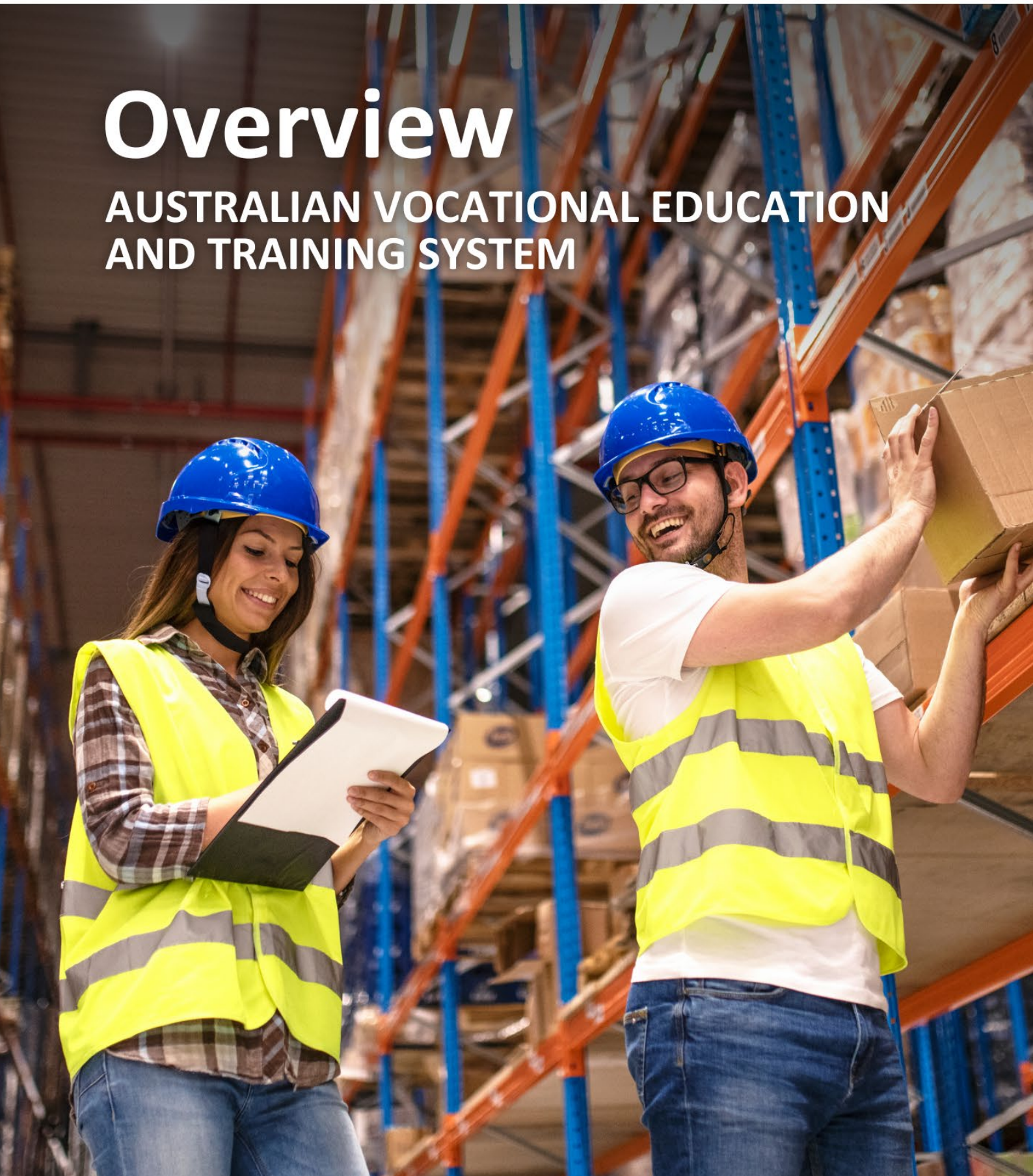# Overview

AUSTRALIAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DoE	Department of Education
JSA	Jobs and Skills Australia
JSC	Jobs and Skills Councils
MP	Member of Parliament
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NRT	Nationally Recognised Training
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
NUHEP	Non-University Higher Education Provider
QLD	Queensland
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
RTO	Registered Training Organisations
SA	South Australia
SWMC	Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAC	Training Accreditation Council
TAS	Tasmania
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VIC	Victoria
VQF	VET Quality Framework
VRQA	Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority
WA	Western Australia

This document provides brief information compiled by Aus4Skills about the Australian vocational education and training (VET) system. The document aims to support knowledge exchange activities organized by Aus4Skills under the Workplan 2025 of the VET Component to explore the governance, industry engagement and quality assurance in VET in Australia, therefore focuses on the relevant information which serves this purpose.

1   BRIEF OF AUSTRALIA

Australia is the sixth-largest country in land area (7,688,287 km2). Its population is nearly 27 million. Australia is a federation of six states which, together with two self-governing territories, have their own constitutions, parliaments, governments and laws. In alphabetical order, the states are New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia. The two major mainland territories are Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory.

