Human (Community) Services

HumanAbility

Industry sector overview

Human Services is a diverse sector that provides a range of supports and services to people and communities.

The sector provides information, advice, practical help, advocacy, along with preventative and intervention-based services to many Australians. Many of the job roles in the sector involve working directly with people who are experiencing emotional distress, poverty, trauma and violence.

Services are primarily funded by government, philanthropy and donations, delivered as government, public or through not-for-profit services. A smaller portion of Human Services are provided by for profit businesses. Services are often inter-connected, and/or overlap with health , aged care and disability services.

 Human Services incorporates multiple subsectors:

- Volunteering
- Community Development and Youth Services,
- Employment Support
- Celebrants
- Pastoral Care,
- Family Violence Services
- Housing and Homelessness Services
- Residential Care, Child Protection and Youth Justice
- Counselling support services including Family and Relationship services, Career Advice, Mental Health, and counselling and support for Alcohol and Other Drugs.

"There is overwhelming demand with high case load, practitioners are carrying high risk.....there is burnout and vicarious trauma...[for people] only offered contracts not permanent positions... and the findings of Royal Commissions are being implemented without more resources."

Human services play an important role in social well-being and addressing inequity within communities. Services provide essential support to individuals and families facing various challenges, ranging from mental illness to housing instability and social isolation. Human services not only enhance the quality of life for those they serve but also contribute to the overall health, safety, and resilience of society. They play a key role in promoting social cohesion and improving access to the resources and support people in our communities need to thrive.

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

- 4177 Welfare Support Worker
- 2725 Social Workers
- 2726 Welfare, Recreation and Community Arts Workers

"There is a data chasm. There is no national data around workforce in the mental health sector. Mental Health Coordinating council have started our own annual workforce census."

SECTOR DEMOGRAPHICS

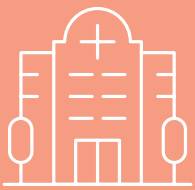## Health and Human Services* Workforce Key Industries[7]

Social and welfare projected
10 year growth to May 2033[2] [3]
27.3%

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]

**Welfare Support
Workers**[7]

70%
female

31%
are part-time

40 years
median age

**Social
Workers**[7]

87%
female

30%
are part-time

41 years
median age

**Welfare, Recreation and
Community Arts Workers**[7]

76%
female

42%
are part-time

41 years
median age

* 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.

Supply, Demand and Gap insights

Drivers of demand

There are multiple drivers of demand for different kinds of human services, that are affected by international, national and local events and policies. Some examples are:

Higher rates of loneliness (16%) and social isolation (17%)

increasing the need for, and resulting in the increased use of, human services due to the links to mental health and other social service supports. **The highest levels of loneliness and isolation are experienced by young people aged 15–24**[79], **people living in rural areas, carers and people who live alone**[80]

Inquiries and reports by Commissioners on issues such as youth justice[81]**, and the mental health system**[78] [79]

that seek reform and systemic changes, including staffing levels and training

Increased rates of risky alcohol use and illicit drug use,

particularly in people under 24[88]

Government strategies to improve the community health and outcomes,

through earlier intervention and prevention[84] [85] [86] that require investment, including in human services

Housing Affordability

rental prices rose by **40%** across Australia in 2023, with **vacancy rates at a record low of 1%**[87], leading to a **7.5% annual surge in homelessness services** in 2023 and higher levels of housing stress[87]

"There's an increased demand from people who are really struggling, at the same time as cost-of-living pressures and a housing crisis is creating a perfect storm, especially in regional areas."

Supply

Workforce supply issues vary across this broad sector:

It is affected by issues such as worker burnout and turnover.

Only **3% of services able to fully meet demand**, creating pressure on staff and services. Leading to **20% of services using less qualified staff and volunteers** to meet rising demands and **54% of staff experiencing exhaustion and burnout**[89]

"Mental Health strain, lack of understanding around how to support workers with their own mental health."

