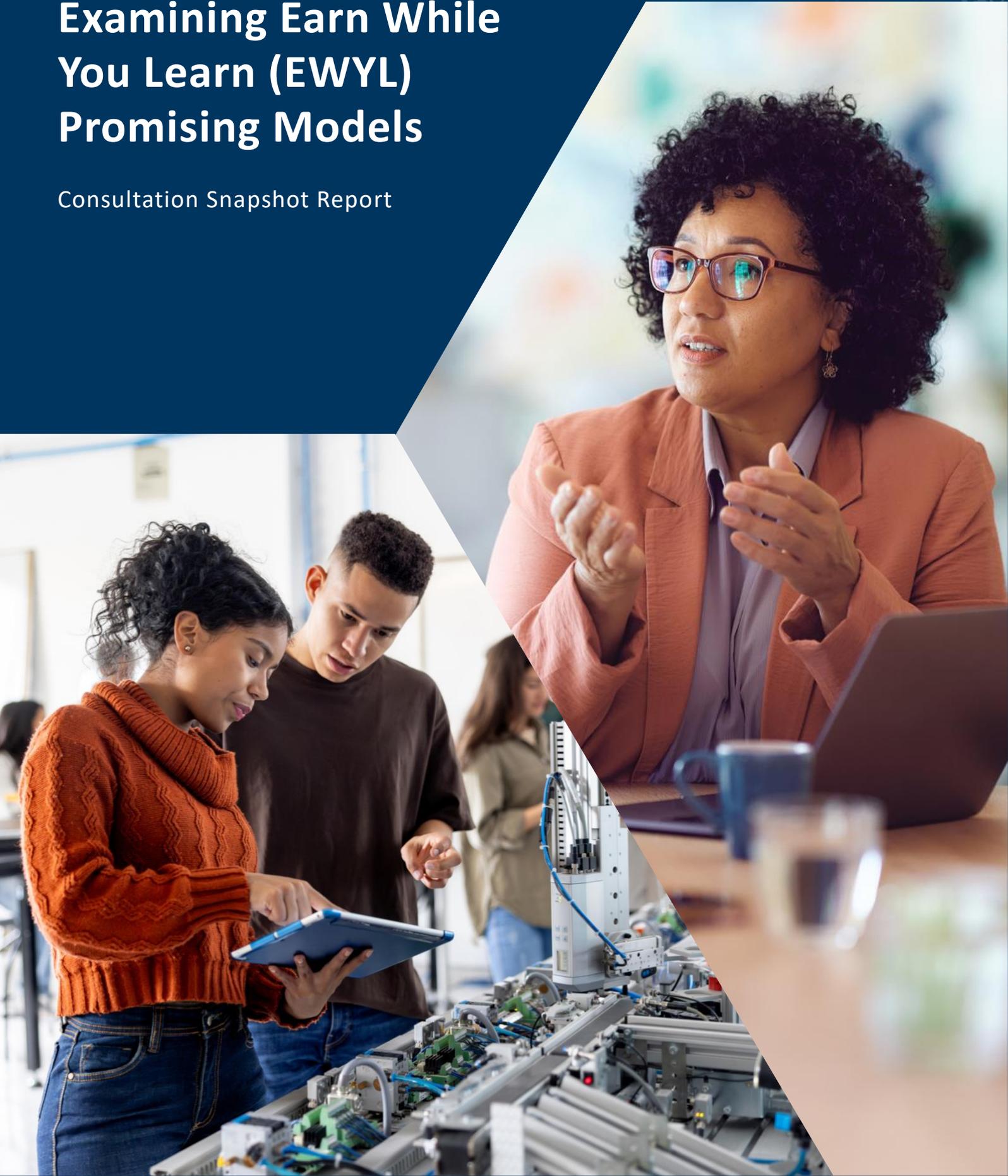




HumanAbility

Examining Earn While You Learn (EWYL) Promising Models

Consultation Snapshot Report





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.





HumanAbility – Copyright, Licensing and Disclaimer Statement

These materials were developed by HumanAbility, funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Copyright Statement

© 2025 Commonwealth of Australia

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).



This licence allows you to distribute, remix and build upon the work, provided it is for non-commercial purposes, appropriate credit is given to HumanAbility and the Commonwealth of Australia as the original creators, and any derivative works are licensed under the same terms.

The copyright of any adaptations and/or modifications to this material remains with the Commonwealth of Australia. Adapted or modified materials must have the HumanAbility logo removed and include the following attribution:

‘This is a modified document based on materials prepared by HumanAbility, the original of which can be found on the HumanAbility website <http://www.humanability.com.au>.’

Disclaimer

While care has been taken in the preparation of this material, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the original developer do not warrant that any licensing or registration requirements specified here are either complete or current for your State or Territory. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the original developer accept no liability for any damage or loss (including indirect or consequential loss) incurred by any person as a result of reliance on the information contained in this material.

HumanAbility and the Commonwealth, through the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, does not accept any liability for any information or advice (or the use of such information or advice) provided in this material or incorporated into it by reference. Users of this material are responsible for assessing the relevance and accuracy of its content. No liability is accepted for any information or services which may appear in other formats or on linked websites.

Publication details

Published by: HumanAbility

Address: Level 13/Suite 4, 80 Collins St (North Tower), Melbourne 3000

Phone: 1800 486 262

Website: www.humanability.com.au

Email: trainingproductadvice@humanability.com.au

First Published: 9 February 2026

ISBN: 978-1-923605-12-1

Print Version: 1

Release Date: 9 February 2026

Find us online:
humanability.com.au



HumanAbility is a Jobs and Skills Council funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

List of acronyms

Acronym	
ACCOS	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations
ACQSC	Australian Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
CEC	Children's Education and Care
CPP	Commonwealth Prac Payment
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EWYL	Earn While You Learn
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
VET	Vocational Education and Training

List of figures

Figure 1: Lifecycle features of a high-quality EWYL model	16
Figure 2: Top System Change Priorities — Stakeholder Perspectives	20
Figure 3: Top System Change Priorities by Sector — Stakeholder Perspectives	21
Figure 4: Top System Change Priorities by Organisation Type — Stakeholder Perspectives	23
Figure 5: Stakeholder Confidence in Scaling EWYL Models — by Sector	23
Figure 6: Stakeholder Confidence in Scaling EWYL Models — by Organisation Type	24

List of tables

Table 1: Key themes agreed by stakeholders across care and support sectors	12
Table 2: Stakeholder strategies for improving student outcomes	15
Table 3: Barriers to scaling promising models in care and support sectors	18
Table 4: Strategies and opportunities to scale suggested by stakeholders	19
Table 5: Overview of key themes by sectors and sub-sectors raised by stakeholders	25
Table 6: Stakeholder-identified EWYL models across care and support sectors	36

Disclaimer: This document provides a summary of the key insights shared by stakeholders during the consultation process. It may not include all perspectives expressed by stakeholders. The findings in this paper will be tested and refined through further consultation as part of the continuing research project.

Table of Contents

List of acronyms	4
Executive Summary	8
Background and context	10
Promising features of an EWYL model	12
EWYL models in the care and support sector	17
System changes to scale EWYL models	18
Appendix A: Snapshot of some key themes by sectors and sub-sectors	25
Appendix B: EWYL models identified by stakeholders in care and support	36

Executive Summary

Earn While You Learn (EWYL) models, such as apprenticeships and traineeships, are vital to Australia's skills development, delivering employment-based training that enhances both skills and knowledge. Apprenticeships primarily serve trade sectors, while traineeships offer pathways into service roles, expanding career options beyond traditional apprenticeships.

