Examining Earn While You Learn Models

Success Rates and Challenges in the Global Contexts

Background Paper

Acknowledgement of Country

HumanAbility acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders – past and present, and recognise their enduring connection to their culture, lands, seas, waters and communities.

List of Acronyms Used

Acronym	
AASN	Apprentice Network Providers
ACCOs	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations
AIN	Assistant in Nursing
AIS	Australian Institute of Sport
ANPs	Apprentice Network Providers
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drugs
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
CEC	Children's Education and Care
CPP	Commonwealth Prac Payment
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DSEAV	Disability Services Enterprise Agreement Victoria
Dual VET	Dual Vocational Education and Training
DSS	Department of Social Services
EARC	East Arnhem Regional Council
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EN	Enrolled Nurse
EU	European Union
EWYL	Earn While You Learn
FaFT	Families as First Teachers
GTOs	Group Training Organisations
GYO	Grow-Your-Own
HSC	Higher School Certificate
IBL	Industry-Based Learning
JSC	Jobs and Skills Council
NASWD	National Skills Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Quality Framework

NHS	National Health Service
NZQF	New Zealand Qualifications Framework
QLD	Queensland
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
RN	Registered Nurse
SBATs	School-Based Traineeships
STAs	State & Territory Training Authorities
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UK	United Kingdom
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

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Executive Summary

The care and support sectors face sustained workforce shortages due to rising demand and high turnover, whilst the supply of skilled graduates is impacted by low completion rates in key qualifications. Alternative pathways and employment models need to be explored to enable the sector to attract the workforce it needs, both now and in the future. Earn While You Learn (EWYL) models have the potential to attract more workers into the sector by integrating formal education with pay and practical industry experience to lift completions. EWYL models allow students to earn income while completing their qualifications, ensuring better outcomes. While these models show promise and are used in other industries, they have varying levels of uptake across HumanAbility sectors—Aged Care and Disability Services, Health, Children's Education and Care (CEC), Human (Community) Services, and Sport and Recreation.

This background paper is the first stage of HumanAbility's Earn While You Learn (EWYL) Research Project. Using a systematic approach to the literature, it details the:

1. Types of EWYL models in use in each HumanAbility sector, as well as the hospitality, retail, business and construction industries and their levels of uptake.

2. Success rates of different models, and challenges associated with lifting quality apprenticeships, traineeships, cadetships, paid placements, and grow-your-own (GYO) initiatives across all HumanAbility sectors.

3. Context of service delivery in each sector and impacts on the quantity of EWYL models.

Key Findings:

- EWYL models vary across sectors and jurisdictions, but all share a common goal: Integrating work and learning to develop skills and improve employment outcomes.

- There is increasing use of traineeships in ECEC and care sectors, with emerging cadetship and co-op models in Health and Sport and Recreation.

- Internationally, models such as degree apprenticeships (United Kingdom), co-ops (Canada), and dual VET systems (European Union) offer additional insights.

- Persistent challenges to the quality of EWYL models affect the quantity of EWYL opportunities, including structural funding issues.

- There is room to improve the quality of EWYL models, including addressing low wages, high non-completion rates, and the provision of wrap-around support for learners.

Gaps and Opportunities:

There is a need for more precise definitions and consistent terminology when referring to EWYL models, and data that spans all EWYL models.

There is limited evidence on the long-term outcomes and progression pathways for those undertaking EWYL models.

Funding solutions that make EWYL models viable for each context of service delivery remain under-researched. Investment in employer support, mentoring, and the right regulatory settings is critical.

Next Steps:

The findings noted above will guide the next three phases of the research, which will consider using EWYL models for both entry-level and existing workforce upskilling:

Phase 2: Identify promising practices and features of identified EWYL models implemented or evaluated in Australia in recent years across all HumanAbility sectors and hospitality, retail, business, and construction sectors/occupations that could be applied more broadly.

Phase 3: Identify and examine the barriers and facilitators affecting the uptake and completion of current EWYL models (learners' perspectives), as well as their implementation (employers' perspectives), across all HumanAbility sectors.

Phase 4: Co-develop models and resources (such as decision-making trees and journey maps) to help services, systems, employers and training providers assess their suitability and readiness for implementation.

Table 1: EWYL models in use across HumanAbility sectors

Sector	Most common EWYL model	Notes
Aged Care, Disability Services	Traineeships. Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing and/or Disability) while in employment, around 1 - 2 years.[1]	On completion, graduates have strong prospects of ongoing employment (often with the same employer).[2] The availability of traineeships remains limited, posing challenges to meeting the growing demand for skilled workers.
Health	A mix, with a preference for traineeships. Traineeships support roles, including Assistant in Nursing (AIN), hospital	Cadetships are less common in this sector, although some niche programs exist, particularly within hospitals and specialist health organisations. Means-tested

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[1] Curran, S. (2023, November 20). *Skilled CareAged Care Traineeship FAQs: Your questions asked.* https://skilledcare.edu.au/aged-care-traineeship-faqs/#:~:text=The%20qualification%20comprises%2013%20modules%20and%20can%20be,months%20with%20part-time%20study%20%2815%20hours%20per%20week%29. (accessed June 10, 2025)

[2] Aspire to Succeed. (2025). *Rising demand for aged care workers in Australia.* https://aspiretosucceed.com.au/demand-for-aged-care-workers-in-australia/ (accessed June 10, 2025)

	orderly/ward assistant, patient services assistant, and food services assistant roles, typically include a minimum of 100 days in paid employment and training.[3]	practicum payments are also available for VET and higher education students in nursing and midwifery.
Children's Education and Care (CEC)	Traineeships and school-based traineeships. School-based traineeships being a notable development, creating a pathway from high school straight into the CEC sector.	ECEC has seen a notable rise in traineeships in response to growing workforce demand, relative to other sectors. Government policies have been effective in encouraging increased use of traineeships.
Human Services (Mental Health, Community Services, AOD)	Traineeships. Most traineeships result in a Certificate III or IV in Community Services, and roles such as case worker, youth worker or family support officer.[4] GYO Initiatives. For example, some Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) run local training programs leading to formal qualifications First Nations social services staff.[5]	Government funding (state skills plans) often subsidises the training cost (some states fully fund community services diplomas under "Free TAFE" or similar initiatives).[6] Means-tested practicum payments are also available for higher education students in social work.
Sport and Recreation	Traineeships and school-based traineeships, with a small number of internships. Particularly at the Certificate II-IV levels, most commonly with the Certificate III or IV in Sport and Recreation. School-based traineeships are effective, supporting students towards careers in lifeguarding, aquatics and coaching.[7]	A very limited number of qualifications can technically be delivered as apprenticeships. Paid placements in sports are generally limited to internships, such as sports management internships, which may be unpaid or supported by stipends. Cadetships are uncommon outside of special programs.

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[3] NSW Government. (2024). *Health Services (Health Services Assistance) – Certificate III.* https://education.nsw.gov.au/schooling/students/career-and-study-pathways/school-based-apprenticeships-and-traineeships/traineeships/certificate-iii-health-services-health-services-assistance (accessed June 10, 2025)

[4] Ibid.

[5] AbSec Learning and Development Centre (LDC). (n.d.). *Leadership through learning.* https://absec.org.au/absec-learning-and-development-centre/ (accessed June 12, 2025)

[6] NSW Government Education. (n.d.). *Health care and social assistance.* https://skills.education.nsw.gov.au/nsw-fee-free/health-care-social-assistance (accessed June 12, 2025)

[7] Australian Government. (2022). *SIS30122 Certificate III in Sport, Aquatics and Recreation, Release 1.* Training.gov.au. https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/SIS30122/qualdetails (accessed June 12, 2025)

Background and context

The care and support sector experiences significant workforce shortages, largely attributed to an aging population, increased demand for services, and substantial turnover rates. The HumanAbility Workforce Plan 2025 notes that "sectors in HumanAbility's scope – Aged Care and Disability Services, Health, Children's Education and Care (CEC), Human (Community) Services, and Sport and Recreation – together represent the largest employing industry in the country. As of November 2024, a total of 3.22 million people worked in these sectors – almost one in five workers."[8] According to a report by the National Skills Commission, over recent years, "growth in the care and support workforce has been 3 times faster than total employment across the Australian economy".[9] The rapid growth of the care and support sector, outpacing other sectors, has prompted calls for the development and testing of strategies to attract, retain, and train individuals with the aim of identifying effective methods for building a sustainable workforce for the future care and support economy.[10]

Interest in EWYL models has reignited in response to these increasing workforce pressures. Feedback in HumanAbility's 2024 Workforce Plan demonstrated robust support from industry unions, training providers, and government for EWYL models within the care and support sector, which offer students valuable experience while allowing them to earn an income.[11] While less common than in blue-collar sectors, EWYL models offer the potential to reduce 'placement poverty'[12,13] in the care and support economy, aligning paid training with future career pathways, lifting completion rates and workforce attraction. The Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), for example, has described EWYL models as an "untapped potential" for broadening and deepening the skills pipeline necessary to sustain and grow the workforce.[14]

EWYL models, including apprenticeships and traineeships, have been crucial to Australia's skills development system, providing effective employment-based training that supports the growth of skills and knowledge. Apprenticeships have primarily been linked to trade professions, while traineeships

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[8] HumanAbilty. (in press). *2025 Workforce Plan.*

[9] National Skills Commission. (2021). *Care workforce labour market study: Report summary.* https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-12/Care%20Workforce%20Labour%20Market%20Study%20-%20Report%20Summary.pdf (accessed June 20, 2025)

[10] NDIS Review. (2023). *Working together to deliver the NDIS: Independent Review in the National Disability Insurance Scheme Final Report.* https://www.ndisreview.gov.au/sites/default/files/resource/download/NDIS-Review-Supporting-Analysis.pdf (accessed June 25, 2025)

[11] HumanAbility. (2024). *Workforce Plan 2024.* https://humanability.com.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/WFP/Workforce%20Plan%202024.pdf (accessed March 02, 2025)

[12] 'Placement poverty' describes the financial strain students face when fulfilling compulsory professional placement requirements.

[13] Lambert, K., Austin, K., Charlton, K., Heins, R., Kennedy, M., Kent, K., Lutze, J., Nicholls, N., O'Flynn, G., Probst, Y., Walton, K., & McMahon, A. (2025). *Placement poverty has major implications for the future health and education workforce: A cross-sectional survey.* Australian Health Review, 49, Article AH24233. https://doi.org/10.1071/AH24233 https://www.publish.csiro.au/AH/AH24233 (accessed March 02, 2025)

[14] Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2024). *Digital and Tech Skills Working Group Final report.* https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/resources/digital-and-tech-skills-compact-and-working-group-final-report (accessed March 02, 2025)

include service-related roles, providing more career paths beyond traditional apprenticeships.[15] Apprenticeships and traineeships are commonly categorised as trade and non-trade, and in 2020, represented 17% of all students enrolled in Vocational Education and Training (VET).[16]

Alongside growing interest in EWYL models, concerns have also emerged about the limitations of traditional, pre-service VET delivery, especially across HumanAbility's sectors. These concerns include a lack of high-quality practical placement opportunities and the growing issue of 'placement poverty' faced by students as they try to balance study with paid work to cover basic costs of living. Stakeholder feedback for the 2024 HumanAbility Workforce Plan highlights the scarcity of quality practical work placements, particularly in regional and remote areas.[17] The limited availability of placements, combined with 'placement poverty' experienced by students, hampers essential on-the-job experience for workforce readiness. As a result, HumanAbility's 2024 Workforce Plan prioritises "improving the quality of, and access to, contemporary training and qualifications".[18] This commitment reflects our dedication to identifying systemic challenges and exploring evidence-informed approaches to enhance training accessibility and outcomes. However, in a sector that is already critically undervalued and underpaid, navigating these risks is crucial to avoid the potential reinforcement or exacerbation of low-paid, undervalued work through EWYL models. Models such as EWYL represent one such area for further research, testing sector consultation to inform strategies for attracting and retaining students in the care and support sector.[19]

This background paper serves as a preliminary assessment of a four-phase research project. The review examines various EWYL models, including apprenticeships, traineeships, cadetships, paid placements and grow-your-own (GYO) initiatives and assesses their success rates and challenges.

The findings from this phase will inform the subsequent research phases, which will consider EWYL models for both entry-level and existing workforce upskilling, thus supporting career development and pathways.

Research Phases	
Phase 2	Identify promising practices and features of identified EWYL models implemented or evaluated in Australia in recent years across all HumanAbility sectors and hospitality, retail, business, and construction sectors/occupations that could be applied more broadly.
Phase 3	Identify and examine the barriers and facilitators affecting the uptake and completion of current EWYL models (learners' perspectives), as well as their implementation (employers' perspectives), all HumanAbility sectors.

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[15] Government of Western Australia, Department of Training and Workforce Development. (2021). *Traineeships — A quick guide for employers*. https://www.jobsandskills.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/uploads/traineeship-page/jswa-traineeship-quickguide-v2-july2022pdf.pdf (accessed March 02, 2025)

[16] Stanwick, J., Ackehurst, M., & Frazer, K. (2021). *Issues in apprenticeships and traineeships – a research synthesis. Research summary.* National Centre for Vocational Education Research. ISBN 978-1-925717-82-2. https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0051/9669669/Issues-in-apprenticeships-and-traineeships-a-research-synthesis.pdf (accessed March 02, 2025)

[17] HumanAbility. (2024). *Workforce Plan 2024.* https://humanability.com.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/WFP/Workforce%20Plan%202024.pdf (accessed March 02, 2025)

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

| Phase 4 | Co-develop models and resources (such as decision-making trees and journey maps) to help services, systems, employers and training providers assess their suitability and readiness for implementation. |

1.1 Background Paper purpose and aim

This background paper forms part of the HumanAbility EWYL Research Project. HumanAbility is the Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) for Aged Care and Disability Services, Children's Education and Care, Health, Human (Community) Services, and Sport and Recreation.

It is based on a systematic approach to the literature, which explores the various forms of EWYL models, including apprenticeships, traineeships, cadetships, paid placements, and grow-your-own (GYO) initiatives across all HumanAbility sectors, both in the Australian and international contexts, and assesses the success rates and challenges associated with these models.

The literature review addresses the following questions:

- What EWYL models currently exist in Australia and internationally?
- How are existing EWYL models under their various names and forms (apprenticeships, traineeships and paid placements) structured, and how do they differ?
- What are the key differences in EWYL models across HumanAbility sectors, and what are the reported success rates and challenges of these existing models?
- What gaps exist in current EWYL models that need to be addressed to improve accessibility and outcomes?

This literature review summarises information gathered through: a desktop review of research literature, EWYL pilots, evaluation reports, academic research, government and peak bodies reports, sector actors and case studies.

Chapter 1: What are Earn While You Learn (EWYL) Models?

This chapter defines the scope of EWYL, examines its types in the Australian context, introduces a framework for categorising different models, and situates Australia within a global perspective by exploring approaches in the UK, New Zealand, Canada and the EU.

Definition and scope

"Earn While You Learn", which may include 'Work Integrated Learning (WIL)'[20,21], Work-based Learning, or Wage-based Learning, is a broad-based term that intends to capture a wide variety of educational strategies that integrate paid work with structured learning experiences.[22]

A sound analysis of EWYL models requires a comprehensive definition and framework,[23] which also distinguishes them from other educational frameworks.[24] However, researchers have highlighted that these models have generally lacked a clear definition, hindering their recognition as a valid educational framework and uptake.[25]

EWYL encompasses various models, including apprenticeships, traineeships, cadetships, paid internships, and GYO initiatives. Some models, such as cadetships, offer higher wages than traineeships. The starting salary upon completion is also significantly higher, and there are greater career and pay progression opportunities available. These differences reflect the varying qualifications, responsibilities, and industry standards. Ultimately, the core principle of EWYL models lies in the simultaneous engagement in both employment and education. This integration enables learners to apply theoretical concepts in real-time, enriching their educational experience and enhancing their employability.[26]

Rooted in experiential learning theory, EWYL models emphasise that knowledge is cultivated through hands-on experiences and thoughtful reflection.[27] By integrating employment with training and embedding learning in authentic work environments, these models help address skills gaps and

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[20] Paid placements including scholarships, summer vacation programs, and internships offered by major organisations, can be considered valid forms of Work Integrated Learning (WIL).