Figure 1: Map of Australia[1]

Australia is a highly developed country with a mixed economy. As of 2023, Australia was the 13th-largest national economy by nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Education is Australia's largest services export, and in 2019, Australia was the world's third most popular destination for international students.

Education and training are a shared responsibility of the Australian Federal Government and the individual State and Territory Governments.

Under the Commonwealth Constitution, education and training in Australia is primarily the responsibility of the State and Territory Governments. They regulate the public and private providers within their States/ Territories and are largely responsible for the funding of government schools.

Currently, with regards to the national governance of education and training, the Federal Government is advised by two Departments, i.e. the Australian Federal Government Department of Education (DoE), and the Australian Federal Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). The DoE provides strategic direction and national leadership of Australia's education system – through early years, school, higher education and research while the DEWR plays a national role in the governance of the Australian vocational education and training (VET) system.

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[1] Source: https://www.mappr.co/counties/australia/

2 OVERVIEW OF THE AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

2.1 Education Sub Sectors

The Australian education system is broadly structured as follows:

- **Primary school**: seven or eight years, starting at Foundation (also called kindergarten/ preparatory/ pre-school) through to Year 6 or 7
- **Secondary school**: four years from Years 7 or 8 to 10
- **Senior secondary school**: two years from Years 11 to 12
- **Tertiary education**: includes higher education and VET[2].
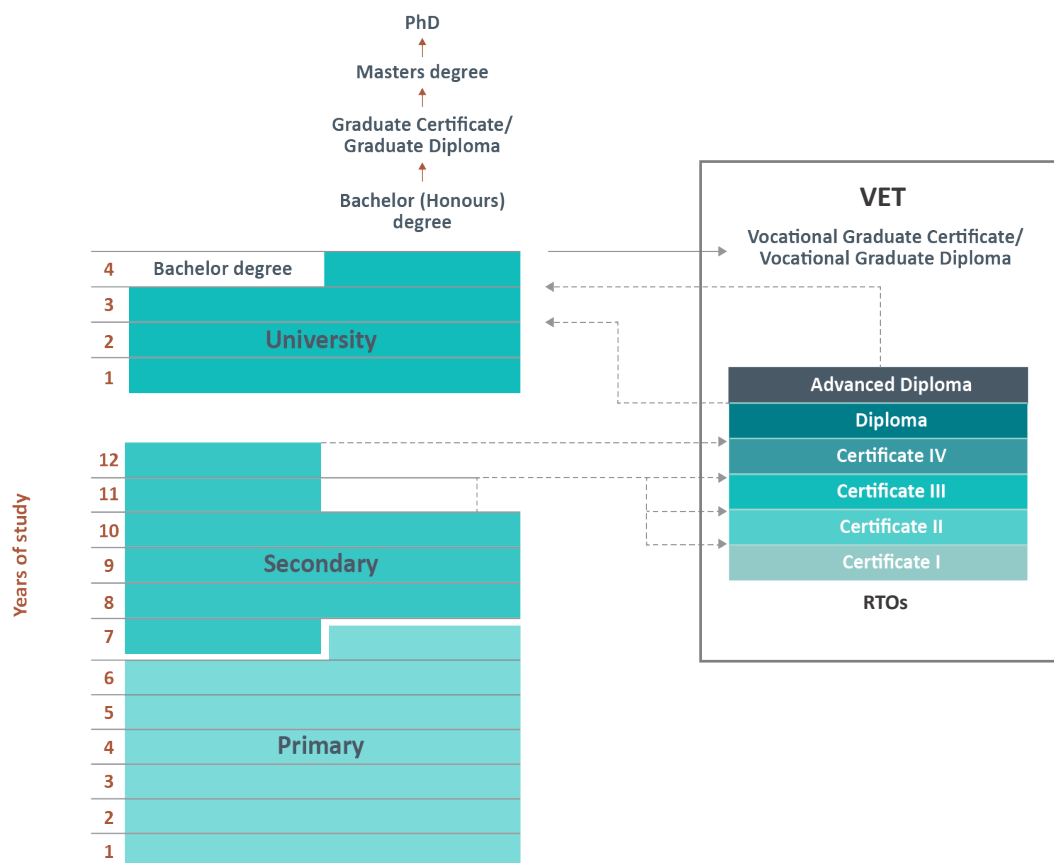

Figure 2: Australian education system chart[3]

[2]https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australian-education-system-foundation.pdf
[3] https://www.aussizzgroup.com/study-in-australia/education-system

Schooling in Australia lasts for 13 years, from preparatory to senior secondary. School is compulsory until at least Year 10 (the age of 16). Schooling from Year 11 to 12 is not compulsory but highly encouraged. In the senior secondary years, students can study for their Senior Secondary Certificate of Education. The Australian higher education sector includes both private and public universities and other higher education institutions that play a critical role in research – fuelling innovation, driving productivity and giving students the skills they need for future success.