In 2020, traineeships and apprenticeships together accounted for 17% of students in Vocational Education and Training (VET). However, concerns have been raised about the limitations of conventional pre-service VET delivery, particularly in sectors within the remit of HumanAbility. These include limited access to quality practical placements and the challenge of 'placement poverty', particularly in regional areas, which hinders workforce readiness.

HumanAbility's Earn While You Learn (EWYL) Research Project seeks to identify, categorise, and examine best-practice EWYL models, assess their effectiveness in supporting students to complete their qualifications, and address critical skills and workforce gaps. This summary paper is the outcome of phase two (of four) of this research project.

Across the care and support economy and beyond, HumanAbility's initial consultations found that EWYL models are most effective when they are sustainably funded, co-designed and combine industry-led training, structured pathways that lead to clear career outcomes. The support of a supervisor, mentor and/or coach, flexible delivery, and incentives for both learners and employers have also been identified as critically important.

This phase of research involved consultations with over 192 stakeholders from Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), service providers, unions and government across eight states and territories in Australia. These consultations demonstrated a strong appetite for EWYL models¹ and strong examples of what quality paid learning pathways entail. This paper reflects the consistent views of stakeholders throughout and identifies where there was a divergence of views.

A promising Earn While You Learn model should include:

- A design reflecting end-to-end lifecycle systems (clear entry, screening, informed onboarding through to post-completion employment, longitudinal tracking and ongoing professional development),
- Demonstrated industry buy-in with links to career progression,
- Dedicated time for trainee learning, including assigning the trainee as an additional staff member to safeguard their learning time (protected learning),
- Industry-current educators and supported workplace mentors,

¹ 'Earn While You Learn', which may include Work Integrated Learning (WIL), work-based learning, and wage-based learning—covers a range of approaches like apprenticeships, traineeships, cadetships, paid internships, and Grow Your Own (GYO) initiatives.

- Financial stability that does not compromise learning integrity,
- Access to pastoral care and wellbeing supports.

Barriers to scaling EWYL models are primarily systemic. Funding limitations are consistently identified as the most significant constraint, affecting both employer willingness to host trainees and learner participation. Other barriers include insufficient employer engagement frameworks, differences in state/territory requirements, and limited cross-collaboration across the entire apprenticeship ecosystem.

Sector-specific challenges also emerged: casualisation of workforces, high supervision demands, regulatory complexity, public perception and gendered undervaluation of care and support work, digital literacy gaps and the cost of required equipment. These sector-specific issues and opportunities will be explored in papers released over the coming months.

Stakeholder recommendations focus on system-level reforms and practical enablers. These include:

- Funding reform to support both employers and learners, including subsidies for pre-employment requirements, supervision and resources.
- Employer engagement frameworks to clarify responsibilities, support structures, and incentives for hosting trainees.
- Cross-sector partnerships and collaboration across government, training providers, and peak bodies to improve pathways and knowledge sharing.
- Flexible, modular qualifications that align with career progression, industrial awards and sector-specific needs.
- Workplace and learning support such as pre-employment checks, trauma-informed practices, support for remote placements, supervision, peer-support and mentoring.

Background and context

HumanAbility's 2024 Workforce Plan prioritises 'improving the quality of, and access to, contemporary training and qualifications.' The launch of the Earn While You Learn (EWYL) Research Project exemplified this commitment, which aims to identify and assess best-practice EWYL models, their effectiveness in helping students' complete qualifications, and address workforce gaps.

HumanAbility released a Background and Summary Paper as a preliminary assessment of the four-phase research project. The project then moved to Phase 2, seeking stakeholder feedback on four focus areas:

- Promising models currently existing across HumanAbility sectors,
- Barriers to scaling promising models,
- Strategies used to enhance student commencements,
- Facilitators and barriers to student commencements and completions.

From October 7 to 28, 2025, stakeholders participated in consultations to inform Phase 2 of the Earn While You Learn Research Project, including one short-form survey, 20 interviews, and 18 workshops. An overview of events and participation is shown below.

This snapshot highlights key insights provided by stakeholders during consultation. These insights are not exhaustive but provide an initial overview of stakeholder perspectives at this stage of the research.

It is also important to note that while sectors often intersect on key cross-cutting themes, each sector adds further nuances and contextual differences. An overview of some of these themes is provided in Appendix A and will be examined and unpacked in later reports, where more detailed sector profiles will be provided.

Engagement snapshot

Workshops were held in 8 regions across Australia



Workshop opportunities

1 short form



20 interviews

18 in-person workshops



3 online workshops

127

in-person workshop attendees



43 short form responses from

- 21 registered training providers
- 11 industry employers
- 6 association or peak bodies
- 5 other



20+

30 minutes one-on-one online interviews



Workshops were attended by

- registered training organisations
- industry bodies
- unions
- employers
- educational experts
- subject matter experts

45

online attendees



Stakeholders across multiple sectors and sub-sectors



Aged care and disability services



Children's education and care



Health (dental)



Human (community) services (mental health)



Sport and recreation

Promising features of an EWYL model

This chapter outlines the promising features of an EWYL model, drawing directly on insights gathered through stakeholder consultations. It presents findings on what stakeholders identified as critical to the design, implementation and sustainability of EWYL models.

Consultations identified a set of features that, when embedded across the full lifecycle of an EWYL model, strengthen learning quality, workforce sustainability, and long-term career outcomes for trainees. Stakeholders emphasised that promising EWYL models must be deliberately designed to extend beyond enrolment and qualification completion, incorporating clear entry processes, protected learning, longitudinal tracking and structured post-completion development to support retention, professionalisation, and system-level workforce planning.

The following table highlights common themes across sectors, as cited by stakeholders, emphasising shared strengths, challenges, opportunities, and key design considerations for EWYL models across care and support sectors.

Table 1: Key themes agreed by stakeholders across care and support sectors

Key features of promising EWYL models raised by stakeholders	
Sufficient and reliable funding	Funding supports all aspects, including program coordination, learner support, employer engagement, and high-quality learning delivery.
Employer buy-in	Active employer participation shapes relevant training, offers realistic placements, and creates clear employment pathways.
Wrap-around support provision	With increasing diversity in the care and support sectors—such as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples, individuals with disabilities, non-English speakers, and those with limited language, literacy, numeracy, or digital skills—wrap-around services are critical enablers of participation.
Quality supervision in the workplace	Consultation feedback emphasised that quality supervisors who are trained and supported enable richer, practical learning and consistent learning progress.
Flexible delivery models	Given the diverse needs of both learners and employers, flexibility in how learning is delivered—timing, placing, blended formats, modular training—is seen by stakeholders to be crucial.
Fair pay for learners	Learners should not be expected to work for ‘free’ under the guise of ‘training’. Stakeholders noted that promising EWYL models should provide fair wages that reflect the value of the work being done.



“Employers play an important role in role modelling the future workforce, any successful model requires that employer buy-in.”

— Peak Body interview participant

Stakeholders also noted that promising EWYL models should include:

Clear entry, screening and informed onboarding

Clear entry, screening and informed onboarding are foundational to successful EWYL models. Promising approaches ensure that learners have a clear and realistic understanding of qualification requirements, including mandatory competencies, assessment volume, regulatory obligations and completion timeframes. Consultations highlighted the importance of confirming that the role, training content, and delivery model align with the learner’s expectations, capability and personal circumstances.

There is a significant need for explicit and honest discussions at entry about workload intensity, assessment timelines, time commitments and the balance between paid work and study. Where these conversations were absent or superficial, learners were more likely to disengage or withdraw. Effective onboarding processes also assess learner readiness, support needs and digital capability, helping reduce early attrition and ensuring trainees enter the EWYL pathway with informed consent and appropriate expectations.