[21] Edith Cowan University. (n.d.). *WIL for students.* https://www.ecu.edu.au/schools/science/employability/work-integrated-learning/students (accessed May 15, 2025)

[22] Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. (2016). *A practical guide for work-integrated learning: Effective practices to enhance the educational quality of structured work experiences offered through colleges and universities.* https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/CCLT/pdfs/heqco-practical-guide-wil.pdf (accessed May 15, 2025)

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Gardner, P. D., & Bartkus, K. R. (2015.). *An analysis of U.S. learn-and-earn programs.* Collegiate Employment and Research Institute, Michigan State University; The Research Group, Utah State University. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Philip-Gardner/publication/266863676_An_Analysis_of_US_Learn-and-Earn_Programs/links/54b7b1d10cf2e68eb2803ef0/An-Analysis-of-US-Learn-and-Earn-Programs.pdf (accessed May 15, 2025)

[26] Sunnemark, L., Sunnemark, F., Dahlquist, K., Gahnström, E., Assmo, P., & Piper, L. (2023). *Bridging theory and practice through work-integrated learning (WIL): Critical perspectives on the conceptualisations of WIL at a university in Sweden.* Journal of Education and Work, 36(5), 403-420. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17508487.2023.2294462#d1e242 (accessed May 15, 2025)

[27] Ibid.

shortages while providing students with accessible educational pathways that lead to formal qualifications and credentials.[28]

The literature emphasises that the most effective initiatives often combine career-focused academic curricula with hands-on work experience, along with financial support for students.[29]

This comprehensive strategy encompasses both the educational element, through traditional learning, and the financial aspect, through government funding or subsidies.[30] Financial support is crucial for students facing economic challenges, aiding them to continuing their studies. Research shows that EWYL initiatives are essential in today's competitive job market, particularly for priority groups such as those from low-income backgrounds or those who require essential skill development.[31]

Types of EWYL Models: Australian Context

EWYL models are recognised as a priority and strategic focus for education providers in Australia,[32] and there is increasing interest in governments supporting their use,[33] yet their interpretation varies significantly across institutions, particularly between Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education.[34] Broadly, these models combine paid work with formal training, often leading to nationally recognised qualifications. In addition to the previously mentioned forms, EWYL models in Australia also include paid placements, co-op programs, paid practicums, or paid versions of university work-integrated learning (WIL).

In its final report from the Digital and Tech Skills Working Group, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) defines EWYL models as those that integrate formal education with hands-on work experiences, allowing learners to develop job-ready skills while earning an income.[35] This definition encompasses a range of authentic, industry-focused learning experiences. In contrast, the dual sector provider RMIT University has adopted a unique "Earn and Learn" model, a variation of the EWYL model with a different definition. This innovative model distinguishes itself from traditional training methods and internship placements by enabling students to fully immerse themselves in their

[28] Ibid.

[29] Gardner, P. D., & Bartkus, K. R. (n.d.). *An analysis of U.S. learn-and-earn programs.* Collegiate Employment and Research Institute, Michigan State University; The Research Group™, Utah State University. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Philip-Gardner/publication/266863676_An_Analysis_of_US_Learn-and-Earn_Programs/links/54b7b1d10cf2e68eb2803ef0/An-Analysis-of-US-Learn-and-Earn-Programs.pdf (accessed May 15, 2025)

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Kay, J., Ferns, S., Russell, L., Smith, J., & Winchester-Seeto, T. (2019). *The emerging future: Innovative models of work-integrated learning.* International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 20(4), 401-413. https://www.ijwil.org/files/IJWIL_20_4_401_413.pdf (accessed May 25, 2025)

[33] Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2024). *Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System Final Report: Skills for tomorrow: Shaping the future of Australian apprenticeships.* https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/16795/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report/39422/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report/pdf (accessed June 24, 2025)

[34] Campbell, M., Russell, L., McAllister, L., Smith, L., Tunny, R., Thomson, K., & Barrett, M. (Year). *A framework to support assurance of institution-wide quality in work integrated learning: Final Report.* Queensland University of Technology; RMIT University; The University of Sydney. https://research.qut.edu.au/wilquality/wp-content/uploads/sites/261/2019/12/Final-Report.pdf (accessed May 25, 2025)

[35]Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2024). *Digital and Tech Skills Working Group Final report.* https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/resources/digital-and-tech-skills-compact-and-working-group-final-report (accessed March 02, 2025)

work environments. As part of their full-time job responsibilities, students engage in training, receive a salary, benefit from mentoring by industry professionals, and tackle real-world challenges.[36]

These models not only vary in definition but also in structure. In some cases, participants are employed and spend most of their time in real-world work environments, with the training integrated into their job roles. In others, students enrolled in Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), including Technical and Further Education (TAFEs), and private providers, undertake structured work experiences or projects as part of their broader coursework. Training may occur on the job, online, or in classrooms, offering a flexible mix of delivery methods tailored to the needs of different learners and employers.

EWYL models are typically integrated into educational programs aligned to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which includes levels 1-10. These models also recognise the skills and competencies acquired through practical engagement.[37]

Table 2: Types of EWYL models in Australia, and their attributes

Model	Entry Requirements	Duration	Qualification	Funding /Support	Employment/ Qualification Outcome
Apprenticeship	Usually, minimum age of 16 years;[38] may require trade prerequisites (e.g. school certificate not essential)	3–4 years (full-time)	Trade or para-professional certificate/ diploma	Employer pays wages; government subsidies/ incentives often apply; training subsidised through Commonwealth/State funding	Completion often yields a trade qualification but can also lead to a non-trade qualification; on completion an apprentice may or may not continue to be employed by the company
Traineeship	Minimum age of 15 years;[39] no formal	6 months – 2 years	Vocational Certificate	Employer wages plus state/federal	Completion leads to entry-level qualification;

[36] RMIT University. (2025). *What is RMIT's new 'Earn and Learn' model?* March 2025. https://www.rmit.edu.au/news/all-news/2025/mar/earn-and-learn-explainer#:~:text=It%20is%20unlike%20traditional%20training%20models%20or%20work,learning%20from%20experts%20and%20dealing%20with%20real-world%20challenges (accessed May 25, 2025).

[37] Atkinson, G. (2016). *A framework to support work-based learning and work-integrated learning: Fostering engagement with employers.* National Centre for Vocational Education Research. https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/60281/Work-based-learning.pdf (accessed May 25, 2025).

[38] The general minimum age for starting an apprenticeship is 16 years old, however for certain apprenticeship programs, especially those fields like construction, automotive and engineering the age requirements may be 18 years old if the nature of the work involves certain health and safety risks.

[39] The minimum age is 15 years in all states/territories, though some allow earlier starts under special arrangements with school. Students as you as Year 10 can begin school-based traineeships, where part time is spent working while still enrolled in VET in Schools programs. After completing the equivalent of Year 10 young people can transition into full-time traineeships.

	education needed	(full- or part-time)	or Diploma (e.g. Cert II)	training subsidies (e.g. Smart & Skilled, Free TAFE)	often employed by same employer
School-Based Traineeships (SBATs)	Year 10-12, school and employer agreement	1–2 years alongside school	Partial Cert II/III	Paid part-time work, subsidised training	Can transition to complete traineeship, apprenticeship or employment
Cadetship	Often current university student or soon-to-be; selection by employer/ university	Up to 3–4 years (aligned with degree)	University degree or advanced diploma	Funded by employer (salary to cadet), may include scholarship; course fees sometimes employer-paid	Completion usually leads to guaranteed interview or job offer (especially in public/private sector)
Paid Placements[40]	Enrolled in required course; placement arranged by university/VET institution providing the course	Short-term (weeks to months, part of study requirements)	N/A (mandatory part of some Vocational Education and Training (VET) or university courses – set out in work placement hours)	Employer pays student (awarded wages) during placement; may be subsidised by scholarships	Student gains practicum experience without debt; may improve job prospects. Required for course completion.
Paid Practicums[41]	Enrolled in required program	60–100+ days across higher education degree	Mandatory for certain courses e.g. teaching, nursing	Commonwealth programs (e.g. Commonwealth Prac Payment); Wage	Required for professional registration and to obtain qualification associated with the course

[40] Differs from paid practicums in that they are often broader, structured work periods that may span weeks or months and often resembles regular employment within a training framework.

[41] Differs from paid placements in that they are often short-term, supervised work experiences embedded in academic programs where any payment is usually a modest stipend or reimbursement rather than wage.

				subsidies and payments; Grants and institutional support	
Grow Your Own (GYO) Initiatives	Varies – often seeks local community members and/or specific cohorts e.g. regional/ remote, Aboriginal/ Torres Strait Islander or CALD	Varies (project-based; often multi-year planning); employer or local area initiative	May include vocational/ diploma qualifications or on-the-job accreditation	Grants or partnerships funded by government or NGOs (e.g. workforce planning grants); sometimes self-funded or through donations and philanthropy	Builds local workforce capacity; many participants progress to local jobs or remain with the employer with which initial training was undertaken
Co-op Programs	University students with high academic results, employer interviews	3–5 years including work periods	Undergraduate degree	Paid placements, scholarship funding	Industry experience, graduate employment pathways
Internships	Final-year university student or recent graduate	4–24 weeks	No formal qualifications, may count toward credit	Often unpaid or stipended; via providers	Industry experience, potential job pathway
University Work-integrated learning (WIL)	Enrolled in university program	Varies (100-600 hrs. typical)	Degree credit (no standalone qualification)	University-administere, often unpaid however, can include paid placements including scholarships, summer vacation programs, and internships,	Enhanced employability, often leads to job offers

				offered by large organisation	
TAFE-Integrated Employment Programs	TAFE course enrolment in addition to employer partnership	3–12 months	Certificate or Diploma	Skills First/Job Trainer and employer support	Often job offers post-placement
Project-based Work-integrated learning	Final year or mid-program enrolment, academic approval	Varies (semester or intensive block)	Degree or VET credit	Institutional support, occasionally industry co-funding	Real-world experience, industry connections, portfolio building
Industry-Based Learning (IBL)	Selected via academic performance	6–12 months	Degree credit	Paid by host organisation	Strong employment links post-graduation

An EWYL Categorisation Framework

The literature and stakeholder experience have shown that these models differ significantly in terms of name, structure, purpose, and delivery; however, they all share a core objective of integrating paid or structured work experience with formal learning to enhance job readiness and credential attainment. To better understand the typology of EWYL models in Australia, a categorisation framework has been developed (see Table 3 below). This framework groups EWYL models into several overarching categories based on shared structural attributes, including the nature of the employment relationship, the level of integration between earning and learning, the role of industry partners, funding mechanisms, and the type of qualification outcomes.

Table 3: Earn While You Learn Models—Categorisation Framework

Formal Apprenticeship/Traineeship Models		
Apprenticeships	School-Based Traineeships (SBATS)	Traineeships
Cadetships	Grow Your Own (GYO) Initiatives	
VET and University Education Integrated WIL		
Paid Practicums	Internships	Project-Based WIL
Clinical Placements	Paid Placements	Industry-Based Learning (IBL)
Co-operative Programs	Higher Education WIL Programs	TAFE-Integrated Employment Programs

Types of EWYL Models: Global Context

United Kingdom (UK)

The apprenticeship system stands out as the most prevalent EWYL model in the UK, offering four tiers:[42]

- Intermediate Apprenticeships (Level 2),
- Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3),
- Higher Apprenticeships (Levels 4-5),
- Degree Apprenticeships (Levels 6-7).[43]

These programs combine paid employment with structured learning, enabling participants to earn nationally recognised qualifications while gaining practical experience in their chosen sectors.[44] Entry requirements vary by level, with higher-level apprenticeships generally requiring Advanced Level qualifications (A-levels), often taken by students in the final two years of secondary school (ages 16-18) or equivalent qualifications. The duration of these apprenticeships can range from 1-6 years, depending on the apprenticeship level and sector in question.[45]

Apprenticeship funding primarily comes from the Apprenticeship Levy, which mandates contributions from large employers towards training costs.[46] Additionally, government funding supports smaller businesses, ensuring broad participation across various sectors.[47] Apprenticeships are prevalent across various industries, including healthcare, engineering, and technology. For instance, the National Health Service (NHS) offers apprenticeships in nursing, paramedicine, and allied health roles, while adult social care providers implement care worker apprenticeships.[48] These programs contribute to high employment rates following completion.

Legally, apprentices are required to spend at least 20% of their time engaged in off-the-job learning.[49]

In addition to apprenticeships, the UK has introduced T Levels—two-year technical educational programs equivalent to three A levels. Aimed at students aged 16-19, T Levels blend classroom instruction with a substantial industry placement lasting at least 45 days.[50] This approach equips students with essential practical skills and sector-specific knowledge across fields such as construction, digital technology, and education. Upon completion, students receive a nationally recognised certificate, facilitating pathways into skilled employment, higher apprenticeships, or further academic study.[51]

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[42]Tiers typically refer to the four levels (or types) of apprenticeships, each aligned to a different education level on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RFQ). These tiers represent increasing complexity, responsibility, and qualification level, rather than income or funding bands.

[43] Laczik, A., & Emms, K. (2022). *Apprenticeship resilience: UK-England.* The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 72.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Evans, S., & Dromey, J. (2019). *Bridging the Gap: Next Steps for the Apprenticeship Levy.* Leicester: Learning and Work Institute.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Bernstein, A. (2021). *You're hired: healthcare apprenticeships in the UK.* British Journal of Healthcare Assistants.

[49] Wolter, S., & Joho, E. (2018). *Apprenticeship training in England: a cost-effective model for firms?*

[50] Straw, S., Sims, D., McCrone, T., & Bradley, E. (2019). *T Levels Research: How Are Providers Preparing for Delivery?* National Foundation for Educational Research. The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 2DQ, UK.

[51] Ibid.

New Zealand

New Zealand's EWYL landscape is characterised by a diverse combination of traditional apprenticeships, industry training, and integrated academic programs.[52] Modern apprenticeships focus on young individuals aged 16-21, blending paid employment with structured training that culminates in national qualifications.[53] While entry requirements can vary by trade, a minimum of NCEA Level 1 is generally necessary (Australian year 10 equivalent).[54] These programs typically span from 2-4 years, leading to Level 4 qualifications on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF).[55] The government supports these initiatives through funding for employers and training organisations to grow employment opportunities, especially in sectors such as construction, engineering, and agriculture.[56]

In addition to apprenticeships, the higher education sector enhances workforce readiness through degrees that incorporate WIL components, such as internships, practicums, and project-based learning.[57] These programs are prevalent in fields such as business, health, sciences, and information technology.[58] Admission into these programs requires meeting specific university criteria, with a course duration of 3-4 years, and WIL components woven throughout the curriculum.[59] Funding support for these educational initiatives comes from government initiatives and industry partnerships.

Canada

Canada's approach to EWYL incorporates a variety of models, including cooperative education, internships, and apprenticeships.[60] Cooperative education programs, or co-ops, are particularly prominent in post-secondary institutions. They successfully integrate academic study with paid work terms that align with students' courses.[61] To enter co-op programs, students must generally be enrolled in a participating institution and meet specific academic criteria. Work terms typically range from 4-16 months, alternating with academic semesters.[62] Graduates often receive a degree or diploma, frequently accompanied by a co-op designation.[63] Financial support for these programs is available through federal government initiatives such as the Student Work Placement Program, which offers wage subsidies to employers, along with provincial programs that provide tax credits.[64] These work

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[52] Mackay, J., Nyhof, R., Jeffery, H., Tokolahi, E., Robinson, R., & Cadzow, H. (2024). *Comparing the development of two degree-apprenticeships in New Zealand, one focused on the needs of industry and the other on the needs of community.* In EDULEARN24 Proceedings (pp. 1250-1258). IATED.

[53] Durkin, G., Cumming, E., McGill, R., & Petersen, L. (2015). *Exploring the impact of mentoring training on the quality of mentoring engagement and provision in the ITO context.* Ako Aotearoa National Centre of Tertiary Teaching Excellence.

[54] Arnerich, A. (2024). *Experiences of NCEA: The challenges and limitations* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Waikato).

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Karim, A., Campbell, M., & Hasan, M. (2019). *A new method of integrating project-based and work-integrated learning in postgraduate engineering study.* The Curriculum Journal, 1-17.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Wyonch, R. (2020). *Work-ready graduates: The role of co-op programs in labour market success.* CD Howe Institute Commentary, 562.

[61] University of British Columbia. (n.d.). Undergraduate work term at a glance. Applied Science Co-op. https://coop.apsc.ubc.ca/undergraduate/current-students/undergraduate-work-term-glance (accessed June 09, 2025).

[62] Ontario Tech University. (2025). *How it works: Co-op education and experiential learning.* https://co-op.ontariotechu.ca/future-students/how-it-works/index.php (accessed June 09, 2025).

[63] Liu, Q., Kovalchuk, S., Rottmann, C., & Reeve, D. (2018). *Engineering co-op and internship experiences and outcomes: The roles of workplaces, academic institutions and students.* Canadian Engineering Education Association.

[64] Ibid.

experiences significantly enhance employability, with many students securing job offers from their co-op employers upon graduation.[65]

On the other hand, apprenticeships in Canada are governed at the provincial and territorial levels and are primarily focused on trades and technical occupations.[66] Generally, entry requirements include a high school diploma or its equivalent, with some programs demanding additional prerequisites.[67] Apprenticeships combine on-the-job training with technical instruction, typically lasting between 2 and 5 years.[68] Upon completion, apprentices are awarded a Certificate of Qualification and, for many trades, the Red Seal endorsement, which facilitates interprovincial mobility.[69] Apprenticeship completion is associated with strong employment outcomes, particularly in sectors such as construction, manufacturing, and automotive services.[70]

European Union (EU)

The Dual Vocational Education and Training (Dual VET) is used in the EU, particularly in nations such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.[71] This approach combines apprenticeships with classroom instruction, typically involving 3 to 4 days of practical training alongside 1-2 days of academic study each week.[72] While entry requirements can differ, most students must have completed lower secondary education prior to enrolment. Programs generally last between 2 and 4 years, resulting in qualifications that are recognised under the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).[73]

Funding mechanisms for these programs often involve a partnership between employers and the state, with employers responsible for paying the apprentices' wages.[74] This system has proven successful in sectors like manufacturing, engineering, and healthcare, where there are strong employment outcomes attributed to the close alignment between training programs and labour market needs.[75] Various case studies in Germany, for example, demonstrate successful transitions from apprenticeships to permanent careers, with many apprentices securing full-time positions with their training companies upon completion.[76]

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Matte, G. C. (2020). *A Critical Analysis of Apprenticeship Programs in British Columbia* (Doctoral dissertation, Carleton University).

