

OVERVIEW

AUSTRALIAN CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

MAY 2026

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Introduction

This document provides an overview of the Australian Centre of Excellence (CoE) Model established under Australia's National Skills Agreement—a five-year joint agreement between the Commonwealth Government and the state and territory governments to strengthen the vocational education and training (VET) sector, which commenced on 1 January 2024. The model aims to develop a highly skilled workforce for strategically important industries and to address national skills challenges in Australia.

The paper is intended to support the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) of Viet Nam in the development of the project on the development of high-quality VET institutions, in accordance with the Government's Action Plan to implement Politburo Resolution No. 71-NQ/TW dated 22 August 2025 on breakthroughs in education and training development. It also serves as a reference for government agencies and relevant stakeholders involved in policy development, planning, and implementation related to the reform and enhancement of Viet Nam's VET system.

This document was prepared by Ms Helen Tinney, an Australian expert from Audit Express Company, at the request of the Australian Embassy in Viet Nam. It should be read in conjunction with the *Australian VET System Overview* (September 2025 version), which was shared by the Australian Embassy in Viet Nam with the Department of Vocational and Continuing Education and Training (DVCET), MOET, in 2025.

1. Overview of Australia’s vocational education and training system

Australia’s Vocational Education and Training (VET) system is characterised by its pivotal role in driving national productivity. The system is structured to ensure that high-quality, accessible education and training are available to all, enhancing productivity and equipping individuals with the skills needed to support Australia’s economic growth. Over 4 million Australians engage with the VET sector each year, and it is fundamental to promoting inclusion, creating opportunities, and supporting economic equality (Aus4Skills 2025; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) 2023).

As described in the Overview of the Australian VET System¹, education and training are a shared responsibility of the Australian Federal Government and the individual state and territory governments² (Aus4Skills 2025). The VET sector, which delivers strong economic and social outcomes, increasingly develops and provides the skilled workforce required to meet evolving workforce demands, ensuring that Australia remains adaptable and resilient in a changing economic landscape.

a. Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) and VET qualifications

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is the national policy guide for regulated qualifications in the Australian education and training system. The AQF defines the essential characteristics, including the required learning outcomes, of the different types of qualifications issued across the senior secondary education, VET and higher education systems in Australia. The AQF comprises 10 levels spanning certificates to doctoral degrees, with qualifications delivered across VET and higher education sectors (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, n.d.). VET is offered at AQF Levels 1 to 8 and higher education ranges from AQF Levels 5 to 10. As represented in Table 1.

AQF Level	Senior Secondary Schools	VET	Higher Education
10			Doctoral Degree
9			Master’s Degree
8		Graduate Diploma Graduate Certificate	Bachelor Honours Degree Graduate Diploma Graduate Certificate
7		Vocational Degree ³	Bachelor’s Degree

¹ This document (latest version) was shared by the Australian Embassy in Viet Nam with the DVCET, MOET in June 2025.

² 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 (NSW), Queensland (Qld), South Australia (SA), Tasmania (Tas), Victoria (VIC) and Western Australia (WA). The two major mainland territories are Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Northern Territory.

³ The Vocational Degree, formally endorsed by Skills and Education Ministers on 17 February 2025, represents a recent addition to the AQF.

AQF Level	Senior Secondary Schools	VET	Higher Education
6		Advanced Diploma	Associate Degree Diploma
5		Diploma	Diploma
4		Certificate IV	
3		Certificate III	
2		Certificate II	
1	Senior Secondary Certificate of Education	Certificate I	

Table 1 Ten levels of Australian Qualifications Framework
Source: Adapted from Australian Qualifications Framework Council (2013).

b. Registered Training Organisations

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) are authorised to offer nationally recognised VET and can issue accredited qualifications. To operate, an RTO must be registered with the Australian Skills Qualifications Authority (ASQA), which ensures they comply with national standards for VET delivery. RTOs include

- *Private training providers:* privately owned independent colleges or training organisation
- *Public training organisations:* operated by government bodies such as Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes which provide government supported education and skills
- *Schools:* Some schools are registered educational institutions and vocational training as part of their curriculum
- *Enterprise training organisations:* organisation internally delivering training to their employees
- *Community led organisations:* providing VET as well as skill development programs.

At the time of this report, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) had identified approximately 3,916 training providers registered on the National System. Among these, 21 are TAFE institutions, which are substantial state or territory-owned organisations typically consisting of multiple campuses such as TAFE NSW, TAFE Queensland, and TAFE SA. There are also around 3,500 private training providers. Although the number of TAFE institutions is relatively small, each operates on a large scale; collectively, they deliver a considerable proportion of public VET.

2025 Standards for Registration

The 2025 Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) were implemented in July 2025, enhancing the emphasis on quality outcomes for learners and employers. These standards offer greater clarity for both RTOs and regulators, as well as increased flexibility and innovation in training delivery. The 2025 Standards establish a direct connection between the requirements expected of RTOs and the outcomes they are mandated to achieve. (Australian Government 2025).

c. The National Skills Agreement

Recognising the critical role of VET and the national VET landscape, the National Skills Agreement (NSA) was developed by Skills Ministers to provide guiding principles for longer-term VET reform. The NSA is a 5-year joint agreement between the Commonwealth and the states and territories to strengthen the VET sector. It commenced on 1 January 2024. The Agreement has superseded

previous intergovernmental funding arrangements and will be delivered via a collaborative stewardship model. Critically, the NSA provides states and territories with access to additional Commonwealth funds of up to AU\$3.7 billion over 5 years. This takes total Commonwealth investment in state and territory training systems up to AU\$12.6 billion over 5 years. Most notably, AU\$325 million is allocated to establish nationally networked TAFE CoE and strengthen collaboration between TAFEs, universities and industry. (DEWR 2023).

The NSA provides funding to support policy initiatives aimed at addressing Australia's workforce skill requirements, specifically

- Closing the Gap⁴
- Ensuring access to foundation skills training
- Improved completions – especially for priority groups
- Measures to strengthen the VET workforce
- Enhanced VET data and evidence
- Establishing a National TAFE Network and,
- TAFE CoE

The NSA has several foundational pillars that define its operational framework. These pillars include, but are not limited to, the Outcomes Framework, Jurisdictional Action Plans, and the National Skills Plan. The National Skills Plan (NSP) serves to translate the overarching objectives of the NSA into actionable initiatives, emphasising collaboration among Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), TAFEs, as well as business and industry stakeholders. (DEWR 2023)

A primary objective of the NSP is to position TAFE as a cornerstone within the VET sector, advancing the provision of high-quality and accessible training. This strategic focus has resulted in enhanced government funding for TAFE institutions. (DEWR 2023). As shown in Figure 1, the National Skill Plan supports shared stewardship of the VET system – a new focus on collaboration, planning and evidence-based reform and highlights the significance of the nationally networked TAFE CoE as a principal objective.

⁴ the Closing the Gap is a formal Australian government strategy and commitment to reduce inequality between Indigenous Australians (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) and non-Indigenous Australians. It aims to close disparities in health, education, employment, justice, housing, and life expectancy by 2031.



Figure 1: National Skills Plan and 2025–26 update
 (a) *National Skills Plan*; (b) *National Skills Plan 2025–26 Update*
 Source: DEWR (2023; 2025).

d. VET system outcomes

The system outcomes represented in Figure 2, illustrates what the Australian government wants to achieve with the VET system’s operation and performance. Focusing on these outcomes will help build a robust and enduring VET system that serves students, workers, and employers effectively.