Australia's VET system provides high-quality, nationally recognised training, based on strong partnerships between governments, VET institutions and industry bodies. This ensures that VET qualifications provide the skills that employers and industry need now and into the future[4].

2.2   The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The AQF was first introduced in 1995 to underpin the national system of qualifications in Australia, encompassing higher education, VET, and schools. The AQF is the agreed policy of Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers, and is administered by the Department of Education (DoE). One of the key objectives of the AQF is to facilitate pathways to, and through, formal qualifications. It also complements national regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for education and training.

AQF has 10 levels and links school, vocational and higher education qualifications into a single national system, allowing easy movement from one level of study to another and between institutions. VET is offered at AQF Levels 1 to 8 and higher education ranges from AQF Levels 5 to 10. Some qualifications such as Diploma and Graduate Diploma can be offered in more than one sector.

More about the AQF can be found at http://www.aqf.edu.au

AQF Level	Senior Secondary Schools	VET	Higher Education
10			Doctoral Degree
9			Master's degree
8		Graduate Diploma	Graduate Diploma
		Graduate Certificate	Graduate Certificate
7			Bachelor's degree
6		Advanced Diploma	Associate degree
5		Diploma	Diploma
4		Certificate IV	
3		Certificate III	
2	Senior Secondary Certificate of Education	Certificate II	
1		Certificate I	

Table 1: Ten levels of the Australian Qualifications Framework

Each AQF level comprises of a set of learning outcomes, the requirements for the application of the AQF level in the accreditation and development of the qualification and a set of policy requirements.

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[4]https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-in-brief-2021.pdf

The key difference among VET levels lies in the level of depth and complexity of the skills and knowledge they provide, as well as the length of study. AQF level 1 has the lowest complexity and AQF level 10 has the highest complexity. The table below describes Certificate I to Advanced Diploma in VET.

AQF Levels	VET	Description
6	Advanced Diploma	• Can lead to university courses in a related field. • Provides theoretical knowledge and technical and creative skills. • Students can apply their knowledge in management or supervisory positions, and/or develop a high level of expertise in a particular area. • Course length*: 1.5 – 2 years (1800 – 2400 hours)
5	Diploma	• Can lead to university courses in a related field. • Provides theoretical knowledge and technical and creative skills. Students can apply their knowledge in management or supervisory positions, and/or develop a high level of expertise in a particular area. • Course length*: 1- 2 years (1200 – 2400 hours)
4	Certificate IV	• Preparation for work in areas that may require complex skills. • Provides a broad knowledge base, teaching students to analyse and evaluate information and to apply the knowledge and skills to a wide variety of contexts. • Course length*: 0.5 – 2 years (600 – 2400 hours)
3	Certificate III	• Minimum qualification for entry into many industries. • Provides theoretical knowledge and encourages development of higher-level skills for problem solving. Can sometimes be completed as part of a traineeship or an apprenticeship that involves a mix of on-the-job and off-the-job training. • Course length*: 1 – 2 years (1200 – 2400 hours) or 3 – 4 years part time as an apprentice
2	Certificate II	• Minimum qualification for entry level jobs in some industries. • Often delivered to Secondary School students; or completed as part of a traineeship. • Course length*: 0.5 – 1 year (600 – 1200 hours)
1	Certificate I	• Foundation level • Prepares school graduates for work in routine activities or community involvement. • Often delivered as a pre-apprenticeship program; to secondary school students. • Course length*: 0.5 – 1 year (600 – 1200 hours)

Course length is indicative only based on regular delivery either full time or part time. In 2022, the majority of program enrolments[5] are at Certificate III level (39.8%) followed by Certificate IV (19.1%) and Certificate II (16.2%).

Table 2: Certificate I to Advanced Diploma in VET in the AQF

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[5] https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp2324/Quick_Guides/VocationalEducationandTraining