[67] Ibid.

[68] Carnoy, M., Froumin, I., Leshukov, O., Marginson, S., Jones, G. A., & Noumi, C. (2018). *Canada: Provincial responsibility, federal influence and the challenge of coordination*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

[69] Boco, E., Emery, H., & Mokhtar, R. (2021). *Retention and labour market outcomes of registered apprentices in New Brunswick: 2009 to 2017.* University of New Brunswick.

[70] Finnie, R., Dubois, M., & Miyairi, M. (2021). *How Much Do They Make? New Evidence on the Early Career Earnings of Canadian Trade Certificate.* Journal of Organizational Psychology, 21(5), 113-139.

[71] Bauer, W., & Gessler, M. (2016). *Dual vocational education and training Systems in Europe: lessons learned from Austria, Germany and Switzerland.* MDPI Journal. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11090403.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Abuselidze, G. *Financing models of vocational education and its impact on the economy: Problems and perspectives.* SHS Web of Conferences. https://doi.org/10.1051/SHSCONF/20196601001.

[75] Wittig, Wolfgan (2022). *Case study Germany. The future of vocational education and training in Europe volume 2. Delivering IVET: institutional diversification and/or expansion.* Thessaloniki: Cedefop.

[76] iMove. (2025). *Germany's apprenticeship model boosts workforce and economy.* https://www.imove-germany.de/en/news/Germanys-Apprenticeship-Model-Boosts-Workforce-and-Economy.htm#:~:text=Germany%27s%20dual%20apprenticeship%20model%20has%20proven%20to%20be,skilled%20workforce%2C%20reducing%20youth%20unemployment%20and%20fostering%20innovation (accessed June 09, 2025)

In addition to the VET system, the EU actively encourages work-based learning through initiatives like the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.[77] This initiative seeks to enhance the quality, availability, and perception of apprenticeships in member states.[78] The effectiveness of such programs can vary by country; for instance, the Netherlands and Denmark have successfully integrated work-integrated learning into their higher education systems, creating a balanced blend of academic learning and practical experience.[79] These initiatives often benefit from funding provided by national governments as well as EU programs, such as Erasmus+, which fosters greater mobility and collaboration in vocational training.[80]

Table 4 below provides a summary of comparative EWYL models in the global sphere.

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[77] Martínez-Izquierdo, L., & Torres Sánchez, M. (2022). *Dual vocational education and training and policy transfer in the European Union policy: the case of work-based learning and apprenticeships.* Cogent Education, 9, Article 2154496. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2154496

[78] Ibid.

[79] Quew-Jones, R.J. (2024), *Conceptualising degree apprentice identity to enhance work-integrated learning, Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning,* Vol. 14 No. 5, pp. 1042-1057. https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-10-2023-0301

[80] Pennaforte, A. (2024). *Multi-level impacts of international mobility co-op programs on work-integrated learning stakeholders: An action-research.* In Refereed Proceedings of the 5th WACE International Research Symposium on Cooperative and Work-Integrated Education, 2024, University West, Sweden.

Table 4: High-level comparison of EWYL models around the world

Country	Model	Entry Requirements	Duration	Qualification	Funding/Support	Employment Outcome
UK	Apprenticeships (Levels 2-7)	Varies by level; typically GSCEs of A-levels[81]	1–6years	Nationally recognised qualifications (e.g., NVQ, Bachelors, Masters)	Apprenticeship Levy, government funding	High employment rates in various sectors
	T Levels	Completion of GCSEs	2 years	T Level certificate (equivalent to 3 A-levels)	Government funded	Progression to skilled employment or further study
EU	Dual VET System	Completion of lower secondary school	2–4 years	EQF Level 3–5	Employer and state-funded	High employment rates, especially in technical fields
	Higher Education WIL Programs	University admission	Varies; typically 3–4 years	Bachelors or Masters degrees with WIL components	National and EU funding (e.g., Erasmus+)	Enhanced employability and practical skills
Canada	Co-operative Programs	Enrolment in participating institution; academic criteria	4–16 months work terms within degree program	Degree or Diploma with co-op designation	Federal and provincial funding, employer wages	High employment rates; job offers from co-op employers
	Registered Apprenticeships	High school diploma or equivalent	2–5 years	Certificate of Qualification; Red Seal endorsement	Employer contributions, government grants/tax incentives	Strong employment prospects in trades

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[81] General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs) are usually taken by students at the age of 16, during their final year of compulsory schooling, known as Year 11. After completing their GCSEs, students usually take Advanced Level (A-levels) between the ages of 17 and 18, in Years 12 and 13.

Country	Model	HumanAbility-Aligned Sector	Qualification Level	Funding/Support	Duration	Employment Outcome
New Zealand	Modern Apprenticeships	Varies; typically NCEA Level 1[82]	2–4 years	NZQF Level 4 qualifications	Government subsidies to employers/training organisations	High employment rates in trades
	Degree programs with WIL	University admission	3–4 years	Bachelors degrees with WIL components	Government and industry partnerships	Improved graduate employability

While there is no specific indication of the exact number of EWYL models used globally within the care and support sector, the following table provides a comparative matrix of EWYL models aligned with HumanAbility sectors.

Table 5: EWYL models used globally within the care and support sector

Country	Model	HumanAbility-Aligned Sector	Qualification Level	Funding /Support	Duration	Employment Outcome
UK	Health and Social Care Apprenticeship	Aged Care and Disability, Health	Level 2–5 Diploma/Nursing Degree (Level 6–7)	Apprenticeship Levy, NHS Trusts, Government co-funding	12–48 months	AINS, ENS, RNs;[83] pathways to registered nurse or senior care roles
	Early Years Practitioner Apprenticeship	Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)	Level 3 Diploma	Government-subsidised apprenticeship funding	18–24 months	Employment as early years educator; pathway to higher qualifications

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[82] NCEA Level 1 refers to the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) at the first level, which is often completed by students in Year 11 (ages 15-16), usually in their second-to-last year of secondary school.
[83] Assistant in Nursing (AINS), Enrolled Nurses (ENs) and Registered Nurses (RNs).

	Community Sport and Health Officer Apprenticeship	Sport and Recreation	Level 3 Certificate	Apprenticeship Levy, Government co-funding, employer wage	16–20 months	Progression to sport development or youth health roles
EU (Germany)	Dual Vocational Training—Nursing; Social Care	Health, Human (Community) Services, Health, Aged Care and Disability	EQF Levels 4–5	Joint funding by employers and government; trainee stipends	2–3.5 years	Direct employment in health and social care sectors
Canada	Co-operative (Co-op) Programs	Health, Human (Community) Services, ECEC	Diploma/Bachelors (with Co-op designation)	Employer wage and federal Student Work Placement Program subsidy (50-70%)	4–8 month work terms (multiple terms)	Up to 90-92% in full-time work, post-grad (within 3 years)
New Zealand	Health and Wellbeing Apprenticeships	Aged Care and Disability, Human (Community) Services	New Zealand Certificate Level 4	Apprenticeship wage; employer wage; Tertiary Education Commission	18–21 months	Pathway to advanced roles and higher qualifications

Chapter 2: EWYL models across HumanAbility sectors

This chapter offers an overview of EWYL models currently used across HumanAbility sectors, including where funding or payment arrangements are in place. It places EWYL within the broader context of workforce shortages and highlights sectors where these models are expanding and succeeding. While examples from different sectors demonstrate that EWYL can support sustainable career pathways, persistent challenges still exist.

Aged Care and Disability Support

While traineeships are the dominant EWYL model in the aged care and disability services sectors, opportunities to earn and learn are scarce compared to sectors such as Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). Table 6 below provides a comparison across the two sectors:

Table 6: Comparison of the completion rates for courses in ECEC and Aged Care and Disability Services

Qualification name	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care	3,035	2,950	3,185	4,080	2,980
Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care	1,750	1,660	1,980	3,350	970
Certificate III in Individual Support	1,105	875	1,335	1,665	2,035
Certificate IV in Ageing Support	65	20	35	90	145
Certificate IV in Disability	150	125	145	220	515

Note: Figures above are rounded to the nearest five completions

Source: DEWR Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System: Final Report

While some providers offer workplace-based traineeship programs,[84] these opportunities are not widespread. The limited availability of these traineeships poses challenges to meeting the growing

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[84] At Home Care. (n.d.). *Disability Training & Traineeships.* https://athomecare.au/work-with-us/training-and-traineeships/#:~:text=At%20Home%20Care%20offers%20a%20workplace-based%20traineeship%20program,%28Disability%29%20while%20serving%20as%20an%20essential%20team%20member (accessed June 10, 2025)

demand for skilled workers, especially as Royal Commission recommendations for minimum qualifications in aged care and registration of disability support workers are contemplated or implemented.[85]

Where traineeships exist in aged care, students typically complete a Certificate III in Individual Support in the Ageing stream while employed as personal care workers.[86,87] In the disability sector, traineeships upskill prospective workers through the Certificate III in Individual Support or the Certificate IV in Disability Support. On completion, graduates become qualified Aged Care or Disability Support Workers with strong prospects of ongoing employment (often with the same employer).[88]

Cadetships are rarer among the disability support and personal care workforces but are more common in the aged care nursing space, with one employer-driven example providing all Diploma or Bachelor of Nursing students on-site and with a guaranteed job interview upon graduation.[89]

Outside the structured apprenticeship/traineeship model, student placements are typically unpaid; however, some informal opportunities for paid placements exist. This includes providers hiring trainees as Assistant Nurses during training to give them paid experience, and unions negotiating enterprise agreement entitlements to pay while on placement for disability support workers.[90]

In contrast, while numerical data on the number of GYO initiatives [91]is yet to be documented, GYO initiatives are growing in popularity to address workforce shortages. For instance, BlueCare (a large Queensland care provider) launched a GYO strategy: partnering with multiple RTOs, it recruits local trainees and even hires personal-care students as supervised workers during training.[92] At the commonwealth level, the Boosting the Local Care Workforce program (2018–2023) invested approximately $33m to help regional aged/disability providers train and retain staff. These GYO efforts emphasise community recruitment and flexible training to "grow" local care workers.

When viable, EWYL models in these sectors are very effective at rapidly upskilling and qualifying its existing workers. For example, BlueCare has achieved considerable success with its traineeship program, launching more than 433 traineeships since February 2022 and maintaining a retention rate of 71%.[93]

[85] Royal Commission. (2021). *Recommendations (Final report, Vol. 1).* https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2021-03/final-report-recommendations.pdf (accessed June 25, 2025)

[86] Uniting AgeWell (n.d.). *Welcoming Trainees.* https://www.unitingagewell.org/news/welcoming-trainees/ (accessed June 25, 2025)

[87] Curran, S. (2023, November 20). *Skilled Care Aged Care Traineeship FAQs: Your Questions Asked.* https://skilledcare.edu.au/aged-care-traineeship-faqs/ (accessed June 10, 2025)

[88] Aspire to Succeed. (2025). *Rising demand for aged care workers in Australia.* https://aspiretosucceed.com.au/demand-for-aged-care-workers-in-australia/(accessed June 10, 2025)

[89] Ramsay Healthcare. (2022, August 18). *Nurses of tomorrow get a head start with Ramsay.* https://www.ramsayhealth.com.au/News/General-News/Nurses-of-tomorrow-get-a-head-start-with-Ramsay (accessed June 10, 2025)

[90] Fair Work Commission. (2023). *Disability Services Enterprise Agreement Victoria 2022-2025.* https://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/decisionssigned/pdf/2023fwca2552.pdf (accessed June 25, 2025)

[91] Australian Government. (2017). *Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program to support local job creation in the National Disability Insurance Scheme and aged care [Media release].* The Hon Christian Porter MP. https://formerministers.dss.gov.au/17557/boosting-the-local-care-workforce-program/#:~:text=The%20Turnbull%20Government%E2%80%99s%20%2433%20million%20Boosting%20the%20Local,an%20employment%20service%2C%20to%20implement%20the%20job-creating%20initiative (accessed June 10, 2025)

[92] CHECKUP. (2025). *Building a stronger workforce: BlueCare's approach to training and placement.* https://checkup.org.au/news-publications/latest-news/building-a-stronger-workforce-bluecares-approach-to-training-and-placement/ (accessed June 10, 2025)

[93] CHECKUP. (2025). *Building a stronger workforce: BlueCare's approach to training and placement.* https://checkup.org.au/news-publications/latest-news/building-a-stronger-workforce-bluecares-approach-to-training-and-placement/(accessed June 10, 2025)

The viability, and availability of EWYL also varies within disability and aged care, and may depend on the funding structures of the work environments:

- Initial observations suggest that EWYL models are more widespread and viable in larger residential environments, such as nursing homes, where provider funding and workforce investment can be more easily collectivised and supervision is more readily available (e.g. 24/7 registered nursing requirements).
- Residential aged care, aged care in the home and disability services are considered "consumer-directed care" sectors, where providers are funded based on client demand and choice.[94] In the disability sector, where plan reviews can lead to persistent fluxes in provider funding,[95] National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) providers face particular constraints in offering EWYL opportunities.

Apprenticeship payments also require students to be employed on at least a part-time basis. The high levels of casual employment in the disability sector may impede access to this support.

Compared to the health sector, aged care and disability services have considerably lower levels of direct service provision by state or federal governments.

Initiatives that have been explored to boost EWYL models in this sector often face challenges in "scaling out" across the aged care and disability sectors, as government funding for the workforce is limited beyond what is directly required to deliver person-to-person support. This means that additional workforce investment is often confined to providers who have the government funding to deliver EWYL initiatives viably.

For example, RMIT's Skills in Employment Program combines mentoring and classroom training with employment on full award wages − training aged care and disability workers up to the Certificates III and IV respectively, with workers receiving qualified wage rates on graduation. This program has been made possible with Victorian government funding but is limited to around 14 providers.[96] The informal opportunities for employment with Victoria's Disability Services Enterprise Agreement Victoria (DSEAV) are similarly only available to five major NDIS providers, sustained with a state government subsidy and were previously under one agreement,[97] but have since negotiated their separate Enterprise Agreement.

The barriers to offering EWYL opportunities in these sectors do not detract from their potential. Research overseas has shown that traineeships can support people with intellectual disabilities into quality jobs in the aged care sector, emphasising the need for structured supports for trainees,

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[94] Macdonald, F & Charlesworth, S (2015). *Cash for Care under the NDIS: Shaping care workers' working conditions?* Journal of Industrial Relations.

[95] Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet (2023), *Working together to deliver the NDIS. NDIS Review – Final Report, Canberra.*

[96] RMIT University. (n.d.). *Skills in employment project.* https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/governance-management/rmit-structure/policy-strategy-impact/social-innovation-hub/widi/projects/skills-in-employment-project (accessed June 10, 2025)

[97] Fair Work Commission. (n.d.). *Disability Services Enterprise Agreement Victoria 2018–2022.* https://www.fwc.gov.au/document-search/view/3/aHR0cHM6Ly9zYXNyY2RhdGFwcmRhdWVhYS5ibG9iLmNvcmUud2luZG93cy5uZXQvZW50ZXJwcmlzZWFncmVlbWVudHMvMjAxOC8xMi9hZTUwMDU4Mi5wZGY1?sid=&q=Disability%24%24Services%24%24Enterprise%24%24Agreement%24%24Victoria%24%24DSEAV%24%242018%24%242022 (accessed June 10, 2025)

workplace mentoring, a positive workplace environment, and tailored training.[98] Realising these potential benefits, however, requires greater consideration of the barriers to EWYL in these sectors, as recommended by the Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System.[99]

Children's Education and Care

High-quality Children's Education and Care (CEC) in Australia relies on a qualified workforce, but there are ongoing shortages of educators and early childhood teachers. In Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), entry-level educators typically need at least a Certificate III, with many also holding a Diploma.[100] To recruit qualified workers, employers have turned to traineeships as part of the solution, and governments have provided incentives to upskill through EWYL, such as the ECEC paid practicum subsidy.[101]

There has been a notable rise in traineeships within the ECEC sector. The JSA Early Childhood and Care Workforce Capacity Study reveals that the proportion of ECEC trainees enrolled in Certificate III qualifications has increased rapidly. Since 2020, the proportion of trainees at the Certificate III level has increased, rising from 53% of total ECEC trainees in July-September 2021 to 70% in July-September 2023. Additionally, the proportion of early childhood educators participating in traineeships grew from approximately 7% in Q3 2019 to 13% in Q3 2023.[102] This system allows services to hire staff who are working towards their qualifications, as permitted by national regulations, to a degree. Figure 1 below offers a snapshot of trainees in ECEC and related roles, categorised by their specific occupation and qualification level.