Industry Needs	Student Needs	Responsive Courses	Quality Delivery	Collaborative & sustainable system
VET activity is aligned to workforce demand	VET learning supports and pathways are accessible and effective, and meet the diversity of learner needs and objectives,	VET courses are trusted, relevant and available at the right time	VET delivery is of a consistently high-quality and provides a positive learner experience, including for priority groups	VET system governance advances stewardship of an effective and efficient national VET system, strengthens partner

	including for priority groups			participation, and ensures system sustainability
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Figure 2: National Skills Agreement outcomes framework
*Source: Commonwealth of Australia (2023),
 Australian Government Jurisdictional Action Plan – National Skills Agreement.*

2. Overview of the Centres of Excellence

Around the world, many institutions now aim for excellence rather than simply meeting targets. A Centre of Excellence (CoE) is a dedicated space focused on gathering knowledge and expertise in a particular field. Within an organisation, it is a specialised group or unit that brings together skills, best practices, and resources in one area to guide leadership, oversee governance, and offer training. Acting as a central hub, a CoE encourages ongoing improvement, innovation, and sharing of knowledge, helping to ensure quality results and boost organisational efficiency. (Gartner n.d.)

As described by Pham et al. (2024) a Centre of Excellence can operate in one of three methodologies

1. A Centre of Excellence in Research with a particular focus in research specifically conducting research and development activities.
2. A Centre of Excellence in Education with a focus on education in schools, vocational and higher education.
3. A Centre of Vocational Excellence focusing on the delivery teaching and learning, collaboration, partnership, governance and operational activities with the intended outcome being vocational excellence. For example, TAFE CoE.

The VET sector has consistently served as a critical avenue for Australians to acquire the skills and training essential for participation in society and the workforce. TAFEs are recognised as trusted and valued institutions that underpin Australia's VET sector and play a central role in the nation's training infrastructure. The NSA reflects a commitment to delivering high-quality, responsive, and accessible VET, aiming to boost productivity and equip Australians with necessary competencies.

Through the NSA, the Australian Government, in collaboration with state and territory governments, has established nationally coordinated TAFE CoE. These centres are intended to cultivate a skilled workforce tailored to industries of strategic importance and national priority.

TAFE CoE are designed to promote increased collaboration among TAFEs via strategic partnerships with employers, unions, universities, and additional stakeholders. Their mission is to ensure individuals possess the requisite skills for secure employment and career progression.

"Our nationally networked TAFE CoE will be centres of innovation, that are responsive to industry and help deliver a skilled workforce that meets the needs of critical and emerging industries. They will engage industry and academic experts in the design and delivery of education and training and bridge the gap between VET and higher education."
(Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2023. 5).

As illustrated in Table 2, at the time this report was prepared, 17 TAFE CoEs had been established and were operational across all States and Territories in Australia.

State/Territory	TAFE CoE	Specialisation	Website
1. New South Wales (NSW)	1. TAFE NSW Hunter Net Zero Manufacturing CoE, Tighes Hill campus, NSW	The Hunter Net Zero Manufacturing Centre of Excellence, located at the TAFE NSW Tighes Hill campus, will provide high-quality training products to support the national transition of traditional mining, energy and manufacturing industries into cleaner, renewable energy sources. <i>The Hunter Net Zero Manufacturing Centre of Excellence will receive approximately AU\$28.1 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA and AU\$5.3 million in additional funding through the Turbocharging TAFE Centres of Excellence measure.</i>	Manufacturing CoE: Skills Training at TAFE NSW TAFE NSW
	2. TAFE NSW Western Sydney Advanced Manufacturing CoE, TAFE NSW Wetherill Park, NSW	The Western Sydney Advanced Manufacturing Centre of Excellence aims to equip the future workforce with the skills needed to support Australia's manufacturing sovereign capability and food security. The Western Sydney Advanced Manufacturing Centre of Excellence, located at the TAFE NSW Wetherill Park campus, will provide targeted training for advanced manufacturing and sovereign capability, food and beverage manufacturing, pharmaceutical manufacturing and will support greater integration of digital technology. <i>The Western Sydney Advanced Manufacturing Centre of Excellence will receive approximately AU\$27 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA.</i>	Manufacturing CoE: Skills Training at TAFE NSW TAFE NSW

	3. TAFE NSW Illawarra Heavy Industry Manufacturing CoE, TAFE NSW Wollongong campus, NSW	The Illawarra Heavy Industry Manufacturing Centre of Excellence will deliver targeted training to support a national transition to clean energy. The Illawarra Heavy Industry Manufacturing Centre of Excellence, located at the TAFE NSW Wollongong campus, will specialise in the delivery of enhanced training in steel manufacturing, defence, and renewable manufacturing to support a positive transition to net zero for all Australians. <i>The Illawarra Heavy Industry Manufacturing Centre of Excellence will receive approximately AU\$23.5 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA.</i>	Manufacturing CoE: Skills Training at TAFE NSW TAFE NSW
	4. TAFE NSW Institute of Applied Technology Digital – National CoE, TAFE NSW Meadowbank campus, NSW	The Institute of Applied Technology Digital – National Centre of Excellence will boost Australia’s workforce capability by delivering training in applied digital skills education for critical digital skills in the technology sector. The Institute of Applied Technology Digital – National Centre of Excellence, located at the TAFE NSW Meadowbank campus, will drive training in applied digital learning to ensure Australia’s digital and technology capability. <i>The Institute of Applied Technology Digital – National Centre of Excellence will receive AU\$5.5 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA.</i>	Institute of Applied Technology (IAT) Digital
2. Victoria	1. Melbourne Polytechnic Future of Housing Construction CoE, Heidelberg, Victoria	The Melbourne Polytechnic Future of Housing Construction Centre of Excellence will deliver industry relevant and innovative training to uplift the technical and digital skills of traditional construction and engineering trades in modern methods of construction.	Future of Housing Construction CoE

		The Melbourne Polytechnic Future of Housing Construction Centre of Excellence, located at the Heidelberg campus, will provide targeted training in affordable and environmentally sustainable construction techniques to help deliver on national housing needs. <i>The Melbourne Polytechnic Future of Housing Construction Centre of Excellence will receive AU\$25 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA.</i>	
	2. Digital, AI, and Technology CoE, Chisholm, Frankston, Victoria	The Digital, AI, and Technology Centre of Excellence will support nation-wide uplift in digital literacy and innovative pathways to obtain digital skills. The Digital, AI, and Technology Centre of Excellence, located at the Chisholm Institute's Frankston campus, will work with Australian businesses and technology start-ups to establish satellite campuses for delivering targeted training for critical industries, while scaling established and emerging higher apprenticeship models across the TAFE network. The Digital, AI and Technology Centre of Excellence will receive AU\$15 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA.	New Digital, AI, and Technology CoE
	3. Home and Community CoE, Holmesglen, Victoria	The Home and Community Care Centre of Excellence will equip the Australian workforce with cutting-edge skills for work in the home and community care sector. The Home and Community Care Centre of Excellence, located at Holmesglen's Moorabbin campus, will drive innovation in health care delivery by establishing virtual training methods to accommodate emerging technological trends in care delivery to support best practice research and pedagogy. The Home and Community Centre of Excellence will receive AU\$10.3 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA.	Holmesglen leads new CoE for home care Holmesglen

