



SECTOR
PROFILE

Health



HumanAbility





Industry sector overview

Our national healthcare system provides a comprehensive range of services and supports enabling Australians to maintain their health and wellbeing. Health services are provided in a variety of settings by state, territory and local governments, not for profit and community-based organisations, through a diverse range of providers including hospitals, GPs, specialists and allied health workers.

In the 2021–22 fiscal year, the nation invested \$241.3 billion in healthcare, translating to an annual spend of \$9,365 per person⁽⁷³⁾. This substantial investment reflects Australia's commitment to a holistic approach to health, encompassing physical, mental, and social wellbeing. The workforce trained through Vocational Education and Training reflects these dimensions across the healthcare spectrum, including both primary and secondary health services. Ensuring Australians have access to a wide range of healthcare professionals capable of addressing various aspects of their wellbeing.

Health services include direct healthcare services that focus on treating and managing specific health issues and promoting overall health. These services are typically provided by healthcare professionals who are directly involved in patient care and treatment.

“Can’t attract enough school leavers to meet the health sector needs when the sectors are all competing for the same people.”

“Allied Health Assistance roles are growing, but it is a challenge in regional areas to attract and retain them.”

VET-trained occupations in the health sector include:

- Enrolled nurses
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers
- Personal care and nursing assistants
- Allied health assistants
- Therapy assistants/aides
- Residential care assistants
- Aged or disabled carers
- Special care workers
- Dental assistants
- Pathology collectors
- Medical technicians
- Ambulance Transport

Health services are funded through government and/or private sources^{(73) (74)}. VET graduates work across the health care sectors, including private businesses such as dental clinics, pharmacies, pathology and diagnostic services, and private hospitals, as well as public services such as community health clinics, alcohol and drug treatment services, mental health services and public hospitals.

The 3 largest occupation groups (based on ANZSCO codes) are:

- Registered Nurses
- Dental Practitioners
- Dental Assistants



SECTOR DEMOGRAPHICS*

Health and Human Services Workforce Key Industries⁽⁷⁾

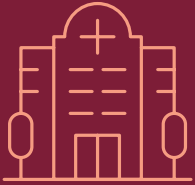


Health Professionals projected workforce growth⁽²⁾

25.8%

Hospitals

552,000⁽⁷⁾



77%

are female⁽⁷⁾

43 years

average age⁽⁷⁾

2%

are First Nations⁽⁷⁾

45%

are part-time⁽⁷⁾

66%

Bachelors Degree or above⁽⁷⁾

Medical and Other Health Care Services

710,000⁽⁷⁾



75%

are female⁽⁷⁾

42 years

average age⁽⁷⁾

2%

are First Nations⁽⁷⁾

53%

are part-time⁽⁷⁾

57%

Bachelors Degree or above⁽⁷⁾

Supply, Demand and Gap insights

Australia's healthcare workforce is experiencing unprecedented growth, with a projected 15%⁽⁷⁴⁾ ⁽⁷⁵⁾ ⁽⁷⁶⁾ increase in demand over the next five years.



This is compounded by **current and predicted workforce shortages** due to aging workforce, retention issues and the changing nature of skills required due to the digitization of healthcare⁽⁷³⁾ ⁽⁷⁶⁾.

The demand for healthcare services is not only increasing but also evolving, driven by changing community and government expectations, as well as significant investments in health infrastructure.

Both locally and globally, competition for healthcare talent is intensifying.

Key drivers of this demand include Australia's ageing population and the rising prevalence of chronic diseases. While Australians are living longer and enjoying more years in full health, chronic diseases continue to pose a significant burden on the healthcare system⁽⁷³⁾. Mental illness and substance use disorders have emerged as major contributors to the overall health burden, further straining the healthcare workforce⁽⁷⁷⁾.

The healthcare sector must adapt to these challenges to meet the growing and changing needs of the Australian population.












* Disaggregated ANZIC data for the Health and Community services sector is not currently available due to data limitations. The following data includes the wider Health and Human (Community) Services workforces. As such the data below is replicated in both sector profiles.



“People are seeking work life balance, with a preference for part-time work, which requires more workers to be trained in total, to meet full time need.”

Government policy and initiatives

This is an evolving and non-exhaustive list of strategies or initiatives that will inform or be informed by HumanAbility in some way. For overarching or cross-cutting strategies, see the HumanAbility Workforce Plan.