3   OVERVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN VET SYSTEM

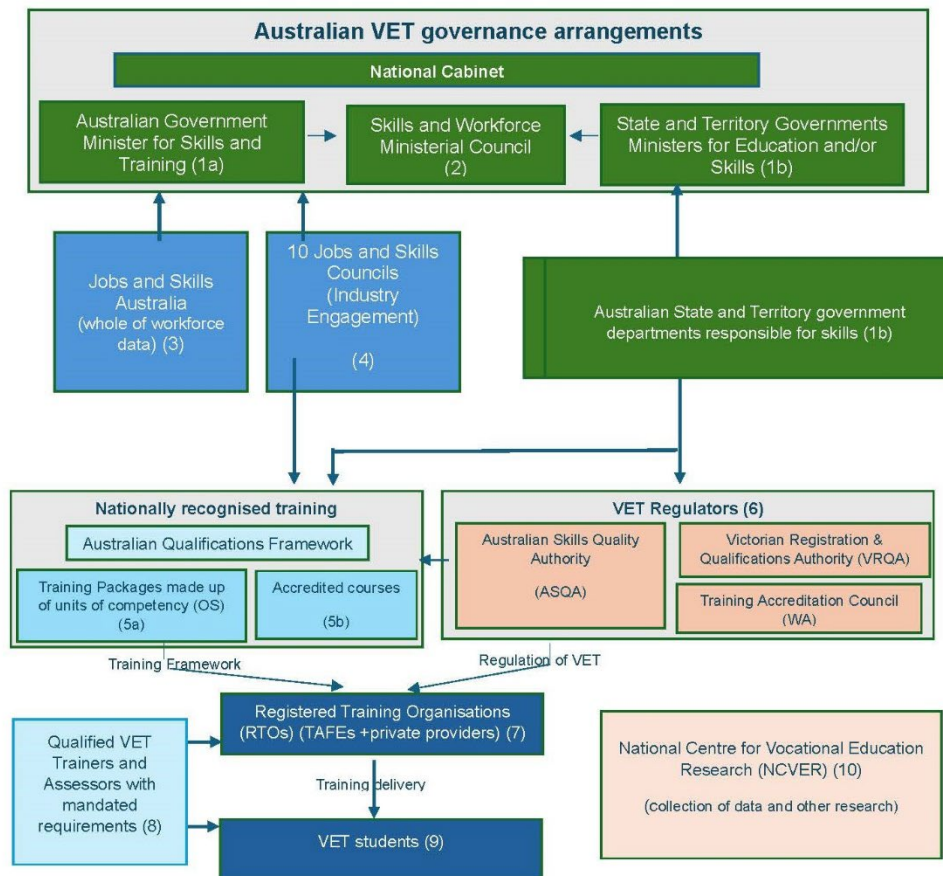The figure[6] below shows the governance structure and regulatory bodies for the VET system.

Figure 3: Governance structure and regulatory bodies for the Australian VET system

Governance of Australia's VET sector is through a network of Commonwealth and state/territory governments.

(1a) Australian Commonwealth Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)

The DEWR enables access to quality skills, training, and employment to support Australians to find secure work in fair, productive and safe workplaces – supporting individuals and our nation to prosper.

Three areas overseen by DEWR are:

- Skills and Training
- Employment
- Workplace Relations

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[6] VET Knowledge Bank - Governance | VOCEDplus, the international tertiary education and research database

DEWR's Ministers[7]:

- The Hon Andrew Giles MP - Minister for Skills and Training
- Senator the Hon Murray Watt - Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
- The Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP - Assistant Minister for Employment, Assistant Minister for Competition, Charities and Treasury

The DEWR plays a national role in the governance, financing, and overarching policy development for the Australian VET system, working cooperatively with state and territory skills departments.

(1b) State and territory training authorities

State and territory training authorities are responsible for the operation of the VET system within their state or territory. Each training authority participates in the formulation of national policy, planning and objectives, and promotes and implements agreed policies and priorities within the state or territory, supported by statutory advisory and regulatory bodies.

Dept of Employment and Workplace Relations (Cwlth)	Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (ACT)	Dept of Education (NSW)	Dept of Industry, Tourism and Trade (NT)	Dept of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training (QLD)	Dept for Education (SA)	Dept of State Growth (TAS)	Dept of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (VIC)	Dept of Training and Workforce Development (WA)
National Career Institute (NCI)	Skills Canberra	Training Services NSW	Workforce NT	Jobs Queensland	South Australian Skills Commission (SASC)	Skills Tasmania	Victorian Skills Authority (VSA)	WA State Training Board
Office of the Unique Student Identifier (USI)		New South Wales Skills Board	Industry Skills Advisory Council NT (ISACNT)		Industry Skills Councils (ISCs)	Tasmanian Traineeships and Apprenticeships Committee (TTAC)		Industry Training Councils (ITCs)
Skills Organisations (SOs) Pilots		NSW Industry Training Advisory Bodies						

Figure 4: Commonwealth, state and territory departments and training authorities

(2) Skills and Workforce Minister Council (SWMC)

The SWMC is made up of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers responsible for the skills portfolio. The SWMC provides an advisory mechanism for national cooperation across the VET system and on the intersection of skills and training policy with workforce issues.

The scope of the SWMC is to provide stewardship for the VET system through strategic policy, priority setting, planning, performance and evaluation, and aligning key cross-sectoral issues.

