HumanAbility

Workforce Plan
2024

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.

Contents

Message from our CEO, Emma King OAM

The sectors that provide care and support to Australians – aged care and disability support, children's education and care, health and human (community) services, and sport and recreation – together represent the largest employing industry in the country. Demand on these sectors is growing fast.

As the Jobs and Skills Council established by the Australian Government to advance training and workforce development for these sectors, HumanAbility recognises both the opportunities and challenges that this unparalleled demand presents.

To meet this demand and to provide the services that Australians need into the future, we must understand and anticipate the changing job needs of our sectors. We must hear all stakeholder voices to inform the growth of a skilled, equipped and stable workforce. This is a responsibility HumanAbility takes very seriously, as reflected in the scope of this Workforce Plan.

Since our inception in July 2023, we have engaged with well over 1,500 industry, union, government and training provider stakeholders. We have hosted forums in each state and territory, in metropolitan and regional areas. We have also attended and presented at conferences, events and roundtables across the country.

This engagement ensures our work is contemporary, responsive and informed by broad expertise.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all stakeholders who continue to generously provide their time.

The extraordinary growth in demand for care and support services underscores the vital importance of these sectors to the wellbeing of Australians and the country's economic prosperity.

There has been some important recognition of the value of this work, the importance of the workforce and the societal benefit through various government initiatives and pay decisions, but there is more to be done.

Workforce shortages across the care and support sectors are significant. Workforce attraction and retention must be a focus to deliver the workforce we need now and for the future.

The 2024 Workforce Plan is one important step in a longer journey to develop and strengthen the workforce across HumanAbility's sectors. We invite you to join us in this ongoing work, to ensure that every Australian can access high quality care and support because the workforce is available, supported by high quality training and support and recognised for their important work.

I am delighted to share HumanAbility's 2024 Workforce Plan with you.

"It is important to measure and value the social impact of the sector, such as physical and mental health outcomes."

Executive summary

The industry sectors in HumanAbility's scope provide care, support and recreation services critical to Australians' overall health and wellbeing.

Collectively these sectors employ over 20 per cent of the national workforce and is one of the fastest growing parts of the economy.[1]

This growth will continue into the foreseeable future – modelling for Jobs and Skills Australia projects employment in the healthcare and social assistance sectors to grow by 585,000 persons (or 25.9%) to 2034.[2]

This growth – driven by changing demographic and societal needs and public policy reforms, accompanied by increased government investment – presents governments, industry, unions and the training sector with challenges in meeting the demand for skilled workers.

Challenges presented by the pace of growth and increased demand in HumanAbility's industry sectors include:

- workforce shortages
- skills and knowledge gaps
- training and qualification issues
- the need for more visible and accessible career pathways
- finding opportunities to increase diversity and inclusion
- data/information gaps and deficiencies.

HumanAbility's research, data analysis and extensive stakeholder consultations indicate that these multifaceted and often interconnected challenges are remarkably similar across our industry sectors. Their key drivers are analysed in the Workforce Challenges section.

The challenges are not due to lack of effort or investment by governments. Governments at all levels have demonstrated commitment to improving the quality and availability of care and support services, underpinned by a well-trained workforce able to meet the demand for increasingly complex care. National and state workforce plans in key sectors have either been developed or are in development.

HumanAbility plays an important role in supporting these plans by leveraging insights gained from our position at the interface of government, industry , unions and training stakeholders. While in many cases the challenges facing the industry are cross-sectoral, effective solutions must be bespoke and targeted, and developed in partnership with each sector, as well as governments and the training sector.

GROWING LEVELS OF DEMAND – A SNAPSHOT

Average hours of attendance per week at centre based children's education and care **rose by three hours** or **10%** between 2019 and 2023.[3]

The share of people entering residential aged care with high care needs **increased from 36% to 58%** between 2013 and 2022.[4]

The average NDIS package is **$60,700 (almost 56%) higher** than it was 5 years ago ($21,800).[5]

Best outcomes for learners, workers, industry and communities depend on the right settings being in place to enhance workforce attraction, retention, training and career pathways. Demand will continue to grow. Without a skilled workforce growing accordingly, there is a risk the best outcomes may not be achieved. Through our priority areas for action and workforce initiatives, HumanAbility's 2024 Workforce Plan articulates a systemic approach to ensuring our vital sectors can meet current and future demand.

Our priorities, identified in partnership with industry stakeholders, include:

- **Improving and updating training packages:** Develop and implement high-quality qualifications, skill sets which help build careers, and flexible training pathways that cater to the diverse needs of the workforce, and support implementation to increase enrolments in priority qualifications.

- **Promoting career pathways:** Map and promote clear career pathways within the care and support sectors, including the development of a Careers Pathway Framework.

- **Increasing diversity:** Implement strategies to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in the sector's workforce, including First Nations people, people with disabilities, and men.

- **Enhancing data collection:** Address data gaps by improving the granularity and accessibility of workforce data to better inform planning and decision-making.

- **Fostering collaboration:** Engage with stakeholders, including government, industry, and educational institutions, to ensure coordinated efforts in workforce development.

We need targeted training package development and workforce initiatives to grow the sustainable and thriving workforce that will remain capable of meeting the evolving needs of the community.

