

October enews

Introduction

Your ITAB is engaging with industry and training system stakeholders across Public Sector, Local Government, Public Safety (Fire and Rescue), Police, Correctional Services, Defence and Water industries. Stakeholder meetings and regional activities are underway to identify skills and training issues and emerging workforce needs.

Your ITAB is an autonomous industry-based advisory body that provides independent advice to the NSW Department of Education on training and skills needs on behalf of stakeholders to ensure industry has the skills and training needed to boost economic growth. For the Department and other state and Federal government agencies, it *identifies* current and emerging skills needs across its sector, advises on which qualifications in its remit are listed on the NSW Skills List and subsidised under Smart and Skilled, it *advises* on Vocational Training Orders (CIBs [710](#) Correctional Services, [703](#) Local Government, [652](#) Public Sector, [714](#) Water Industry) which govern the qualifications, nominal terms and other conditions for each traineeship, it advises on the implementation of national training packages to meet any NSW-specific requirements including registration or licensing, and it promotes and supports the take-up of government-funded training.

You are invited to contact sarah.rosen@publicservicesitab.org.au to see how the ITAB can support your industry or agency operations to access training to develop and grow the skills required to meet current and future workforce needs.

NSW Update

Local Government Training Awards - Closed Monday 26 October

The inaugural NSW Local Government Training Awards celebrate apprentices, trainees and cadets working in councils, and the supervisors, mentors and councils supporting them. Applications closed 5pm on Monday 26 October with judging throughout November ahead of the awards ceremony on 8 December at The Calyx, Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney.

[Click here](#) for more information. Award categories include:

- Male and female First Nations Apprentice, Trainee or Cadet of the Year
- Male and female Cadet of the Year
- Male and female Trainee of the Year
- Male and female Apprentice of the Year
- Young Achiever (under 21)
- Workplace Supervisor of the Year
- Mentor of the Year
- Metropolitan Council of the Year
- Rural Council of the Year
- Regional Council of the Year

Free TAFE Agreement

A \$560 million deal to fund Free TAFE was announced 21 October by Andrew Giles, the Federal Minister for Skills and Training, and Steve Whan, the NSW Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. The agreement locks in a joint investment over 5 years from 2027.



This commitment is expected to deliver around 160,000 fee-free training places in NSW to grow the skilled workforce and remove financial barriers to accessing vocational study. The agreement will also allow for upskilling those who are under-represented in the economy to help address skilled workforce shortages.

According to Minister Steve Whan, 'Backed by the Minns Labor Government's record of \$3.46 billion investment in skills, training and TAFE, Free TAFE has encouraged more people to take up vocational education and training in the critical skills areas that will make a real difference to the economic future of our state... By removing barriers, including upfront costs, we're creating pathways to secure jobs and building the workforce needed to deliver more homes, support clean energy transition and strengthen essential services across NSW'

[Click here](#) for the full media release.



Training Services

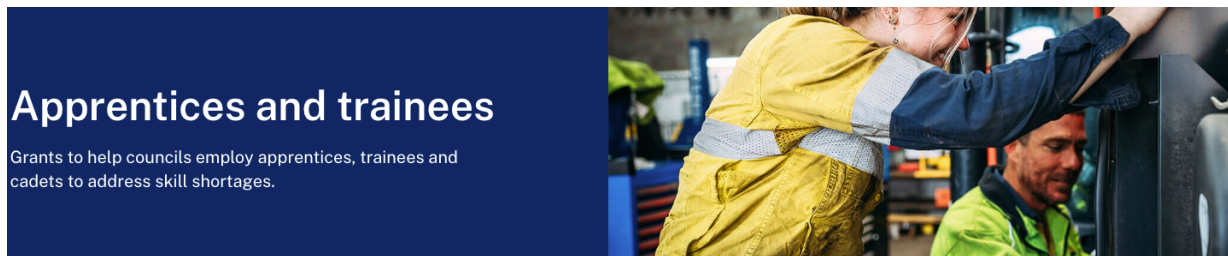
Smart and Skilled Updates

The latest Smart and Skilled update, released 22 October, advises of the NSW Fee Free arrangements from January 2027. This follows the announcement above on 21 October by Steve Whan, Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, and Andrew Giles, Australian Government Minister for Skills and Training of the new \$560 million over 5-years TAFE National Agreement.