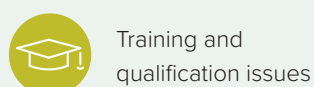
Strategy	Key sections / recommendations	Challenges
National Nursing Workforce Strategy <i>(being developed)</i>	<p>While the final strategy is yet to be released, it will explore the nursing workforce in all health and aged care sectors across Australia and will provide a national-level strategic approach to nursing. It is expected to explore the skills and training needs for nurses, including Enrolled Nurses and Assistants in Nursing, emphasising the need for improved education and training pathways and experiences.</p> <p>Increasing the First Nations nursing workforce and addressing the racism experienced by First Nations nurses will be critical components of the strategy. There will also be an emphasis on providing more education, training, and leadership development in digital tools and technologies to prepare nurses for the evolving healthcare landscape.</p> <p>HumanAbility is closely monitoring these developments and planning for integration of the strategy's recommendations into future workforce planning and qualification design.</p>	   
National Allied Health Workforce Strategy <i>(being developed)</i>	<p>The National Allied Health Workforce Strategy is currently under development and will be considered as part of future workforce planning initiatives.</p> <p>While the final strategy is yet to be released, several key aspects are being contemplated to address the challenges facing the allied health workforce in Australia. The strategy is expected to focus on improving pathways from Vocational Education and Training (VET) to higher education for allied health professionals to create more seamless career progression opportunities and enhance the overall skill level of the workforce. There is also likely to be an emphasis on ensuring allied health assistants have the necessary skills to support allied health professionals in working to their full scope of practice across various healthcare settings.</p> <p>It's important to note the scope of the Strategy may not include the Allied Health Assistants workforce specifically. HumanAbility is engaging with the development of this strategy and will incorporate its relevant recommendations into future workforce planning and qualification design.</p>	      



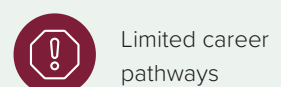
Labour force shortages



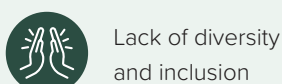
Skills gaps



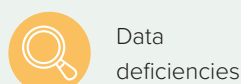
Training and qualification issues



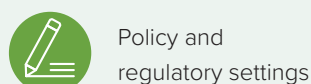
Limited career pathways






Lack of diversity and inclusion



Data deficiencies



Policy and regulatory settings

Strategy	Key sections / recommendations	Challenges
National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021–2031	<p>The Framework and Implementation Plan outlines several strategic directions relevant to HumanAbility's role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Direction Two focuses on ensuring the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce possess the essential skills, capacity, and leadership across all health disciplines, roles, and functions. • Strategic Direction Four aims to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying and completing health qualifications to meet future healthcare needs of their communities. • Strategic Direction Five emphasizes the importance of successful transitions into the workforce for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health students, along with providing clear career pathway options. 	
First Nations Health Worker Traineeships Program	<p>Delivered by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), this initiative is aimed at strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. The program supports up to 500 First Nations trainees to undertake Certificate III or IV accredited training, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to work across various health settings. The primary goal is to enable these trainees to deliver culturally appropriate care to First Nations peoples, thereby improving health outcomes and contributing to closing the gap in health disparities. By providing this targeted training, the program not only creates employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but also ensures that healthcare services are more culturally responsive and accessible to First Nations communities.</p>	
National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021–2031	<p>The 10-year plan has been developed to guide long-term medical workforce planning across the country. It aims to build a sustainable, highly trained medical workforce and improve access to healthcare for all Australians.</p> <p>HumanAbility's remit across the paramedical and care and support sector workforce considers aspects of the strategy that are relevant. HA's career pathways project will also examine career progression and articulation for VET qualified workers into higher education pathways.</p>	