Protected learning with trainees not counted as core staff

While some stakeholders emphasised that effective EWYL models should prioritise positioning trainees as learners initially, others highlighted the importance of recognising trainees not merely as students but as employees acquiring skills. A range of stakeholders also emphasised the importance of providing trainees with dedicated, protected learning time and ensuring they are not counted as part of regular staffing, ensuring learning is not compromised by service-delivery pressures. This approach protects safety and quality in regulated environments and reinforces professional standards. Stakeholders also noted that educators and supervisors, where possible, should have adjustments made to allow for appropriate time for supervision separate from the operational requirements of their role.

Strong integration between work and learning

Consultations identified that effective EWYL models deliberately integrate structured learning with a gradual, supported introduction to real work tasks. Training delivery is sequenced to align with workplace exposure, allowing trainees to apply theoretical knowledge incrementally and safely. The lifecycle model reflects iterative cycles of learning, practice, feedback and consolidation, which stakeholders identified as essential for competence development and learner confidence.

Industry-current trainers and supported workplace mentors

Promising models rely on industry-current educators (educators who are up to date with changes in practices and regulation) and trained workplace mentors who understand both regulatory requirements and operational realities. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of clearly defined, supported and recognised mentor roles for the duration of an Earn While You Learn program. Where supervision expectations were informal or unpaid, learning quality and mentor capacity were diminished.

Financial stability without compromising learning

Financial insecurity is a major risk to trainee completion. Promising EWYL models provide income stability for trainees as well as the RTO and service provider while avoiding arrangements that position trainees as substitutes for skilled labour. Funding mechanisms that separate income support from assessment, supervision, and placement decisions were seen as critical to preserving learning integrity.

Ongoing feedback, pastoral care and wellbeing support

Promising models embed regular progress monitoring, formative assessment, and pastoral care throughout the lifecycle. Stakeholders noted that early identification of workload stress, skill gaps, or wellbeing concerns improves retention, particularly in care-based sectors where emotional labour is high.

Transition to secure employment and advancement

Promising models support structured transition from traineeship to secure employment, with clarity around the job roles, conditions and progression opportunities. Completion is positioned as a transition point rather than an endpoint, linking graduates to ongoing mentoring and in-service learning.

Longitudinal tracking and outcomes beyond completion

A distinguished feature of promising EWYL models is the inclusion of longitudinal data collection beyond qualification commencements and completions. Stakeholders emphasised tracking outcomes such as employment stability, role progression, retention in the sector and participation in further training. This data could be used to support workforce planning, continuous improvement and evidence-based policy decisions. While NCVET collects and reports on data spanning some of these broader outcomes for graduates once they have entered the workforce—for instance, via its Student Outcomes Survey—it may fall on employers more generally to expand on this work.

Structured in-service training and career progression

Promising EWYL models extend beyond initial qualifications to include planned in-service training and professional development opportunities. Stakeholders identified the need for clear post-completion pathways that support skill deepening, specialisation and leadership development, reinforcing professional identity and reducing workforce churn.

Continuous improvement through learner voice

Stakeholders emphasised embedding participant feedback across all stages of the model's lifecycle, including post-completion. Promising EWYL models include mechanisms for trainees and graduates to inform program refinement, ensuring responsiveness to learner experience and evolving sector needs.

Drawing on stakeholder consultations, the following table synthesises the proposed strategies aimed at boosting student commencements and completions, highlighting practical actions to strengthen learner participation and success.

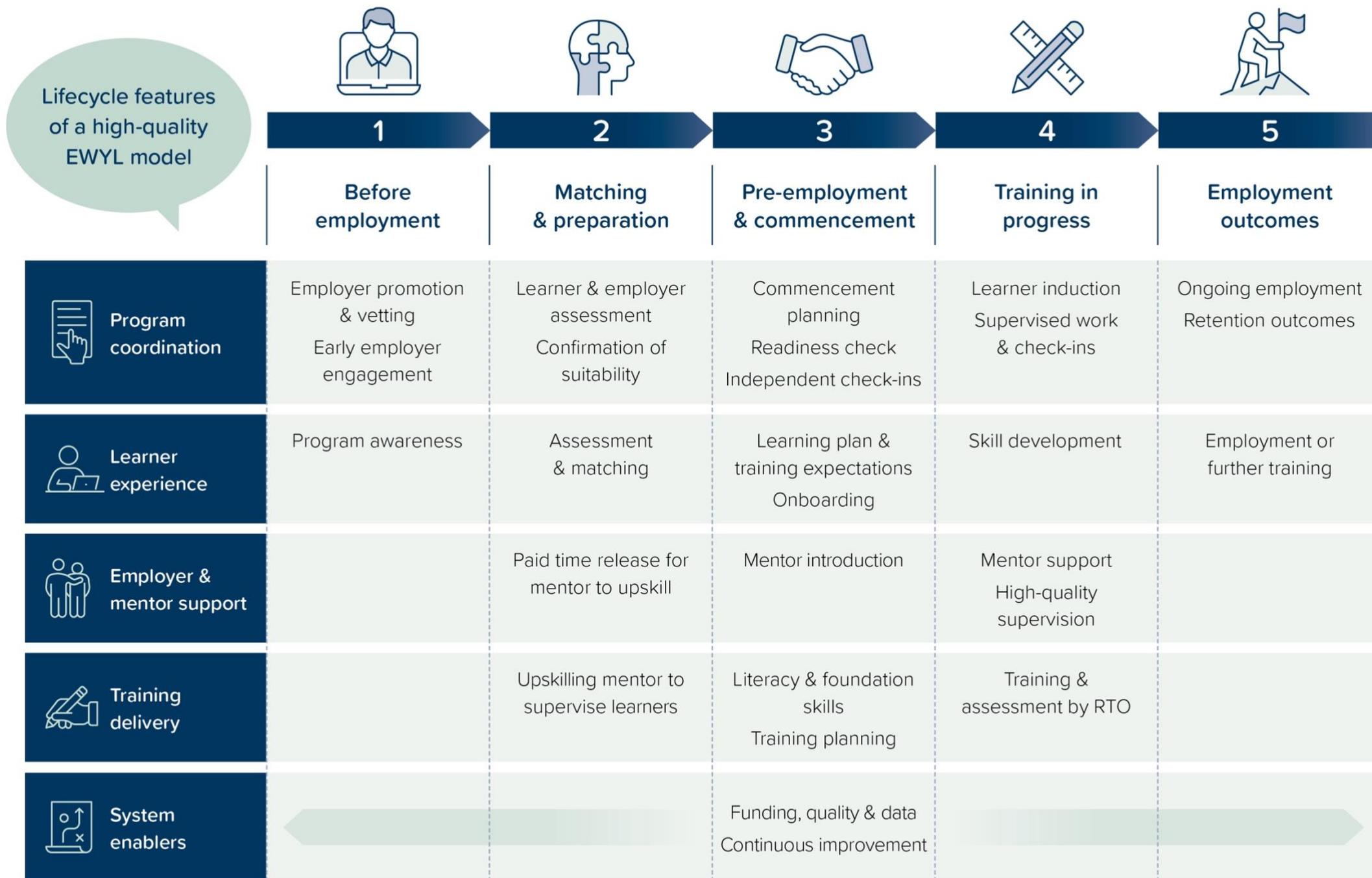
Table 2: Stakeholder strategies for improving student outcomes

Stakeholders proposed strategies to increase student commencements and completions	
Buddy support	Formal peer-buddy system helps with workplace navigation, build social connection, support and reduce drop-out rates.
Flexibility around training packages	Offering some qualifications as a sequence of shorter, clearly scoped modules so students can progress in smaller, achievable steps that fit shift work and personal commitments.
Taster-programs	Brief taster experiences (workplace visits, simulated shifts, pre-apprenticeship blocks) ensure students can test interest and develop realistic expectations regarding the role.
Increase advertising, promotion and awareness of programs	More coordinated, sector-specific marketing and outreach (school partnerships, community organisations, employer networks, media) that highlights the 'earn and learn' advantage, real student stories and career outcomes, will help attract candidates who might otherwise choose higher education or not engage at all.
Guaranteed employment	Guaranteed employment (or clear conditional offer on successful completion of stages) is a powerful attractor, particularly for candidates who need income security.