Conversely there are strengths that positively impact supply, such as:

A strong migrant and CALD workforce,

higher than the overall workforce[90], able to support a culturally diverse community

A stable workforce in some areas

e.g. In the alcohol and other drugs (AOD) sector, one third of the workforce are employed in rural locations, **41% had been working in the AOD sector for more than 10 years, 1 in 3 workers were men** and **93% find their work meaningful**[93]

Pay rates for many job roles increased

within the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHADS) award from 1 July 2024 **rates of pay have increased by 3.75%, a minimum of $45 per week**[91]. With evidence showing that increasing pay rates has an impact on the ability to attract and retain workers[92]

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.

Initiative	Of relevance or instruction to HumanAbility	Challenges
Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence	A workforce that is skilled and sustainable will underpin the successful achievement of improved prevention and response to family, domestic, and sexual violence. HumanAbility will collaborate with government bodies, industry stakeholders, and experts to develop content and/or training products that effectively address these issues, including Recommendation 26, which emphasises the need for more training on coercive and controlling behaviour. HumanAbility expects to review and update existing qualifications, as they are reviewed, to incorporate relevant content on identifying and responding to coercive control. HumanAbility will collaborate with government if the establishment of minimum standards for training on coercive control recommendation is accepted.	(Labour force shortages, Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues, Policy and regulatory settings)
National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–32	The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–32 has a focus on building capacity, ensuring coordinated services, and supporting long-term recovery for victim-survivors. HumanAbility will work with government bodies, industry stakeholders, and frontline services to support the development of content and training products aimed at enhancing the sector's capacity to identify and support women and children at risk of experiencing gender-based violence. This may include reviewing qualifications, and skill sets to incorporate trauma-informed and culturally safe practices, as well as primary prevention and early intervention strategies.	(Labour force shortages, Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues, Policy and regulatory settings, Lack of diversity and inclusion)

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

Initiative	Of relevance or instruction to HumanAbility	Challenges
National Housing and Homelessness Plan (in development)	When finalised, HumanAbility will work with government to progress recommendations relating to workforce development and training and consider these in future workplans. This includes exploring opportunities to enhance skills development for workers supporting people experiencing homelessness, considering a holistic approach that integrates various support services and highlighting the critical importance of the availability of affordable, adequate housing for people working in essential care and support services.	🧑 ✏️
National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2022–2032	The strategy emphasises the critical need to grow and develop a skilled mental health workforce through accessible education and training systems. HumanAbility aims to align our efforts with Strategic Pillars 1 (Attract and Train) and 2 (Maximise, Distribute and Connect) of the Strategy. This may involve reviewing and updating the CHC training package to ensure it equips individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge for various roles and settings within the mental health sector. In 2023–24 HumanAbility is reviewing the CHC Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs qualifications. We will explore opportunities to collaborate with industry stakeholders, education providers, and government bodies to develop clear and meaningful career pathways in mental health.	🧑 🧩 🎓 ⚠️ 🙌

🧑 Labour force shortages   🧩 Skills gaps   🎓 Training and qualification issues   ⚠️ Limited career pathways

🙌 Lack of diversity and inclusion   🔍 Data deficiencies   ✏️ Policy and regulatory settings

Enrolments and completions

The Human (Community) Services sector has seen steady enrolment and completion growth in recent years. The steady and strong enrolment numbers suggest a high demand for training in the sector, likely driven by increasing societal needs such as mental health support, ageing populations, and social services for vulnerable groups. This indicates that the sector appeals to individuals seeking meaningful and essential work.

The top qualifications in this sector cater to roles in areas like community services, case management, and social work support. These qualifications (listed below) are vital for preparing workers to meet the increasing demand for services driven by Australia's ageing population and ongoing social support needs.