Labour force shortages



Skills gaps



Training and qualification issues



Limited career pathways





Lack of diversity and inclusion



Data deficiencies



Policy and regulatory settings

Strategy	Key sections / recommendations	Challenges
<p>The “Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce”</p> <p>Scope of Practice Review</p>	<p>The Scope of Practice Review is currently under development. This review aims to identify and address barriers that prevent health professionals from working to their full capacity, with the goal of enhancing healthcare access and productivity.</p> <p>A key element of the review is considering the support workforce needed to enable health professionals to work to their full scope of practice. This includes allied health assistants, nursing assistants, and other support roles that are vital to the healthcare system. Understanding the current workforce composition and qualifications content for these support roles is essential.</p> <p>HumanAbility’s career pathways project will support the review by examining career progression opportunities, alignment of current qualifications to support progression, and articulation of pathways for VET qualified workers into higher education pathways.</p>	
<p>National Agreement for Closing the Gap</p>	<p>HumanAbility, is committed to supporting the National Agreement on Closing the Gap; workforce development and training in the health and community services sectors is a critical foundational piece to achieving the Closing the Gap targets. HumanAbility’s approach aligns with key priority reforms focused on workforce planning and training, including establishing formal partnerships and shared decision-making processes to co-design education and training initiatives at all levels (Priority Reform #1), and building the community-controlled RTO sector through increased investment and autonomy to deliver culturally safe and responsive education, On Country where possible (Priority Reform #2).</p> <p>We aim to ensure our qualifications align with the priorities identified by ACCHOs and support their workforce development goals. This collaborative process will include ongoing consultation, shared decision-making, and a commitment to incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices into our training frameworks. By partnering with ACCHOs, HumanAbility seeks to contribute to the strengthening and expansion of the community-controlled sector, enhancing the skills of the Indigenous health workforce, and ultimately improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>	



Labour force shortages



Skills gaps



Training and qualification issues



Limited career pathways




Lack of diversity and inclusion



Data deficiencies



Policy and regulatory settings



“Holistic training is needed. Greater emphasis on quality delivery needed, including building capacity [of trainers].”

Enrolments and completions

The Health training package includes a wide range of qualifications, including widely popular courses and specialised, niche qualifications for specific technical roles. Since the 2015 release of these qualifications, enrolments have shown a steady upward trend, with a significant surge during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. This growth reflects the increasing demand for skilled professionals in various health-related roles.

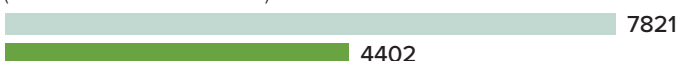
Despite the steady rise in enrolments, the sector faces challenges converting them into completions. Addressing these gaps could help meet the growing workforce needs in the health sector, which remains vital to supporting Australia's healthcare system.

Enrolments and completions by qualification⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

Certificate II in Medical Service First Response
(HLT21015 and HLT21020)



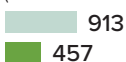
Certificate II in Health Support Services
(HLT23215 and HLT23221)



Certificate III in Ambulance Communications (Call-taking)
(HLT31015 and HLT31020)



Certificate III in Non-Emergency Patient Transport
(HLT31115 and HLT31120)



Certificate III in Basic Health Care
(HLT31215 and HLT31220)



Certificate III in Dental Assisting
(HLT35015 and HLT35021)



Certificate III in Dental Laboratory Assisting
(HLT35115)



Certificate III in Population Health
(HLT36015)



Certificate III in Sterilisation Services
(HLT37015)



Certificate III in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support
(HLT37115)



Certificate III in Pathology Collection
(HLT37215)



Certificate III in Health Administration
(HLT37315)



Certificate III in Pathology Assistance
(HLT37415)



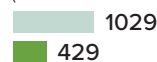
Certificate IV in Ambulance Communications (Dispatch)
(HLT41015)



Certificate IV in Ambulance Communications (Dispatch)
(HLT410)



Certificate IV in Health Care
(HTL4115 and HLT41120)



Certificate IV in Massage Therapy
(HLT42015)



Certificate IV in Dental Assisting
(HLT45015 and HLT45021)



■ Enrolments ■ Completions

Note that these figures are for HLT qualifications, not including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific qualifications, as these are highlighted in additional detail on page 13.

Enrolments and completions by qualification⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

Certificate IV in Population Health
(HTL46015)

| 6
| 1

Certificate IV in Sterilisation Services
(HTL47015)

| 472
| 182

Certificate IV in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support
(HLT47115)

| 414
| 97

Certificate IV in Health Administration
(HLT47315)

| 2944
| 649

Certificate IV in Audiometry
(HTL47415)

| 11
| 0

Certificate IV in Operating Theatre Technical Support
(HLT47515)

| 245
| 93

Certificate IV in Medical Practice Assisting
(HLT47715)

| 801
| 61

Certificate IV in Optical Dispensing
(HLT47815)

| 1124
| 288

Diploma of Clinical Coding
(HLT50321)

