caseloads in the Pilot assess many occupations in male-dominated industries such as Trades Recognition Australia and Vocational Education and Training Assessment Services.

*| Pilot 3 participants have a better understanding of the employment system in Australia and report that the employability skills assessment process enhanced their sense of wellbeing.*

More than two thirds (or 66%) survey respondents agreed that following participation in the Pilot they have a better understanding of the employment system in Australia. While more than half (or 55%) agreed that they have a better understanding of where and how to apply for jobs and 42% reported having a better connection to employers in their industry (Chart 5.8).

**Chart 5.8:** 'Based on your experience in the employability assessment process so far, how has the program helped you?'



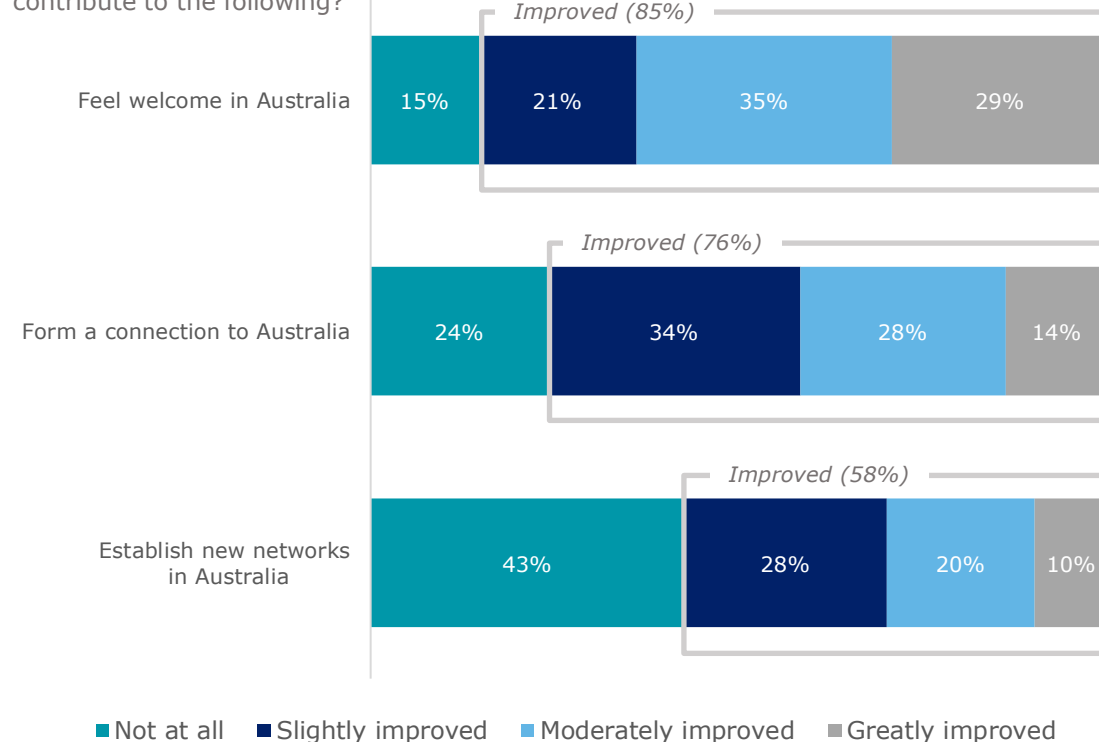
Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=76), excludes respondents who selected 'prefer not to say'.



# Effectiveness of Pilot 3 | Key findings

Almost all (85%) survey respondents indicated that participating in the employability assessment process had enhanced their sense of belonging. A further, 76% of respondents indicated that participating in the employability assessment enhanced their sense of connection to Australia and 58% shared similar sentiments about establishing new networks in Australia. Therefore, the Pilot appears to have contributed towards improvements in applicants' social wellbeing. For further information surrounding improvements to participants understanding of the employment system, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix C).

**Chart 5.10:** 'To what extent did participating in the employability assessment process contribute to the following?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=82), excludes respondents who selected 'don't know'.

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| Pilot 3 participants were trained in skilled high-demand occupations however given low uptake in the Pilot in parallel to the potentially limited impact of receiving an employability skills assessment and training, the contribution to addressing Australia's skills shortages is likely to be limited.

Almost all Pilot 3 participants (96%) were skilled in occupations currently facing national shortages. However, given low uptake in the Pilot in addition to findings of the potentially limited long-term impact of receiving an employability skills assessment and associated training, the contribution to reducing national skill shortages is likely to be very limited.