Top 5 Human Services qualifications

The top 5 qualifications accounted for

61% (79,779) of all enrolments and

57% (18,141) of all completions in Human Services qualifications in 2022:

1. Certificate III in Community Services
2. Certificate IV in Community Services
3. Certificate IV in Mental Health
4. Diploma in Counselling
5. Diploma in Community Services

Enrolments and completions by qualification[9] [10]

Volunteering

Certificate I in Active Volunteering (CHC14015)
- 484
- 225

Certificate II in Active Volunteering (CHC24015)
- 5293
- 1964

Certificate III in Active Volunteering (CHC34015)
- 446
- 181

Certificate IV in Coordination of volunteer programs (CHC44015)
- 98
- 34

Community Services/Development

Certificate II in Community Services (CHC22015)
- 7635
- 2869
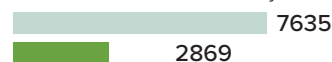
Certificate III in Community Services (CHC32015)
- 17,347
- 3507

Certificate IV in Community Services (CHC42015)
- 11,462
- 2562

Certificate IV in Community Development (CHC42115)
- 319
- 90

Diploma of Community Services (CHC52015) (Not on same scale)
- 29,259
- 8641

Diploma of Community Development (CHC52115)
- 80
- 34

■ Enrolments ■ Completions

"We need to build on the existing workforce and developing cascaded qualifications and skill sets."

Enrolments and completions by qualification[9] [10]

Child, Youth and Family Intervention

Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention (CHC40313)
- Enrolments: 4842
- Completions: 803

Certificate IV in Youth Justice (CHC40513)
- Enrolments: 360
- Completions: 99

Diploma of Child, Youth and Family Intervention (CHC50313)
- Enrolments: 1245
- Completions: 286

Graduate Certificate in Statutory Child Protection (CHC81215)
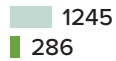- Enrolments: 14
- Completions: 0

Graduate Certificate in Client Assessment and Case Management (CHC82015)
- Enrolments: 86
- Completions: 44

Youth Work

Certificate IV in Youth Work (CHC40413)
- Enrolments: 6257
- Completions: 1389

Diploma of Youth Work (CHC50413)
- Enrolments: 1387
- Completions: 265
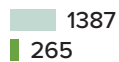
Career/Employment Services

Certificate IV in Employment Services (CHC41115)
- Enrolments: 1271
- Completions: 243
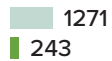
Certificate IV in Celebrancy (CHC41015)
- Enrolments: 2762
- Completions: 858
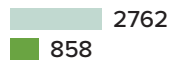
Alcohol and Other Drugs

Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs (CHC43215)
- Enrolments: 1814
- Completions: 460
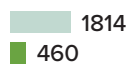
Diploma of Alcohol and Other Drugs (CHC53215)
- Enrolments: 602
- Completions: 113

Mental Health

Certificate IV in Mental Health (CHC43315)
- Enrolments: 11,988
- Completions: 2008

Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work (CHC43515)
- Enrolments: 1249
- Completions: 282
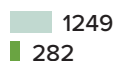
Diploma of Mental Health (CHC53315)
- Enrolments: 4535
- Completions: 814

Other

Certificate IV in Social Housing (CHC42215)
- Enrolments: 152
- Completions: 86

Certificate IV in Housing (CHC42221)
- Enrolments: 250
- Completions: 29

Certificate IV in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care (CHC42315)
- Enrolments: 527
- Completions: 153

Certificate IV in Leisure and Health (CHC43415)
- Enrolments: 3678
- Completions: 987
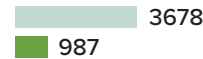
Diploma of Counselling (CHC51015)
- Enrolments: 8710
- Completions: 1809

Diploma of Financial Counselling (CHC51115)
- Enrolments: 640
- Completions: 205

Diploma of Leisure and Health (CHC53415)
- Enrolments: 234
- Completions: 40

Advanced Diploma of Community Sector Management (CHC62015)
- Enrolments: 2968
- Completions: 1101

Graduate Diploma of Relationship Counselling (CHC81015)
- Enrolments: 33
- Completions: 3

Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution (CHC81115)
- Enrolments: 234
- Completions: 60

Graduate Certificate in Career Development Practice (CHC81315)
- Enrolments: 252
- Completions: 106

■ Enrolments   ■ Completions

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

*NB: Many of these qualifications have been superseded with a new release in 2021; however, due to the recency of this release, no data is available at this stage.