| 401
| 0

Diploma of Paramedical Science
(HLT51015)

| 414
| 238

Diploma of Emergency Health Care
(HLT51020)

| 2407
| 279

Diploma of Remedial Massage
(HLT52015)

| 6053
| 2142

Diploma of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)
Remedial Massage (HLT52115)

| 14
| 17

Diploma of Nursing (HLT54115 and HLT54121) (Graph not on same scale)

| 25,763
| 7289

Diploma of Shiatsu and Oriental Therapies
(HLT52215)

| 64
| 28

Diploma of Clinical Aromatherapy
(HLT52315)

| 61
| 30

Diploma of Kinesiology
(HLT52415)

| 265
| 76

Diploma of Reflexology
(HLT52515)

| 37
| 7

Diploma of Ayurvedic Lifestyle Consultation
(HLT52615)

| 118
| 60

Diploma of Dental Technology
(HLT55118)

| 599
| 127

Diploma of Audiometry
(HLT57415)

| 186
| 31

Diploma of Practice Management
(HLT57715)

| 1349
| 192

Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology and Practice
(HLT57915 and HLT7921)

| 171
| 81

Advanced Diploma of Ayurveda
(HLT62615)

| 73
| 7

Advanced Diploma of Nursing
(HLT64115 and HLT64121)

| 25
| 6

Advanced Diploma of Dental Prosthetics
(HLT65015)

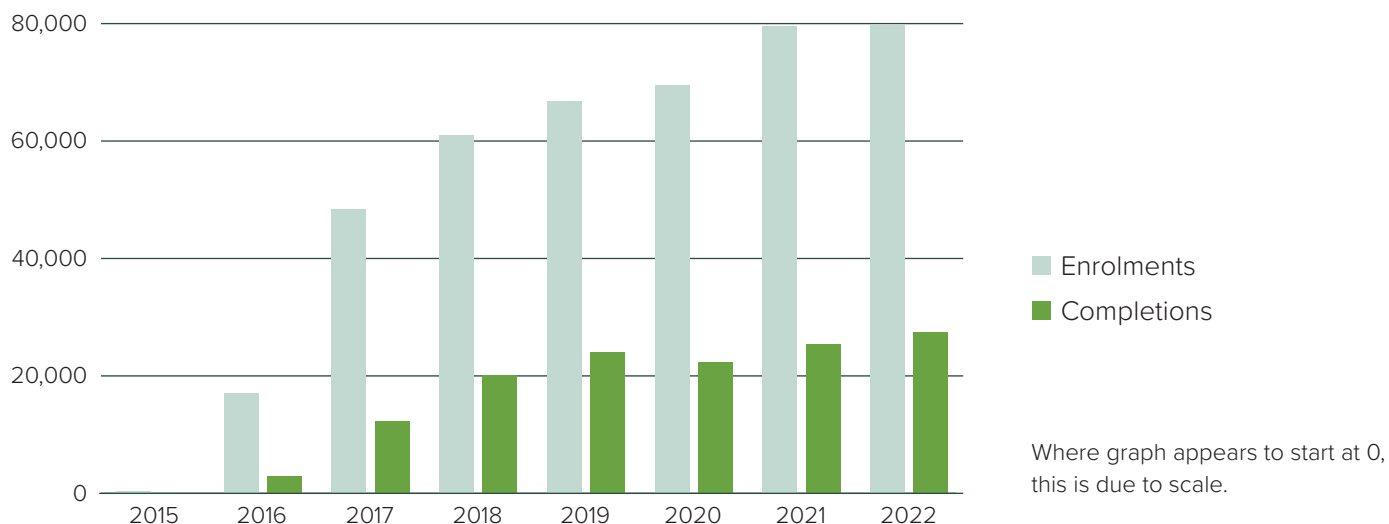
| 53
| 17

■ Enrolments ■ Completions

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

Note that these figures are for HLT qualifications, not including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific qualifications, as these are highlighted in additional detail on page 13.

Total enrolments and completions for health qualifications^{(9) (10)}



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Enrolments	340	17,131	48,445	61,087	66,843	69,525	79,545	79,703
Completions	44	2,932	12,330	20,121	24,114	22,280	25,349	27,379

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

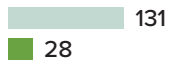


After the initial surge in enrolments, expected following the release of the qualifications analysed in 2015, there have been modest yearly increases in enrolments from 2018 to 2021. **While there has been an upward trend in completions over the past 5 years, they have not kept pace with the increase in enrolments.**

Note that these figures are for HLT qualifications, not including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific qualifications, as these are highlighted in additional detail on page 13.