We should consider this early on, even before the traineeship begins. Introducing tasters, so that we are giving students a chance to determine if a career fits their interests before making a commitment.”
 — Provider interview participant

Figure 1: Lifecycle features of a high-quality EWYL model



Note: Simplified representation. A detailed version—outlining core components, enablers and implementation considerations—is available on the project website [here](#).

EWYL models in the care and support sector

This chapter presents a snapshot of EWYL models identified through stakeholder consultations across care and support sectors. The list provided in Appendix B is not comprehensive, and additional models are expected to emerge in subsequent phases of the research.

Building on the models identified in our Background Paper, released September 8, 2025, these stakeholder-identified models represent the types of EWYL approaches currently in use across the care and support sectors.

The models encountered through consultation confirmed the following findings stemming from our Background Paper:

- Traineeships were the most common model of paid training in use. This reflects their established role in delivering structured, paid learning opportunities in non-trade occupations.
- With the exception of higher apprenticeships, which are increasingly used in higher education contexts, as well as certificate and diploma pathways, traditional apprenticeships were less common in the care and support sectors than in other sectors.

Throughout consultations, cadetships were found to be increasingly used in Human (Community) Services, enabling different community service providers to coordinate training and work placements across smaller providers.

Stakeholders also suggested several models that are not classified as traineeships, apprenticeships, or cadetships. These models would support some goals of work-integrated learning, help address placement challenges, or offer payment for placements without fully merging work and learning.

Some examples include:

- The Qualification Pathways Program (QPP), identified as a scholarship-and-subsidy-based model, provides financial support to enable learner participation and progression rather than a formal employment or training contract.
- Registered Undergraduate Student of Nursing (RUSON) and Midwifery (RUSOM) programs, which offer paid work opportunities alongside training without being structured as formal traineeships, apprenticeships or cadetships.
- Means-tested Commonwealth payments for students in Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work placements.

System changes to scale EWYL models

This chapter summarises stakeholder perspectives on the system-level changes needed to support and scale EWYL models, highlighting priorities across sectors and organisation types, and examining confidence in implementation and expansion.

Barriers to scaling were frequently recognised as the inverse of the key features identified in successful models across various sectors in Table 1. However, the following barriers were also acknowledged as fundamental challenges to scaling promising EWYL models.

Table 3: Barriers to scaling promising models in care and support sectors

Barriers to scaling promising EWYL models raised by stakeholders	
Differences regarding state/territory requirements	Stakeholders unanimously agreed that differences in accreditation processes, licensing, compliance obligation and program approval pathways across state/territories, lead to additional administrative burden and increase cost and time required to expand.
Limited availability of training providers in rural/regional areas	Rural and regional communities face significant barriers to accessing Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and specialist providers for EWYL programs, resulting in limited opportunities for learners and employers outside metropolitan areas. These regions often have small, resource-constrained services that struggle to scale.
Lack of structured coordination and unclear roles and responsibilities	Effective EWYL delivery relies on strong collaboration between employers and training providers, yet stakeholders reported fragmented or underdeveloped partnerships. In many cases, roles and responsibilities are reported to be unclear, difficulty aligning delivery with employer resourcing and partnerships lacking long-term planning and co-design.
Limited funding for mentorship/coaching	Mentorship was unanimously seen by stakeholders as essential for completion and integration. However, employers and RTOs struggle to offer mentoring without dedicated release time funding. When available, mentoring is often viewed as an ‘add-on’ rather than core business or a funded, structured program. Workplace coaching was also deemed critical to translating learning into safe and competent practice. Where coaching is informal, inconsistent or conflated with supervision and assessment, learning quality can be compromised and learner confidence diminished.

Fragmented system	Across all consultation workshops, multiple stakeholders—including RTOs, employers, industry bodies, and support services—were seen to be operating in silos, resulting in inconsistent learner experiences and missed opportunities for resource sharing. Stakeholders also noted seeking local networks but lacking the mechanisms and incentives to convene.
-------------------	---



“There is a lack of funding for supervision, mentorship, and coaching, and organisations are unclear about their responsibilities in these areas.”

— RTO interview participant

Stakeholders often noted that strategies and opportunities to scale EWYL models are closely linked to addressing the barriers outlined in Table 3 above. In addition, stakeholders identified the following range of potential solutions, presented in Table 4 below, that could further support the expansion and sustainability of EWYL models.

Table 4: Strategies and opportunities to scale suggested by stakeholders

Strategies and opportunities to scale EWYL models across care and support sectors	
Support for embedded and incentivised mentorship	Mentoring embedded into the EWYL model and incentivised for employers/providers was seen by stakeholders to be critical for transitioning learners into workplaces and for ongoing skill support. Mentors need time, training and incentives. Funding mentors’ stipends, training and time allocations within EWYL models can improve learner outcomes.
More flexible, ‘stackable’ models of training	Stakeholders agreed on flexible EWYL delivery models, including stackable units, micro-credentials, and blended learning, with individual plans to address diverse learner needs and employer requirements.
Availability of regional/remote training, inclusive place-based delivery	Standard metropolitan models were noted as often failing in thin labour markets. EWYL models, which prioritise communities and are customised to regional and remote characteristics, enhance access and local relevance. Mainstream delivery models often fail in First Nations communities due to cultural factors. Funding of culturally safe, localised EWYL delivery models co-designed with First Nations communities, and support for community governance structures and leadership in program oversight is required.

Career pathways including upskilling existing workforce

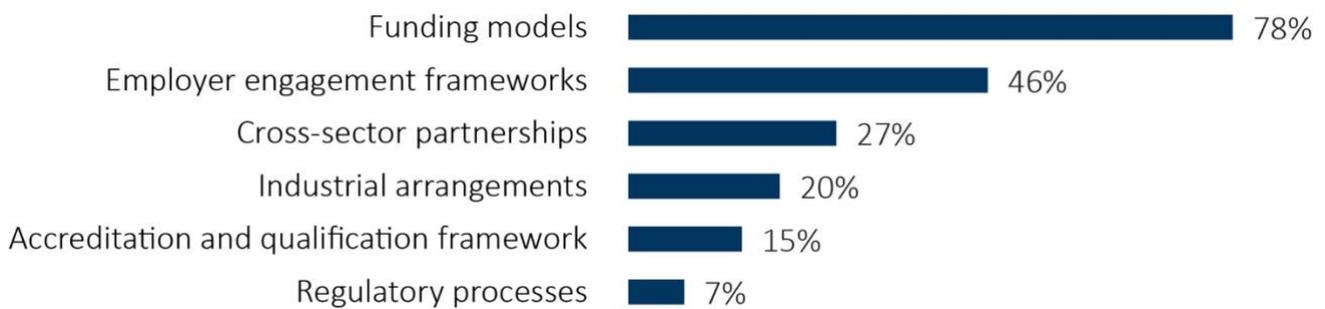
Making career pathways explicit, mapped into a visible matrix and embedded in EWYL models increases participation motivation, employer buy-in, credential transparency and clearer progression from entry-level roles to longer-term careers.