The SWMC as of June 2025 consists of the following ministers:
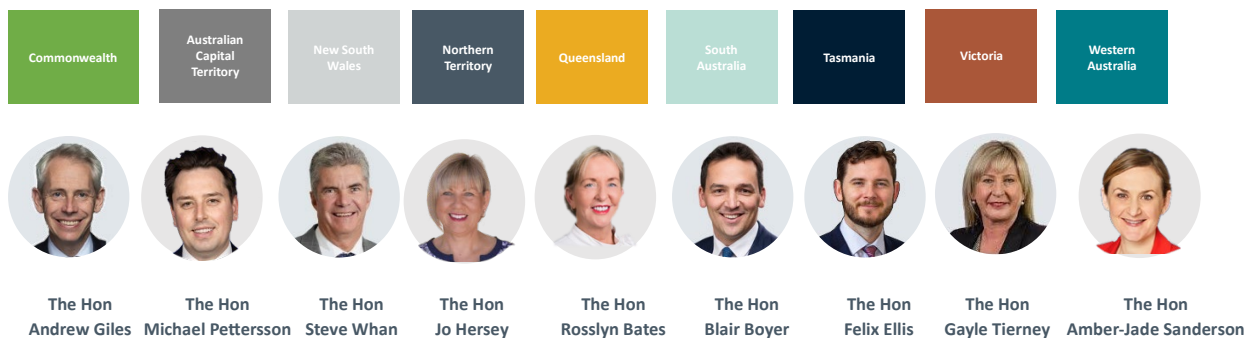
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[7] As of June 2025

| Commonwealth | Australian Capital Territory | New South Wales | Northern Territory | Queensland | South Australia | Tasmania | Victoria | Western Australia |

| The Hon Andrew Giles | The Hon Michael Pettersson | The Hon Steve Whan | The Hon Jo Hersey | The Hon Rosslyn Bates | The Hon Blair Boyer | The Hon Felix Ellis | The Hon Gayle Tierney | The Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson |

Figure 5: The Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council (June 2025)

(3) Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA)

The JSA was established by legislation through a new Jobs and Skills Australia Act 2022.

It is a secondary statutory authority independent of government but administered by DEWR and fully funded by the Australian Government.

It provides independent advice to the DEWR and the SWMC on current, emerging, and future workforce, skills, and training needs. Its advice informs government policy, programs, and investment; industry planning; and the choices Australians make about their education, training, and employment.

JSA works closely with ten Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs) to:

- Support the effective operation of JSCs by providing baseline, whole-of-economy data and insights on current, emerging and future skills needs, data on VET system activity and performance.
- Integrate the sector-specific insights generated by JSCs into its analysis and advice and rely on feedback from JSCs as key users to continuously improve its data products.
- Work closely with relevant JSCs when tasked with conducting deep-dive capacity studies into priority sectors.

(4) Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs)

JSCs are established under the Corporations Act 2001. 10 JSCs were established through an open tender process by DEWR. DEWR identified the number of JSCs to be established (10), the name of each JSC and the eligibility requirements before bid opening (based on industry groupings from the National Skills Commission at the time). National Skills Commission has now been abolished with the passage of the Jobs and Skills Australia.

Organisations bid for the implementation of each JSC. The JSC, once awarded, operates as not-for-profit.

Each JSC has four key functions including workforce planning, training product development, industry stewardship, and implementation, promotion and monitoring. Training products include training packages and accredited courses (Please see 5a and 5b for further information).

JSCs have strong governance arrangements in place to support a high level of industry engagement for the sectors within their remit. Each JSC have their own structure to accommodate the needs of the sector.

The 10 JSCs and the relevant industry sectors are:

Jobs and Skills Councils (Entity Name)	Relevant industry sectors
Skill Insight	Agribusiness, Fibre, Furnishing, Food, Animal and Environment Care
BuildSkills Australia	Building, Construction, Property and Water
Service and Creative Skills Australia (SaCSA)	Arts, Personal Services, Retail, Tourism and Hospitality
Future Skills Organisation	Finance, Technology and Business
Powering Skills Organisation Ltd	Energy, Gas and Renewables
Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance	Manufacturing
Mining and Automotive Skills Alliance	Mining and Automotive
Industry Skills Australia	Transport and Logistics
Public Skills Australia	Public Safety and Government
Human Ability	Early Educators, Health and Human Services

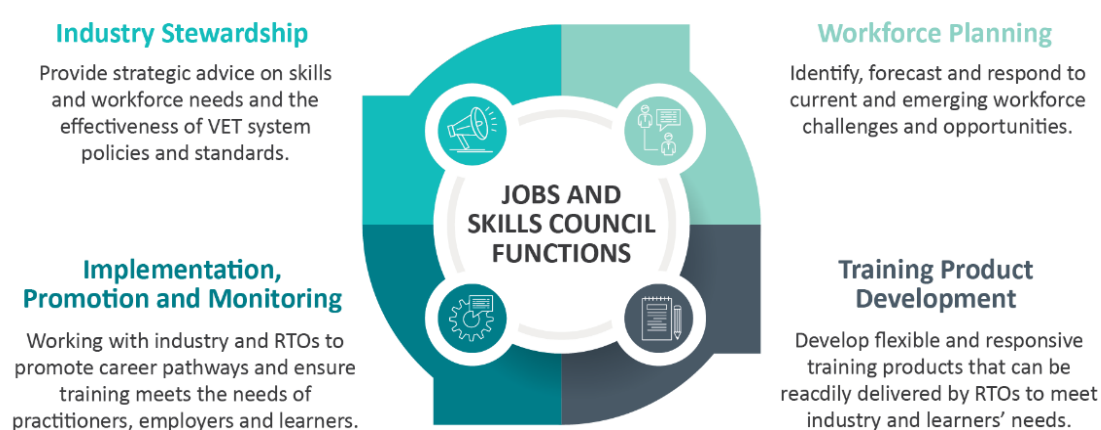*Table 3: Jobs and Skills Councils and the relevant industry sectors*

Industry Stewardship

Provide strategic advice on skills and workforce needs and the effectiveness of VET system policies and standards.