[98] Alexander, J., Gendera, S., Robinson, S., Fisher, K. R., & Howe, K. (2024). *On-the-job training supports for people with intellectual disability employed in aged care.* Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability, 49(2), 163-174. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39815868/ (accessed June 10, 2025)

[99] Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2025). *Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System: Final Report.* https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/16795/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report/39422/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report/pdf (accessed June 25, 2025)

[100] Jobs and Skills Australia. (2024). *The Future of Early Childhood Education Profession. Early childhood education and care workforce capacity study.* https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/download/19636/future-early-childhood-education-profession/2658/future-early-childhood-education-profession-extended-report/pdf (accessed May 05, 2025)

[101] Department of Education. (2025). *Paid practicum subsidy.* https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/providers/workforce/support/professional-development-opportunities/paid-practicum-subsidy (accessed June 25, 2025)

[102] Ibid.

Figure 1 data for apprentices and trainees in ECEC occupations, categorised by occupation and qualification level (July-September 1994 to July-September 2023)
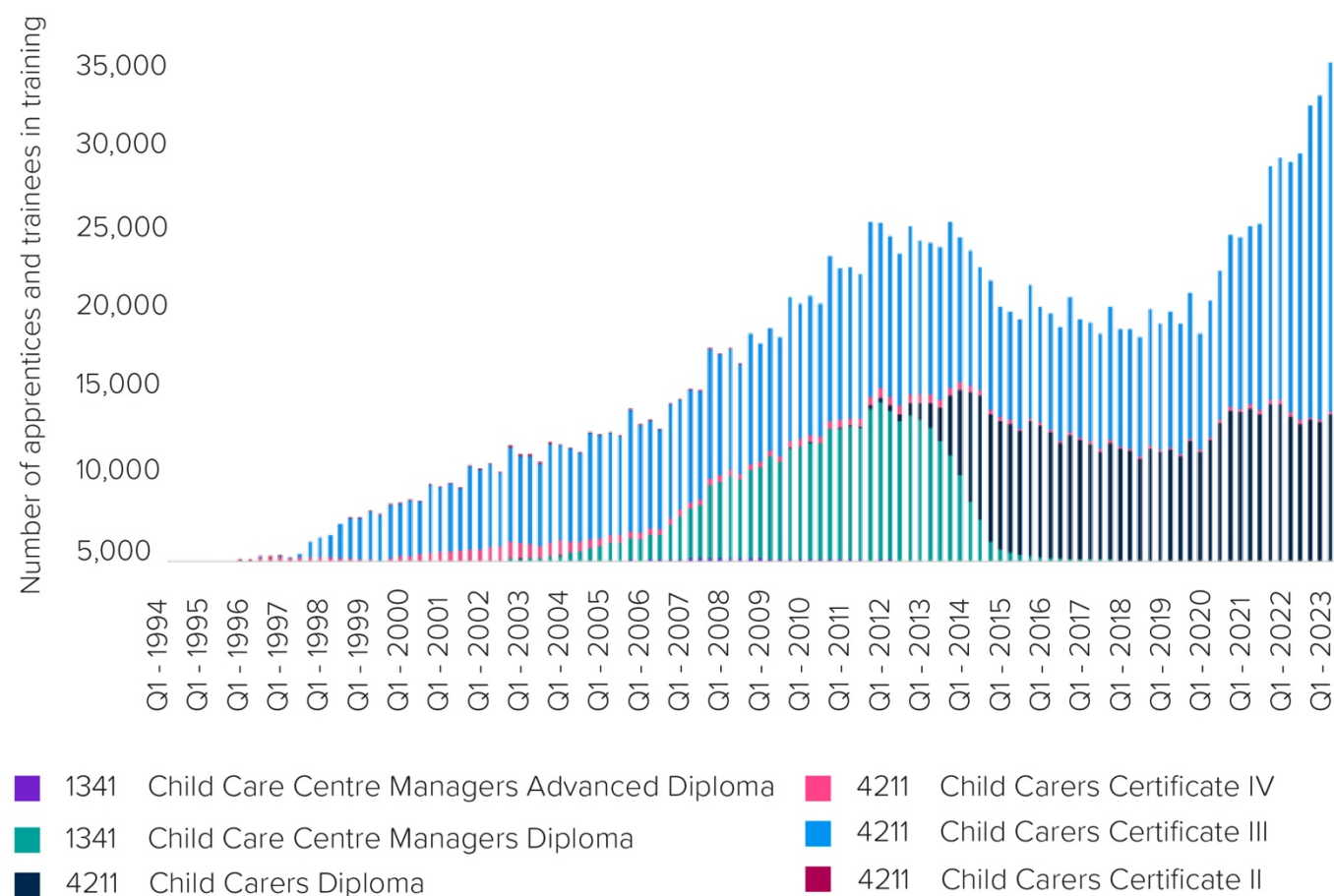
Note: Certificate III/IV level qualifications include CHC30113, CHC30121, CHC40113, CHC41208. Diploma level qualifications include: CHC50113, CHC50121, CHC50202, CHC50213, CHC50211

Source: JSA, Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Capacity Study

Two noteworthy examples of increased participation in traineeships in the sector include:

Western Australia (WA), which has also seen a marked increase in ECEC traineeship completions. In the year leading up to 30 April 2023, commencements rose by 37% and completions surged by 94% compared to the previous year.[103] This growth is attributed to the State Government's implementation of low-fee training for the ECEC sector, which involves low-cost training places in areas of identified skills need, launched on 1 January 2022.[104]

Another initiative includes the St Nicholas Pathways School-Based Traineeship (SBAT) program. This program is in partnership with Macquarie Community College and enables Year 11 and 12 students to

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[103] Government of Western Australia. (2023, July). *Traineeship boost for WA's early childhood education workforce.* https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/Cook-Labor-Government/Traineeship-boost-for-WA%27s-early-childhood-education-workforce-20230629 (accessed June 09, 2025)

[104] Ibid.

earn a Certificate III in ECEC. The program has expanded from 12 students in 2019 to 46 students in 2023.[105]

In ECEC, traineeships are similar to those in other care and support sectors, providing young people and career changers with paid employment while they study.

Common pathways in ECEC include the Certificate III and Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care, which are often facilitated through traineeships.[106] For example, a Certificate III traineeship lasts 1-2 years, combines work experience in childcare centres with formal training. States heavily subsidise these qualifications, sometimes offered under fee-free TAFE, to address workforce shortages and ensure ECEC services comply with staffing requirements and other regulations under the National Quality Framework and National Quality Standards.[107]

Employers benefit from wage subsidies and a potential talent pipeline, as most graduates of ECEC traineeships quickly find work.[108] NCVER's report, *High-use training package qualifications: childcare*, highlights that 71% of students who completed the Certificate III in ECEC secured employment shortly after their training. These traineeships not only saw high completions, but they also facilitated further career progression, with 36% of these graduates pursuing further studies.[109]

ECEC also has a relatively high uptake of school-based traineeships, especially in comparison to adjacent care and support sectors – a model that allows high school students to begin their childcare training early, transitioning quickly from high school to the sector.[110]

While traineeships help alleviate staffing shortages, they do come with challenges:

- Recent workforce surveys reveal high turnover of trainees and experienced educators, reflecting low satisfaction amongst both groups.[111] Industry feedback in the ECEC sector suggests that a heavy reliance on trainees can overwhelm experienced staff, who must balance mentoring responsibilities with their own workloads, which can drive job dissatisfaction and increase attrition.[112,113]

- For trainees, inadequate support and supervision can result in frustration and lack of confidence, further contributing to turnover. This instability disrupts relationships between children, families and

[105] Lucas, F. (2023, March 20). *For Emma, starting her ECEC career in high school has set her on the right path.* The Sector. https://thesector.com.au/2023/03/20/for-emma-starting-her-ecec-career-in-high-school-has-set-her-on-the-right-path/ (accessed June 09, 2025)

[106] Queensland Government. (2024). *ECEC qualifications and pathways: Pathways.* https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/careers/qualifications-and-pathways/pathways (accessed June 09, 2025)

[107] Ibid.

[108] Korbel, P. (2018). *High-use training package qualifications: childcare. National Centre for Vocational Education Research.* https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/2237714/High-use-training-package-qualifications_childcare.pdf (accessed June 09, 2025)

[109] Ibid.

[110] Jobs and Skills Australia. (2024). *The Future of Early Childhood Education Profession. Early childhood education and care workforce capacity study.* https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/download/19636/future-early-childhood-education-profession/2658/future-early-childhood-education-profession-extended-report/pdf (accessed May 05, 2025)

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.

educators, undermining the continuity and quality of care that are essential for positive child outcomes.[114,115]

Without sufficient supervision, trainees are less able to meet the quality standards mandated under the National Quality Framework, potentially compromising children's safety, learning and wellbeing.[116]

- Additionally, the mandated 20% off-the-job training can slow down the qualification process.[117] These challenges highlight the need for careful management of traineeships to ensure they deliver benefits for industry, workforce and end users.

There is no evidence of cadetships being utilised in this sector, although some pre-service teacher education programs offer scholarships.[118]

Efforts to grow the local workforce also focus on rural and First Nations contexts. Local councils and universities often collaborate to provide traineeship for First Nations participants interested in pursuing a career in childcare.[119] For example, the Galiwin'ku Child Circle collaboration, a partnership between the Batchelor Institute, Shepherdson College, East Arnhem Regional Council (EARC), the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training, local childcare providers, and Families as First Teachers (FaFT), which aims to support children from conception to age five. This network of programs provides hands-on learning opportunities for students while addressing community interests and seeking to build community capacity to delivery Children's Education and Care.[120]

Health

The Australian health sector uses a mix of EWYL models.

For health services assistance roles such as Assistants in Nursing (AIN), hospital orderlies/ ward assistants, patient services assistants and food services assistants – traineeships are the primary vehicle for work-integrated learning. Traineeships in these roles typically include undertaking a minimum of 100 days in paid employment and training.[121] Entry usually requires being employed by a health service, and completion yields a Certificate III Health Services Assistance (HLT33115) qualification.[122]

On the other hand, Enrolled Nurses (ENs) and Registered Nurses (RNs) must complete clinical placements as part of accredited programs leading to registration. These placements typically last

[114] Bryant, D. Yazejian, N., et al. (2023). *Investigating teaching staff turnover in early childhood education.* https://fpg.unc.edu/news/investigating-teaching-staff-turnover-early-childhood-education (accessed June 20, 2025)

[115] Von Suchodoletz, A., Lee, D. S., Henry, J., Tamang, S., Premachandra, B., & Yoshikawa, H. (2023). *Early childhood education and care quality and associations with child outcomes: A meta-analysis.* PubMed Central. https://doi.org/10.37228090.

[116] ACEQA (2018). *Active Supervision: Ensuring safety and promoting learning.* https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-04/QA2-ActiveSupervisionEnsuringSafetyAndPromotingLearning_1.pdf (accessed June 20, 2025)

[117] Ibid.

[118] NSW Government. (2024). *ECEC vocational education and training scholarships.* https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/initiatives/early-childhood-careers/available-supports/ecec-vocational-education-and-training-scholarships (accessed June 09, 2025)

[119] Torre, G. (2025). *Early education and care skills boosted in remote NT community Galiwin'ku. National Indigenous Times.* https://nit.com.au/11-03-2025/16736/early-education-and-care-skills-boosted-in-remote-nt-community-galiwinku (accessed June 10, 2025)

[120] Ibid.

[121] NSW Government. (2024). *Health Services (Health Services Assistance) – Certificate III.* https://education.nsw.gov.au/schooling/students/career-and-study-pathways/school-based-apprenticeships-and-traineeships/traineeships/certificate-iii-health-services-health-services-assistance (accessed June 10, 2025)

[122] Ibid.

between 400 and 800 hours for ENs and 800 and 1000 hours for RNs. Completion of these placements often leads to a qualification in a Diploma of Nursing (AQF Level 5) or a Bachelor of Nursing (AQF Level 7), respectively. In July 2025, the Australian Government introduced new weekly payments of $319.50 for students in nursing, midwifery, and social work who are experiencing placement hardship.[123] This policy initiative predominantly focuses on higher education students, but also provides a means-tested EWYL pathway to 5,000 VET students in nursing.[124] The new payment will be accessible to students who receive Australian Government income support and those who must work over 15 hours per week while attending university.[125] However, sector debates are ongoing about the extent of the placement support, with some highlighting that students in some courses have "up to 2,300 hours of compulsory practicum" and will not be eligible.[126] In some instances, regional health services provide their own forms of remuneration for placements, paying student nurses or midwives during placement, effectively functioning as early employment.[127]

Cadetships are also particularly prominent for nurses and allied health professionals. A notable example is the CQ University–Ramsay nursing cadetship. Bachelor or diploma nursing students complete all clinical placements at Ramsay hospitals and are guaranteed interviews for graduate RN positions.[128] These cadetships, which span approximately 2-3 years (aligned with the degree), are funded by the employer.[129] Cadets earn a wage and receive on-the-job supervision. Similarly, Queensland Health's Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathways upskill existing rural allied health staff, such as physiotherapists, through structured training. This approach, akin to a GYO cadetship, effectively "grows" local clinicians rather than recruiting from cities.[130]

Human Services (Mental Health, Alcohol & Other Drugs, Community Services)

The main EWYL pathways in community services are traineeships leading to Certificate III or IV in Community Services. For example, South West TAFE offers an 18-24 month Diploma of Community Services via traineeship, combining on-the-job learning with monthly workshops.[131] These programs (often full-time traineeships) lead to roles such as case worker, youth worker or family support

123 Department of Education. (2025). *Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP).* https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education/commonwealth-prac-payment (accessed June 25, 2025)

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid.

126 Health Service Union (HSU). (2024). *'Don't leave us behind': Allied health professionals urge action on placement poverty.* https://hsu.net.au/portfolio/dont-leave-us-behind-allied-health-professionals-urge-action-on-placement-poverty/ (accessed June 20, 2025)

127 Queensland Health Careers. (2024). *Nursing and Midwifery Regional, Rural and Remote Student Placement Allowance.* https://www.careers.health.qld.gov.au/students-and-graduates/clinical-placements/students/nursing-and-midwifery-regional-rural-and-remote-student-placement-allowance (accessed June 10, 2025)

128 Ramsay Health Care. (n.d.). *Nursing & Midwifery Academy.* https://www.ramsaycareers.com.au/Nursing-and-Midwifery-Academy#:~:text=The%20Cadetship%20Program%20is%20a%20dedicated%20Ramsay%20cohort,at%20Ramsay%20facility%20where%20available%20during%20their%20study. (accessed June 10, 2025)

129 Ibid.

130 Queensland Health. (2023). *Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway.* https://www.health.qld.gov.au/ahwac/html/rural-remote/ahrgp#:~:text=The%20Queensland%20Health%20Allied%20Health%20Rural%20Generalist%20Pathway,programs%20in%20rural%20and%20remote%20allied%20health%20teams. (accessed June 10, 2025)

131 South West TAFE. (n.d.). *Diploma of Community Services (Traineeship).* https://www.swtafe.edu.au/courses/nursing-health-community-services/diploma-of-community-services-traineeship (accessed June 12, 2025)

officer.[132] State government funding (through state skills plans) often subsidises the cost of traineeships (some states also fully fund community services diplomas under "Free TAFE" or similar initiatives).[133]

Social work students in an eligible Bachelors or Masters also qualify for the Commonwealth Practice Payment (CPP) when on placement, subject to means testing to address the effects of placement hardship.[134]

GYO strategies here focus on marginalised communities. For example, some Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) run local training programs leading to formal qualifications First Nations social services staff.[135] Similarly, mental health and Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) services may run local cadet or assistant programs (e.g. training existing client liaison staff into full community support roles).[136] However, most community services workforce development relies on formal traineeships.

The Human (community) Services sector mirrors those in ECEC and aged care and disability services: limited funding means wage subsidies are often needed to entice employers to take on trainees. As with ECEC and Aged Care and Disability Services, Community Services is diverse, and many small non-governmental organisations (NGOs) lack the scale to adequately provide structured on-the-job training.[137]

Sport and Recreation

In the Sport and Recreation sector, traineeships remain the most common pathway, particularly at the Certificate II-IV levels. While a very limited number of SIS (Sport, Recreation and Personal Training) qualifications can technically be delivered as apprenticeships, the pathway is uncommon. In 2022, the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) introduced a small number of sports-related apprenticeships, including roles such as high-performance sports coach and pool lifeguard. These sit alongside the Elite Athlete Apprenticeships scheme, [138] which allows elite athletes to undertake flexible, part-time apprenticeships, so they can continue training while earning apprentice wages, for example by working as a part time lifeguards.

Outside of this, paid placements in sports are generally limited to internships, such as sports management internships, which may be unpaid or supported by stipends. More commonly, qualifications such as Certificate III or IV in Sport and Recreation are delivered as traineeships. These are particularly effective in school-based programs, where high school students gain a Certificate III while

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[132] Ibid.