The Australian Government will provide NSW with \$281 million to fund fee-free training places for training commencing from 1 January 2027 to 31 December 2031. NSW will match the Australian Government funding through existing commitments including fee-free training for equity cohorts, apprentices and trainees covered in Smart and Skilled. The program will continue to be known as NSW Fee Free, recognising that TAFE NSW and Smart and Skilled providers will deliver fee-free training funded through the Agreement. It will continue to focus on funding student fees for existing subsidised training places under Smart and Skilled. Fee Free enrolments will open in early November.

The previous Smart and Skilled update, released 12 October, advised of the opening of the 2026-2027 Targeted Priorities Prevocational and Part Qualifications (TPPPQ) Program. Smart and Skilled training providers can submit Training Needs Identification applications (TNIs) through their regional Training Services offices for the delivery of part qualifications.

The TPPPQ has been aligned to NSW workforce and industry needs and expanded to include two additional objectives: supporting the small business workforce and building capability in AI and emerging technologies. [Click here](#) for more information or talk to your Smart and Skilled provider or contact your local [Training Services office](#).



Office of Local Government - OLG Fresh Start Program

The OLG Fresh Start program provides grants to help councils employ apprentices, trainees and cadets to strengthen the local government workforce and create career opportunities for job seekers, school leavers and career changers. The \$252.2 million NSW Government funded program aims to fund the wages of 1,700 apprentice, trainee or cadet places over six years from its launch in 2024.

Fresh Start also offers upskilling opportunities for existing council employees in critical and emerging skills areas including Supervisor Workshops, Electric Vehicle Servicing and Repair, Electrical Instrumentation, Water and Wastewater Cross-Skilling, Civil Construction, and Leadership. Round 4 grants closed 2 October, and those applications are now being assessed. This grant round will fund up to 574 new roles including 200 apprentices, 100 trainees, 100 cadets and 174 unfilled places from the previous round. [Click here](#) for details. [Click here](#) to see the 66 council recipients of Round 3 in June 2026.

Sydney Water's new wastewater facility

Western Sydney's new Wastewater Resources Recovery Facility and Advanced Water Recycling Plant was unveiled by Prue Car, Deputy Premier and Minister for Western Sydney, and Rose Jackson, Minister for Water on 7 October. The \$1.2 billion Badu Yarragul Water Resources Recovery Facility at Kemps Creek will provide essential



(image from John Holland [Instagram](#))

water services to support more than 140,000 homes, jobs and economic growth across the Aerotropolis, Bradfield City and surrounds. From opening, the facility will treat up to 35 megalitres of wastewater each day, producing biosolids that can be reused in agriculture and forestry and enabling recycled-water opportunities. Future upgrades will double the facility's capacity to 70 megalitres per day, supporting a footprint of more than 280,000 new connections. It is one of the most advanced wastewater recycling facilities in the Southern Hemisphere, using a membrane bioreactor and reverse osmosis to produce very high-quality treated water.

Sustainability has been embedded throughout design and construction, including:

- A four-megawatt solar farm capable of generating half of the facility's energy needs
- Internal roads incorporating a world-first combination of recycled coffee cups and low-carbon binder
- Pipe bedding made from recycled glass

The new facility forms a cornerstone of Sydney Water's long-term vision to support a circular economy in Western Sydney while enabling new homes, jobs and economic development. Badu Yarragul sets a new benchmark for what modern water infrastructure can achieve.

[Click here](#) for more information.

Jobs and Skills Councils (JSC) Updates

Public Skills Australia (PSA)

A reminder that in June PSA released the *Local Government Skills Audit and Review of Uptake and Utility of the LGA Local Government Training Package National Report 2025-2026*.



The project was delivered in partnership with the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and state and territory peak bodies. It provides a national picture of workforce challenges, skills shortages and future workforce needs across the local government sector. Key findings include that 83% of councils report persistent occupational shortages, most acute in specialist and technical areas such as engineers, building surveyors and town planners. Regional, rural and remote communities experience the most severe impacts compounded by an ageing workforce, recruitment competition and higher turnover.