Workforce Planning

Identify, forecast and respond to current and emerging workforce challenges and opportunities.

JOBS AND SKILLS COUNCIL FUNCTIONS

Implementation, Promotion and Monitoring

Working with industry and RTOs to promote career pathways and ensure training meets the needs of practitioners, employers and learners.

Training Product Development

Develop flexible and responsive training products that can be readily delivered by RTOs to meet industry and learners' needs.

Figure 6: Four core functions of JSCs[8]

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[8] Source of diagram: https://manufacturingalliance.org.au/jobs-and-skills-councils-explained/

(5a) Training packages

In Australia, each accredited qualification is aligned to a training package for a specific industry. For example, Training Package "TLI" relates to Transport and Logistics Training Package.

Training packages specify the knowledge and skills required by individuals to perform effectively in the workplace, expressed in **units of competency**. Training packages also detail how units of competency can be packaged into nationally recognised and portable qualifications that comply with the AQF. They also specify how they can be packaged to provide pathways towards a specialist industry need or regulatory/license requirement.

Training packages are used for a range of purposes, but predominantly:

- by training providers, to design training curriculum tailored to support individual learner needs, and the needs of employers and industry
- by employers, to assist with workforce design, development, and structure.

Australia has 54 current training packages which contain more than 17,000 units of competency, 1,450 qualifications and 1,300 skill sets.

Training packages are available free of charge from https://training.gov.au - the national register of VET in Australia.

TRAINING PACKAGE		
Units of Competency	**Qualifications**	**Skill Sets**
Building blocks for a work function	A job role (Typically, 13 – 15 Units)	(Typically, 3 – 7 Units) Providing potential pathways towards a specialist industry need or regulatory/ license requirement
Examples TLIA0001 – Complete import procedures TAEASS512 – Design and develop assessment tools BSBCMM411 – Make presentations	**Examples** BSB10120 – Certificate I in Workplace skills (6 Units) TAE40122 – Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (12 Units) TLI50221 – Diploma of Logistics (15 Units)	**Examples** TAESS00019 – Assessor Skill Set (3 Units) BSBSS00110 – Business Development Skill Set (4 Units) TLISS00195 – Manage Supply Chains Skill Set (5 Units)

Table 4: A training package[9]

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[9] gskillsimpact.com.au/about/what-is-a-training-package

Example of a training package

Transport and Logistics Training Package (Training Package Code: TLI)

(Developer: Industry Skills Australia)

671	UNITS OF COMPETENCY

- Example 1: TLIX4028 - Apply knowledge of logistics
- Example 2: TLIG0001 - Facilitate work teams

49	QUALIFICATIONS

- Example 1: TLI11321 - Certificate I in Supply Chain Operations
- Example 2: TLI50221 - Diploma of Logistics

118	SKILL SETS

- Example 1: TLISS00213 - Conduct Logistics Support Analysis in Defence Materiel Logistics Skill Set
- Example 2: TLISS00195 - Manage Supply Chains Skill Set

Figure 7: Transport and Logistics Training Package

(5b) Accredited courses

Accredited courses are an important part of Australia's VET sector.

Accredited courses are developed when a training need is not covered by a training package (but may be developed to meet the needs of emerging or specialist industries) and a course needs to be nationally recognised.

Accreditation means a course which has been independently assessed by ASQA or a state regulator and meets the Standards for VET Accredited Courses 2021 and Australian Qualification Framework.

(6) VET regulators

VET regulators are independent bodies responsible for the registration and audit of registered training organisations (RTOs), and the accreditation of courses in the VET sector.

ASQA is the national VET regulator. It is responsible for regulating approximately 90% of Australian VET providers[10]. ASQA's regulation of Australia's VET sector is supported by the VET Quality Framework (VQF). ASQA is also subject to the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Regulations 2011.

The VQF was introduced in 2011. It is a set of standards and conditions used by the ASQA to assess whether RTOs under its jurisdiction meet the requirements for registration. The Framework aims to achieve greater national consistency in the registration of RTOs and enforcement of standards in the VET sector. It comprises:

- Standards for registered training organisations (RTOs) 2015
- Fit and proper person requirements 2015
- Financial viability risk assessment requirements 2021
- Data provision requirements 2020
- Australian Qualifications Framework.

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[10] The two other VET regulators, i.e. Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) and the Western Australian Training and Accreditation Council (TAC), have regulatory responsibilities within their own jurisdictions.