For further information surrounding the alignment of participants to occupations deemed to be in a state of national shortage, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix C).

| Assessing Authorities indicated that the Pilot had strengthened their relationship with DEWR and agreed that the Pilot had led them to consider how they could better support migrants after receiving a skills assessment outcome.

Consistent with Pilot 1 and 2, all Assessing Authorities reported that participating in the Pilot has strengthened the relationship between Assessing Authorities and the Department. Assessing Authorities highlighted that participation in the Pilot has increased the frequency of contact with the Department in addition to their comfort reaching out to the Department with queries.

Furthermore, many Assessing Authorities highlighted that the Pilot had encouraged them to consider what additional support and services could be provided to applicants post skills assessment to support the development of employability skills and transitions to work. Some of these Assessing Authorities have already introduced new free supports to previous applicants, such as job register to connect employers to jobseekers. Revealing that the Pilot was effective in progressing the consideration of employment outcomes in the skills assessment process.

For further information surrounding the strengthened relationship between Assessing Authorities and the Department and actions adopted to better support migrants transition to employment, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix C).



# Impact of Pilot 3

This section combines 6-month and 12-month survey data with publicly available evidence.



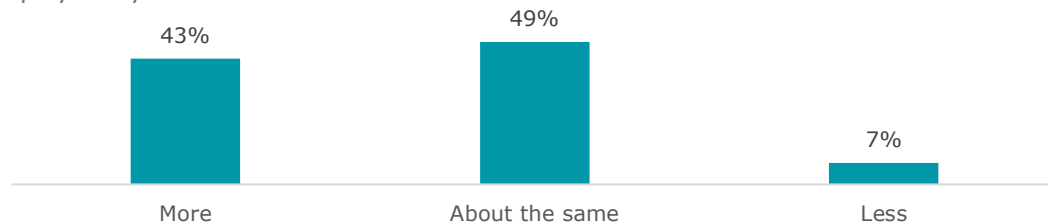
# Impact of Pilot 3 | Key findings



| Overall, the evidence suggests that the Pilot had a relatively limited financial and economic impact on participating migrants as the barriers to securing employment in line with skills extend beyond those associated with employability skills.

Nearly half (or 49%) of survey respondents are earning the same amount as when they received their employability skills assessment, meanwhile the remainder were either earning more (43%) or less (7%) (Chart 5.11).

**Chart 5.11:** 'Do you earn more or less money now than you did at the time you received an employability assessment?'



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024) (n=69), excludes respondents who selected 'don't know'.

Given the small share of participants transitioning into roles aligned with their skills assessment following participation in the Pilot in parallel to the fact that some improvement in labour market outcomes is expected to occur overtime naturally, suggests that receiving an employability skills assessment had relatively limited impact on participants financial and economic wellbeing.

Instead, the evidence reveals that the barriers to securing employment in line with migrant's skills extend beyond gaps in employability skills and often include a combination of the below:

- **Employers' attitudes and a lack of local work experience.** Employer hiring practices often favour local references and experience and disadvantage those without an Australian network. In fact, the Inquiry into Australia's Skilled Migration Program found that Australian employers prefer to employ an Australian over a skilled migrant wherever possible.<sup>1</sup> Getting a 'foot in the door' can be extremely difficult for migrants who have no local experience and often have no local referees and was consistently identified across Assessing Authorities, survey respondents and

withdrawn participants as the top barrier to securing employment commensurate with their skills. Assessing Authorities often highlighted the value of facilitating links between migrants and local professionals cannot be understated to overcome some of these barriers.

- **Understanding what it means to work in Australia in their nominated occupation.** Assessing Authorities, survey respondents and withdrawn participants often noted that not understanding the subtleties of their nominated occupation is also identified as a top barrier to securing employment in line with skills.
- **System navigation.** Regardless of how well functioning systems and processes may be, the nature of the cohort and the scenario means that the need for system navigation persists. This is largely due to the cultural and language differences that can make navigating the process of professional registration and job seeking in Australia difficult. In this case, the opacity and complexity of the system and processes often exacerbates this challenge, a finding consistent with the recent Review of Australia's Migration system.<sup>2</sup>

Some suggested alternative approaches to tackling some of the barriers faced by migrants in securing employment commensurate with their skills assessment included:

- Opportunities to secure local work experience, which may support with meeting licensing and registration requirements depending on the occupation.
- Opportunities to network and connect directly with employers.
- Educating employers to support the removal of biases towards hiring migrants, this may also involve supporting employers to develop a better understanding of migrants work rights and how to navigate sponsoring migrants.
- Training which provides an overview of the Australian context of their nominated occupation.
- Additional technical training which provides badging (i.e., micro-credentials), so that migrants can enter the job market with a new certification.