(CHC35021 Certificate III in Community Safety Services, CHC40321 Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention, CHC40421 Certificate IV in Youth Work, CHC40521 Certificate IV in Youth Justice, CHC42021 Certificate IV in Community Services, CHC42121 Certificate IV in Community Development, CHC50321Diploma of Child, Youth and Family Intervention, CHC50421 Diploma of Youth Work, CHC50521 Diploma of Youth Justice, CHC51122 Diploma of Financial Counselling, CHC52021 Diploma of Community Services, CHC52121 Diploma of Community Development).

Total enrolments and completions for human services qualifications[9] [10]
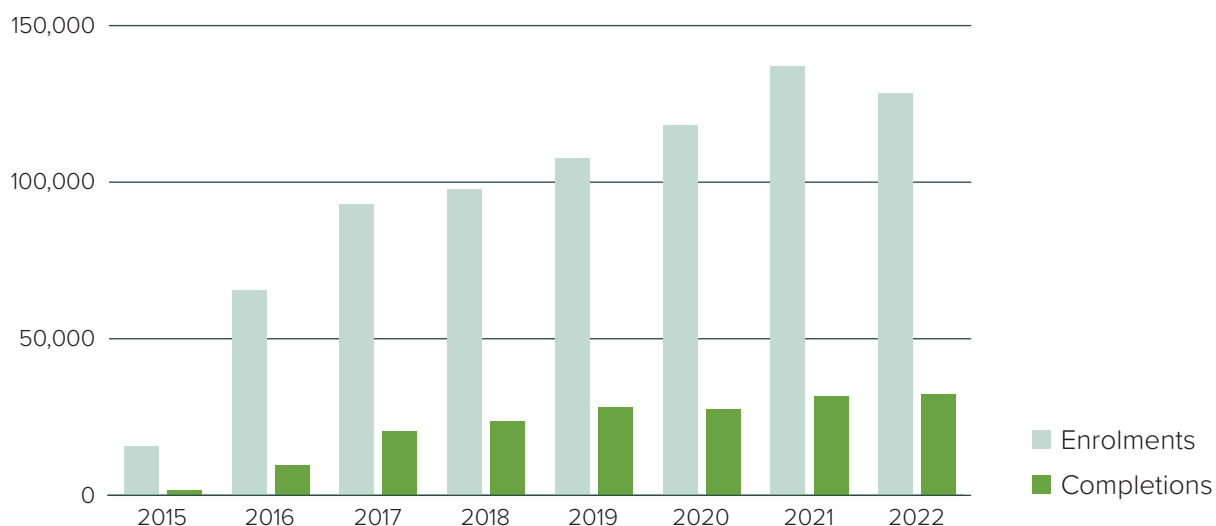
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Enrolments	15,561	65,586	92,866	97,835	107,597	118,157	137,168	128,516
Completions	1817	9534	20,525	23,582	28,299	27,480	31,691	32,353

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

The data for the health sector shows a significant increase in enrolments and completions from 2015 to 2022. Enrolments saw a steep rise, starting at 15,561 in 2015 and peaking at 137,168 in 2021 before slightly decreasing to 128,516 in 2022. Completions followed a similar upward trend, beginning with 1,817 in 2015 and growing steadily to 32,353 in 2022. **The growth in both enrolments and completions reflects the increasing demand for health-related qualifications, though enrolments consistently outpaced completions. This trend is comparable to the overall VET program, where completion rates across various sectors often fall short of enrolments.**