3. Queensland	1. TAFE CoE Health Care and Support, State-wide, Queensland	The TAFE Centre of Excellence Health Care and Support will deliver critical higher-level skills training to grow and sustain Australia's essential care and support services. The TAFE Centre of Excellence Health Care and Support, located across the network of TAFE Queensland campuses, will strengthen capability and capacity for the aged care, disability support, and mental health care sectors, and will explore new pathways in nursing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, and health leadership. The TAFE Centre of Excellence Health Care and Support will receive AU\$15 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA and AU\$5 million in additional funding through the Turbocharging TAFE CoE measure.	TAFE CoE Health Care and Support TAFE Queensland
	2. TAFE CoE Clean Energy Batteries, State-wide, Queensland	The TAFE Centre of Excellence Clean Energy Batteries will drive growth in the clean energy sector by improving and innovating training for clean energy battery technologies across Australia. The TAFE Centre of Excellence Clean Energy Batteries, located across the network of TAFE Queensland campuses, will target training for renewable energy batteries, intermittent renewable energy source storage, grid connectivity, network embedded storage at large and small scales, and electric vehicles for existing and emerging workforces. The TAFE Centre of Excellence Clean Energy Batteries will receive AU\$10 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA.	TAFE CoE Clean Energy Batteries TAFE Queensland
4. Western Australia	1. Clean Energy Skills National CoE (CESNCE), State-wide, Western Australia	The Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence will provide world-class training across the WA TAFE network to grow Australia's clean energy skills and workforce capacity.	 WA Clean Energy

		The Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence, located across the network of WA TAFE colleges and other training institutes, will specialise in the delivery of innovative training in clean energy technologies including solar, wind, hydrogen, and batteries, to feed into the grid to help create a Future Made in Australia. The Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence will receive AU\$32.75 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA and AU\$5.03 million in additional funding through the Turbocharging TAFE CoE measure.	
	2. WA Defence Industry Skills TAFE CoE, South Metropolitan TAFE, Western Australia	The WA Defence Industry Skills TAFE Centre of Excellence will provide innovative training to strengthen Australia's sovereign defence capability. The WA Defence Industry Skills TAFE Centre of Excellence, located across four South Metropolitan TAFE campuses, will also target activities to improve student completions and advance workers' knowledge in engineering and advanced manufacturing, preparing them for higher skilled roles in defence industries. The WA Defence Industry Skills TAFE Centre of Excellence will receive AU\$7.3 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA.	Defence Industry Skills CoE South Metropolitan TAFE
5. South Australia	1. TAFE SA National Security CoE, Regency, South Australia	The TAFE SA National Security Centre of Excellence will improve the Australian workforce's understanding of cybersecurity, information security, and foreign interference risks. The National Security Centre of Excellence, located at the TAFE SA Regency campus, will provide training to the trades and technical workforces to address both physical and digital threats to improve sovereign capability, and ensure digital and technology capability across Australia.	National Security

		The TAFE SA National Security Centre of Excellence will receive AU\$14.1 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA.	
	2. TAFE SA CoE in Early Childhood Education and Care, Adelaide, South Australia	The TAFE SA Centre of Excellence in Early Childhood Education and Care is partnering with industry and universities to train early childcare workers for essential care services. The TAFE SA Centre of Excellence in Early Childhood Education and Care, located at the TAFE SA Adelaide City West campus, will lift the skills and capability of early childcare workers for essential care services on a national scale, through sharing of high-quality training products and industry demonstration to increase access to early childhood education and care across Australia. The TAFE SA Centre of Excellence in Early Childhood Education and Care will receive AU\$11.5 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA and AU\$5 million in additional funding through the Turbocharging TAFE CoE measure.	CoE in Early Childhood Education and Care
6. Tasmania	1. Tasmanian Clean Energy CoE, Burnie, Tas mania	The Tasmanian Clean Energy Centre of Excellence will support new training methodologies for future clean energy industries and technologies. The Tasmanian Clean Energy Centre of Excellence, located across the TasTAFE Burnie campuses, will focus on construction and maintenance of wind generation and hydro pump technologies to meet local and national needs for a transition to a net zero economy. The Tasmanian Clean Energy Centre of Excellence will receive AU\$13.20 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA and AU\$0.80 million in additional funding through the Turbocharging TAFE CoE measure.	Tasmanian Clean Energy CoE Skills Tasmania

7. Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	1. CIT Electric Vehicle (EV) CoE, Fyshwick, ACT	The Electric Vehicle Centre of Excellence is partnering with industry and universities to support growth in the electric vehicle industry across Australia. The Electric Vehicle Centre of Excellence, located at the Canberra Institute of Technology's Fyshwick campus, will specialise in innovative training for heavy hydrogen electric vehicles, retrofitting of vehicles, battery repurposing and charging installation, in addition to the broader development of safety training for a range of occupations with touch points across the electric vehicle industry. The Electric Vehicle Centre of Excellence will receive AU\$9.66 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA and AU\$4.78 million in additional funding through the Turbocharging TAFE CoE measure.	Electric Vehicle TAFE CoE: Canberra Institute of Technology
	2. CIT Cyber Security CoE, Woden, ACT	The Cyber Security Centre of Excellence will bolster Australia's sovereign capabilities and resilience by enhancing the cyber readiness of businesses and government agencies. The Cyber Security Centre of Excellence, located at the CIT Woden campus, will deliver training with a national focus on cyber threats, prevention and security to help build the national workforce and safeguard Australia's digital future. The Cyber Security Centre of Excellence will receive AU\$2.5 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA and AU\$0.45 million in additional funding through the Turbocharging TAFE CoE measure.	Cyber Security TAFE CoE: Canberra Institute of Technology
8. Northern Territory	1. NT Regional and Remote Essential Care Services CoE, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, Northern Territory	The Regional and Remote Essential Care Services Centre of Excellence will boost the accessibility of culturally safe healthcare services. The Regional and Remote Essential Care Services Centre of Excellence, delivered through Charles Darwin University and the Batchelor Institute at Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, will transform remote healthcare delivery through culturally informed education and	CDU TAFE CoE for Remote Essential Care Services given green light Charles Darwin University

		innovative training solutions in aged care, birthing, children's healthcare, and mental health. The Regional and Remote Essential Care Services Centre of Excellence will receive AU\$10 million from the Commonwealth through the NSA and a further AU\$5.3 million in additional funding through the Turbocharging TAFE CoE measure.	
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Table 2: TAFE CoE across Australia

Source: Compiled from DEWR, (2023).

a. Policy context and rationale

The National Agreement on Skills sets out shared responsibilities between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments for strengthening Australia's skills system. The agreement was endorsed by National cabinet on 31 August 2022 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2022).

"The Parties agree to establish nationally networked TAFE CoE to partner with industry, universities and governments to grow the skills needed by high-potential and strategically important industries and meet workforce challenges that demand a coordinated response from governments, industry and the tertiary sector." (Commonwealth of Australia, 2022).

The Australian Government plans to invest up to AU\$325 million over five years to create and operate up to 20 TAFE CoE. These centres are designed to enhance the VET system's ability to deliver high-quality, adaptable skills training for vital and emerging industries. This includes supporting the shift towards a net zero economy, maintaining essential care and support services, boosting digital and technological skills, and strengthening sovereign capabilities. The Centres will set the standard for outstanding training and education.

In addition, TAFE CoE will address the recommendations outlined in the Working Future White Paper by focusing on the development of higher-level skills to meet Australia's evolving labour market requirements.