[133] NSW Government Education. (n.d.). *Health care and social assistance.* https://skills.education.nsw.gov.au/nsw-fee-free/health-care-social-assistance (accessed June 12, 2025)

[134] Department of Education. (2024). *Commonwealth Prac Payment.* https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education/commonwealth-prac-payment (accessed June 12, 2025)

[135] AbSec Learning and Development Centre (LDC). (n.d.). *Leadership through learning.* https://absec.org.au/absec-learning-and-development-centre/ (accessed June 12, 2025)

[136] Strong Spirit Strong Mind. (2025). *SSSM Alcohol and other Drugs training.* https://strongspiritstrongmind.com.au/training/sssm-new-training (accessed June 12, 2025)

[137] Brotherhood of St Laurence. (2018). *Capacity building for small community service organisations.* https://www.bsl.org.au/research/our-research-and-policy-work/projects/past-capacity-building-for-small-community-service-organisations/ (accessed June 25, 2025)

[138] Australian Institute of Sport. (2024). A*pprenticeships and traineeships: A guide to vocational pathways and careers for elite athletes.* https://www.ais.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1143298/Elite-Athlete-Apprenticeships-Guide-2024.pdf (accessed June 16, 2025)

working part-time as lifeguards, swim instructors, or junior sports coaches.[139] These traineeships typically take 1-2 years and combine structured training with part-time paid work, giving students a strong industry head start.

In addition to traineeships and niche apprenticeships, cadetships are offered in some parts of the sport sector. Cadetships are uncommon outside of specialist programs. One key player is AFL SportsReady (a not-for-profit), which runs cadetships across the sports industry, including First Nations-specific programs. AFL SportsReady explicitly offers both traineeships and cadetships in sports and related fields. For example, they have a First Nations Cadetship with mentoring and career support tailored for Indigenous Australians. These programs typically place cadets in local councils, clubs or sports businesses while they study sport management or business diplomas.[140]

GYO approaches appear in community sports development. For instance, regional councils or state sports bodies may fund local youth traineeships to nurture local coaches and fitness instructors. However, there are few formal nationwide GYO programs in sports. The AFL's First Nations programs above are an example of targeting local talent.

Cross-sector challenges and bottlenecks

While EWYL models have demonstrated considerable promise in expanding and diversifying the workforce across HumanAbility sectors, they also face persistent and interconnected challenges that can undermine their impact and scalability. The cross-sector challenges and bottlenecks are rooted in both systemic policy and structural workforce issues that cut across all of HumanAbility's sectors. Common themes that were identified in the literature include:

- **Employer engagement:** Some employers hesitate to take trainees, fearing lost productivity or high supervision costs. This is particularly the case for small businesses that face significant time and budget constraints, which often prevent them from having dedicated staff to focus on apprenticeships, traineeships, or even human resources.[141] Consequently, they overlook or fail to fully evaluate the considerable benefits these programs can provide.[142]

- **Funding structures:** Training and trainee wage subsidies often come from multiple sources (federal/state VET funding, specific grants).[143] Inconsistencies between states or uncertainty around incentives (e.g. changes to subsidies) can cause boom-bust cycles. For example, traineeship numbers in the ECEC sector were found to be highly sensitive to incentive payments.[144] Similarly, in Sport and

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[139] Australian Government. (2022). *SIS30122 Certificate III in Sport, Aquatics and Recreation, Release 1.* Training.gov.au. https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/SIS30122/qualdetails (accessed June 12, 2025)

[140] AFL SportsReady. (n.d.). *Calling all First Nations university students: get a head start in your career with a Cadetship.* https://aflsportsready.com.au/cadetships/#:~:text=AFL%20SportsReady%E2%80%99s%20Cadetship%20Program%20is%20a%20Commonwealth-funded%20initiative,a%20role%20related%20to%20their%20field%20of%20study (accessed June 25, 2025)

[141] Behavioural Insights Team. (2020). *Perceptions of apprenticeships: Behavioural insights evidence review*. Behavioural Insights Team. https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/resources/perceptions-apprenticeships-behavioural-insights-evidence-review-february-2020 (accessed June 16, 2025)

[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Jobs and Skills Australia. (2024). *The Future of Early Childhood Education Profession. Early childhood education and care workforce capacity study.* https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/download/19636/future-early-childhood-education-profession/2658/future-early-childhood-education-profession-extended-report/pdf (accessed May 05, 2025)

Recreation, traineeships attract participants primarily due to available subsidies, such as those offered through AFL SportsReady.[145] Removing incentives leads to a significant drop in enrolment.

- **Regulatory constraints:** EWYL models are frequently funded through apprenticeship or traineeship systems that require workers to be supervised and engaged on an ongoing basis. When combined with pre-existing workforce pressures, qualification requirements and prescribed ratios e.g. the National Quality Framework in children's education and care that enforces strict educator-child ratios and minimum qualification requirements,[146] – little funding or staffing may be left to support workers through EWYL pathways. Rather than changing these quality standards to accommodate trainees, employers may need additional support and resources to free up experienced staff to adequately supervise and mentor trainees within these regulated environments.

- **Mentoring and supervision constraints:** A pervasive bottleneck is the need for experienced staff to train and mentor EWYL participants. In the ECEC sector, this was also identified as a critical constraint. Doubling traineeships created a mentorship shortfall and formally recognising senior educators' mentoring role and allocating mentoring time are seen as potential remedies.[147] Similarly, research in the Aged Care and Disability Services sector stressed the necessity of training mentors alongside trainees.[148]

- **Sector fragmentation and geographical disparity:** Community Services often function with minimal staffing, meaning they lack capacity and training structures to support trainees. The Victorian Department of Social Services (DSS) Community Sector Grants Engagement Framework, developed after extensive consultations, highlights that small providers "lack capacity" to navigate complex grant and training processes,[149] which could provide a significant barrier to their participation in EWYL models. Regional, rural and remote areas often lack RTOs or structured vocational supports, which limits access to EWYL models beyond metropolitan centres. The JSA report on Vocational education and training in regional, rural, and remote Australia reveals a concerning decline in the number of RTOs delivering VET in regional and remote areas compared to major cities.[150] In assessing the number of RTOs and training products by delivery location, the report noted that the number of RTOs (including those exclusively delivering online subjects) was 2,253 in major cities, 1,154 in inner regional areas, 856 in outer regional areas, and 421 in remote locations.[151] Additionally, the report highlights significant issues with enrolment figures, indicating smaller class

[145] Australian Institute of Sport. (2024). *Apprenticeships and traineeships: A guide to vocational pathways and careers for elite athletes.* https://www.ais.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1143298/Elite-Athlete-Apprenticeships-Guide-2024.pdf (accessed June 17, 2025)

[146] ACECQA. (2024). *Qualifications for centre-based services with children preschool age or under. Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority.* https://www.acecqa.gov.au/qualifications-0/qualification-requirements/qualifications-centre-based-services-children-preschool-age-or-under#:~:text=Under%20regulation%20126%20of%20the%20Education%20and%20Care,diploma%20level%20education%20and%20care%20qualification%20%28or%20higher%29. (accessed June 17, 2025)

[147] Ibid.

[148] Alexander, J., Gendera, S., Robinson, S., Fisher, K. R., & Howe, K. (2023). *On-the-job training supports for people with intellectual disability employed in aged care.* DOI: 10.3109/13668250.2023.2256075. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3109/13668250.2023.2256075?rfr_dat=cr_pub++0pubmed&url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Acrossref.org#abstract (accessed June 18, 2025)

[149] Victorian Department of Social Services. (2025). *Community Sector Grants Engagement Framework.* https://www.dss.gov.au/system/files/documents/2025-02/community-sector-grants-engagement-final.pdf

[150] Jobs and Skills Australia. (2023). *Vocational education and training in regional, rural and remote Australia.* https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/download/690/vocational-education-and-training-regional-rural-and-remote-australia/983/vet-regional-rural-and-remote-australia/pdf (accessed June 18, 2025)

[151] Ibid.

sizes, particularly in geographically remote areas.[152] Enrolment statistics show that the majority of students are from major cities, with approximately 66% in these areas, 21% in inner regional areas, 10% in outer regional areas, and only 3% in remote locations.[153] A follow-up NCVER study documents the barriers faced by RTOs in regional, rural, and remote areas.[154] These barriers include travel distance, infrastructure limitations, and insufficient enrolment numbers, known as "thin markets," which can lead to trainees needing to relocate to access training.[155]

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[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Griffin, T., & Andrahannadi, U. (2023). *VET delivery in regional, rural and remote Australia: Barriers and facilitators.* National Centre for Vocational Education Research. https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0044/9677267/VET_delivery_in_regional_rural_and_remote_australia_barriers_and_facilitators.pdf (accessed June 19, 2025)

[155] Ibid.

Chapter 3: Factors influencing individual participation and completion of an EWYL model/approach

This chapter examines the factors that influence participation and completion of EWYL models. Key facilitators include financial support, flexible schedules, strong mentoring, and clear employment outcomes. In contrast, barriers such as unsafe or unsupportive workplaces, low wages and financial strain, inadequate supervision and structural challenges can undermine participation and increase attrition.

Participation and completion of EWYL models are influenced by various factors, including systemic (policy, economic and social), institutional (employers and training providers), and individual (personal circumstances and support). The literature identifies facilitators that encourage learners to start and finish different forms of EWYL models, as well as barriers that hinder participation and completion, with specific relevance to HumanAbility's care and support sectors.

Facilitators

Systemic facilitators: Government incentives and supportive policies have played a vital role in promoting the commencement and completion of EWYL programs. Financial incentives for employers, such as wage subsidies and hiring bonuses, along with training subsidies and travel allowances for EWYL participants, help reduce cost barriers and encourage participation.[156] For example, Australia's new Australian Apprenticeship Priority List (which includes traineeships) explicitly includes occupations in Aged Care and Disability Services, Health and ECEC, making employers and trainees in these fields eligible for additional support under the national incentive system.[157] These targeted incentive programs can encourage more commencements and assist EWYL participants with cost-of-living pressures.[158] Broader campaigns to promote the value of EWYL models, can enhance the perception of these pathways as legitimate career options. This, in turn, can increase community and school engagement with vocational pathways.[159] National and state initiatives, such as the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network, offer mentoring and navigation support. This assistance can improve completion rates by helping apprentices access support services when they encounter difficulties.[160] Strengthening these

[156] Universities Australia, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Australian Industry Group, Business Council of Australia, & Australian Collaborative Education Network. (2015). *The national strategy on work integrated learning in university education.* https://www.acen.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/National-WIL-Strategy-in-university-education-032015.pdf (accessed June 19, 2025)

[157] HumanAbility. (2024). *Workforce Plan 2024.* https://humanability.com.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/WFP/Workforce%20Plan%202024.pdf (accessed June 19, 2025)

[158] Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2025). *Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System: Final Report.* https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/16795/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report/39422/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report/pdf (accessed June 25, 2025)

[159] VOCEDplus. (2023). *Focus on apprenticeships and traineeships: An update on key issues.* https://www.voced.edu.au/focus-apprenticeships-and-traineeships-update-key-issues (accessed June 19, 2025)

[160] Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2025). *Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System: Final Report.* https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/16795/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report/39422/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report/pdf (accessed June 25, 2025)

support services (especially for vulnerable learners such as those with disabilities and remote learners) has been a recent focus to boost completion rates.[161]

Institutional facilitators: A supportive workplace and an effective training environment are crucial for enhancing the retention and competitiveness of EWYL programs. Research indicates that positive relationships with supervisors and colleagues, providing adequate on-the-job training, and offering a diverse range of work tasks are all factors that contribute to higher rates of successful program completions.[162] Employers that offer robust mentoring during the initial phases of EWYL programs, such as apprenticeships and traineeships, alongside fostering a safe and respectful workplace culture, achieve higher completion rates.[163] Group Training Organisations (GTOs), which employ apprentices and place them with host employers, can facilitate completions by rotating trainees to stable workplaces if issues arise and by supporting small businesses in managing training obligations.[164] Data shows that completion rates under GTOs are higher than small and medium-sized direct employers across both trade and non-trade apprenticeships.[165] While GTOs have traditionally operated primarily in the apprenticeships space, their presence in traineeships – particularly non-trade care and support sectors – is still emerging, presenting a significant opportunity for growth in supporting this sector.[166] Flexible delivery allows apprentices to balance work and study demands. In addition, close collaboration between employers and training providers ensures that the curriculum aligns with real workplace needs, thereby enhancing skill development and apprentice confidence.

Individual-level facilitators: At the individual level, the personal attributes and support systems of EWYL participants significantly influence their likelihood of success. One key facilitator is intrinsic motivation, along with clear career goals. EWYL participants who enter with a genuine interest or passion for the occupation are more likely to succeed. Studies have shown that having an intrinsic interest in the field is a primary motivator for both beginning and completing a program.[167] A robust personal support network is another facilitator. Support from family, friends, or mentors provides encouragement and practical help, such as a place to live, transport, or simply moral support. This is crucial, given that EWYL participants often juggle work, study, and very modest starter wages.[168] Resilience and life skills, such as

[161] Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). (2024). *Apprenticeship Support Services Outcomes Fact Sheet.* https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/16207/apprenticeship-support-services-outcomes-factsheet/37154/apprenticeship-support-services-outcomes-factsheet/pdf (accessed June 19, 2025)

[162] VOCEDplus. (2023). *Focus on apprenticeships and traineeships: An update on key issues.* https://www.voced.edu.au/focus-apprenticeships-and-traineeships-update-key-issues (accessed June 19, 2025)

[163] Ibid.

[164] Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2025). *Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System: Final Report.* https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/16795/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report/39422/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report/pdf (accessed June 25, 2025)

[165] O'Dwyer, L., & Korbel, P. (2019). *Completion rates for group training organisations and direct employers: How do they compare?* National Centre for Vocational Education Research. ISBN 978-1-925717-38-9. https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/7456220/Completion-rates-for-group-training-organisations.pdf (accessed June 20, 2025)

[166] GAN Australia and Apprenticeship Employment Network. (2024). *Discussion paper: Victorian Schools, TAFE and Apprenticeships via GTOs are key to improving our critical skill shortages by 2030.* https://aen.org.au/wp-content/uploads/AEN-Victorian-Government-VET-GTO-Discussion-Paper-Nov2024.pdf (accessed June 26, 2025)

[167] Andrahannadi, U., & Griffin, T. (2025). *Effective student support: Enabling the learner journey - Good practice guide.* National Centre for Vocational Education Research. ISBN 978-1-922801-29-6. https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0042/9696327/Effective_student_support_enabling_the_learner_journey_good_practice_guide_R.pdf (accessed June 20, 2025)

[168] National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). (2016). *Providing social support for apprentices: Good practice guide.* https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0029/59483/Social-support-for-apprentices_GPG.pdf (accessed June 20, 2025)

time management, communication, and coping strategies, also enable EWYL participants to push through tough periods. Those with more maturity or prior work experience often find it easier to adapt to the discipline of regular work hours and responsibilities, however, conversely may be less able to sustain themselves on a traineeship wage. Research shows that prior exposure to the sector can significantly enhance learners' success. For instance, completing a school-based VET program in a related field provides a glimpse into the work environment and expectations, setting them up for success.[169]

Barriers

Low wages and financial strain: A significant barrier for many EWYL participants is the low starting wage. This financial challenge not only discourages potential entrants but also leads to higher dropout rates. For example, apprentices and trainees receive lower wages than fully qualified workers. In sectors like caregiving, which are predominantly female and already offer comparatively low pay, training wages can create considerable financial strain for participants.[170] Research has found that many young people are not attracted to EWYL models because they perceive the pay in these jobs to be too low compared to other careers, and those who do start often cite the training wage as a main difficulty in continuing.[171] Beyond wages, funding models in certain sectors, such as human services, create structural barriers. Many care and support services are government-funded or NDIS-funded with fixed budgets, making it difficult for employers to allocate additional funds to support apprentice or trainee wages, provide allocated time for mentoring or backfill their position on study days.