Gender[9] [10]

Females accounted for
72.5%
of enrolments and
70.6% of completions

Males represented
26.6%
of enrolments and
28.6% of completions

People who identified as '**Other**' comprised
0.2%
of enrolments and
0.2% of completions

Learners whose gender is **not known** comprised
0.6%
of enrolments and
0.7% of completions

Enrolments and completions by gender

Females
93,231
22,858

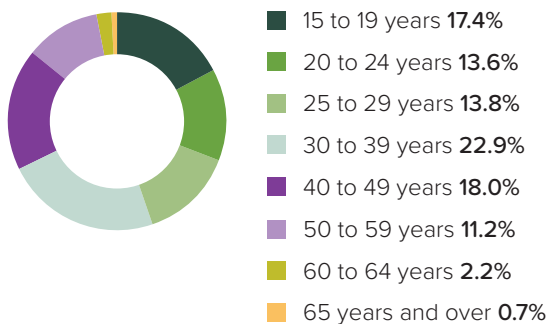Males
34,249
9252

■ Enrolments ■ Completions
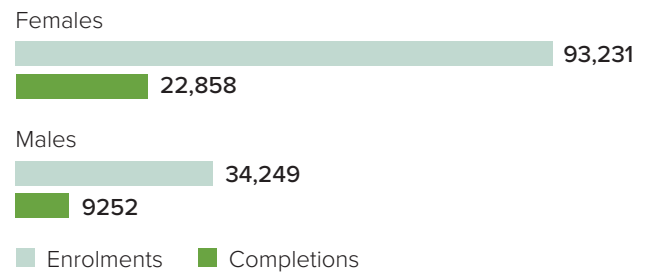
* Other: 221 Enrolments; 71 Completions
  Not known: 817 Enrolments; 215 Completions

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

In the Community Services sector, **females** overwhelmingly dominate, making up **72.5%** of enrolments and **70.6%** of completions in 2022. This strong female representation reflects broader trends across care-related industries, where women tend to have higher participation rates. **Males accounted for a much smaller share of learners.** Compared to overall VET program data, where female participation in care sectors is often high; the gender imbalance in Community Services follows this trend, underscoring the need to encourage greater gender diversity in this field.

Age[9] [10]

% of overall enrolments by age

- ■ 15 to 19 years **17.4%**
- ■ 20 to 24 years **13.6%**
- ■ 25 to 29 years **13.8%**
- ■ 30 to 39 years **22.9%**
- ■ 40 to 49 years **18.0%**
- ■ 50 to 59 years **11.2%**
- ■ 60 to 64 years **2.2%**
- ■ 65 years and over **0.7%**

In the Community Services sector, learners aged **30 to 39 years** had the largest enrolment share at **22.9%**, followed by those aged **40 to 49 years** at **18.0%**.

Learners aged **30 to 39 years** also had the highest proportion of completion share at **24.1%**, followed by those aged **40 to 49 years** at **18.1%**.

Compared to overall VET program data, the Community Services sector has a higher proportion of mid-career learners in both enrolments and completions.