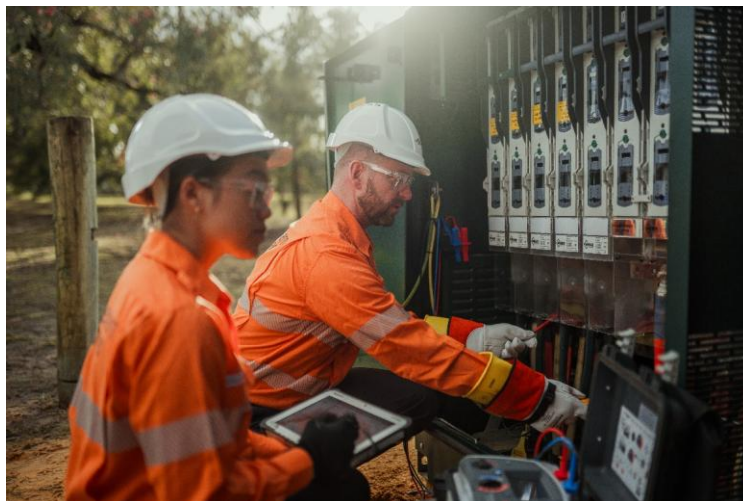


Figure 3: Training activity at a Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence facility
Source: Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence, Western Australia (supplied image).

b. Objective

The primary objective of TAFE CoE is to establish a nationally networked system that partners with industry, universities, and government agencies. The CoE aim to develop the skills required by high-potential and strategically significant sectors, effectively addressing workforce challenges that necessitate a coordinated effort from government, industry, and the broader tertiary education sector.

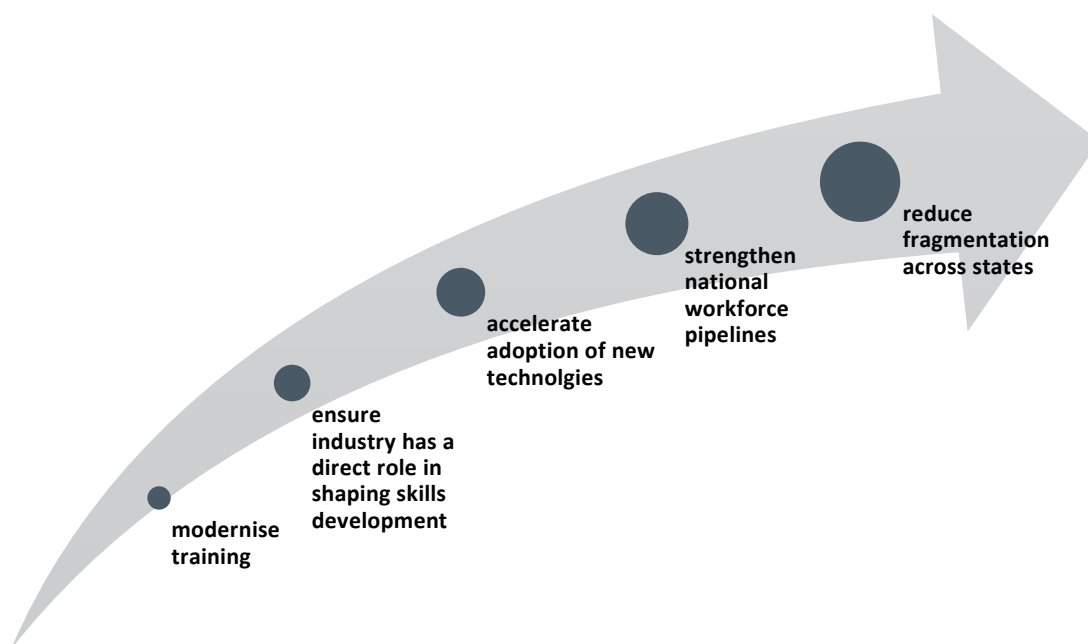


Figure 4: Nationally networked model for TAFE CoE

Source: Adapted from DEWR, (2023).

As illustrated in Figure 4 & 5, TAFE CoE are intended to move Australia’s VET system away from fragmented, state-based initiatives toward a nationally networked model, underpinned by strong partnerships with industry and universities. As reflected in the National Skills Agreement framework, these centres support collaboration on pathways, applied research, and higher-level skills development, while promoting greater quality and consistency through shared curricula, facilities, and expertise. In doing so, they reinforce TAFE’s central role in delivering a responsive, future focused VET system aligned with national workforce priorities (DEWR, 2023).

	Provide national leadership in the delivery of skills, education and training
	Bring together employers, unions, universities and other education and training providers to develop and implement real work and practical solutions to meet skills needs
	Support industry and enrich students’ learning experience through applied research and problem-solving programs
	Innovate the delivery of tertiary education, such as the development and delivery of higher apprenticeships in areas of high skills need

	Disseminate best practice across the TAFE network
	Enable organisational innovation and teaching and training excellence.

Figure 5: Collaboration and pathways supported by TAFE CoE

Source: Adapted from DEWR, (2023).

c. Design and Approach

The design and implementation of the TAFE CoE adhere to a nationally consistent model focused on collaboration, industry leadership, and systemic transformation. As represented in figure 6 official documentation consistently outlines the following components as integral to this approach.

Nationally Networked Model	TAFE CoE are not standalone institutions. They are designed as national networks of TAFEs, working together across jurisdictions to: • share training products • share facilities and equipment • coordinate workforce development • ensure national consistency in priority industries This represents an intentional move away from state-based operations.
Deep Industry Partnership	A defining feature of the TAFE CoE design places industry at the centre. This includes: • industry co-design of training products • industry involvement in governance • industry access to facilities and training • rapid updating of training to match emerging technologies The model regards industry as a partner rather than merely an advisor.
Collaboration with Universities	TAFE CoE are designed to bridge VET and higher education through: • shared teaching and research • pathways from VET to higher education • joint qualifications or stacked credentials • applied research linked to industry needs This is part of the broader tertiary system reform under the National Skills Agreement.

High-quality, Future-focused Training	The design emphasises: • modern, technology-enabled training • access to cutting-edge equipment • training aligned to future workforce needs • capability building for TAFE teachers •
Nationally Consistent Training Products and resources	TAFE CoE are tasked with: • developing national training products • ensuring consistency across states • reducing duplication • accelerating updates to qualifications This is a major system-shaping function.
Focus on Priority and High-growth Industries	The approach targets industries where: • workforce shortages are acute • technology is rapidly changing • national coordination is essential Examples include clean energy, digital/AI, housing construction, and care sectors.
Strong Governance and Accountability	The design includes: • joint governance between TAFEs, industry, and government • clear performance measures • national oversight through the NSA governance architecture This ensures TAFE CoE proactively respond to and deliver on national priorities.

Figure 6: Design & Approach to TAFE CoE

Source: Adapted from DEWR, (2023) and Australian Government (2023).

d. Budget and funding arrangements

As a policy initiative under the NSA the Commonwealth will provide a maximum financial contribution to the States of AU\$325 million over five years toward TAFE CoE. TAFE CoE are supported by Commonwealth financial contributions that require matched funding by State & Territories. Figure 4 represents the maximum financial contribution to States & Territories.