The audit looked at the LGA Local Government Training Package and the VET Frameworks to examine how well they support workforce planning, skill-building and policy alignment to the National Skills Agreement. The NSW report particularly identified restrictions on access to training in regional and remote areas, demand for shorter, faster upskilling such as micro-credentials and non-accredited training, and the need for training frameworks to cover emerging demand in digital, cyber, AI, climate resilience and community engagement. [Click here](#) for national and jurisdiction reports.

Current Public Skills Australia projects include:

- [Auslan, Interpreting and Translating](#) qualification review (Phase 2). Consultations are underway with a workshop to be held in Sydney on Wednesday 11 November, 2-6pm (with an optional networking lunch from 1-2pm). A national virtual session will be held on Thursday 26 November for those unable to attend in-person sessions. These workshops provide an opportunity to discuss the feedback received, explore proposed approaches for updating the training products and help inform the next stage of the review before the release of the next draft. [Click here](#) to register for the in-person consultations. Recently released project updates include [Update #9](#) and public consultation videos #3 and #4.

- [Police Training Package Release 12](#) will update a range of qualifications to support the policing industry's capability and training priorities across leadership, management, prosecutions, digital forensics, witness and personal protection. Public and government consultation was held during September and has now concluded.
- [Police Occupational Pathways](#) project commenced in response to the 2025 Public Safety Workforce Insights Report which identified workforce sustainability pressures and police specialist occupation shortages. The project is due for completion by December 2026.
- [Correctional Services](#) Training Implementation (Phase 2) to strengthen delivery of *CSC30122 Certificate III in Correctional Practice* and *CSC30222 Certificate III in Immigration Detention Operations* by improving clarity, assessment quality and cultural appropriateness. The current stage is the development of the Implementation Guide.
- [Cross-Industry Biosecurity Skills Review](#) is a cross-JSC project to support implementation of the Australian Government's National Biosecurity Strategy. The project is at the report preparation stage.

BuildSkills Australia

The Water Sector Workforce Roadmap. Clean, safe and reliable water and sewerage services underpin daily life and economic growth. However, the sector faces a range of workforce challenges. The 10-year roadmap will address these challenges and identify sector-wide skills needs and strategies to ensure the sector has the workforce capability needed to meet future water service delivery needs. [Click here](#) for the project page. The final report is due by the end of 2026.



Reports and Data

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) – Jobs and Skills Month

JSA has launched the inaugural Jobs and Skills Month from 20 October to 20 November to promote jobs and skills from across the system that support our economy. By bringing people from across the jobs and skills system together, Jobs and Skills Month turns conversation into collective action. Led by Jobs and Skills Australia, with NCVER and VOCEDplus, this collaborative, not-for-profit initiative will highlight the important role the jobs



and skills system plays in supporting individuals, communities, industries and Australia's economy. Aligned with this year's theme, 'Pathways to success', NCVER is sharing data, research and insights to help stakeholders better understand pathways through education, training and work and support informed decision-making. NCVER showcases opportunities, pathways and support to help Australians build skills and progress their careers.

As part of Jobs and Skills Month, NCVER has a range of webinars and resources to learn more about our skills and training system.

- *Exploring pathways through education, training and work with VOCEDplus.* NCVER will introduce you to VOCEDplus, a free international research database you can use to explore pathways through education, training and work. Users will learn how to search the database effectively and make the most of resources such as the Pod Network and VET Knowledge Bank. Tuesday 27 October 12.30-1.30pm
- *Getting started with NCVER data and DataBuilder.* Get an introduction to Australia's national VET data and the DataBuilder platform. Users will learn how to navigate the range of information available, understand datasets and turn data questions into meaningful insights. Tuesday 3, Friday 13, Tuesday 17 November, 12.30-1.30pm.
- *VET Information Standard - the future of VET reporting.* Learn about the new VET Information Standard and the future of VET data. 2-3pm, Friday 6 November.
- *Strengthening teaching practice and psychosocial support.* Supporting learners on their pathways to success starts with supporting the educators who guide them. As part of Jobs and Skills Month, join Dr Tabatha Griffin for a webinar on NCVER's new publication, *Strengthening teaching practice and psychosocial support*, on Wednesday 11 November 12.30-1.30pm.

[Click here](#) for more information, to register and to explore VOCEDplus resources.



Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) is conducting its annual roadshow in October and November, to bring stakeholders from across Australia together to explore the latest labour market trends, workforce challenges and emerging opportunities.