Enrolments and completions by age

15 to 19 years
156,829
6457

20 to 24 years
122,297
3108

25 to 29 years
124,414
4452

30 to 39 years
205,989
7798

40 to 49 years
162,097
5860

50 to 59 years
100,630
3698

60 to 64 years
19,309
702

65 years and over
6709
258

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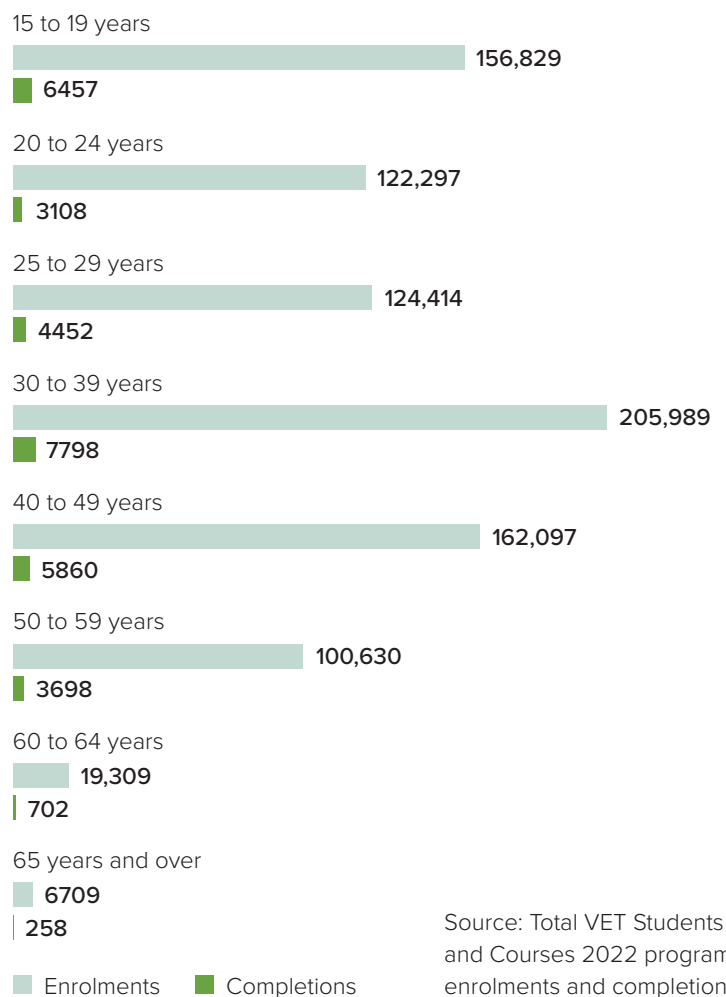
Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

First Nations students[9] [10]

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners accounted for
8.7%
of enrolments and
5.6%
of completions

Non-Indigenous learners represented
83.3%
of enrolments and
80.7%
of completions

Not known learners comprised
8.0%
of enrolments and
13.7%
of completions

In the Community Services sector, **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** learners comprised **8.7%** of enrolments in 2022. This sector demonstrates higher Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation compared to overall VET program data.

Despite this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners comprise only **5.6%** of completions, suggesting that there are specific challenges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners face in completing their qualifications.

By comparison, **non-Indigenous learners** accounted for **83.3%** of enrolments and **80.7%** of completions, indicating a more balanced progression through their studies.

Students with disability[9] [10]

Learners with a disability represented
10.9%
of enrolments and
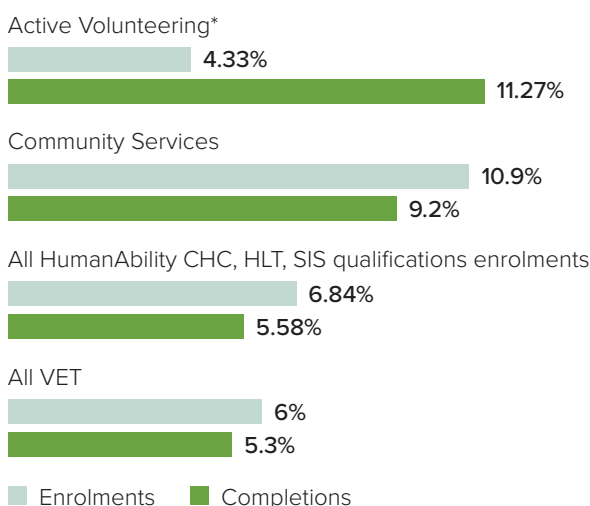**9.2%**
of completions in the Community Services sector

In contrast, **learners without a disability** comprised **78.2%** of enrolments and **76.0%** of completions.