“The National Skills Agreement directs at least 70% of Australian Government funding for VET delivery by states and territories to TAFE and public training providers, including dual sector universities” (DEWR, 2023)

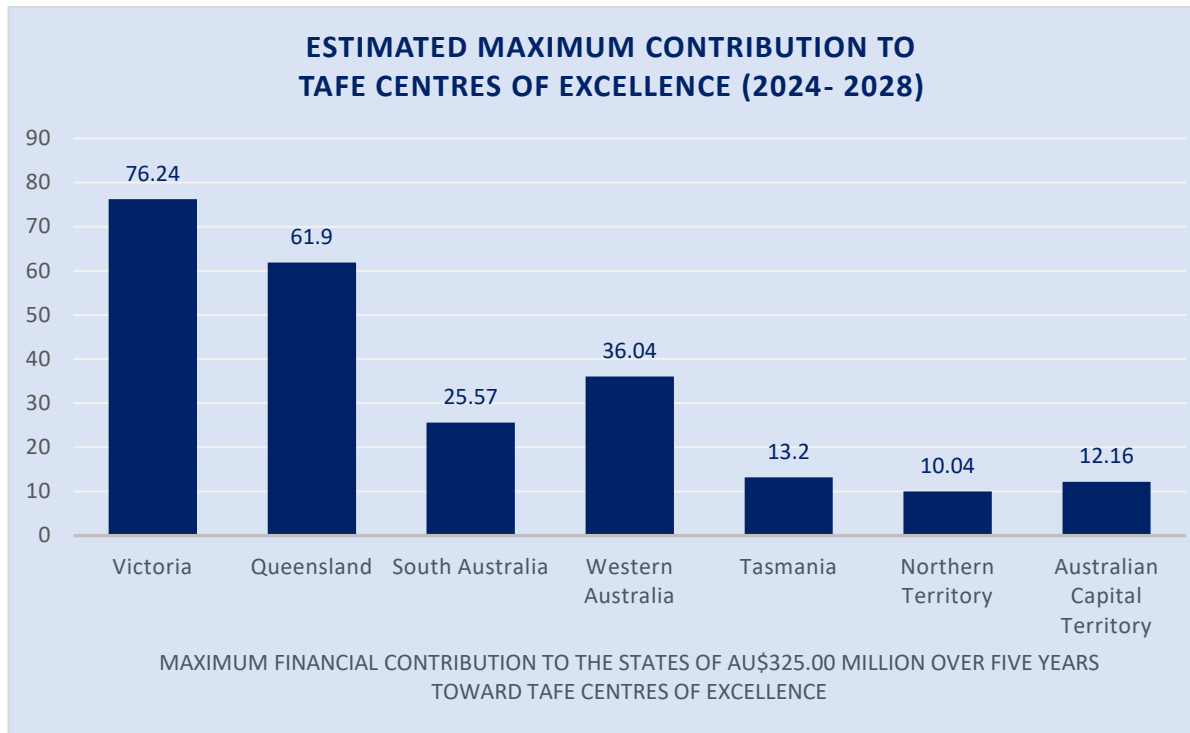


Figure 7 Estimated maximum contribution to TAFE CoE, 2024–2028
Source: Commonwealth of Australia (2023), National Skills Agreement.

e. Turbocharging TAFE CoE

In alignment with the release of Working Future: The Australian Government’s White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities, the Australian Government has announced additional funding to expedite the development of TAFE CoE under the NSA. These Centres will be interconnected nationally to provide training in priority sectors, including the transition to net zero, essential care and support services, and the advancement of digital skills capability. A total of AU\$41.2 million in supplementary funding over five years will support this initiative:

- States are eligible to apply for AU\$31.6 million to accelerate the establishment of TAFE CoE. This is in addition to funds already available through the NSA.
- An additional AU\$9.6 million will facilitate enabling work for higher and degree apprenticeships.

The Department is actively collaborating with states and territories on their TAFE Centre of Excellence proposals and Turbocharging applications. (DEWR, 2023)

f. Implementation mechanisms

Each TAFE CoE is required to develop a Bilateral Implementation Plan in alignment with the National Skills Agreement Policy Initiatives, guided by the vision statement and principles endorsed by the National Cabinet on 31 August 2022. The implementation plan is set to conclude on 31 December 2028. It must clearly outline the actions to be undertaken, the metrics for assessing progress, and

the anticipated contributions of these actions to the overarching objectives of the NSA. Policy initiatives will be paid in accordance with milestones agreed in the State's implementation plan.

All Bilateral Implementation Plans and agreements are a matter of public record and are publicly available on the Australian Government federal financial relations website (DEWR, 2023). The following provides a summary of the information requirements specified for TAFE CoE under the NSA (Australian Government 2023).

1. Project Description
2. Delivery Method
3. Expected Reach and Additionality
4. Investment - Commonwealth & State + Start & End dates
5. Approach to matched funding
6. Reporting & Data collection
7. Contribution to National Skills Agreement
8. Evaluation Arrangement
9. General provisions
10. Milestones & payments

g. Progress to date

Under the NSA, the Commonwealth has developed an Outcomes Framework in collaboration with State and Territory governments. This Framework ensures that the objectives and activities of the Agreement are implemented and delivered in alignment with the VET system. It adopts an overarching and strategic approach to tracking, monitoring, and responding to changes throughout the life of the NSA, through to 2028. For example, the Framework includes regular reporting cycles and stakeholder consultations to address emerging skills needs as they arise.

In addition, each Australian state, territory, and the federal government has established Jurisdictional Action Plans that delineate strategies for achieving the objectives of the National Skills Plan and National NSA. These Action Plans offer a comprehensive overview of both individual and collaborative actions undertaken to fulfil the goals, outcomes, and national priorities set by the NSA. This approach assists VET stakeholders in effectively engaging with initiatives and prioritising their efforts to ensure alignment toward shared objectives. (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2023).

The DEWR (2025) details updated priorities and actions for the 2025–26 period under the National Skills Agreement. TAFE CoE have a direct line of impact to the following National Priorities under the NSA. Below provides an update on TAFE Centre of Excellence progress to date.

i. Supporting the Net Zero transformation

TAFE CoE – Five TAFE CoE established across ACT, Qld, WA, NSW and Tas are supporting the national transition to clean energy with AU\$93.7 million in Australian Government funding (matched by states) and a further AU\$15.1 million to fast-track establishment of the ACT, WA, NSW and Tas TAFE CoE.

ii. Sustaining Essential Care Services

TAFE CoE – Four TAFE CoE for sustaining essential care services in Vic, Qld, SA and NT, supported by AU\$46.9 million in Australian Government funding (matched by states) and an additional AU\$15.3 million to Qld, SA and the NT TAFE CoE to fast-track establishment.

iii. Developing Australia's Sovereign Capability and Food Security

TAFE CoE – Six TAFE CoE supporting Australia's sovereign capability have been announced across NSW, WA, SA and ACT, with a combined AU\$98.4 million in Australian Government funding, matched by states, with a further AU\$5.7 million to fast-track establishment of the ACT and NSW Hunter TAFE CoE.

iv. Ensuring Australia's Digital and Technology Capability

TAFE CoE – Three TAFE CoE have been announced to date in Vic, SA and the ACT supported by AU\$31.6 million in Australian Government funding (matched by states), and an additional AU\$0.4 million to the ACT to fast-track establishment.

v. Delivering Housing Supply

TAFE CoE – TAFE CoE for innovative, industry-relevant training in Modern Methods of Construction in Vic, supported by AU\$25 million in Australian Government funding (announced).



Figure 8: Future of Housing Construction CoE facility, Melbourne Polytechnic
Source: Melbourne Polytechnic (supplied image).

3. Case Studies

The case study findings are based on semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives from three TAFE CoE. Participants included Directors, senior TAFE personnel, TAFE Directors Australia (TDA), and DEWR. The interviews took place between 21 and 23 April 2026. Data from these interviews were analysed thematically to identify governance structures, partnerships, delivery models, and areas of specialisation associated with each Centre. Additionally, interviewees provided insights regarding lessons learned, which will be incorporated into the concluding section of the report.

Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence, State-wide, Western Australia



Figure 9: Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence, Western Australia (header image)
Source: Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence (supplied image).

The Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence (CESNCE) offers clean energy training across WA TAFE colleges and partner institutes, focusing on areas like solar, wind, hydrogen, and batteries. CESNCE is funded with AU\$32.75 million from the Commonwealth through the National Skills Agreement which is matched by the State Government of Western Australia. The Commonwealth Government has provided an additional AU\$5.03 million from the Turbocharging TAFE CoE initiative to accelerate implementation and exploration of higher apprenticeships in clean energy related fields. The below content was gathered at an interview conducted on 21 April 2026.

Governance Arrangements

The Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence (CESNCE) has been established under the *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996 (WA)* and has a leading stewardship role in driving the clean energy skills agenda. It works in close partnership with the Western Australian TAFE system under a governance model designed to support a national remit and drive collaboration among the State's publicly funded training providers, including the State owned five TAFE colleges. Governance is overseen through a formal Cabinet appointed Industry Advisory Board comprising industry, union, and government representatives, with the Director General participating as an *ex officio* member. Operational responsibility sits with the CoE's executive leadership, supported by a lean staffing model focused on coordination and system enablement. Training delivery is publicly funded through the Department of Training and Workforce Development and given highest priority to enable the transition to a net zero carbon emissions economy. This structure supports accountability while enabling responsiveness to emerging clean energy priorities. The CESNCE also takes a lead role in the strategic planning and investment in the State's clean energy skills training infrastructure, with a focus on capability and capacity uplift, and innovation.

Partnerships

Partnerships are central to CESNCE's national role. The CoE prioritises engagement with peak industry bodies, government agencies, and other TAFE CoE to aggregate demand and reduce duplication across jurisdictions. Formal partnerships, including through Memoranda of Understanding, support collaboration on curriculum development, capability uplift, and delivery across the TAFE network, universities, national Jobs and Skills Councils, and industry. The CESNCE also prioritises servicing regional and remote communities. Partnerships are positioned as mechanisms for national coordination and system stewardship rather than standalone delivery arrangements.

Delivery Models

CESNCE operates through an enabling and facilitative delivery model focused on strengthening capability across multiple providers and regions. Delivery approaches include shared training products, educator capability development, access to specialised infrastructure and equipment, and mobile and distributed delivery models suited to project based clean energy industries. Digital

delivery supports reach and flexibility but does not replace practical, hands on training. The CoE's impact is defined by system level enablement rather than direct enrolment volumes.

Areas of Specialisation

CESNCE specialises in priority clean energy technologies including renewable generation, energy storage, grid integration, hydrogen, and workforce transition pathways. A defining feature of its approach is an emphasis on transition skills and workforce mobility, recognising the evolving nature of clean energy industries. This adaptive model positions CESNCE as a nationally coordinated hub supporting Australia's clean energy workforce transition.

Source: Semi-structured interviews with Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence leadership, April 2026.

TAFE Centre of Excellence Health Care and Support, State-wide, Queensland

TAFE Centre of Excellence



Health Care and Support



Figure 10: TAFE Centre of Excellence Health Care and Support, TAFE Queensland (header image)

Source: TAFE Queensland (supplied image).

The TAFE Centre of Excellence Health Care and Support will provide advanced skills training to help grow Australia's care and support services. Based at TAFE Queensland campuses, it will boost aged care, disability support, and mental health sectors, and pursue pathways in nursing, Indigenous health, and leadership. The Centre will receive AU\$15 million from the National Skills Agreement and an extra AU\$5 million through Turbocharging TAFE CoE. The below content was gathered at an interview conducted on 23 April 2026.

Governance Arrangements

The TAFE Centre of Excellence (CoE) Health Care and Support operate within TAFE Queensland under a governance model aligned to the National Skills Agreement. The CoE is staffed by a dedicated team of six and led by a manager who reports through an Executive Director to the Chief Academic Officer and Chief Executive Officer of TAFE Queensland.

Governance is overseen by a formal Steering Committee chaired by the Chief Academic Officer and comprising external stakeholders. This is supported by four standing subcommittees focused on innovative training practices, applied research, higher level pathways, and cultural practices. The cultural practices subcommittee has a specific remit for First Nations priorities. Subcommittees include representation from industry, government, universities, and the TAFE system and operate under formal terms of reference to ensure accountability, transparency, and alignment with agreed milestones.

The CoE operates as a distributed, networked entity rather than a single physical site, with staff located across multiple Queensland regions. Centralised reporting, audit, and risk management are supported through TAFE Queensland systems and a dedicated grant management platform.

Partnerships

Partnerships are central to the CoE's operating model. TAFE Queensland is the primary institutional partner, providing system level support across governance, legal, financial, product development, and technology functions.

Industry engagement is embedded through governance subcommittees and independent grant selection advisory committees, with strong links to HumanAbility, the Jobs and Skills Council for the care and support sectors. The CoE also collaborates with universities, including Australian Catholic University and the University of Southern Queensland, and maintains active relationships with other TAFE CoE nationally to support coordination, information sharing, and reduced duplication.

Grant recipients are treated as delivery partners rather than contractors, with formal requirements relating to collaboration, reporting, branding, and intellectual property. From the second funding round onward, partnerships with a TAFE institution are mandatory, strengthening system integration and reducing delivery risk.

Delivery Models

The CoE does not operate as a high-volume training provider. Instead, it adopts an enabling and commissioning model designed to stimulate innovation, applied research, and workforce capability uplift across the broader system. Delivery is primarily achieved through competitive grant rounds aligned to identified workforce priorities.

Grant rounds are conducted biannually and supported by independent selection advisory committees comprising industry and academic representatives. Funded projects are subject to strict eligibility, governance, and reporting requirements, with staged payments tied to milestones. This approach supports quality assurance, risk management, and value for money.

Delivery approaches are flexible and include workplace-based learning, digital and blended delivery, community embedded models, and targeted regional and remote strategies. A pilot Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management demonstrates this approach, combining workplace-based delivery, limited residential intensives, and mentoring support to enable learners to remain in community.

Areas of Specialisation

The CoE focuses on four priority sectors: aged care, disability, mental health, and nursing. Applied research and funded projects must align to one or more of five critical skill areas identified through environmental scanning and workforce analysis: leadership and management, digital literacy, care worker wellbeing, work readiness, and mentoring.

A strong cross cutting priority is improving access and outcomes for First Nations learners and for regional, rural, and remote communities. This includes culturally safe training frameworks, targeted engagement strategies, and tailored delivery models. Intellectual property generated through funded projects is retained by the CoE to enable national dissemination across the TAFE network, reinforcing its role as a system level asset.

Melbourne Polytechnic – Future of Housing Construction Centre of Excellence, Victoria



Figure 11: Future of Housing Construction Centre of Excellence, Melbourne Polytechnic (header image)
Source: Melbourne Polytechnic (supplied image).

Governance Arrangements

Melbourne Polytechnic's Future of Housing Construction Centre of Excellence, based at the Heidelberg campus, provides innovative training to enhance the technical and digital skills of tradespeople in modern construction methods. The Centre will focus on affordable, environmentally sustainable techniques to address national housing needs and is supported by AU\$25 million from the Commonwealth under the National Skills Agreement. The below content was gathered at an interview conducted on 21 April 2026.