The JSA Roadshow is a chance to hear directly from JSA, state and territory governments, industry leaders and local experts through presentations and panel discussions exploring the latest evidence and insights shaping Australia's jobs, skills and training landscape and including findings from the 2026 Jobs and Skills Report.

Whether you're from government, industry, education, the training sector, business, unions or the community, the Roadshow provides an opportunity to connect with others, exchange ideas and learn more about JSA's work. This year the JSA Roadshow is taking place in Jobs and Skills Month, a collaborative, not-for-profit initiative led by JSA.

The Roadshow will be in Sydney at the NSW Teachers Federation Conference Centre, Thursday 19 November 1-3.30pm or online on Monday 9 November 2-3.30pm. [Click here](#) to register.

NCVER news

The VET Teacher, Trainer and Assessor (TTA) Survey

is a new survey to help shape the future VET workforce by asking VET practitioners about their work and experiences.

It aims to build a clearer picture of the VET workforce and identify shortages, future needs and inform initiatives to

attract and retain a strong VET workforce. The survey is a joint effort led by Jobs and Skills Australia with NCVER and the Social Research Centre (SRC). Selected VET practitioners who completed a TAE qualification since 2016 may be invited to participate in the survey which opened 12 October. [Click here](#) for more information.



Apprentices and trainees 2026: March quarter data. The latest report released in September indicates nationally that apprentices and trainees have continued their decline with in-training contracts down 9% compared to the March quarter 2025 (trades down 5.6% and non-trades down 17.6%). In the 12 months to March 2026, compared to the previous year, NSW trade commencements increased 2%, non-trade commencements fell 11.7%, trade completions rose 9.9% and non-trade completions fell 10.3%. [Click here](#) for the full report.

VET qualification completion rates. Released 29 September, this publication provides data and insights on the proportion of students who complete nationally recognised vocational education and training (VET) qualifications. Completion rates vary across jurisdictions, training packages, training providers, occupations, funding source and cohort demographics. Many factors influence whether a qualification is completed, including job requirements, student intention and circumstances, training quality, timetable flexibility, learner support, economic conditions and policy settings. [Click here](#) for the full report.

Government funding of VET 2025. This publication provides information on the distribution of Australian and state and territory government funding for vocational education and training (VET) in the 2025 calendar year. States and territories provide VET service delivery to meet local and national skill needs. The Australian Government prioritises national skills development and supports states and territories with VET service delivery by providing funding under intergovernmental funding arrangements. The funding provided by governments is reported across five broad VET activities: VET delivery funding, employer assistance, student assistance, capital expenditure, and system administration and governance.

In 2025, total government funding provided through VET appropriations and VET intergovernmental funding arrangements was \$10.1 billion, up 1.4% from 2024, due to increased state and territory government contributions. In 2025, compared to 2024:

- state and territory governments' share of total government funding increased to 51.8%, up \$152.0 million to a total of \$5.2 billion
- total Australian Government funding declined 0.3% to \$4.9 billion.

VET delivery expenditure increased 2.5% (\$165.0 million) in 2025, following increases of 11.9% in 2023 and 9.2% in 2024. This funding category includes training subsidies and expenditure on national priorities such as TAFE Centres of Excellence. System administration and governance expenditure increased to \$1.0 billion in 2025, up \$108.6 million (11.9%) from 2024.

[Click here](#) for the full report.

Events, Opportunities, Resources

2026 Water Directorate's Annual Forum

This year's forum, *From insights to action: digital water in practice*, will focus on what digital water approaches are and how they can be applied in real operational settings. Designed for regional Local Water Utilities (LWUs), the program will move from a shared understanding to practical application through keynotes, case studies and facilitated discussion.

Participants will explore:

- what digital water means in practice
- how utilities are using digital tools to improve visibility and decision-making
- the tools, skills and techniques needed to support adoption
- clear, achievable next steps linked to the Directorate's Digital Roadmap.

Local Water Utility members and associates, water and sewerage managers, engineers, operations staff, government stakeholders and non-members are welcome to attend this event on **Friday 30 October 9am to 7pm** at the Aerial UTS Function Centre Ultimo.

[Click here](#) for details and to purchase tickets.