Stakeholders agreed that scaling EWYL must not focus solely on new entrants but also upskill the existing workforce. Opportunities for higher apprenticeships, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) supported by high-quality assessment and short courses that acknowledges experience are essential for workforce sustainability.



“We really need to develop the trainer workforce, but it can be a real fight getting people’s skills recognised with remuneration. It falls back on workers to prove their skillset.” — Union workshop participant

Figure 2: Top System Change Priorities — Stakeholder Perspectives

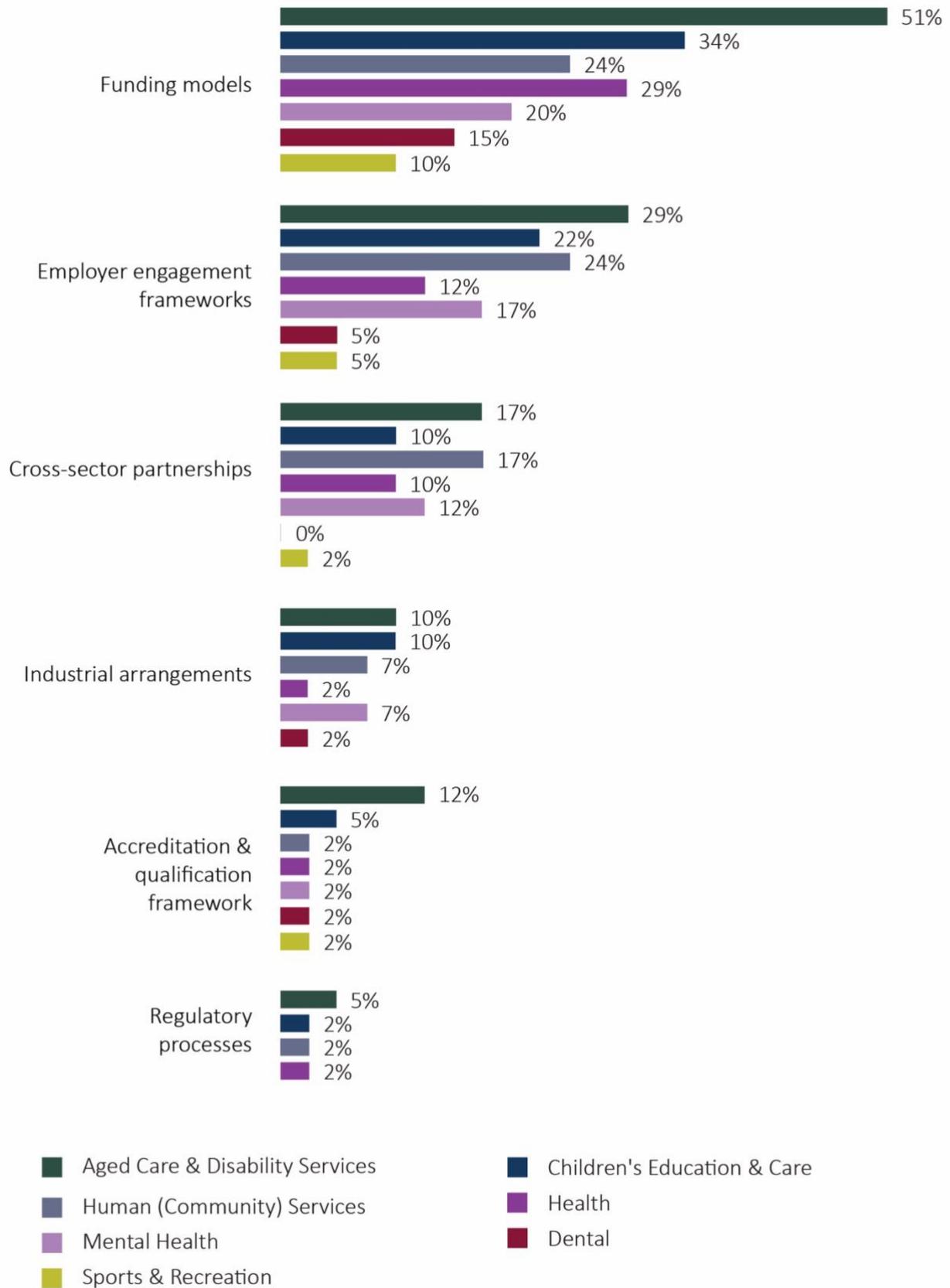


When stakeholders were asked which three system settings they would change to improve EWYL in the sector, they clearly identified funding models as the most critical system change needed for success, with 78% indicating that current funding structures do not adequately support employers or remove financial risk for learners. This was seen as the key enabler for all other reforms. The next highest priorities were employer engagement frameworks (46%), aimed at clarifying roles, expectations, and support for trainees, followed by cross-sector partnerships (27%), to reduce duplication and enhance collaboration among government, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), industry, and peak bodies. Additional changes seen as important but less widely prioritised included updates to industrial arrangements (20%), accreditation and qualification settings (15%), and regulatory processes (7%), reflecting concerns around flexibility, supervisory requirements and compliance burden.



78% of respondents indicated that current funding structures do not adequately support employers or remove financial risk for learners.

Figure 3: Top System Change Priorities by Sector — Stakeholder Perspectives



The data highlights that funding models, including the need for targeted and / or tiered funding specifically for training and supervision requirements, are the most significant system change priority across all HumanAbility sectors. Over half of the stakeholders in the Aged Care and Disability Services sector (51%) identified current funding structures as a critical barrier to sustainable training and workforce development. This priority was also strongly reflected in Children’s Education and Care (34%), Health (29%) and Human (Community) Services (24%), indicating that financial barriers are widespread across these sectors. This was also emphasised to a smaller extent by stakeholders in Mental Health (20%), Dental (15%) and Sport and Recreation (10%), signalling that enhanced incentives would lift employer participation.

Employer engagement frameworks were the second most common system priority, most notably for Aged Care and Disability Services (29%), Human (Community) Services (24%) and Children’s Education and Care (22%). Stakeholders stressed the need for clearer guidance, structured partnerships and streamlined processes to reduce the complexity of taking on trainees. While still relatively low, the figures from Health (12%), Mental Health (17%), Dental (5%), and Sport and Recreation (5%) indicate varying degrees of system maturity and capacity across these sectors.

Cross-sector partnerships were the third-ranked reform area with sectors such as Aged Care and Disability Services (17%), Human (Community) Services (17%) and Mental Health (12%), emphasising the need for stronger collaboration across education, employment and service providers to improve learner pathways, ensure appropriate supervision and build shared workforce solutions. The priority was less pronounced in Children’s Education and Care (10%), Health (10%) and Sport and Recreation (2%), and was not identified within Dental, suggesting that while partnerships are valued, the maturity and dependency on cross-sector coordination vary significantly between sectors.