Indigenous health qualifications⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

Certificate II in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (HLT20113)



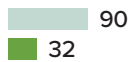
Certificate II in Indigenous Environmental Health (HLT26120)



Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (HLT30113)



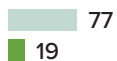
Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (HLT40113)



Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice (HLT40213)



Diploma of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (HLT50113)



Diploma of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice (HLT50213)



■ Enrolments ■ Completions

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners made up **95.0%** of enrolments and **99.6%** of completions

Non-Indigenous learners represented **4.4%** of enrolments and had **0.0%** of completions

Not known status accounted for **0.6%** of enrolments and **0.4%** of completions



NB: Many of the qualifications analysed were superseded in 2022 and so data for these releases is unavailable.

Gender⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

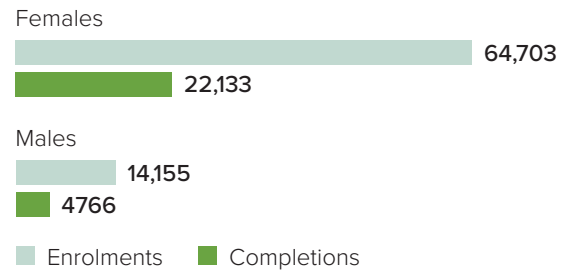
Females accounted for **81.5%** of enrolments and **81.4%** of completions

Males represented **17.8%** of enrolments and **17.5%** of completions

People who identified as 'Other' comprised **0.1%** of enrolments and **0.1%** of completions

Learners whose gender is not known comprised **0.6%** of enrolments and **0.9%** of completions

Enrolments and completions by gender



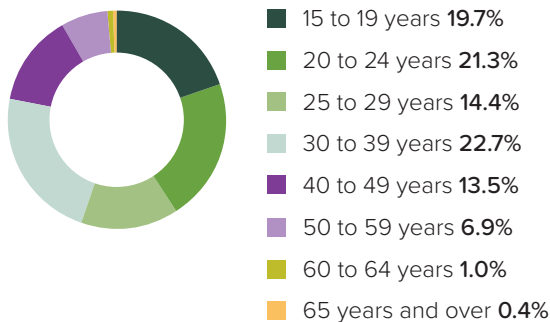
* Other: 85 Enrolments; 37 Completions
Not known: 457 Enrolments; 241 Completions

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

Compared to overall VET program data, where the gender balance is more evenly distributed, the health sector is significantly more female-dominated, reflecting the broader trends in care-related industries.