Local Government NSW 2026 Annual Conference - Wollongong

The LGNSW Annual Conference is the premier policy-making event for the local government sector, bringing together councillors from across NSW to shape the sector's future direction. As LGNSW's key decision-making forum, it provides a platform to submit and debate motions on strategic issues affecting councils statewide, helping define advocacy and policy priorities.

Speakers include LGNSW President, Mayor Darcy Byrne; Ron Hoenig MP, NSW Minister for Local Government; and Cr Tania Brown, Lord Mayor of Wollongong. The 3-day conference features a line-up of speakers, workshops, training sessions and a trade exhibition will run from **Sunday 22 to Tuesday 24 November** at the WIN Sports and Entertainment Centres, with the support of Wollongong City Council. [Click here](#) to register.



Digital NSW 2026 Showcase – 25 November

The Digital NSW Showcase 2026 is the state's flagship event for the public servants shaping the next chapter of digital government. Aligned to NSW's five digital missions, this year's program brings together the people delivering inclusive and connected services, smarter and more productive ways of working, trusted and resilient infrastructure, and a future-ready public service workforce. Across four tracks and a full plenary program, the showcase explores what it takes to deliver an inclusive, intelligent and trusted digital state and the leadership shift required to get there.



Key speakers include:

- Ministerial Keynote by Jihad Dib MP, NSW Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Youth Justice
- Elizabeth Mildwater, Secretary, NSW Department of Customer Service
- Laura Christie, Deputy Secretary, Digital NSW, NSW Department of Customer Service
- Liz Livingstone, Deputy Secretary, NSW Treasury
- Phillipa Hetheron, Director, Women, Family and Community Safety, Department of Communities and Justice
- Ranil Boteju, Chief AI Officer, Commonwealth Bank
- Murat Dizdar, Secretary, NSW Department of Education

This event is aimed at:

- public sector senior executives and policy advisors wanting to gain strategic insights into digital initiatives, influence policy decisions and understand technology's broader impact on public sector efficiency
- IT and cyber security professionals wanting to explore new technologies, improve IT infrastructure and enhance system security and performance in public sector projects
- data and digital transformation specialists wanting to leverage data analytics for decision-making, and discover strategies to implement digital solutions and drive innovation in government services
- service delivery and project managers wanting to enhance service design, streamline operations and master project management techniques to ensure successful delivery of digital projects.

This year's showcase moves the conversation from what to how. Whether you're shaping policy, designing services, leading delivery, protecting trust or building capability, Digital NSW 2026 is where you'll connect with peers, see what's working on the ground, and leave with ideas you can implement. This event will be held on Wednesday 25 November 8.30am to 4.40pm at the Queen Elizabeth II Grandstand, Royal Randwick Racecourse.

[Click here](#) for the program details and to register. Registration is complimentary for public sector employees, academics and representatives of not-for-profit organisations. Log in through the Public Sector Network.

RIEP Careers – Government careers in the Illawarra

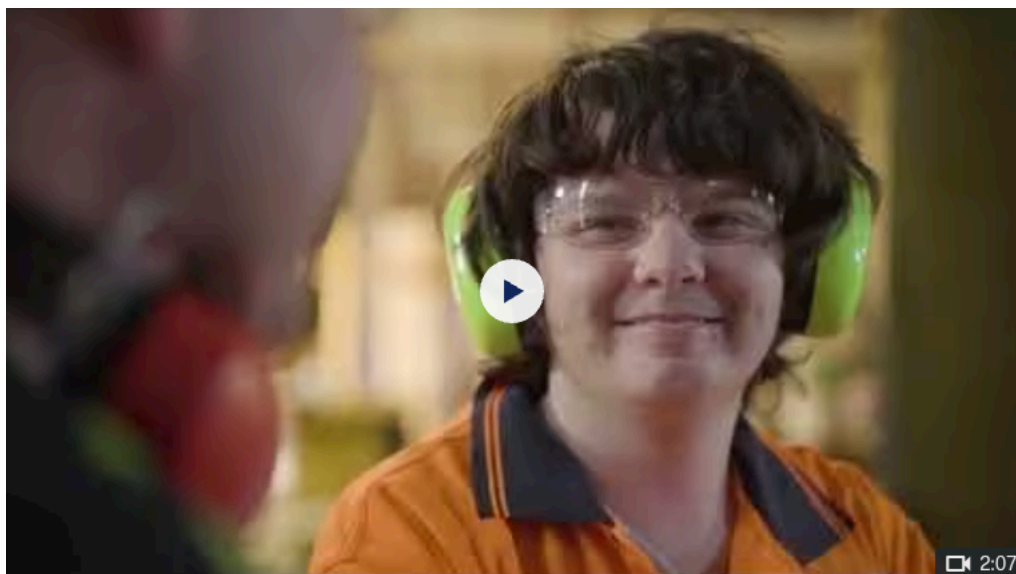
The Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP) team is seeking participation from Illawarra and South Coast government departments and agencies in an upcoming careers event to showcase the diverse range of career opportunities across the public sector. It will bring high school students, career advisers and teachers together to learn about government careers, pathways to employment and where to access information on current and future opportunities.