Unpaid training requirements: For those undertaking training that includes unpaid mandatory work placements, this can also be a significant barrier. Many qualifications in these fields require students to complete extensive practical placements without compensation. This model, prevalent in health and social care, forces learners to manage living expenses without income during their placements, leading to decreased participation and higher attrition rates. The HumanAbility 2024 Workforce Plan highlights that the lack of EWYL models exacerbates workforce shortages, as well as financial barriers related to unpaid placements deterring students from enrolling or completing their training. Unlike apprenticeships that provide higher starting wages during training and with higher earning potential on completion, the current structure of many care qualifications results in financial strain, prompting many potential candidates to withdraw or forgo enrolment altogether.[172]

Complexity of the apprentice and traineeship system: Administrative burdens, red tape, and inconsistent state regulations discourage employers and confuse prospective apprentices and

[169] Waugh, J., Lees, M., & Hansen, C. (2025). *Understanding the value of pre-apprenticeships.* National Centre for Vocational Education Research. ISBN 978-1-922801-27-2.
https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0040/9696460/Understanding_the_value_of_pre_apprenticeships_R.pdf (accessed June 20, 2025)
[170] HumanAbility. (2024). *Workforce Plan 2024.*
https://humanability.com.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/WFP/Workforce%20Plan%202024.pdf (accessed June1 9, 2025)
[171] Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2022). *Australian Apprenticeship Background Paper.*
https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/14760/australian-apprenticeship-services-and-supports-discussion-paper/31053/australian-apprenticeship-services-and-supports-discussion-paper/pdf (accessed June 19, 2025)
[172] HumanAbility. (2024). *Workforce Plan 2024.*
https://humanability.com.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/WFP/Workforce%20Plan%202024.pdf

trainees.[173] Societal perceptions have long viewed vocational training as a "second-best" option to university, limiting its promotion in schools, particularly in sectors like childcare and community services.[174] National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) research indicates that vocational pathways are frequently under-promoted, contributing to the invisibility of EWYL options, such as traineeships, for young people.[175] Although public perception has improved thanks to government and industry-led campaigns, stigma and low pay continue to deter interest, with better-paid alternatives attracting youth away from vocational pathways.[176]

Poor workplace conditions and support: Unsafe or unsupportive work environments are the leading causes of apprenticeship and traineeship non-completion. Factors such as inadequate supervision, lack of mentoring, toxic team cultures, and harassment significantly increase the likelihood of withdrawal among EWYL learners.[177] For example, Safe Work Australia found that 35.2% of non-completing apprentices and trainees reported bullying compared to 21.2% of completers with bullying strongly linked to cancellation.[178] The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) also reported that 14% of women and 7% of men apprentices cited "poor working conditions" as their main reason for quitting. Women were twice as likely to face harassment and exclusion in male-dominated trades.[179]

[173] Misko, J., & Wibrow, B. (2020). *Traditional trade apprenticeships: Learnings from the field.* National Centre for Vocational Education Research. ISBN 978-1-925717-44-0. (accessed June 19, 2025)
https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0040/9463567/Traditional_trade_apprenticeships_learnings_from_the_field.pdf (accessed June 19, 2025)

[174] National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). (2023). *Inquiry into the perceptions and status of vocational education and training.* Submission by Simon Walker, Managing Director. https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0052/9684997/Sub036-National-Centre-for-Vocational-Education-Research.pdf (accessed June 19, 2025)

[175] Misko, J., Lees, M., & Chew, E. (2021, October 14). *VET for secondary school students: Insights and outcomes.* National Centre for Vocational Education Research. ISBN 978-1-925717-81-5.
https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0044/9668942/VET_for_secondary_school_students_insights_and_outcomes_F.pdf (accessed June 19, 2025)

[176] Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2022). *Australian Apprenticeship Background Paper.*
https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/14760/australian-apprenticeship-services-and-supports-discussion-paper/31053/australian-apprenticeship-services-and-supports-discussion-paper/pdf (accessed June 20, 2025)

[177] National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). (2019). *Apprentice and trainee experience and destinations 2019.*
https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0037/8379181/Apprentice_and_trainee_experience_and_destinations_2019.pdf (accessed June 20, 2025)

[178] Safe Work Australia. (2023). *Data insights snapshot: WHS outcomes for apprentices and trainees.*
https://data.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-07/Data-Snapshot_WHS-outcomes-apprentices-trainees_July2023.pdf (accessed June 20, 2025)

[179] Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). (2024). *Strategic review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive system: Final report – Fact sheet for women apprentices in male-dominated trades.*
https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dewr.gov.au%2Fdownload%2F16802%2Fstrategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-fact-sheet-women-apprentices-_male%2F39735%2Fstrategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-fact-sheet-women-apprentices-male%2Fdocx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK (accessed June 20, 2025)

Chapter 4: Examination of EWYL Models in Hospitality, Retail, Business, and Construction Sectors

This chapter examines EWYL models in hospitality, retail, business and construction, comparing apprenticeship and traineeship commencements and completions with those in HumanAbility sectors. By identifying differences in commencements and completions, the analysis provides a foundation for future research into how lessons from these industries may inform the application of EWYL in the HumanAbility context.

In sectors such as hospitality, retail, business and construction, EWYL models have consistently delivered strong outcomes in training completions, job readiness, and workforce supply. Examination of the usage and success of these models in other sectors could offer valuable insights for strengthening their application in the care and support sector. This is not to say that these industries, by comparison to HumanAbility sectors, are not facing workforce demands, but care and support roles have been among the most urgent skill shortages in Australia in recent years.[180] The Aged Care and Disability Services sectors, for example, are expected to require thousands of new workers in the coming years. According to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA), there is an anticipated annual shortfall of 30,000 to 35,000 direct care workers.[181] ECEC is also experiencing ongoing shortages of qualified educators,[182] which threaten the availability of services. These staffing shortages in HumanAbility sectors have been worsened by an aging population and policy changes, such as increased care standards that demand more staff.

Other industries report skills gaps of a different nature. Construction trades, such as carpenters, plumbers, and electricians, have faced well-documented shortages in recent years.[183] In 2023, the Technician and Trades Workers category experienced the most significant shortages, with 50% of these occupations evaluated as being in shortage (102 out of 205 occupations assessed).[184] Hospitality is also experiencing significant shortages, particularly of skilled chefs and cooks. These professions have been officially recognised as in short supply; for example, more than one-third of chef roles and a quarter of cook roles are filled by migrants, pointing to a local supply gap.[185] The retail industry, employing approximately 1.3 million Australians,[186] continues to struggle with staffing shortages. Despite a decline in job vacancies from 46,100 in August 2022 to 38,500 in August 2023, this decrease is primarily

[180] Health Services Union. (2024). *Making traineeships work for the care and support economy: Submission: Australian Apprenticeship Incentive Scheme Review.* https://hsu.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Apprentice-Review-submission-HSU.pdf (accessed June 30, 2025)

[181] Committee for Economic Development of Australia. (2022). *Duty of care: Aged care sector in crisis.* https://www.ceda.com.au/getmedia/a7bc2f9e-4999-4c6b-9795-0eff89f0b94b/Duty-of-Care-Aged-Care-Sector-in-Crisis.pdf (accessed June 30, 2025)

[182] Jobs and Skills Australia. (2023). *2023 Skills Priority List: Key findings report.* https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/2023%20SPL%20Key%20Findings%20Report_0.pdf (accessed June 30, 2025)

[183] Ibid.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Service and Creative Skills Australia. (2024). *Shaping Tomorrow: Workforce Planning Report, Hospitality.* https://sacsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Hospitality_Full_Report_2024_Web_Ready.pdf (accessed June 30, 2025)

[186] Vandenbroek, P. (2023). *Snapshot of employment by industry, 2023.* https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Parliamentary_Library/Research/FlagPost/2023/December/Employment_by_industry_2023 (accessed July 07, 2025

attributed to retailers reducing hiring activities in response to rising operational costs, rather than an easing of labour shortages.[187] Workforce shortages are not just affecting the retail sector; they are also impacting businesses across the board. According to the Australian Industry Group (Ai Group), a staggering 90% of businesses reported being affected by staffing shortages in 2023, with 36% of those businesses stating that these shortages would hinder their business growth.[188]

Hospitality

The hospitality sector, including restaurants, chefs and hotels, utilises several EWYL pathways. For example, the 3-year Australian Apprenticeship for chefs (cookery), which leads to a Certificate III/IV in Commercial Cookery or Patisserie.[189] Apprentice chefs work under skilled chefs while attending off-site training to learn culinary theory and technique. Another common pathway is hospitality traineeships, for example, Certificate II in Hospitality,[190] for roles such as food and beverage attendants, hospitality all-rounders, or hotel receptionists. School-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SBATs) are also popular in hospitality. For example, high school students may enter into a training agreement that typically lasts around five years, starting with 2 years of part-time study, followed by 3 years of full-time study after completing the Higher School Certificate (HSC).[191] There are hospitality traineeships that provide employment pathways to careers in restaurants, hotels, or pubs. These programs typically last up to 24 months and are offered at Certificate III levels.[192] These apprenticeships and traineeships are quite popular. The Department of Employment's Australian Jobs 2015 report highlights the Accommodation and Food Services sector as a promising entry-level option for those entering the workforce.[193] Notably, the report reveals that 3 in every 5 workers in this industry lack post-school qualifications.[194] Furthermore, approximately 24,000 young workers in this sector are apprentices or trainees. Additionally, workers in this sector are more likely to be employed part-time compared to other industries, allowing them to balance work and study effectively.[195]

[187] Australian Retailers Association. (2023). *Retail vacancies decline year-on-year as retailers feel financial pinch.* https://www.retail.org.au/media/retail-vacancies-decline-year-on-year-as-retailers-feel-financial-pinch#:~:text=Australia%E2%80%99s%20peak%20retail%20body%2C%20the%20Australian%20Retailers%20Association,investment%20in%20jobs%20due%20to%20challenging%20trading%20conditions (accessed July 07, 2025)

[188] Australian Industry Group. (n.d.). *Deep dive: Solving the skills shortage crisis.* https://www.aigroup.com.au/resourcecentre/research-economics/economics-intelligence/2023/solving-the-skills-shortage-crisis/#:~:text=New%20Ai%20Group%20research%20shows%20the%20extent%20of,have%20become%20all%20too%20common%20in%20Australian%20business (accessed July 07, 2025)

[189] Holmesglen. *Certificate III in Commercial Cookery (Course Code SIT30821): Apprenticeship.* https://www.holmesglen.edu.au/explore-courses/hospitality-tourism-and-events/cookery/vocational-education/certificate-iii-in-commercial-cookery-apprenticeship (accessed July 07, 2025)

[190] NSW Government. (2023). *Hospitality – Certificate II.* https://education.nsw.gov.au/schooling/students/career-and-study-pathways/school-based-apprenticeships-and-traineeships/traineeships/certificate-ii-hospitality (accessed July 07, 2025)

[191] Evolution. (n.d.). *Smart and Skilled – School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships SBATs.* https://evolution.edu.au/courses/smart-and-skilled-school-based-apprenticeships-and-traineeships-sbats/ (accessed July 07, 2025)

[192] South West TAFE. (n.d.). *Food and Hospitality: Certificate III in Hospitality (Traineeship).* https://www.swtafe.edu.au/courses/food-hospitality/certificate-iii-in-hospitality-traineeship (accessed July 07, 2025)

[193] Department of Employment. (2015). *Australian Jobs 2015.* https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/australian_jobs_2015.pdf (accessed July 08, 2025)

[194] Ibid.

[195] Ibid.

Retail

The retail sector, for example, supermarkets, stores and customer service outlets, has widely adopted traineeships as a primary EWYL model. Retail Traineeships at Certificate II/III level generally involve a commitment to undertake at least 100 days of paid employment and training, covering skills in sales, merchandising, customer service, and retail operations.[196] Most trainee enrolments in the sector are concentrated in major cities, reflecting Australia's population distribution. However, there is growing interest in regional areas for Pharmacy Sales Assistants and Technicians.[197] Retail is Australia's second-largest employer, with sales workers being the most common occupation.[198] Approximately one out of every three workers in the industry are between 15 and 24 years old, accounting for 411,300 employment opportunities for young individuals.[199] The workforce is also mainly female, and nearly half of the workers are employed part-time.[200]

Business

The business sector here is broad, covering office-based roles, administration, finance and professional services. EWYL models in this sector range from entry-level traineeships to high-level cadetships and internships. For example, Business Administration Traineeships (Certificate III in Business) are common in organisations. The Certificate III in Business (BSB30120) encompasses a variety of skills pertinent to business functions, such as data entry.[201] Employers in industries such as finance, healthcare (specifically for administrative positions), and education (for example, school office trainees) utilise these traineeships. They enable employers to bring in entry-level staff and train them to company standards in tasks like data entry, accounts payable, or record-keeping. Moving up the skill ladder, Cadetships and Sponsored Programs play a major role in professional fields. A well-known example is Accounting Cadetships, wherein large accounting and auditing firms have historically offered cadetship programs for school leavers where the cadet works full-time in the firm in a support role and studies a commerce or accounting degree part-time, often funded or reimbursed by the employer. For example, the Pitcher Partners 2026 Cadetship Program provides accounting cadets with an opportunity to blend part-time coursework with hands-on, relevant work experience.[202] Eligibility includes candidates who are in Year 12 and set to complete their Higher School Certificate (HSC) in 2025, or who have finished their first year of university in 2025.[203] Over the program's duration, the cadet gains practical experience in auditing or bookkeeping while earning their degree, effectively an earn and learn path into an accountant role.

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[196] NSW Government. (2023). *Career and study pathways: Retail Certificate III.* https://education.nsw.gov.au/schooling/students/career-and-study-pathways/school-based-apprenticeships-and-traineeships/traineeships/certificate-iii-retail#Commitment2 (accessed July 08, 2025)

[197] Service and Creative Skills Australia. (2024). *Shaping Tomorrow: Workforce Planning Report, Retail.* https://sacsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Retail_Full_Report_2024_Compressed.pdf (accessed July 08, 2025)

[198] Department of Employment. (2015). *Australian Jobs 2015.* https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/australian_jobs_2015.pdf (accessed July 08, 2025)

[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Queensland Academy of Technology. (2024). *BSB30120 Certificate III in Business Administration Course.* https://qat.qld.edu.au/domestic/business/bsb30120-domestic-certificate-iii-in-business/ (accessed July 09, 2025)

[202] Pitcher Partners. (n.d.). *2026 Cadetship Program. Pitcher's Partner.* https://www.pitcher.com.au/job-offer/pitcher-partners-2026-cadetship-program/ (accessed July 09, 2025)

[203] Ibid.

Internships and graduate programs are also prolific in business fields. University students in business, finance, IT, or similar often undertake paid internships during summer or as part of their course requirements, working in companies as interns. Although shorter in duration (a few weeks to months), these internships let students earn a wage and gain real-world experience that often leads to improved job readiness. For example, NAB Australia's Summer Intern Program 2025–2026 is an 8-week paid program designed to give students insights into the banking and finance industry.[204] To undertake these internships, candidates are usually in the final year of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree and nearing the completion of their studies.[205] Some employers, such as NAB Australia, use internships as a pipeline for their graduate programs, wherein they identify high-performing interns and later recruit them into full-time graduate trainee roles after graduation.[206]

Construction

The construction industry is often held up as the classic example of the apprenticeship model's success. Trade apprenticeships in construction trades, such as carpentry, electrical, plumbing, and bricklaying, provide a foundational training route. These are typically 3-4 year programs leading to a Certificate III qualification and a skilled tradesperson status.[207] In construction, completing an apprenticeship is not only a pathway to a job but often a necessity to become licensed or fully qualified in the trade. In addition to trade apprenticeships, construction also employs traineeships in specific sub-trades or related roles. For instance, civil construction traineeships are available for plant operators or road pavers, typically lasting approximately 1-2 years.[208] Trainees completing these traineeships are usually qualified with a Certificate II in Civil Construction.[209] The industry also supports Civil Construction traineeships for beginner First Nations employees (Level 1), acting as a starting point for First Nations trainees to enter the sector and leading to a Certificate I in Resources and Infrastructure Operations.[210]

Higher-level cadetships also exist in the sector, especially for roles that require tertiary education.[211] Large construction contractors and engineering firms offer cadetships to university students in civil engineering, construction management, or quantity surveying. A construction cadet might work as a cadet site manager or health safety and environment cadet part-time while studying, gradually taking on more responsibility as they progress in their degree.[212] Upon graduation, they transition into roles like site engineer or project manager. Moreover, the sector has graduate programs for engineers and project managers, which are structured much like other industries' graduate programs, i.e. rotational

[204] NAB Australia. (n.d.). *NAB Summer Intern Program 2025-2026.* https://careers.nab.com.au/jobs/f645d243-9e24-49bd-aac7-32e4e7ffde95 (accessed July 14, 2025)

[205] Ibid.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Fair Work Ombudsman. (n.d.). *Apprentices in the building and construction industry.* https://www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/building-and-construction-industry/apprentices-in-the-building-and-construction-industry#:~:text=Find%20out%20about%20entitlements%20for%20apprentices%20working%20in,can%20take%203%20to%204%20years%20to%20complete (accessed July 14, 2025)

[208] Directions. (2022). *Workforce Development Apprenticeships Training Careers: Civil Construction Traineeships.* https://www.directionswa.com.au/traineeships-perth-wa/civil-construction-traineeships (accessed July 15, 2025)

[209] Ibid.

[210]Ibid.

[211] Construction Pathways. (n.d.). *Cadetships & Graduate Programs: Learn on the job while you study.* https://constructionpathways.com.au/entry-pathways/cadetships-graduate-programs/ (accessed July 15, 2025)

[212] MIRVAC. (n.d.). *Mirvac's 2025 Cadetship Program.* https://www.mirvac.com/careers/Cadetship (accessed July 15, 2025)

on-the-job training over a couple of years.[213] Lastly, pre-apprenticeships, which are short VET courses with some work experience taken before an apprenticeship, are common in construction. For instance, a Certificate II in Building and Construction Pre-apprenticeship (Carpentry) offers a solid foundation prior to beginning a trade apprenticeship, assisting apprentices in determining whether carpentry is the right career choice for them.[214] These courses prepare candidates for the full apprenticeship and, while not earning-while-learning per se, they contribute to the apprenticeship pipeline and improve success once on the job.