Age⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

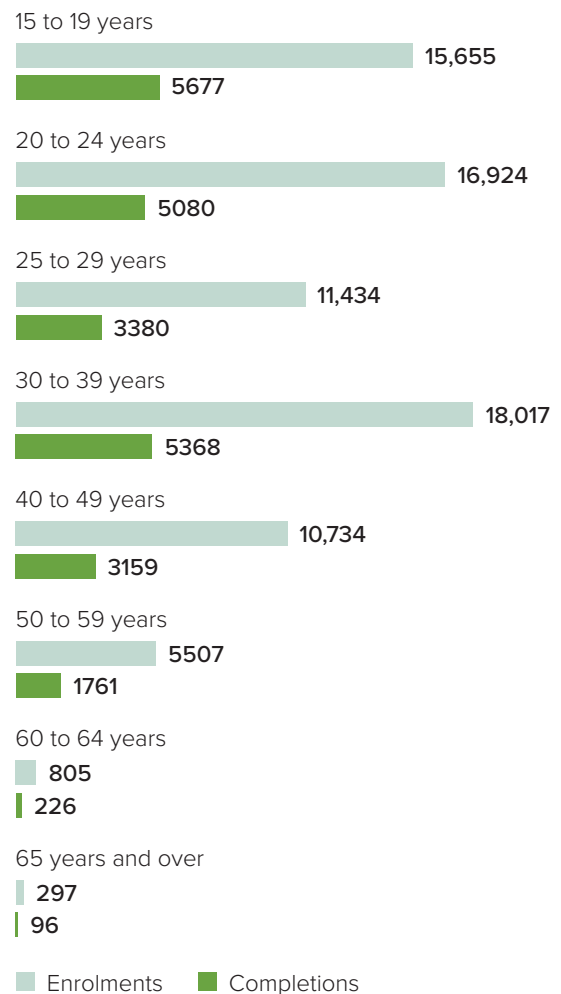
% of overall enrolments by age



In the health sector, the **30 to 39 years** age group had the highest share of enrolments (**22.7%**) and completions (**21.7%**) in 2022, followed closely by those aged **20 to 24 years**, who made up **21.3%** of enrolments and **20.5%** of completions. Learners aged **15 to 19** and **25 to 29** also contributed significantly, representing around **34.1%** of enrolments. Participation drops noticeably among older age groups, with those aged 50 and over accounting for a much smaller proportion.

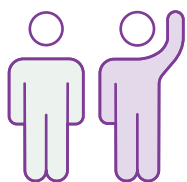
Compared to overall VET program data, the health sector shows a similar trend of strong representation from younger and mid-career learners, but with slightly higher participation among individuals in their 30s.

Enrolments and completions by age



Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

First Nations students⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners made up **4.2%** of enrolments and **3.7%** of completions

Non-Indigenous learners represented **90.9%** of enrolments and **91.0%** of completions

Not known learners accounted for **4.9%** of enrolments and **5.3%** of completions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners made up 4.2% of enrolments in 2022, showing a strong level of participation. This proportion is higher than their representation in the overall population (3.2%, ABS 2022⁽⁷⁸⁾), indicating the sector's appeal to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. Compared to overall VET program data, the health sector also sees a higher enrolment rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, reflecting a positive trend in attracting these students to health-related qualifications.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners comprised 3.7% of the completions for Health qualifications in 2022. For qualifications specifically designed and delivered for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the rate of students who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander rose to 99.6%.

This data provides compelling evidence of the effectiveness of culturally relevant and tailored qualifications in engaging and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the health sector. The higher completion rates in health-related courses, particularly those designed with cultural considerations, underscore the importance of culturally appropriate education in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Students with disability⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾



Learners with a disability represented **6.0%** of enrolments and **5.3%** of completions in the Health sector*

* 1442 students

The health sector shows similar trends to overall VET program data, with a comparable proportion of learners with disabilities enrolling in courses.

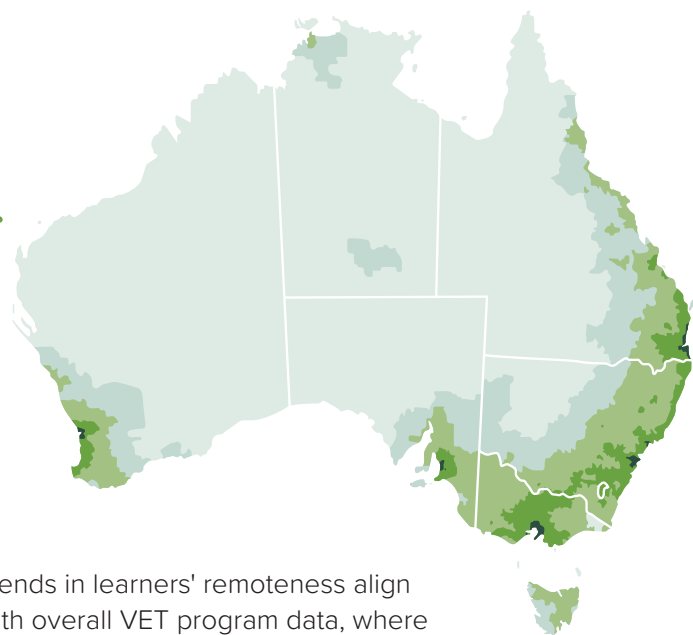
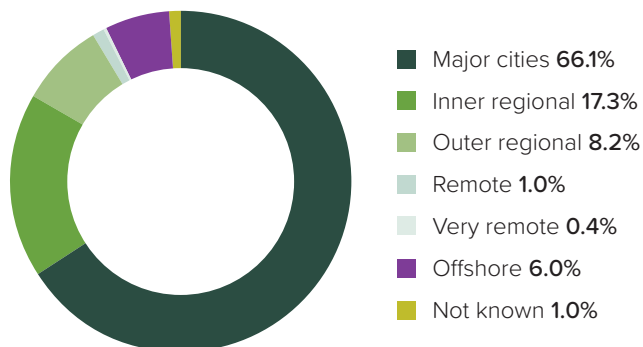
* Not including Indigenous specific qualifications. These are reported on page 13.