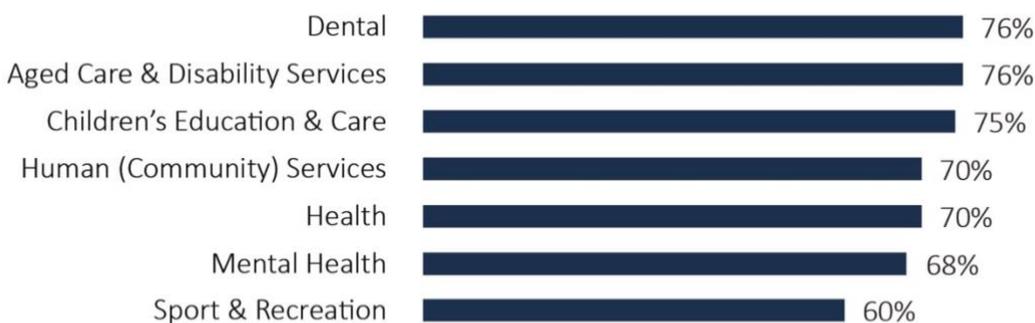
Over half of the stakeholders in the Aged Care and Disability Services sector (51%) identified current funding structures as a critical barrier to sustainable training and workforce development. This priority was also strongly reflected in Children’s Education and Care (34%).

Figure 4: Top System Change Priorities by Organisation Type — Stakeholder Perspectives



Funding models remain the strongest system change priority across stakeholder groups, particularly among RTOs, with 41% of all responses from RTOs citing funding reform as critical. Employers also highlighted funding barriers (24%). Employer engagement frameworks emerged as the second-highest priority, especially for RTOs (24%). Employers (15%) and peak bodies (7%) similarly stressed that consistent engagement models would improve trainee outcomes and participation. Priorities related to industrial arrangements and cross-sector partnerships were more evenly distributed by lower levels of concern.

Figure 5: Stakeholder Confidence in Scaling EWYL Models — by Sector



Stakeholders across sectors generally expressed high confidence that EWYL models could be successfully scaled if the right conditions are met, as discussed in the various workshops. Confidence was strongest in the Dental sector (76%) and Aged Care and Disability Services (76%), reflecting the sentiments that emerged in workshops, including established and supported training structures, supportive employers and clear career pathways. Children’s Education and Care (75%) followed closely, indicating that stakeholders see strong potential for scaling given appropriate resourcing and engagement frameworks.

Moderate confidence was reported in Health (70%) and Human (Community) Services (70%), suggesting an acknowledgement of both opportunities and sector-specific challenges, including workforce complexity and regulatory requirements. Confidence was slightly lower in Mental Health (68%) and Sport and Recreation (60%).

Figure 6: Stakeholder Confidence in Scaling EWYL Models — by Organisation Type



Stakeholder confidence in successfully scaling EWYL models is generally high across all organisation types, provided the right conditions are in place. Employers reported the strongest confidence (85%), reflecting their direct experience with workplace-based learning and an understanding of operational feasibility when adequate support, funding, and engagement frameworks are in place. Association or peak bodies followed at (77%), signalling confidence in system-wide coordination and advocacy for workforce development initiatives. Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) reported 75% confidence, indicating optimism tempered by the operational and regulatory challenges involved in delivering consistent, high-quality training across multiple sectors and contexts.

Appendix A: Snapshot of some key themes by sectors and sub-sectors

Stakeholder insights also pointed to some sector-specific and sub-sector variations, with distinct operational contexts, workforce needs and training conditions shaping how EWYL models are experienced across care and support sectors.

Table 5: Overview of key themes by sectors and sub-sectors raised by stakeholders

Sector	Themes	Key features of promising models	Barriers to scale & other sector concerns	Opportunities to overcome barriers
Aged Care ²	Participant-centred and co-design learning	Stakeholders highlighted that EWYL models should be co-designed with participants, ensuring the learning experience is tailored to individual needs and reflects the realities of the sector.	Standardised delivery of Certificate III in Individual Support limits flexibility to respond to diverse learner backgrounds and workforce entry points.	Create participant reference groups to actively inform program design, delivery, and ongoing service improvements.
Aged Care	Shared practice, care minutes and workforce reform	Models that are deemed successful were cited as emphasising learning through shared experience and best-practice exchange.	Concerns were raised regarding residential aged care being affected by minimum qualifications if implemented per the Aged Care Royal Commission,	Protect structured learning time within shifts and support peer-based learning and mentoring models.

² Please note that stakeholders repeatedly emphasised that the Aged Care and Disability Services sectors should be treated as distinct rather than combined, noting that while there are overlaps in the kind of supports provided, the underlying needs, service models and regulatory frameworks differ. Due to this divergence, stakeholders noted that lumping them together risks obscuring critical nuances in workforce requirements and consumer needs. This report has taken the liberty to separate the two sectors.

Sector	Themes	Key features of promising models	Barriers to scale & other sector concerns	Opportunities to overcome barriers
			<p>which would require rapid upskilling of the workforce.</p> <p>In aged care, the ‘care minutes’ restrict funding solely to direct care provided by trainees or their supervisors, meaning that supervision itself is not separately funded.</p> <p>Traineeships in the sector must navigate regulatory requirements, particularly those of the Australian Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC), which can constrain flexibility in how traineeships are delivered.</p>	
Aged Care	Attraction, image and entry pathways	Several stakeholders in this sector indicated that EWYL models should also convey professional ‘integrity’ and career pathways within the sector, countering common misconceptions that these fields are low-status or lack growth opportunities, which often leads to the perception of the sector as a transient point rather than a destination.	Almost all stakeholders noted that a poor public image of the sector discouraged entry, even where paid roles and training opportunities exist.	Strengthen the professional integrity of aged care through targeted communications, school-based feeder programs and visible career pathways.

Sector	Themes	Key features of promising models	Barriers to scale & other sector concerns	Opportunities to overcome barriers
Aged Care	Home Care workforce progression	Stakeholders noted that promising models in the sector should provide structured pathways for upskilling staff such as Home Care staff so as to avoid 'role stagnation' and attrition.	The need for targeted investment in traineeships for Home Care Staff was raised by a number of stakeholders, particularly to support workers transitioning from domestic care roles into personal or clinical care roles.	Stakeholders emphasised the need for targeted investment in traineeships for Home Care Staff, particularly to support employees transitioning from domestic care roles into personal and clinical care roles.
Disability Services	Face-to-face, practical skill development	Promising EWYL models emphasises hands-on, in-person training to ensure learners develop practical skills in complex disability support environments.	Stakeholders pointed out that certain practical skills, such as responding to medical emergencies or managing complex behavioural scenarios, cannot be safely simulated online, resulting in gaps in applied learning.	Maintain and expand in-person training opportunities while integrating safe simulation techniques where appropriate to supplement hands-on learning.
Disability Services	Integration of current sector practices and lived experience	Effective models incorporate contemporary disability practices and the lived experiences of people with disability, fostering relevance in training.	Supported accommodation has the most acute training shortages and need for complex skills in the disability sector, funding for supervisors and mentors are most critical in these areas but lacking.	Stakeholders suggested upskilling existing workers into mentoring, supervision roles (i.e. 'train the trainer') and provide structured support to embed current practices and lived experience learning in EWYL pathways.
Disability Services	Wrap-around support, workplace	Successful models incorporate structured mentoring, buddy systems and trained supervisors to	The NDIS does not allocate specific funding or set pricing for supervision, which can impact the availability and quality of supervisory support within the	Introduce wrap-around funding and support mechanism for supervision, including structured in-person mentoring and buddy systems that