For further information surrounding the barriers to securing employment, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix C).

## Pilot 3 conclusions

*Pilot 3 appears to have achieved its overarching objective to a lesser degree, i.e., to enable migrants with a suitable skills assessment outcome in a priority occupation to secure employment that is commensurate with their skill level. Here, a range of factors outside of employability skills may be acting as barriers to achieving this objective.*

Similar to Pilots 1 and 2, procedurally, Pilot 3 was implemented effectively through the guidelines, materials, systems and support provided by DEWR. However, similar to Pilot 2, encouraging uptake represented a key challenge. The employment outcomes under Pilot 3 also do not match those observed under Pilots 1 and 2, though this is likely to be due in part to a different type of cohort participating in Pilot 3, who despite possessing suitable skills assessments were still working beneath their skill level.

While Assessing Authorities widely agreed that the intent of Pilot 3 was important, some components of the design of the Pilot did not align well with their occupations, such as the skill level, further consultation and input into the design of the Pilot would have been beneficial as opposed to the more general approach adopted.

The value of an employability assessment was also reportedly unclear from the perspective of some potential participants, and the process itself was relatively involved, with several steps required for applicants.

One of the key limiting factors around the Pilot was that employability skills were not often identified by Assessing Authorities or participants as the key barrier to securing employment in line with their qualifications. Instead, some of the key challenges faced by migrants include:

- Employers' hiring practices and attitudes favour local references and experiences and disadvantage those without an Australian network.
- Not understanding the subtleties of their nominated occupation.
- Regardless of how well functioning systems and processes may be, the nature of this cohort means that the need for system navigation persists, which is made even more challenging by the opacity and complexity of the system and processes

of professional registration and job seeking.

In considering similar programs to Pilot 3 in future, the Department should take into account some of these additional barriers (beyond employability skills), where investment in addressing them in concert may help produce the overarching aims that were set for Pilot 3. For more in-depth analysis of Pilot 3, please refer to the Appendices to the Final Evaluation Report (Appendix C).

# Final conclusions

# Concluding remarks across the three Pilots

Overall, the three Pilots were all able to achieve their overarching objectives, albeit to varying scales and differing degrees of success.

- Pilot 1 (the key objective of which was to accelerate eligible migrants' participation in the Australian workforce in priority occupations) was able to realise faster processing times and support improved employment outcomes for the majority of participants, noting that a high proportion were already employed when the assessment was undertaken. The Pilot has nonetheless demonstrated that when there exists a large backlog of skill assessment applications, it is possible for Government to work with Assessing Authorities to support faster processing.
- For Pilot 2 the key objective was also to accelerate migrants' participation in the Australian workforce, but in this instance through subsidised fast-tracked skills assessments. Here, the evidence suggests that the Pilot resulted in positive employment and social outcomes that otherwise would have not occurred for a share of participants. And for those participants who received an unsuitable outcome, some benefit came through the provision referrals from Assessing Authorities to relevant training to improve skills in their nominated occupation.
- Pilot 3 appears to have achieved its overarching objective to a lesser degree, i.e., to enable migrants with a suitable skills assessment outcome in a priority occupation to secure employment that is commensurate with their skill level. Here, a range of factors outside of employability skills may be acting as barriers to achieving this objective.

Beyond the progress towards achieving the overall policy objectives associated with the SAP, there also exists broader value to testing and piloting a new program or intervention as it helps agencies to identify roadblocks and make adjustments before implementing larger-scale interventions in future.

Looking across the three Pilots, there are several themes which emerged with a degree of consistency. These lessons learned can be used to inform the design of similar programs and interventions in future, in addition to the findings and conclusions related to each individual pilot.

## Eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria posed challenges in supporting uptake for Pilots 2 and 3. Assessing

Authorities consistently often described them as too narrow to enable sufficient uptake, noting in particular the limits around visa type, occupation and the purpose of the assessment. Despite the changes made to the eligibility criteria towards the end of Pilot 2 and 3, uptake still remained below expectations. In future programs, the Department may further consider how the eligibility criteria for Pilot 2 and 3 could be adjusted to enable higher levels of participation.