The Future of Housing Construction Centre of Excellence (CoE) operates within Melbourne Polytechnic as a distinct project under the National Skills Agreement, reflecting dual Commonwealth–State accountability. Governance is provided through an internal Centre of Excellence Steering Committee comprising senior executives responsible for education design, industry engagement, infrastructure, and financial oversight. Engagement with the Victorian Government is structured through quarterly project control group meetings, supporting accountability while enabling timely decision making. The CoE is hosted on behalf of the National TAFE Network, reinforcing its role as a system level asset with a mandate extending beyond Victoria.

Partnerships

Industry partnership is central to the CoE's operating model. Its primary industry partner is prefabAUS, the peak body for prefabricated building and Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), with collaboration formalised through service agreements and co-location at the Heidelberg campus. An Industry Advisory Panel, co-chaired by the CoE and industry, provides strategic guidance and ensures curriculum responsiveness. Partnerships extend to workforce and equity organisations, including Trades Women Australia, supporting increased participation of women and underrepresented groups by positioning MMC as advanced manufacturing rather than traditional construction.

Delivery Models

The CoE's delivery model is agile and industry led, enabling rapid response to emerging workforce needs. Delivery has focused on staged implementation through a Certificate III in Prefabricated Construction and targeted micro credentials, rather than early commitment to large qualifications. Co delivery with industry experts supports credibility and educator capability development, while flexibility is retained to adapt offerings as industry demand evolves.

Areas of Specialisation

The CoE specialises in modern methods of construction (MMC), with a focus on prefabrication, automation, digital integration, and sustainable construction practices. Applied research is an emerging area, with partnerships progressing to support industry driven research aligned to vocational outcomes and National Skills Agreement objectives.

Source: *Semi-structured interviews with Melbourne Polytechnic Future of Housing Construction Centre of Excellence leadership and industry partners, April 2026.*

4. Analysis, Key Lessons and System level Insights

The analysis of Australian TAFE CoE must be understood within the broader context of Australia's VET system and the reform objectives of the NSA. As outlined earlier in this report, Australia's VET system operates within a federated governance model in which responsibility is shared between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. The NSA establishes a shared stewardship framework intended to reduce fragmentation, strengthen national coordination, and position TAFE as a central pillar of a responsive, high quality tertiary system.

Within this context, the TAFE CoE initiative represents a deliberate system shaping intervention rather than a traditional program delivery mechanism. Evidence from the case studies demonstrates that CoE are not operating as high volume training providers; instead, they function as system level assets, designed to coordinate activity, uplift capability, and accelerate reform in priority industries identified under the NSA. This system enabling role is evident across diverse sectors, including clean energy, construction, and health and care, where CoEs focus on commissioning, coordination, and capability uplift rather than direct delivery.

A consistent finding across the CoE examined is the successful integration of state led delivery with national impact. Governance arrangements reflect the dual accountability of Commonwealth and state funding while allowing CoE sufficient operational flexibility to respond to industry needs. Strong internal governance structures, complemented by external advisory and steering mechanisms, support accountability, audit assurance, and risk management while enabling innovation. This balance is critical in fast moving sectors and aligns directly with the National Skills Agreement's emphasis on collaboration, planning, and evidence-based reform rather than prescriptive, centrally controlled delivery.

Industry engagement emerges as a core design principle of the CoE model and a key departure from earlier VET initiatives. Across the case studies, industry is embedded structurally through governance boards, advisory committees, co design of training products, and co delivery or commissioning arrangements. In the health and care context, this includes the use of independent selection advisory committees and formal grant partnerships to align applied research and training innovation with workforce priorities. Positioning industry as a partner rather than an advisor has directly supported relevance, credibility, and speed to market.

Delivery models adopted by the CoE reinforce these system level objectives. Rather than relying on uniform delivery approaches, CoEs employ agile, modular, and enabling models, including micro credentials, phased qualifications, applied research grants, and workplace-based pilots. The Health Care and Support CoE demonstrates how commissioning and grant based models can be used to stimulate innovation, manage risk, and drive workforce capability uplift across the system while maintaining strong governance and value for money.

At a system level, a key lesson is that national coordination must be intentionally enabled through both design and funding mechanisms. While early progress relied on goodwill and informal collaboration, the later establishment of the National TAFE Network highlights the importance of embedding coordination structures early to support sharing of training products, applied research outputs, and intellectual property. The retention and national dissemination of intellectual property generated through CoE reinforces their role as system wide assets rather than institution specific initiatives.

Timeframes and funding horizons also shape outcomes. CoEs with longer establishment periods demonstrate greater capacity to embed applied research, workforce transition pathways, and equity focused delivery models, particularly for First Nations learners and regional, rural, and remote communities. Compressed delivery timeframes constrain the depth of reform achievable,

highlighting the importance of longer-term planning and investment horizons consistent with the five-year reform cycle of the NSA.

Overall, the CoE initiative illustrates how a nationally consistent, co funded, and networked model can move Australia's VET system beyond fragmented state-based delivery toward a coordinated, industry responsive approach. Across sectors, Centres are functioning as catalysts for collaboration, innovation, and capability uplift, reinforcing TAFE's role at the centre of a future focused tertiary system.

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Appendix A: Brief of Bilateral Implementation Plan made between the Commonwealth of Australia and New South Wales under the 2024–2028 National Skills Agreement (the NSA) for TAFE NSW Manufacturing Centres of Excellence Mode

The NSW Manufacturing TAFE Centres of Excellence (CoE) Implementation Plan puts the National Skills Agreement (2024–2028) into action, detailing how New South Wales will establish a nationally important Manufacturing Centre of Excellence. This centre will be delivered through three regionally focused sites: Hunter (Net Zero Manufacturing), Illawarra (Heavy Industry Manufacturing), and Western Sydney (Advanced Manufacturing). The approach aims to shape the system in ways that support key national priorities, such as moving toward net zero emissions, strengthening sovereign manufacturing abilities, advancing digital transformation, and improving gender equity in trades.

Instead of operating as an isolated training provider, the Plan defines the Manufacturing CoE as a connected, supportive model with the goal of boosting capability throughout the NSW TAFE system. It is also intended to contribute to nationwide coordination through the developing National TAFE Network.

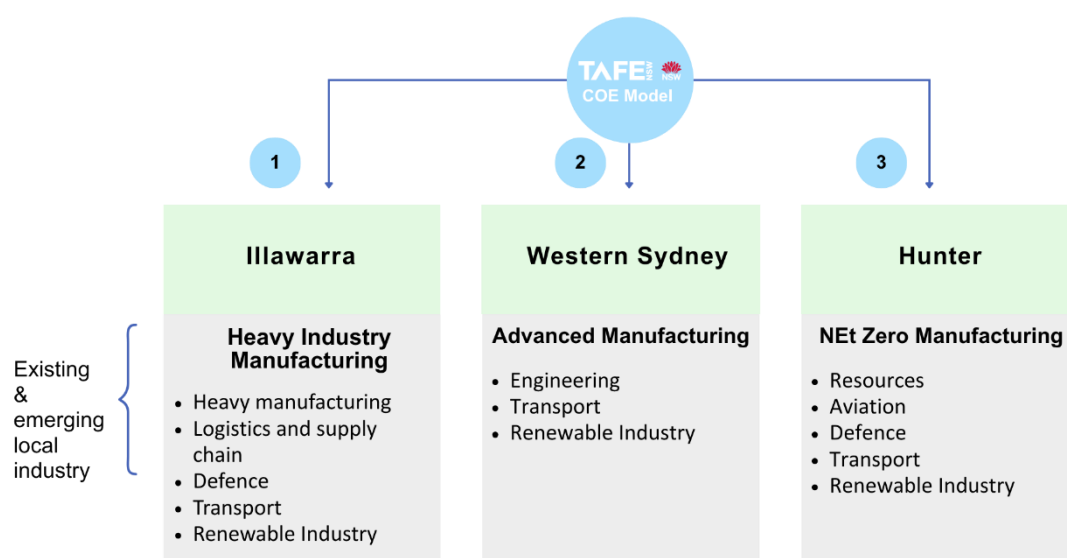


Figure A1. NSW Manufacturing TAFE CoE model

Source: Commonwealth of Australia and New South Wales Government 2024, NSW – Manufacturing TAFE CoE – Implementation Plan, viewed 30 April 2026,

Nationally Aligned, Regionally Specialised Model

TAFE NSW uses a hub-and-spoke model, letting each Centre of Excellence focus on the specific needs of its region but still work within a common educational and governance framework. This approach keeps qualifications and teaching methods consistent across the country, while also being flexible enough to meet local workforce demands.