Comparing apprenticeship and traineeship commencements and completions across HumanAbility sectors with other industry sectors

In comparing HumanAbility sectors with the previously mentioned industry sectors, it becomes evident that each sector experiences differing rates of apprenticeship and traineeship commencements and completions, influenced by factors like industry demand, training pathways, and workforce retention. Commencements denote the count of apprenticeship or traineeship training contracts that begin within a specific timeframe, whereas completions indicate the number of such contracts where all the required conditions have been fulfilled during that period.[215]

Figures 2 and 3 below illustrate apprenticeship and traineeship commencement and completion data across hospitality, retail, business and construction in comparison to traineeships in HumanAbility sectors. Commencement data shows that between 2020 and 2021, apprenticeship and traineeship commencements in the Retail, Hospitality, Business and Construction sectors outpaced those in HumanAbility sectors. However, by 2021 and continuing into 2023, a notable shift occurred, wherein the Children's Education and Care sector experienced a significant surge in commencements, recording 670 more new trainees than Retail in 2022 and then significantly higher numbers of trainees than, Retail, Hospitality and Business, in 2023 and 2024, reflecting growing demand for early childhood educators and targeted policy interventions such as Fee-Free TAFE and funded Cert III and Diploma pathways.

In 2020, apprenticeship and traineeship completions in the Retail, Hospitality, Business and Construction sectors were generally higher than those recorded across HumanAbility sectors. The sole exception was Children's Education and Care, which surpassed Retail by 165 completions, highlighting early momentum in workforce development within that sector.

Throughout 2021 and 2022, completions remain stronger in Retail, Hospitality, Business and Construction overall. However, Children's Education and Care now outperformed Retail and Hospitality, reflecting sustained investment in ECEC training pipelines and the impact of supportive funding.

In 2023, Construction led completions across all sectors. Children's Education and Care further consolidated its position as a high-performing HumanAbility sector in terms of traineeship completions, however, fell behind Business, Hospitality, and Retail.

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[213] Construction Pathways. (n.d.). *Cadetships & Graduate Programs: Learn on the job while you study.* https://constructionpathways.com.au/entry-pathways/cadetships-graduate-programs/ (accessed July 15, 2025)
[214] Chisholm. (2025). *Certificate II in Building and Construction Pre-apprenticeship: 22614VIC Carpentry.* https://www.chisholm.edu.au/Courses/Certificate-II/Building-and-Construction-Preapprenticeship-Carpentry (accessed July 15, 2025)
[215] National Centre for Vocational Education Research. (2025). *Apprentices and trainees: Terms and definitions.* https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0040/9695317/Terms-and-definitions-National-Apprentice-and-Trainee-Collection.pdf (accessed July 15, 2025)

By 2024, Construction remained dominant in completions, but Children's Education and Care returned to significantly exceeding completions in Retail and Hospitality.

Figure 2: Apprenticeship and Traineeship Commencements Data across Hospitality, Retail, Business and Construction in Comparison to Traineeships in HumanAbility sectors

Commencements 2020

Category	Value
Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework	23,265
Business Services	24,215
Tourism, Travel and Hospitality	13,200
Children's Education & Care	8,325
Retail Services	9,815
Aged Care & Disability Support	3,160
Health	2,700
Sports & Recreation	1,445
Human (Community) Services	1,140

Commencements 2021

Category	Value
Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework	29,880
Business Services	33,195
Tourism, Travel and Hospitality	17,570
Children's Education & Care	10,740
Retail Services	11,875
Aged Care & Disability Support	4,875
Health	3,770
Sports & Recreation	1,855
Human (Community) Services	1,560

Commencements 2022

Category	Value
Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework	30,700
Business Services	36,420
Tourism, Travel and Hospitality	19,090
Children's Education & Care	13,560
Retail Services	12,890
Aged Care & Disability Support	6,600
Health	4,685
Sports & Recreation	2,080
Human (Community) Services	1,570

Commencements 2023

Category	Value
Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework	24,630
Business Services	11,560
Tourism, Travel and Hospitality	11,825
Children's Education & Care	14,930
Retail Services	5,655
Aged Care & Disability Support	5,375
Health	3,340
Sports & Recreation	965
Human (Community) Services	1,195

Commencements 2024

Category	Value
Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework	22,000
Business Services	9,930
Tourism, Travel and Hospitality	9,420
Children's Education & Care	13,250
Retail Services	4,290
Aged Care & Disability Support	4,045
Health	2,975
Sports & Recreation	925
Human (Community) Services	1,100

Legend:
- Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework
- Business Services
- Children's Education & Care
- Aged Care & Disability Support
- Sports & Recreation
- Tourism, Travel and Hospitality
- Retail Services
- Health
- Human (Community) Services

Figure 3: Apprenticeship and Traineeship Completions Data across Hospitality, Retail, Business and Construction in Comparison to Traineeships in HumanAbility sectors

Completions 2020

Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework	10,925
Business Services	8,265
Tourism, Travel and Hospitality	5,825
Children's Education & Care	4,685
Retail Services	4,520
Aged Care & Disability Support	1,100
Health	1,120
Sports & Recreation	1,225
Human (Community) Services	285

Completions 2021

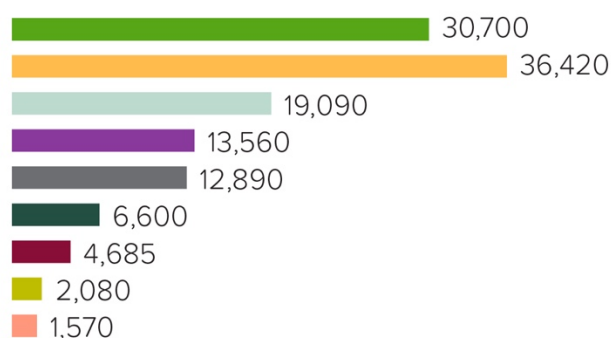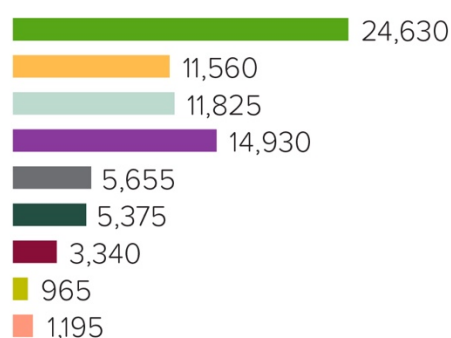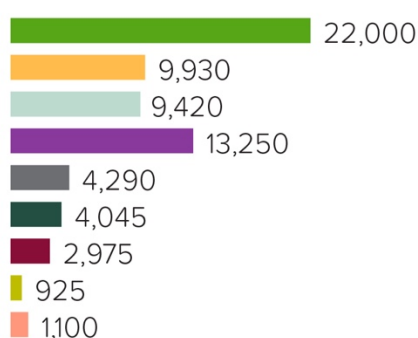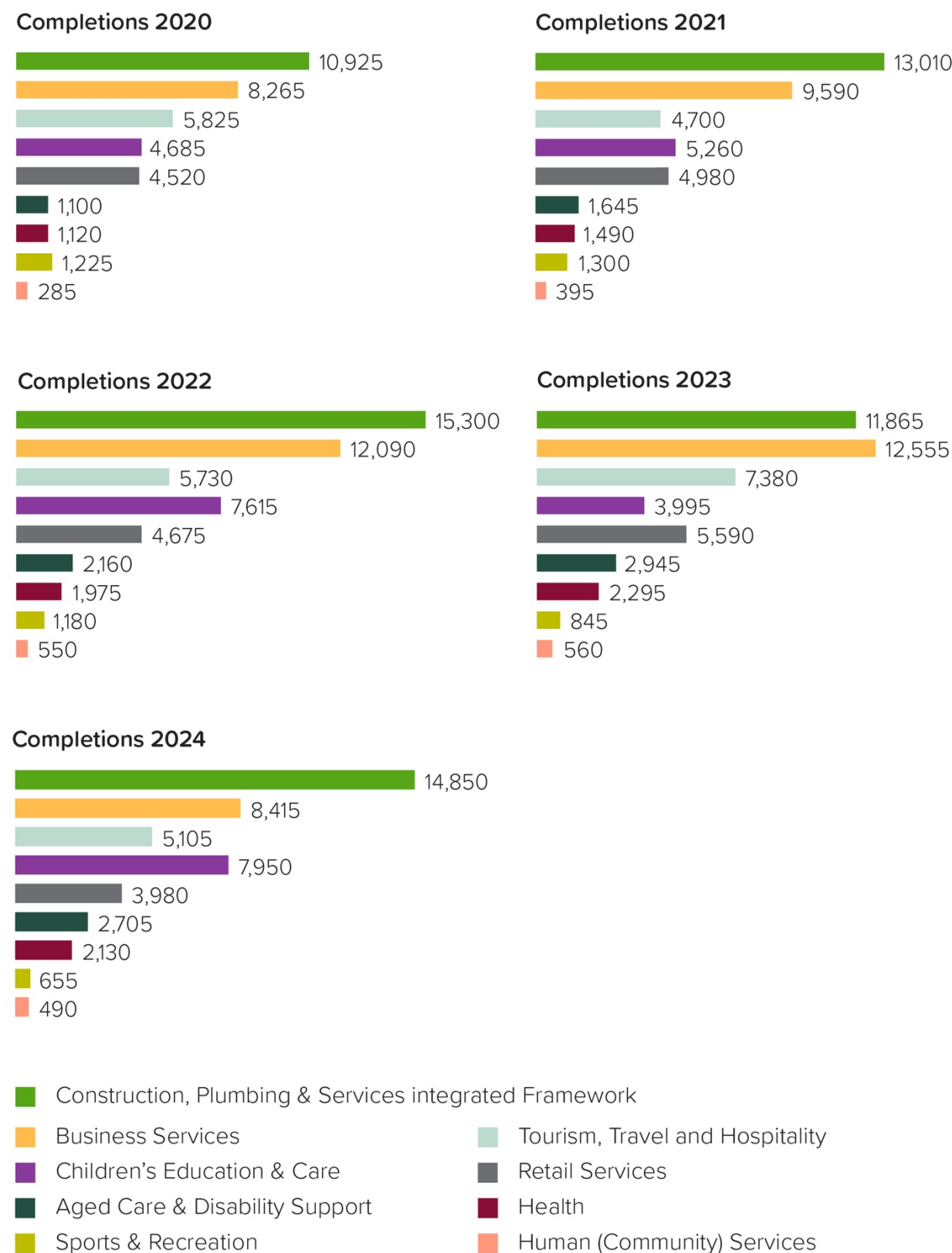|	
Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework	13,010
Business Services	9,590
Tourism, Travel and Hospitality	4,700
Children's Education & Care	5,260
Retail Services	4,980
Aged Care & Disability Support	1,645
Health	1,490
Sports & Recreation	1,300
Human (Community) Services	395

Completions 2022

Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework	15,300
Business Services	12,090
Tourism, Travel and Hospitality	5,730
Children's Education & Care	7,615
Retail Services	4,675
Aged Care & Disability Support	2,160
Health	1,975
Sports & Recreation	1,180
Human (Community) Services	550

Completions 2023

Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework	11,865
Business Services	12,555
Tourism, Travel and Hospitality	7,380
Children's Education & Care	3,995
Retail Services	5,590
Aged Care & Disability Support	2,945
Health	2,295
Sports & Recreation	845
Human (Community) Services	560

Completions 2024

Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework	14,850
Business Services	8,415
Tourism, Travel and Hospitality	5,105
Children's Education & Care	7,950
Retail Services	3,980
Aged Care & Disability Support	2,705
Health	2,130
Sports & Recreation	655
Human (Community) Services	490

Legend:
- Construction, Plumbing & Services integrated Framework
- Business Services
- Children's Education & Care
- Aged Care & Disability Support
- Sports & Recreation
- Tourism, Travel and Hospitality
- Retail Services
- Health
- Human (Community) Services

Note 1: NCVER does not split training packages by sector. For example, the Human Services training package includes qualifications for Human (Community) Services, Children's Education and Care, and Aged Care and Disability Services sectors.

Note 2: The HumanAbility sectors have been separated from the training packages using a reference table, while the comparison training packages have not been split due to a lack of a similar reference.

Note 3: HumanAbility sectors do not utilise apprenticeships, only traineeships.

Source: NCVER DataBuilder, Apprentices and Trainees, 2020-2024

Given the sustained performance of the in Retail, Hospitality, Business and Construction sectors in traineeship commencements and completions across multiple years, it is both timely and strategic to examine these industries for transferable best practices that could strengthen EWYL models in HumanAbility sectors.

Chapter 5: Stakeholder roles in the Australian Apprenticeship System

This chapter begins by outlining the key stakeholders in the Australian Apprenticeship System and their respective roles, including EWYL learners, employers, training providers, government and support services. It also traces the apprentice and trainee journey from recruitment to completion and examines the role of the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) in providing guidance, mentoring and administrative support throughout.

A complex ecosystem of stakeholders supports the journey for learners participating in EWYL models under their various forms, and mapping the apprenticeship system, which underpins the models, reveals how each stakeholder contributes at different points. (From this point forward, reference to learners should be taken to mean apprentices or trainees).

EWYL Learners: Learners are the centre of the journey, typically in the form of an apprentice or trainee who is both a learner and an employee. The user journey mapping (see Figure 2 below) focuses on their experience from initial contact to eventual qualification. They bring their motivation and effort, engage with all other stakeholders, and provide feedback that can improve the system.

Employers (host organisations): Employers play a central role, entering into a formal contract of training with the learner, agreeing to employ them for a fixed period and provide on-the-job training and supervision. In return, the learner commits to work and undertake the required training. Employers must be approved to ensure they can provide a suitable workplace and range of work for the learner's training. Notably, there is an alternative arrangement via GTOs.[216] Employers or GTOs pay the learner's wages, often supported by junior or training wage provisions under national awards, and allow them to attend off-job training.

Training Providers: An RTO, including a public TAFE institute and private RTOs, delivers the formal off-the-job training component of the EWYL model. The training plan is agreed between the RTO, employer, and learner to ensure the content aligns with workplace requirements. State governments often subsidise course tuition for learners as part of their skills funding, meaning they often pay little or no fees in priority occupations. This funding is supported by federal-state agreements. Upon completion, learners receive a national qualification. Data shows that those who complete the model have significantly better employment outcomes than non-completers.[217]

Government agencies: Australian apprenticeship system is federated, meaning both federal and state governments have defined responsibilities.[218] State/Territory Training Authorities (STAs) legally administer apprenticeships. They establish training contract laws, register and regulate training

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[216] National Centre for Vocational Education Research. (2022). *Getting to know VET overview: Apprenticeships and traineeships.* VET Knowledge Bank, NCVER, Adelaide. https://www.voced.edu.au/vet-knowledge-bank-getting-know-vet-overviews-apprenticeships-and-traineeships

[217] National Centre for Vocational Education Research. (2021). *Digging into Australia's apprenticeship system [Media release].* https://www.ncver.edu.au/news-and-events/media-releases/digging-into-australias-apprenticeship-system

[218] National Apprenticeship Association. (2022). *A blueprint for strengthening apprenticeships [Technical paper].* Treasury. https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-03/258735_national_australian_apprenticeships_association_supporting_document.pdf

contracts, and fund training organisations, often through public TAFEs or subsidies to private RTOs.[219] The Australian Government, through DEWR, provides overarching policy direction, funding, and support programs. The Commonwealth co-funds vocational training through the National Skills Agreement with states. This agreement, succeeding the previous National Skills Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development (NASWD), crucially funds employer incentives and apprentice supports to drive and increase completion rates.[220] DEWR also oversees the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) and national priority schemes (described below).

Support networks and intermediaries: Beyond the primary triad of trainee, employer, and RTO, a network of support entities assists learners in the EWYL model. AASN providers, contracted by the Commonwealth, offer free support services to employers and learners from pre-commencement to completion, making them a key component of this support system.[221] There are currently seven contracted Apprentice Network Providers (ANPs) operating nationally.[222] Figure 3 below provides a snapshot of their role.