Sector	Themes	Key features of promising models	Barriers to scale & other sector concerns	Opportunities to overcome barriers
	readiness and candidate pipeline	build learner confidence and competence.	service delivery framework. Without dedicated funding, consistent supervisory oversight may be challenging, potentially affecting service quality and staff training outcomes.	taper as learners gain experience, to ensure readiness and retention.
Disability Services	Candidate pipeline and workforce sustainability	Promising EWYL models in the sector should include clear mapping and support for career progression from entry-level roles through to leadership positions.	The small candidate pool for Certificate III in disability support, onerous assessment requirements for the Certificate III in individual support and limited professional development pathways for those already working within the sector, all of which contribute to high recruitment and retention costs.	Stakeholders identified the need to better showcase career pathway opportunities, highlighting that clearer visibility of career pathways within the sector is critical to attracting and sustaining learners, particularly by demonstrating progression from entry-level roles into more specialised, clinical or leadership positions.
Children’s Education and Care	Structured, staged learning design, clear career pathways and readiness for progression	Stakeholders noted that promising EWYL models in ECEC involves learning in clear, staged blocks, moving from foundational theory to guided practice so that students experience early achievement and gradually develop workplace readiness.	The Certificate III in ECEC is perceived as onerous and complex, similar in difficulty to the Certificate IV in School Age Education and Care, making navigation difficult for early learners and migrants who may require additional literacy and language support.	Stakeholders suggested pre-employment training (‘try before you buy’) would enable ECEC candidates to experience the reality of the work of an educator before committing to a qualification. Identify and filter candidates whose expectations and values align, while excluding those who do not. This

Sector	Themes	Key features of promising models	Barriers to scale & other sector concerns	Opportunities to overcome barriers
		Successful models emphasise gradual capability development before advancement to high-level qualification.	Stakeholders highlighted concerns about candidates being pushed into higher-level qualifications, such as the Diploma, before they are ready, leading to attrition and poor fit.	could potentially be in the form of a skill set or a Cert II.
Children’s Education and Care	Alignment between training and job realities	Stakeholders described promising models as having resources that are both willing and capable of providing structured guided practice, enabling progressive achievement and development of workplace readiness through mentoring and coaching.	Misalignment between training delivery and limited workplace release time undermines learner confidence and on-the-job effectiveness.	Strengthening workplace release arrangements and aligning training with modern workforce realities were seen as essential to building a sustainable pipeline of skilled, confident educators.
Children’s Education and Care	Sector image and attraction	EWYL models perform best when learners understand the value and purpose of roles within the sector.	The poor public image of the ECEC sector continues to reduce demand for roles, creating a thin labour market where quality candidates are harder to attract and support.	Stakeholders also called for positive media representation of the sector, a National Campaign to showcase the ‘feel good’ stories of the sector to change the negative perception of early learning in the community, and funding incentives to increase gender diversity by supporting both men and women into non-traditional roles.

Sector	Themes	Key features of promising models	Barriers to scale & other sector concerns	Opportunities to overcome barriers
Health	Alignment of training with clinical practice	Stakeholders described promising EWYL models in the Health sector as those that demonstrate delivery that aligns closely with workplace operations, with training that is relevant, adaptable to different service sizes, and reflective of contemporary clinical realities.	Scaling promising models is complicated by inconsistencies in assessment instruments, variable training quality across providers, and persistent negative perceptions within parts of the sector about trainees. Additional concerns include limits on lecturer currency, gaps in professional skills even when assessments are passed.	Stakeholders emphasised the need for ongoing upskilling of the existing workforce, with professional development resources, tools and learning opportunities curated in a centralised repository accessible to trainers, teachers and assessors.
Nursing	Educational integrity and learner protection	High-quality models prioritise learner development and professional competence in regulated clinical environments.	Stakeholders raised concerns about using students to fill workforce shortages in a highly regulated environment, emphasising that learners are not yet fully skilled and should not be embedded as core workforce contributors.	With significant shortages students should be treated as supernumerary. Nursing and midwifery stakeholders advised that educators should ideally be in a position where their primary focus is on being an educator, to ensure that the quality of learning remains high and is not affected by the demands of patient care. Alternative measures to address placement hardship in nursing and midwifery such as the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP)

Sector	Themes	Key features of promising models	Barriers to scale & other sector concerns	Opportunities to overcome barriers
Allied Health Assistants	Qualification-role alignment	Promising approaches align training with roles to support competence and retention.	Misalignment exists between pathways for the Allied Health Assistant role and the Certificate IV qualification.	For Allied Health Assistants, a revised generalist stream within the Certificate IV was seen as essential to better reflect the diversity of roles better and reduce qualification-job mismatch.
Dental	Career pathway visibility, attraction and diversity	Effective models ensure trainees understand role expectations, responsibilities and long-term career opportunities, while promoting greater workforce diversity.	Dental Assistants carry substantial responsibility ranging from infection control compliance to chairside assistance and patient support, yet many students enter the sector without a clear understanding of these expectations or the broader pathways available. Dental Assisting is rarely promoted in schools or career counselling settings, despite offering structured technical career pathways.	Strengthen career promotion through schools and guidance systems. Despite the sector being heavily female-dominated, stakeholders see value in actively promoting gender balance, noting that a more diverse workforce strengthens team dynamics and reduces existing cultural norms that may disadvantage trainees.
Dental	High-quality onsite workplace learning	Successful EWYL models are built around high-quality onsite workplace training and assessment, which allows trainees to learn clinical procedures, instrument handling, infection prevention and patient interaction in real time.	Dental trainees are often young and abruptly immersed in pressurised clinical environments, making the combination of study and hands-on work particularly challenging. Entry-level roles in private dental practices typically do not require a prior	Stakeholders recommended making the qualification mandatory for employment as a dental assistant to raise professionalism, standardise skills, and reduce unsafe ad hoc training practices.

Sector	Themes	Key features of promising models	Barriers to scale & other sector concerns	Opportunities to overcome barriers
			certificate or formal registration, meaning many dental assistants are ‘trained on the job’ by employers without structured learning pathways.	
Dental	Workforce sustainability and sector investment	Effective models should also be viable in small dental practices where traineeships play a critical role in workforce supply and retention.	All stakeholders raised concerns around the removal of priority status and employer incentives and the impact it will have on the financial viability of traineeships Stakeholders also flagged other barriers, including the requirement for staff to hold a Certificate III before progressing to Certificate IV, which slows entry into higher-level or specialised roles at a time when the sector needs greater scope and skills.	Reinstate priority funding and ease access to higher-level training to support workforce stability and professional standards.
Human (Community) Services	Community-embedded, purpose-driven models	Promising EWYL models in this sector are seen as those that embrace a social enterprise mindset, viewing traineeships not only as training arrangements but as community-building mechanisms that strengthen local capability and	Stakeholders expressed concerns that large-scale models could risk eroding the local community-embedded nature that makes these programs successful—relationships, cultural context, and community trust cannot easily be standardised or replicated at scale.	Design bespoke EWYL models tailored to local contexts, community needs and employer capability, rather than generic or standardised approaches.

Sector	Themes	Key features of promising models	Barriers to scale & other sector concerns	Opportunities to overcome barriers
		create intergenerational employment pathways.		
Human (Community) Services	Qualification relevance and workforce-capability	Effective EWYL models align training content with contemporary frontline practice, including trauma-informed care, cultural safety and psychosocial support.	<p>Scaling promising EWYL models is seen to be challenging when clear post-qualification pathways beyond Certificate III and IV in Community Services are lacking, limiting both learner progression and employer confidence in longer-term workforce development.</p> <p>Stakeholders also noted that the Certificate IV in Housing is not fit for purpose, particularly in relation to cultural safety, trauma-informed practice and psychosocial support, skills that are now essential for frontline housing work.</p>	<p>Mental health, homelessness and family-violence challenges present in the sector require training that better prepares the workforce for crisis response and long-term case coordination.</p> <p>Stakeholders also called for qualifications that are flexible, modular and mapped to clear pathways aligned with industrial awards, enabling workers to progress meaningfully without being locked into narrow training structures that fail to reflect the sector’s evolving needs.</p>
Human (Community) Services	Employer awareness and system readiness	Strong EWYL models require informed and capable employers who understand available traineeship models, funding supports and implementation requirements in the sector.	<p>Many employers are interested in traineeships but lack awareness of what is available in the sector, including funding supports and implementation steps, which limits uptake.</p> <p>Stakeholders also noted that currently, no strong, promising EWYL model exists in</p>	Provide targeted guidance, implementation support and practical tools to build employer readiness and uptake, particularly for small and regional providers.