- Hunter - Net Zero Manufacturing: Focused on renewable manufacturing, decarbonisation of heavy industry, and workforce transition from coal-based industries, aligned with the Hunter–Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone and offshore wind development.

- Illawarra - Heavy Industry Manufacturing: Focused on steel, defence, transport, and advanced manufacturing, responding to automation, digitalisation, and large-scale infrastructure and defence projects.
- Western Sydney - Advanced Manufacturing: Focused on Industry 4.0, food and beverage manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and advanced production systems, leveraging Western Sydney's scale, diversity, and proximity to the Aerotropolis.

The Manufacturing CoE is jointly funded, with AU\$78.6 million Commonwealth funding matched by NSW, totalling approximately AU\$157 million over the life of the initiative. Delivery is phased from establishment through to full operation, with milestones extending to December 2028.

Forecast impacts include:

- Thousands of learners engaged annually through Higher Apprenticeships, microcredentials and microskills
- Strengthened manufacturing workforce pipelines aligned to net zero, defence, transport and advanced manufacturing
- National scalability through sharing of curriculum, digital content, and delivery models with other TAFEs and CoEs

Higher Apprenticeships and Microcredentials

TAFE NSW's CoE model uses an integrated approach to connect VET and higher education. Microcredentials are industry-endorsed, quality-assured, and can evolve into nationally accredited Units of Competency as skills develop and gain wider acceptance.

Key elements include:

- Higher Apprenticeships at Associate Degree (AQF 6) level, combining a Certificate III trade qualification with degree level study and on-the-job training.
- Two flagship Higher Apprenticeships:
 - Associate Degree in Manufacturing and Applied Digital Technologies
 - Associate Degree in Electrotechnology and Renewable Technologies
- Flexible exit points, allowing learners to complete the trade qualification while retaining pathways into higher level learning.
- Short courses, microcredentials and microskills, designed to support workforce upskilling across the worker lifecycle, respond rapidly to emerging technologies, and support transition to net zero.

Strong Industry Partnership and Co-Design

Industry is embedded as a core partner rather than an advisor. The implementation plan documents extensive engagement with employers, industry bodies, unions, Jobs and Skills Councils, and universities across all three regions.

Industry contributions include:

- Co-design and review of curriculum
- Hosting Higher Apprenticeship pilots
- Access to specialist equipment and facilities
- Guest lecturers and educator capability uplift

- Applied research partnerships focused on manufacturing productivity and education delivery

This approach is intended to ensure relevance, credibility, and speed-to-market, particularly in fast changing manufacturing and clean energy sectors.

Applied Research and System Enablement

The Manufacturing CoE is positioned as a system level asset, with applied research used to:

- Improve education delivery models
- Identify and address barriers to participation and completion
- Inform equity strategies and workforce transition pathways
- Support continuous improvement and national dissemination of best practice

Equity, Workforce Participation and Gender Equality

Equity is a cross-cutting priority, with a particular emphasis on:

- Increasing participation and completion for women in manufacturing trades
- Improving access and outcomes for First Nations learners
- Supporting culturally and linguistically diverse communities and regional learners

A formal Gender Impact Assessment underpins targeted interventions across the learner lifecycle, including outreach, wrap around supports, culturally safe delivery, and employer engagement. All Higher Apprenticeships and many microcredentials are delivered fee free, reducing financial barriers to participation.

Governance, Quality and Regulation

The implementation plan reflects strong attention to governance and quality assurance, including:

- Dual accountability to Commonwealth and NSW Governments
- Alignment with National Skills Agreement milestones and reporting requirements
- Engagement with both ASQA and TEQSA, reflecting the dual VET and higher education nature of the model
- Progress toward self-accrediting authority for TAFE NSW to support agility and innovation in qualification development

This governance framework balances accountability with flexibility, enabling innovation while maintaining system integrity.

The NSW Manufacturing TAFE CoE Implementation Plan demonstrates how a nationally aligned, regionally responsive CoE model can function as a catalyst for workforce transition, system reform, and productivity uplift. Its emphasis on higher apprenticeships, microcredentials, industry co-design, and applied research exemplifies the intended role of TAFE CoE as system shaping, enabling institutions rather than traditional training providers.

Appendix B: Vocational Degree - AQF 7

The Vocational Degree is a recent addition to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), formally endorsed by Skills and Education Ministers. It was developed in response to workforce challenges identified in *Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities* and addresses the need for enhanced advanced skills training at AQF Level 7 within the VET sector (DEWR, 2025).

The learning outcomes of the Vocational Degree are aligned with those of a Bachelor's Degree, while placing a stronger emphasis on advanced skill development and the practical application of specialised technical knowledge. This qualification is intended to leverage the strengths and organisational expertise of the VET sector in delivering skills-based, industry-focused tertiary education.

The introduction of the Vocational Degree supports the objectives of TAFE CoE, particularly their role in innovating the delivery of tertiary education, including the development and delivery of higher apprenticeships in areas of high skills need (Commonwealth of Australia 2023, p. 21). Designed to accommodate multiple modes of delivery, including apprenticeships, the Vocational Degree integrates structured industry experience to equip learners with contemporary, agile skill sets aligned to evolving workforce demand. (DEWR, 2025).

A nationally accredited AQF Level 7 Vocational Degree in Reliability Engineering is being developed by the Mining and Automotive Skills Alliance (AUSMASA), a Jobs and Skills Council funded by the DEWR. The qualification is structured as a three-year, competency-based program with 20 core units, plus completion of five electives. Electives are drawn from specialised areas such as energy systems and sustainability, digital and data-driven reliability, materials testing and innovation, industry collaboration, and commercial aspects of engineering operations.

A staged year progression will include:

1. Foundation Year: theoretical and practical grounding in science, engineering principles, and basic reliability concepts.
2. Development Year: advanced technical skill clusters and independent application in troubleshooting and multidisciplinary reliability engineering.
3. Practicing Year: integration of knowledge in complex, real-world problem solving and contextual specialisation.

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is vital, using a shared-responsibility model with AUSMASA, employers, providers, and learners. WIL features supervised, real tasks with industry data, structured plans, and feedback to build communication, reflection, and practical skills.

The project is scheduled for completion by July 2027, at which point the qualification will advance to pilot delivery and national rollout. (AUSMASA, 2026)

Appendix C: Interview Participants

The following individuals participated in semi structured interviews conducted as part of this study.

Angela Chen

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