10.8% of learners fell into the **"Not known"** category for disability status, with **14.9%** of completions from this group.

Compared to overall VET program data, the participation of learners with a disability in the Community Services sector is relatively high. However, the lower completion rate highlights the need for additional support to improve outcomes for this group.

Active Volunteering qualifications[9] [10]

Enrolments and Completions of people with a disability – comparison

Active Volunteering*
- 4.33%
- 11.27%

Community Services
- 10.9%
- 9.2%

All HumanAbility CHC, HLT, SIS qualifications enrolments
- 6.84%
- 5.58%

All VET
- 6%
- 5.3%

■ Enrolments ■ Completions

* CHC14015, CHC24015, CHC34015

CHC14015 Certificate I in Active Volunteering
22%
of enrolments and
12.4%
of completions

CHC24015 Certificate II in Active Volunteering
10%
of enrolments and
10.7%
of completions

CHC34015 Certificate III in Active Volunteering
11%
of enrolments and
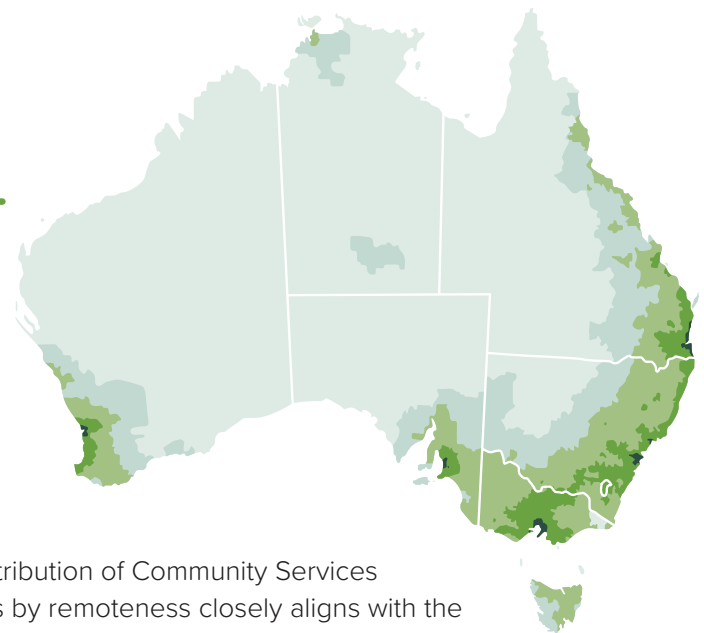**10.7%**
of completions

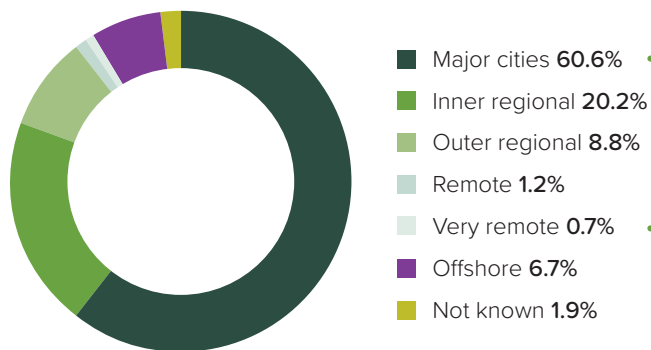Active Volunteering qualifications have notably higher enrolment and completion rates for people with a disability compared to general VET qualifications and other industry sectors like Aged Care, ECEC, Health, and Sports. This trend suggests that Active Volunteering and related Community Services sectors may be more accessible or supportive, with enrolment and completion rates nearly double those of the overall VET sector.