Sector	Themes	Key features of promising models	Barriers to scale & other sector concerns	Opportunities to overcome barriers
			<p>the mental health sector, leaving organisations without examples to emulate.</p> <p>Smaller providers, especially in regional areas, struggle most, as decisions about traineeships often rest with Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) who may be overstretched, which therefore delays or prevents engagement.</p>	
Sport and Recreation (Outdoor Leadership Industry) ³	Experiential, mentored workplace learning	Stakeholders stressed that a promising EWYL model in Outdoor Leadership should build on the sector’s culture of practical learning, especially through shadowing and peer-to-peer mentorship across different skill levels.	<p>Outdoor Leadership qualifications require extended periods away from home for both staff and students, which can be challenging for individuals with families or other life commitments.</p> <p>The Certificate III training package’s diversity and unit volume cause time pressure. With only one year to complete the Certificate, including 22 units spanning diverse outdoor environments and activity types, providers struggle to</p>	Stakeholders recommended that prospective trainees receive clear expectations regarding travel, time away from home and lifestyle impacts before commencing, helping prevent early withdrawal.

³ While the Sport and Recreation sector is a focus for the next phase of the research, stakeholders from the Outdoor Leadership sub-sector actively engaged in this phase through interviews and online workshops. Their valuable insights are therefore included here, with broader sector perspectives to be captured in the subsequent phase of the project.

Sector	Themes	Key features of promising models	Barriers to scale & other sector concerns	Opportunities to overcome barriers
			cover all required competencies in ways that meet the varied needs of employers.	
Sport and Recreation (Outdoor Leadership Industry)	Career security and workforce conditions	Effective models in the sector benefits from offering highly experiential, real-world learning environments aligned with industry practice.	<p>The Outdoor Leadership industry has not traditionally engaged unions as heavily as other sectors have in championing workforce development, rights, or conditions.</p> <p>Stakeholders also noted that the industry does not have a dedicated industrial award regulating wages and employment conditions, leading to variability in pay.</p>	<p>Strengthen funding levers to recognise the true cost of supervision, equipment and field-based training.</p> <p>Stakeholders also stressed the importance of clear progression opportunities, noting that structured pathways from traineeships into more advanced outdoor leadership roles would help strengthen long-term workforce development.</p>

Appendix B: EWYL models identified by stakeholders in care and support

Whilst not exhaustive, the table below sets out those models identified by stakeholders in HumanAbility's consultations.

Table 6: Stakeholder-identified EWYL models across care and support sectors⁴

Name	State / Terr	Qualification	Type
Traineeships delivered by BlueCare	QLD	Cert III Individual Support	Traineeship
Flinders University Diploma in Aged Care & Disability Support (Advanced Apprenticeship)	SA	Diploma in Aged Care and Disability Support	Apprenticeship
RMIT Skills in Employment Project (SKiP) program	VIC	Certificate IV in Disability Support Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing)	Traineeship
RMIT Higher Apprenticeships & Traineeships Social Services Extension Project (HATSSEP)	VIC	Certificate IV Disability Advanced Diploma Community Sector Management	Apprenticeship Traineeship
Disability Services Enterprise Agreement Victoria (DSEAV) traineeships	VIC	Certificate IV in Disability Support	Traineeship
Traineeships delivered by Warrigal Aged Care	NSW	Certificate III in Individual Support	Traineeship
Community Traineeship Pilot Program	VIC	VET qualifications in Community Services and Disability Support	Traineeship

⁴ This list is being expanded through further research. A fully finalised version will be available in a future report. This list does not include similar models to Earn While You Learn.

Name	State / Terr	Qualification	Type
	NSW		
Anglicare Home Care Worker Traineeship	TAS	Certificate III in Individual Support	Traineeship
Traineeships delivered by Uniting AgeWell StrathHaven	VIC	Certificate III in Individual Support	Traineeship
The Batchelor Institute's Traineeship Program in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)	NT	Certificate III in ECEC Diploma of ECEC Bachelor of ECEC Graduate Diploma in ECEC	Traineeship
Victorian Government Lived experience Peer Cadetship program	VIC	Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work	Cadetship
WA Country Health Service Anaesthetic Technician Traineeship	WA	Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology and Practice	Traineeship
IAHA National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Academy	ACT NT NSW	Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance	Traineeship
Australian Academy of Dental Assisting College Traineeships	NSW	Certificate III in Dental Assisting Certificate III in Health Services Assistance	Traineeship
NACCHO First Nations Health Worker Traineeships (FNHWT) Program	National	Certificate III or Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care	Traineeship
GenU Employment Services Traineeships	VIC	Certificate III in Community Services	Traineeship

Name	State / Terr	Qualification	Type
		Certificate IV in Community Services	
Disability Support, Aged Care Traineeships delivered by GenU	VIC	Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability) Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing)	Traineeship
South West TAFE (SWTAFE) mobile Skills Lab	VIC	Certificate III in Individual Support	Traineeship
Y Careers Traineeships	VIC NSW QLD WA SA	Certificate III in ECEC (with an optional Diploma upgrade) Certificate III in Community Services Certificate III in Individual Support with the option to continue into Certificate IV in Aged Care Certificate III in Individual Support with an option for Certificate IV in Disability Support	Traineeship (GTO operated)
Kangan Institute Traineeship	VIC	Certificate III in ECEC Diploma of ECEC Certificate III in Dental Assisting	Traineeship
Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Traineeships delivered by Anglicare	VIC	Certificate IV in AOD Diploma in Community Service Bachelor in Social Work, Counselling, or Mental Health and AOD	Traineeship
Victorian Department of Health Lived Experience Peer Cadet Program	VIC	Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work	Cadetship
AFL Sports Ready Traineeships	VIC QLD NSW	Certificate III in Sport, Aquatics and Recreation	Traineeship

Name	State / Terr	Qualification	Type
	TAS		
One Tree Community Services Traineeships	QLD WA NT	Certificate III in ECEC Diploma of ECEC	Traineeship
Blue Haven Illawarra Traineeships	NSW	Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing)	Traineeship
Mas National Deadly Start Traineeship Program	QLD	Certificate III in Health Services Assistance	Traineeship
IRT Traineeship Program	NSW QLD ACT	Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing)	Traineeship
Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) NSW Cadetship Program	NSW	Certificate IV in Housing	Cadetship
Traineeships delivered by BUSY at Work	VIC QLD NSW WA	Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance Certificate III in Health Services Assistance Certificate III in Dental Assisting Certificate III and IV in Fitness Certificate III and IV in Outdoor Leadership Certificate III in Sport, Aquatics and Recreation	Traineeship
Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) Traineeships	QLD	Certificate III in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Certificate III in ECEC Diploma of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care	Traineeship

Name	State / Terr	Qualification	Type
NSW Aboriginal Nursing and Midwifery Cadetships	NSW	Bachelor of Nursing Bachelor of Midwifery	Cadetship
Wesley Mission Queensland Aged Care Traineeships	QLD	Certificate III in Individual Support	Traineeship SBAT



HumanAbility

www.humanability.com.au