There are 8 "Standards for RTOs" 2015 in the VET Quality Framework which currently include:

Standard 1	The RTO's training and assessment strategies and practices are responsive to industry and learner needs and meet the requirements of training packages and VET accredited course.
Standard 2	The operations of the RTO are quality assured.
Standard 3	The RTO issues, maintains and accepts AQF certification documentation in accordance with these Standards and provides access to learner records.
Standard 4	Accurate and accessible information about an RTO, its services and performance are available to inform prospective and current learners and clients.
Standard 5	Each learner is properly informed and protected.
Standard 6	Complaints and appeals are recorded, acknowledged and dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively.
Standard 7	The RTO has effective governance and administration arrangements in place.
Standard 8	The RTO cooperates with the VET Regulator and is legally compliant at all times.

Table 5: Eight standards for registered training organisations

ASQA uses the Standards to ensure nationally consistent, high-quality training and assessment across Australia's VET system. Compliance with the Standards is a requirement for all RTOs and applicants seeking registration. The Standards protect the interests of all students in Australia's VET system.

(7) Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)

Regardless of the provider, an organisation must be registered as a RTO with ASQA to deliver and assess nationally recognised training and issue nationally recognised qualifications and statements of attainment, as well as apply for government funding to provide VET services.

There are approximately 4000 RTOs in Australia.

The Nationally Recognised Training (NRT) logo is a distinguishable mark of quality for promoting and certifying national VET leading to Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications or Statements of Attainment. The NRT logo can only be used by RTOs, ASQA, State and Territory registering/course accrediting bodies and other authorised bodies.

> **The TAFE sector** is the largest education and training sector in Australia. As of June 2024, there are 23[11] registered TAFEs, all of which are government-funded RTOs. In Western Australia, there are 5 TAFE Institutes based on geographical location that are independently managed but operate in unison under the TAFE WA banner. In Victoria, there are 14 TAFE Institutes that are all state owned but independently operated. Whereas the other States operate their TAFE institutions centrally: TAFE Queensland, Tas TAFE, TAFE SA and TAFE NSW. As an example, TAFE NSW operates 181 campuses across the state of New South Wales. This does not include dual sector providers (Vocational and Higher Education) such as RMIT, Swinburne University of Technology etc.
>
> Some RTOs are also registered with TEQSA as a Non - University Higher Education Provider (NUHEP) and also deliver higher degrees including Bachelors and Masters.

(8) VET Trainers and Assessors

Well-qualified trainers and assessors play a vital role in educating and skilling Australia's workforce. The requirements for trainers and assessors delivering nationally recognised training at an RTO are set out in the _Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015_ (the Standards). [12]

To be compliant with the Standards, training and assessment must be delivered by people who have one of the credentials such as TAE40122 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, or its successor, diploma or higher-level qualification in adult education...The Standards also specify credential requirements where a person conducts assessment only, and where an RTO in delivering training and assessment engages an individual who is not a trainer or assessor to work under the supervision of a trainer.

RTOs are responsible for ensuring that their trainers and assessors meet the requirements of the Standards, including other requirements relating to holding vocational competencies and current industry skills, as well as undertaking professional development.

(9) VET Students

In 2022, 4.5 million students[13] were enrolled in VET. They included:

2.1 million students enrolled in nationally recognised programs
3.0 million students enrolled in subjects not delivered as part of a nationally recognised program.

In 2022, of the students enrolled in nationally recognised training:

3.4 million (76.2%) were enrolled at private training providers
717,760 (15.9%) at Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes (Government funded)
493,480 (10.9%) at community education providers
106,380 (2.3%) at enterprise providers
103,475 (2.3%) at schools
67,695 (1.5%) at universities.

Note that these percentages add up to more than 100% as students may have enrolled in training with multiple provider types.

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[11] Search for training providers | Your Career

[12] https://gdewr.gov.au/trainer-and-assessor-requirements

[13] Source: https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/total-vet-students-and-courses-2022. The sum of students (n= 5.1 million in 2022) will not add to the 2022 total (4.5 million) as a student may have enrolled in multiple types of training in a calendar year.

(10) The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

NCVER is the national professional body responsible for collecting, managing, analysing and communicating research and statistics on the Australian vocational education and training (VET) sector.