In parallel, several Assessing Authorities noted that more extensive engagement or conducting a scoping study prior to the launch may have been beneficial to better inform the design of the eligibility criteria.

## Approach to engaging with Assessing Authorities

Examination of all three Pilots showed that the specific circumstances of an individual occupation (and the Assessing Authority) had a significant influence on the outcomes of the Pilot. The nuances of each occupational context mattered, and the mix of occupations and participants was highly diverse. In many instances, the external labour market conditions, or the registration and licencing process for an occupation meant that it was hard to demonstrate the value of a skills assessment to potential participants. In others, Assessing Authorities suggested that alternative occupations may have been more suitable, even if they weren't in significant shortage.

This means that it may be challenging in future to develop program settings that adequately suit every Assessing Authority's context and each occupation. There may, therefore, be a case to consider a more tailored approach to engaging with Assessing Authorities (given the relatively small number involved), where individual organisations are able to put forwards proposals to address the program intent within a set of broad guidelines.

## The diversity of barriers faced by skilled migrants

The three Pilots revealed that a number of barriers and challenges remain for migrants in undertaking a skills or employability assessment and attempting to fully and meaningfully participation in the labour market. The Pilots went some way in addressing these, but other potentially more material and persistent ones were said to remain and could complement the measures put in place through the three Pilots.

# Concluding remarks across the three Pilots

## The diversity of barriers faced by skilled migrants (cont.)

- For instance, a key challenge faced by applicants was in getting their skills assessment applications assessment ready (i.e. obtaining all the required documentation). Here, a case management system was often identified by Assessing Authorities as an effective, though resource-intensive support mechanism. It would involve a funded case manager taking ownership of the communications and administrative follow-up with the applicant throughout the processes.
- A lack of navigational support for migrants when engaging with the migration, settlement and employment system was also identified as a key barrier, especially for those who were not supported by a migration agent.
- Employers' cultural attitudes and hiring practices were said to favour local references and experiences and disadvantage those without an Australian network.

## The MSI system

Across all three Pilots, the MSI platform and system was viewed by Assessing Authorities as overall suitable for its purpose. There was, however, a consistent view that it lacked some flexibility, in particular to edit or update data once it had already been entered. Correcting minor data entry errors was said to be a highly manual process.

## Funding considerations

Across the Pilots, the sufficiency of funding was typically related to the scale of uptake with an individual Assessing Authority, largely as a result of the high initial costs associated with setting up the systems and processes and promoting the Pilot. In future, in instances where program participation levels are uncertain, it may be more suitable to include a fixed funding amount per Assessing Authority, as well as a variable component linked to the number of completed assessments.

Adopting a more nuanced approach to program settings across Assessing Authorities, supported by consultation around what would be most suitable given the Assessing Authority's specific occupational contexts.

## Value for money considerations

Overall, the post program outcomes observed among migrants involved in the Pilots were good, with most maintaining or entering employment. However, care should be taken when designing potential future programs in assessing the public benefits that can be attributed to the specific intervention, versus those that are likely to have occurred in its absence. For example, under Pilot 1, the extent to which the fast-tracking of applications was material in supporting future employment and earnings outcomes.

Care should also be taken in the context of free services, as the Pilots, notably Pilot 2, has shown that 25% of those receiving free fast-tracked assessments would have been willing to pay for them, and that there can be implications for application withdrawal rates observed in Pilot 3.

## Marketing and outreach

While less of a challenge for Pilot 1 (since participants has already applied for a skills assessment), the promotion and marketing of the Pilots presented a challenge for Assessing Authorities and the Department. In some cases, several thousand emails were sent out by Assessing Authorities, resulting in few or no subsequent applications.

Despite undertaking extensive consultation with settlement and migrant community organisations including with settlement support case workers, Assessing Authorities highlighted that alternative channels for promoting any future programs of this nature should be explored. For example, Assessing Authorities provided examples of approaches taken in other contexts or by state governments that utilised community forums and 'on the ground' engagement with potential applicants to promote migration and settlement focussed initiatives.

Similarly, Assessing Authorities noted significant administrative burden was involved in responding to queries as participants often misunderstood the intent and eligibility requirements of the Pilots. Some noted that this improved when Assessing Authorities made tailored the outreach material to their specific occupation. Future programs of this nature may explore how communications can be tailored to specific occupations.

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