This event provides public sector employers with the opportunity to promote jobs and inspire young students to consider rewarding careers across a range of public sector departments and agencies. There will be a careers panel, with representatives from participating departments.

Participants will have the opportunity to introduce themselves and their role, provide an overview of their organisation and its services, discuss career pathways, employment opportunities, traineeships, apprenticeships, graduate programs and other entry pathways, and share information and resources for students to find current vacancies and career resources. Students and teachers will have the opportunity to ask questions directly of industry representatives. The event will conclude with a quick tour of the government building.

The *Government careers event* will be held on Wednesday **25 November** 9.30am to 11.30am at the NSW Department of Education Training Services Training Room, 84 Crown St, Wollongong. Contact RIEP Officer Jennifer Watts at jennifer.watts6@det.nsw.gov.au for more information.

Click the video below for more information about the RIEP program and how it delivers customised initiatives for employers to connect with secondary schools enabling students to learn about and experience real jobs.



Local Jobs Program

The [Local Jobs Program](#) is an initiative managed through the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) that has operated since 2020. It connects job seekers with training, support services and local employers and now operates across 51 regions nationally, including 13 in NSW and the ACT. The key program elements include:

- Job coordinators connecting business, training providers and community groups in their region
- Local Jobs and Skills Taskforce in each region bringing industry and community representatives together to identify local workforce needs and implement solutions
- Local Jobs Plans that are regionally tailored strategies to address specific employment priorities using market data and implementing actions
- Local Initiatives Funds and Grants ([Local Jobs Local People](#)) provide flexible funding to support local projects that create ongoing employment.

The Hunter Local Jobs Program has a [Transitioning Workforce Fund](#) for the Hunter Region. It is designed to support workers, communities and regions through Australia's energy transition process, by helping people to prepare for new opportunities and a changing workforce in net zero priority regions, including the Hunter. It aims to improve access to jobs and training opportunities and increase workforce participation to ensure businesses can access a workforce with the skills they need and strengthen the social and economic wellbeing of communities.

Project proposals are welcome from a broad range of organisations, including First Nations and community organisations, local governments and education and training providers.

Suitable projects include those that:

- support First Nations people, including with jobs and skills pathways and social, cultural and economic wellbeing
- enhance community awareness, understanding, readiness and participation in workforce energy transition
- strengthen pathways for transitioning workers into emerging industries.

For details, visit [DEWR](#) or AusTender (ATM ID: ESE26/9217).

Hunter Transitioning Workforce Fund proposals close **3pm AEDT, 3 November 2026**.



Engage with your ITAB

Promote your activities, programs and resources. If you have career or learner resources, tools or platforms that help improve services and skills within the Public Services sector that you would like to share on our Resources and Careers page, contact sarah.rosen@publicservicesitab.org.au.

The enews is published on the website and LinkedIn.

Visit our website at www.publicservicesitab.org.au for news, events and resources.

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The ITAB plays an important role in informing the training landscape for the Public Services sectors across NSW. We are an independent not-for-profit resource hub providing advocacy, advice, support and leadership. We support our sectors by providing a voice to government on skills needs, emerging issues, challenges and trends. Your input shapes our advice on workforce and skills shortages, training needs and barriers to accessing the skills employers need. Stakeholder insights and evidence can impact policy and funding for the VET sector to support the delivery of a wide range of training programs.

The NSW Public Services ITAB is funded by the NSW Department of Education.