NCVER's areas of activity:

- Undertaking a strategic program of education and training research, including the collection and analysis of national VET statistics and survey data and the analytical program of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY).
- Collecting and publishing research findings on VET and directly related research from across the world through the VOCED plus research database.
- Disseminating the results of integrated research and data analytics.
- Building links with similar international organisations to undertake strategic comparative analyses of mutual interest to benchmark and inform Australian practices.
- Providing a professional research, analysis and evaluation capability across Australia and internationally.
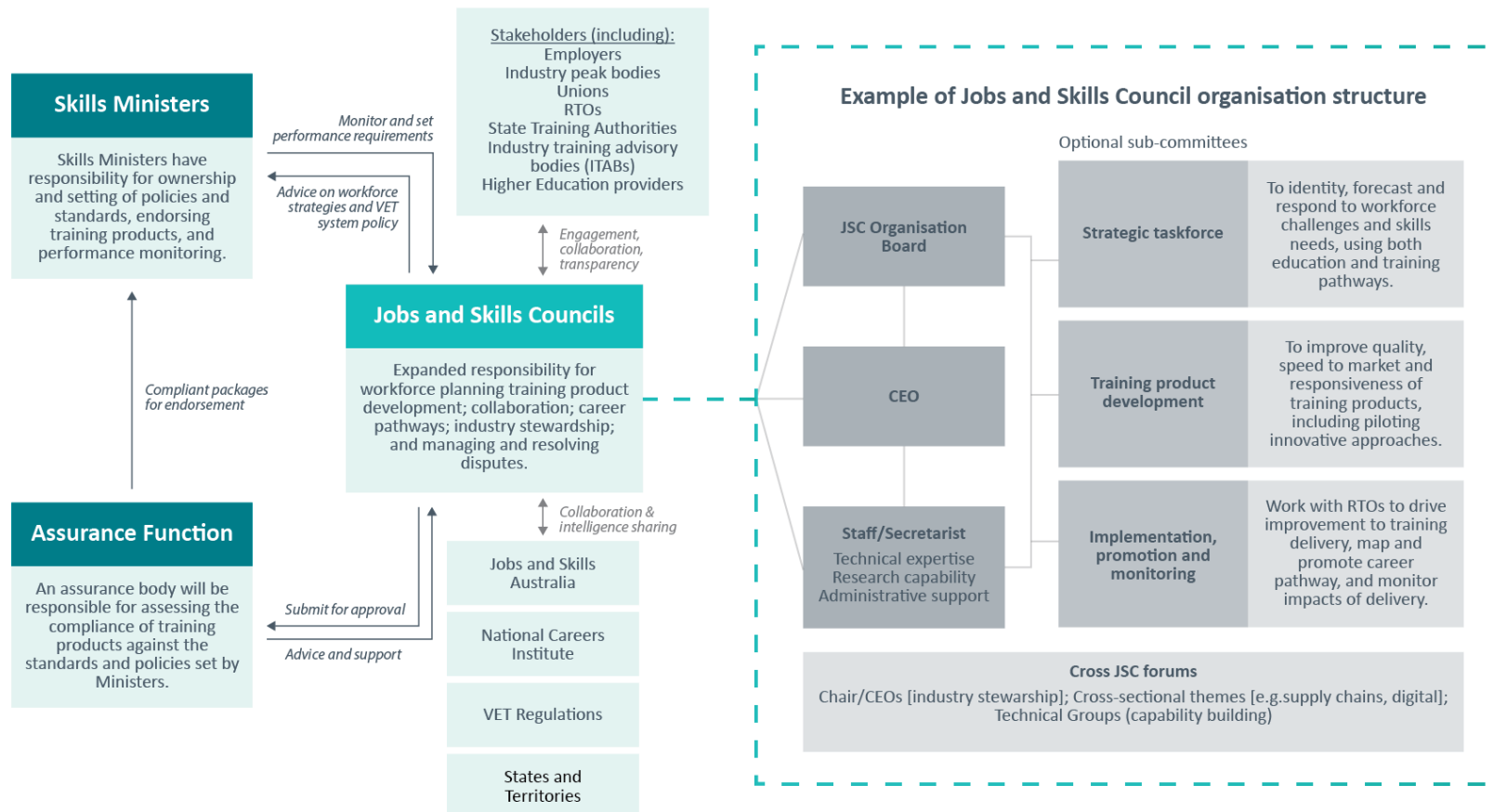
Figure 8: Jobs and Skills Roles and Responsibilities and Example of JSC Organisational Structure[14]

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4   RESOURCES

Parliament of Australia: aph.gov.au

Australian Government Bodies in VET: training.gov.au

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations: dewr.gov.au

Jobs and Skills Australia: gjobsandskills.gov.au

Jobs and Skills Councils (link through from): https://gdewr.gov.au/skills-reform/jobs-and-skills-councils

Australian Skills Quality Authority: https://www.asqa.gov.au/

Australian Qualifications Framework: https://gaqf.edu.au/

National Centre for Vocational Education Research: https://gncver.edu.au/

Victorian Skills Gateway: https://www.skills.vic.gov.au/s/understand-course-types

Others

WorldSkills Australia: https://gworldskills.org.au/

For individuals to explore vocational career ideas: yourcareer.gov.au

For further information on Australian sector skills council models throughout 30 years of development, and Australian training packages, please refer to the following reports:

Industry-VET engagement in Australia: origins and reforms *(developed by Paul Walsh and Paul Humphreys from Australian Industry Skills (AIS))*

Australian Training Packages *(compiled by Aus4Skills with extensive support from Aus4Skills' VET advisor - Dr Greg McMillan)*