Geographic location⁽⁹⁾ ⁽¹⁰⁾

Remoteness

Remoteness Index of Australia

% of overall enrolments by remoteness



Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

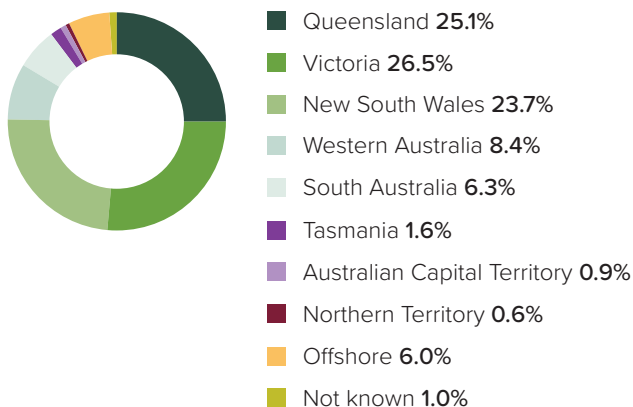


Health qualifications have high enrolments in **major cities at 66.1%**, similar to other health-related sectors like Aged Care and Disability (65.6%).

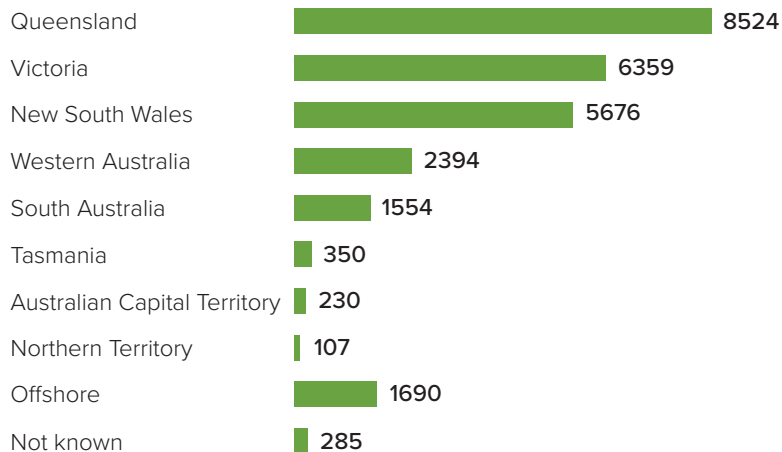
Trends in learners' remoteness align with overall VET program data, where major cities consistently dominate participation. However, the health sector shows slightly higher enrolment and completion rates from inner and outer regional areas than the broader VET sector.

State/territory

% of overall enrolments by state/territory



Number of completion of qualifications by state/territory



Victoria led in enrolments with **26.5%**, followed by **Queensland** with **25.1%** and **New South Wales** with **23.7%**. Together, these three states accounted for most enrolments and completions, with **Queensland** having the highest proportion of completions, at **31.4%**. **Western Australia**, **South Australia**, and **offshore learners** each contributed smaller shares of enrolments, ranging from **6% to 9%**.

The trends in the health sector are consistent with those in overall VET program data. Larger states dominate participation, but Queensland had a higher completion rate relative to its enrolments, highlighting strong learner outcomes in the state.

Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.



“Creating clear pathways involves time and money, it’s a long-term investment, a journey. We see skill sets as a critical way to build a sustainable workforce... [the]... Solid Connections program builds capacity in a slow measured way, with students participating in the Community Support Skill Set... providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants with an opportunity to discover new skills and explore career pathways in the Care and Support Workforce.”

Actions

Work initiated in response to what we have heard from stakeholders:

Research



Completion rates project: understanding the drivers and opportunities for intervention to address low completion rates in key qualifications.

Training Package Development and Review



Identify priority qualifications for review and update annually.



Review HLT training products: to improve career pathways that will attract people and support industry growth, while also ensuring the qualifications match current industry standards, regulatory demands, safety requirements and skill needs. Qualifications to be reviewed:

- Pathology Collection
 - Optical Dispensing
 - Audiometry
 - Health Services Assistance
-

Note: For all references in this sector profile, please refer to the HumanAbility 2024 Workforce Plan.

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