Geographic location[9] [10]

Remoteness

Remoteness Index of Australia

% of overall enrolments by remoteness

- Major cities **60.6%**
- Inner regional **20.2%**
- Outer regional **8.8%**
- Remote **1.2%**
- Very remote **0.7%**
- Offshore **6.7%**
- Not known **1.9%**

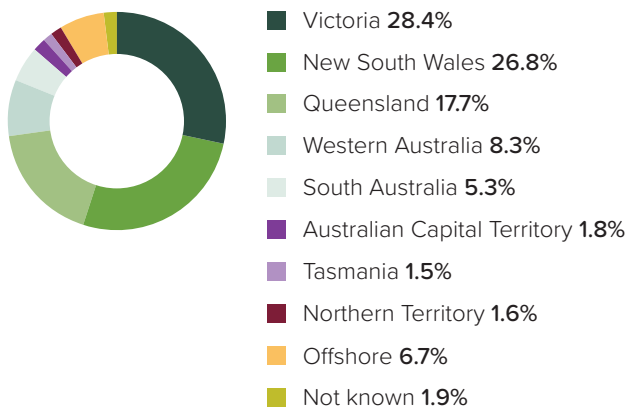Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

Major Cities made up **60.6%** of enrolments and **57.3%** of completions
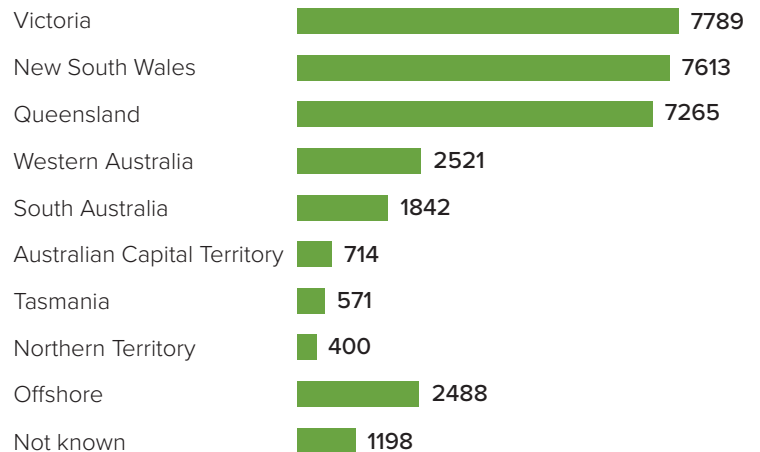
The distribution of Community Services learners by remoteness closely aligns with the overall VET program data. Major cities dominate with 60.6% of enrolments and 57.3% of completions, followed by inner and outer regional areas. Remote and very remote regions account for a small percentage of enrolments and completions.

State/territory

% of overall enrolments by state/territory

- Victoria **28.4%**
- New South Wales **26.8%**
- Queensland **17.7%**
- Western Australia **8.3%**
- South Australia **5.3%**
- Australian Capital Territory **1.8%**
- Tasmania **1.5%**
- Northern Territory **1.6%**
- Offshore **6.7%**
- Not known **1.9%**

Number of completion of qualifications by state/territory

State/territory	Number
Victoria	7789
New South Wales	7613
Queensland	7265
Western Australia	2521
South Australia	1842
Australian Capital Territory	714
Tasmania	571
Northern Territory	400
Offshore	2488
Not known	1198

Victoria made up **28.4%** of enrolments and **24.0%** of completions.
New South Wales had a similar learner profile, accounting for **26.8%** of enrolments and **23.5%** of completions.

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

Actions

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 the CHC Community Services qualifications: This review aims to update and realign the community service qualifications to meet the evolving demands of human services sub-sectors such as family violence support and residential care. The project will revise qualifications, skill sets, and units of competency to enhance career progression and address workforce shortages by reflecting current industry standards and job roles.

Review the CHC Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs qualifications: This project seeks to revise the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs qualifications to reflect current industry practices and new service delivery models. It will update qualifications and units of competency to ensure alignment with holistic, person-centred care and trauma-informed principles, based on feedback from industry stakeholders and emerging service demands.

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