[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Australian Government. (2025). *Apprenticeship support: The Australian Government delivers targeted support to Australian apprentices and their employers.* https://www.dewr.gov.au/australian-apprenticeships/apprenticeship-support
[222] National Apprenticeship Association. (2022). *A blueprint for strengthening apprenticeships [Technical paper].* Treasury. https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-03/258735_national_australian_apprenticeships_association_supporting_document.pdf

Figure 4: Apprentice and trainee journey in the Australian EWYL system
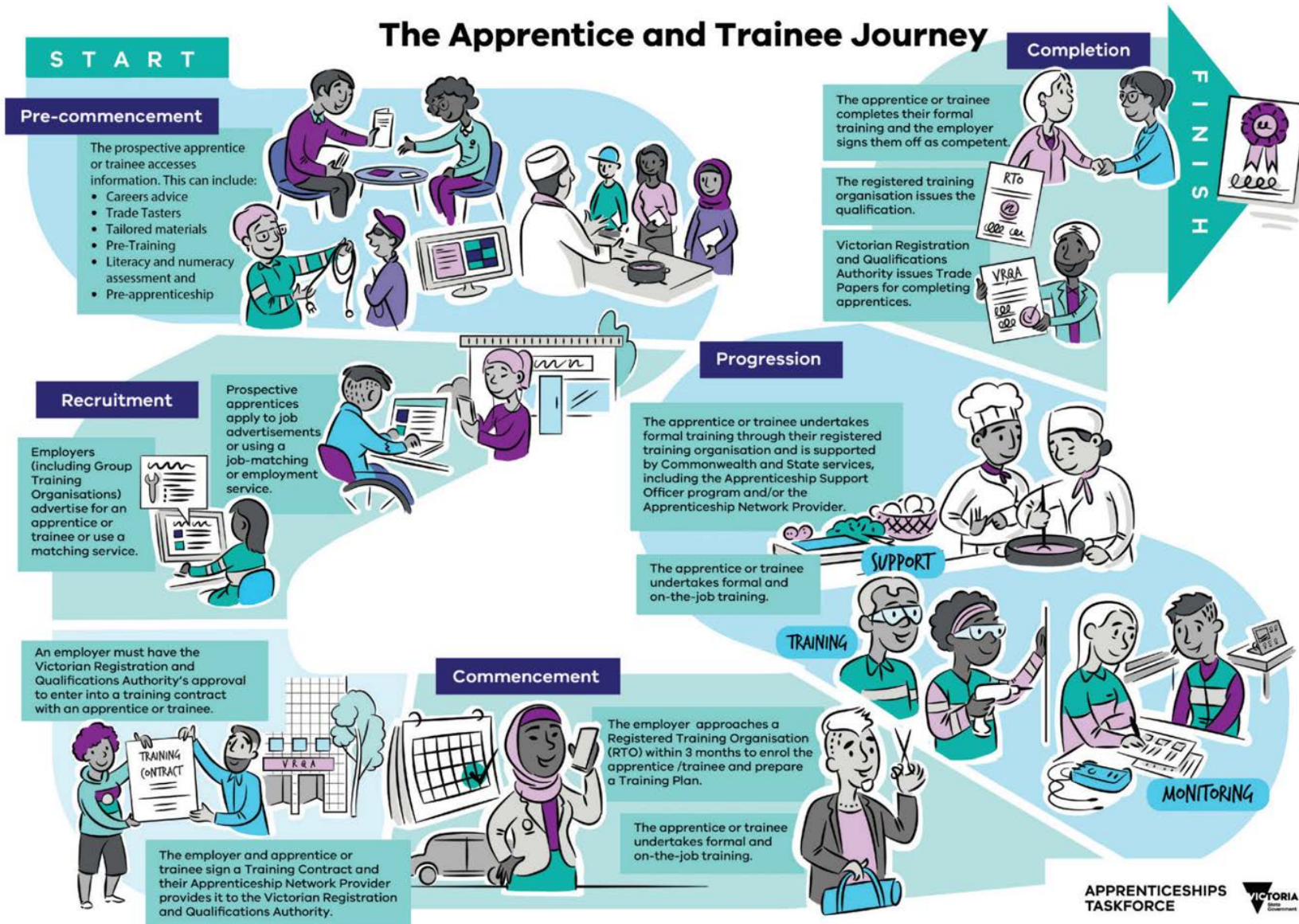
Note: The apprentice and trainee journey mentioned above also parallels the experience of School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships, which includes greater engagement from schools and support from the Head Start program for SBATs in government schools. Source: Apprenticeships Taskforce Final report.

Figure 5: Australian Apprenticeship Support Network: Roles and Responsibilities

TRUSTED PARTNERS
• Enduring relationships with 150,000 employers
• Skills and workforce planning
• 23 years of trusted partnerships

EXPLAINERS
• Demystify the apprenticeship system
• Determine incentive eligibility
• Walking you through how to get started

DELIVERERS
• Administer complex AASN contract requirements - gatekeepers of quality
• Seamlessly deliver government priorities - BAC and SAT
• Digital innovators - Co-design of JR Active and predictive analytics

PROMOTERS
• Visit schools nationally to promote apprenticeships and traineeships
• Visit employers to encourage them to participate
• Gateway services to drive quality commencements

ADVISERS
• Resolving workforce issues
• Coaching appropriate behaviours
• Linking to specialist supports

MENTORS
• Mentor 40,000 apprentices and trainees each year
• Assistance to address complex barriers and issues
• "We've got your back"

Source: National Apprenticeship Association blueprint for strengthening apprenticeships [Technical paper].

AASN providers handle the sign-up of training contracts, ensuring all paperwork between employers, trainees, and state authorities is completed.[223] They also provide ongoing support and mentoring, including regular check-ins, issue resolution, and referrals to additional supports.[224] Over 40,000 apprentices and trainees per year receive mentoring from AASN. AASN staff promote apprenticeships and traineeships in schools and to employers, help match candidates to jobs, and administer government incentive payments as gateways.[225] They bridge the gap between employers, apprentices and trainees, training providers, and government agencies.

Table 7 below provides a visual snapshot of the systems mapping of the Australian apprenticeship system, highlighting the stakeholders involved along with their respective roles and responsibilities.

Table 7: Mapping of the Australian Apprenticeship System

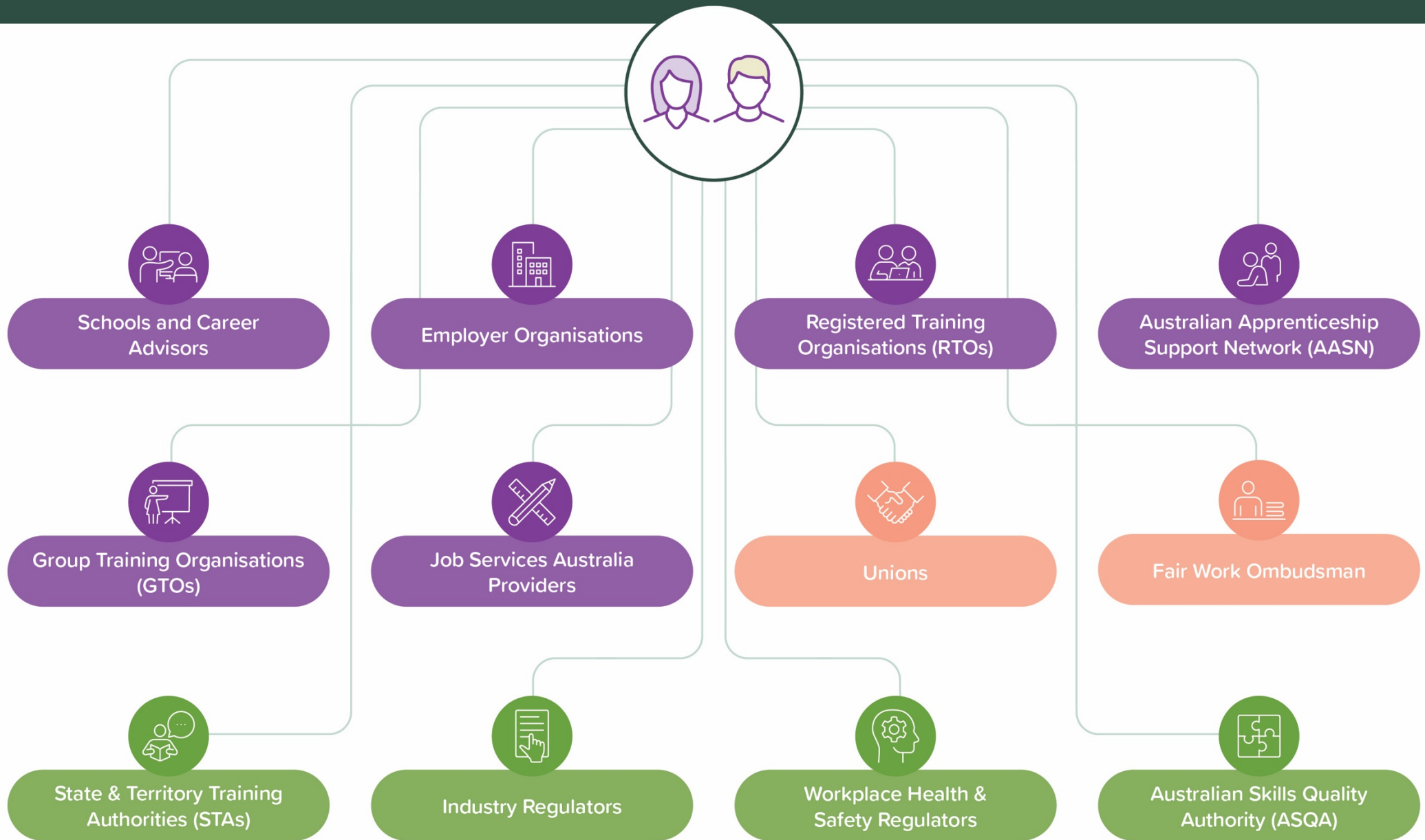| Category	Entity / Stakeholder	Role / Description
Support & Facilitation	Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN)	Provides end-to-end support services to apprentices / trainees and employers, including sign-up, mentoring, job-matching, and ongoing guidance.
Support & Facilitation	Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)	Deliver off-the-job formal training, develop training plans, assess competency, and issue nationally recognised qualifications.
Support & Facilitation	Employer Organisations	Provide guidance and support to employers and ensure they are aware of their obligations under the apprenticeship system.
Support & Facilitation	Group Training Organisations (GTOs)	Employ trainees directly and place them with host employers, simplifying admin and increasing flexibility for SMEs.
Support & Facilitation	Schools and Career Advisors	Support school-based apprenticeships/traineeships and provide guidance to young people about VET pathways.
Support & Facilitation	Job Services Australia Providers	Assist job seekers to connect with apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities and access relevant training pathways.

[223] Government of Western Australia Department of Training and Workforce Development. (2024). *Roles and responsibilities for the Western Australian apprenticeship system.* https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2023-10/ao-factsheet-roles_responsibilities-v18_5_18.pdf
[224] National Apprenticeship Association. (2022, February). *A blueprint for strengthening apprenticeships [Technical paper].* Treasury. https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-03/258735_national_australian_apprenticeships_association_supporting_document.pdf
[225] Ibid.

Rights & Obligations	Unions	Advocate for apprentices' and trainees' rights, workplace safety, pay, entitlements, and workplace conditions.
Rights & Obligations	Fair Work Ombudsman	Enforces compliance with the Fair Work Act, including pay, entitlements, leave, unfair dismissal, and workplace rights.
Compliance & Oversight	State & Territory Training Authorities (STAs)	Approve employers and training contracts, regulate training schemes, oversee delivery and policy (e.g., Skills Canberra, NSW Training Services).
Compliance & Oversight	Industry Regulators	Ensure compliance with industry-specific standards (e.g., electrical safety regulators, construction and licensing authorities).
Compliance & Oversight	Workplace Health and Safety Regulators	Promote and enforce state/territory OHS laws (e.g., SafeWork NSW, NT WorkSafe, WorkSafe WA, WorkSafe QLD).
Compliance & Oversight	Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)	National regulator for RTOs (except for WA and VIC for some providers); ensures quality and compliance with training delivery.

The Australian Apprenticeship System

Schools and Career Advisors

Employer Organisations

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)

Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN)

Group Training Organisations (GTOs)

Job Services Australia Providers

Unions

Fair Work Ombudsman

State & Territory Training Authorities (STAs)

Industry Regulators

Workplace Health & Safety Regulators

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)

Support & Facilitation   Rights & Obligations   Compliance & Oversight

Source: Adapted from the Apprenticeships Taskforce Final report.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter concludes the paper by highlighting the different forms of EWYL models, their global effectiveness, and success stories in HumanAbility sectors. It identifies key barriers to realising EWYL's full potential, outlines strategies to address them, and sets out the next stages of this research.

EWYL models present major opportunities for addressing skills shortages and enhancing employment outcomes across the care and support sectors. By integrating formal hands-on, industry-based learning, these models offer students valuable real-world experience while ensuring they can earn an income during their studies. Across these sectors, EWYL models come in varied forms with differing levels of uptake:

- apprenticeships,
- traineeships,
- school-based traineeships (SBATs),
- internships,
- cadetships,
- paid placements,
- co-op programs,
- paid practicums,
- grow-your-own (GYO) initiatives, or
- university work-integrated learning (WIL).

Globally, countries such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland have demonstrated the success of dual education systems, showcasing the effectiveness of combining education with workplace experience.

There are success stories in Australia's Aged Care and Disability Services, CEC, Health, Human Services, and Sport and Recreation. However, structural barriers are getting in the way of realising EWYL's true potential.

These barriers are impeding:

- The quantity of EWYL models on offer, and the scalability of good practice – driven by funding constraints for non-traditional apprenticeships and traineeships, particularly in the care and support sector, a lack of coordination between employers and education providers, difficulties finding placements, among other factors.
- The quality of EWYL models including but not limited to low rates of pay for trainees, gaps in wrap-around support for learners and supervision rates.

To overcome these structural barriers, EWYL models must be adapted to meet sector-specific needs, such as through:

- Targeted policy interventions on the supply side, to mitigate the sector-specific barriers to supplying traineeships, so more learners can access EWYL pathways
- Identifying the drivers of quality learner experiences, completions and workforce attraction appropriate for each sector.

Despite differing occupational profiles, the Hospitality, Retail, Business and Construction sectors have consistently achieved higher overall apprenticeship and trainee commencements and completions than most HumanAbility sectors. Given the sustained performance of these sectors across multiple years, it is both timely and strategic to examine these industries for transferable best practices that could strengthen EWYL models in HumanAbility sectors.

Moving towards solutions, this research will help frame further discussion about the targeted strategies required for attracting and retaining students in the care and support sector – both at the level of industry practice and government policy. The findings will guide the next three phases of the research:

- Phase 2: Identify promising practices and features of identified EWYL models implemented or evaluated in Australia in recent years across all HumanAbility sectors and hospitality, retail, business, and construction sectors/occupations that could be applied more broadly.
- Phase 3: Identify and examine the barriers and facilitators affecting the uptake and completion of current EWYL models (learners' perspectives), as well as their implementation (employers' perspective), across all HumanAbility sectors.
- Phase 4: Co-develop models and resources (such as decision-making trees and journey maps) to help services, systems, employers and training providers assess their suitability and readiness for implementation.

Appendix 1: Methodology

A systematic literature review was conducted to minimise bias and subjectivity in addressing the research inquiries,[226] and to establish a detailed and organised search strategy without requiring the inclusion of all existing studies on the subject.[227] This involved mapping evidence linked to various types of EWYL models, including apprenticeships, traineeships, cadetships, paid internships, and grow-your-own initiatives, across all HumanAbility sectors in Australia and globally. Additionally, it aimed to evaluate the success rates and challenges linked to these models.

The research questions served as a foundation for developing a comprehensive summary of the current literature. This approach aimed to balance thoroughness and practicality. A structured search query was developed to navigate the seven databases. By employing a framework that systematically catalogues the existing literature, key ideas, theories, sources of evidence, and areas requiring further investigation were uncovered. This review encompassed both Australian and global sources, integrating peer-reviewed research articles with grey literature to incorporate findings from EWYL pilot studies and evaluations. This methodological approach promotes evidence-based practices and contributes to ongoing discussions in this field.

Databases searched

Several resources were examined, including the National Library of Australia, the websites of governmental and non-governmental organisations, First Nations organisations, and various governmental archives.

The investigation covered a total of seven databases: Scopus, VOCEDPlus, JSTOR, Google Scholar, EBSCO, ProQuest and PubMed. The search parameters were limited to publications dated 2016—2025, accounting for the two years during the pandemic when research was limited. Key terms utilised for databases searches include:

"Earn While You Learn" OR "Work Integrated Learning" OR "WIL" OR "learn AND "First Nations" OR "Aboriginal" OR "Torres Strait Islander" AND "paid learning" OR "employment-based training" OR "Early Childhood Education" OR "Childcare" OR "Sport and Recreation" OR "Health" OR "Community Services" OR "Aged care" OR "Disability Services" OR "Vocational Education and Training" OR "VET" OR "School-based apprenticeship" AND "model" OR "program" or "trainee" OR "traineeship" OR "policy" OR "evaluation" OR "youth employment" AND "traineeship" OR "on-the-job training" AND "government initiative" OR "pilot program" OR "case study" OR "evaluation" OR "care and support sectors" AND

[226] Drucker, A. M., Fleming, P., & Chan, A.-W. (2016). *Research techniques made simple: Assessing risk of bias in systematic reviews.* Journal of Investigative Dermatology, 136(11), 1-6.

[227] Shaheen, N., Shaheen, A., Ramadan, A., Hefnawy, M. T., Ramadan, A., Ibrahim, I. A., Hassanein, M. E., Ashour, M. E., & Flouty, O. (2023). *Appraising systematic reviews: a comprehensive guide to ensuring validity and reliability.* Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics, 8, 1268045.

"work placement" OR "work-integrated learning" OR "Retail" OR "Business" OR "Construction" OR "Hospitality" .

When entering the search keywords, the terms were connected using "OR" to reduce duplication in the results and guarantee a thorough exploration for each phrase. Due to the large number of outcomes generated by each search, the emphasis was placed on peer-reviewed academic works. The selection was restricted to articles published in English and relevant to both Australian and global contexts.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

After conducting eight rounds of database searches and exploring additional grey literature, a total of 145 results were selected for data extraction and evaluation of their significance. Each article was carefully reviewed for relevance and organised according to the research questions. The initial analysis focused on determining whether the articles (n=145) referenced EWYL models within HumanAbility sectors and other industry sectors, including the successes and challenges associated with these models. Upon further review, 5 articles were removed because they dealt with sectors outside the intended scope of this research, and an additional 3 were discarded for being proposals. This filtering process led to a final selection comprising 121 pieces of grey literature and 16 peer-reviewed articles for further examination.

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