The 2024 Workforce Plan is informed by insights from varied and extensive engagement mechanisms including industry forums, consultations, and collaborative research. Reflecting HumanAbility's broader role in providing expert support for workforce development, it signals a more strategic approach to addressing key challenges and implementing effective solutions.

The Workforce Plan is a roadmap to guide development of a more skilled and adaptable workforce in the care and support economy, to meet the industry's and the community's current and future needs.

"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."

Industry overview

Care and Support Industries Overview

1 in 5
Australian workers are employed in the Care and Support Industries[6]

3,035,000 workers[6]
14,124,000 Australia

50%
of Australian VET students are in the Care and Support Industries[10]

2,349,000
VET students[8]
4,526,000 Australia

2.65M
projected employment by May 2033[2]

65,000
vacancies[7]

75%
female[6]
48% Australia

43%
part-time[6]
30% Australia

2%
First Nations people[6]
2% Australia

54%
Bachelor Degree or higher[6]
35% Australia

Median weekly earnings:

$1,000
Certificate I to Advanced Diploma[9]
$1,300 Australia
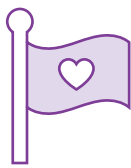
$1,561
Bachelor Degree or higher[7]
$1,672 Australia

40
median age[6]
38 Australia

10%
<25 years[6]
14% Australia

33%
50+ years[6]
30% Australia

Key industries[7]

Industry	Workers
Preschool and School Education	728,000
Hospitals	552,000
Medical and Other Health Care Services	710,000
Residential Care Services	301,000
Social Assistance Services	718,000
Sports and Recreation Activities	153,000

Compared to the whole economy, workers in the care and support sectors:

Are **60 per cent more** likely to be female[6]

Earn **$15,000 less** per year[7]

Are **50 per cent more** likely to have a Bachelor Degree[6]

Are **40 per cent more** likely to work part-time[6]

Key occupations[6]

Registered Nurses, Aged and Disabled Carers, Child Carers, Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers, Education Aides, Welfare Support Workers, Enrolled Nurses, Sports Coaches, Instructors and Officials, Welfare, Recreation and Community Arts Workers, Fitness Instructors, Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers, Dental Assistants

Employment data in green text: Care and Support Industries; purple text: Australia wide.

Context for the 2024 Workforce Plan

The Commonwealth Government's *Working Future White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities*[12] identifies the care and support economy as one of three industry sectors forecast to experience rapid employment growth and increased demand for skills. *Working Future* contains a roadmap to address critical challenges in the labour market, including within the care sector. It notes the importance of workforce attraction and retention, managing regional workforces, using migration to complement local capability, and better utilising the available workforce.[12]

The Government is putting in place skills and training measures targeted at the sector's workforce needs. This includes a new National Skills Agreement[13] that identifies sustaining essential care services as one of eight national priorities, and creation of TAFE Centres of Excellence in national priority areas including the care and support sector. The Centres of Excellence will increase collaboration and partnerships between TAFEs, industry, universities, vocational education and training providers and Jobs and Skills Councils to provide students with cutting-edge skills. They will also lay the groundwork for the increased take-up of higher apprenticeships, including in care.

The latest labour market reports from Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) provide context for the aspirations set out in *Working Future*,[12]

including a global labour market that remains tight and an Australian labour market that has eased slightly in recent months. The softening of the domestic labour market was partly caused by a shift away from full-time employment.[14]

Healthcare and social assistance is Australia's largest and fastest-growing industry, accounting for 15 per cent of total employment and increasing 6 per cent in the last year.[1] *The Annual Jobs and Skills Report* highlights seven of the top 20 occupations in demand are in the health, aged and disability support, children's education and care, or community services sectors.[15]

The care and support sectors are already experiencing skills shortages as they struggle to meet current demands. Without intervention and support, workforce and skills shortages will be exacerbated as the forecast demand is realised. The health care sector is subject to similar pressures and growth expectations, with occupations such as nursing experiencing significant skills shortages and projected strong growth in demand.

Similarly, the sport and recreation sector is experiencing growth in demand for services and activities as participation rates increase and the sector's vital role in promoting health, wellbeing and social inclusion is increasingly recognised. The sector is, however, still recovering from significant

workforce losses experienced during and post the COVID pandemic. Sport and recreation faces similar workforce challenges to other sectors, with highly casualised and seasonal workforces, and issues in attracting and retaining skilled staff and volunteers to meet the increasing demand for services.[16]

Rising demand for the care and support sectors is being driven by megatrends shaping the economy – Australia's changing demographics, an ageing and increasingly diverse population, a transition from informal to formal care, and increased citizens' expectations of government.

The ageing population is increasing the need for aged care and health services, demand for early childhood education and care (ECEC) continues to rise, as does demand for sport/recreation activities that promote physical, cognitive, and social development from an early age. Workers in these sectors make it possible for Australians to live healthy and fulfilling lives at every stage of life. Equally, feedback widely shows this is a workforce that feels undervalued, in part due to low wages, casualised hours, and unclear or limited opportunities for career progression. Their work is critical to the nation's wellbeing and future growth.

Rising demand for the care and support sectors and workforce is being driven by... Australia's changing demographics, an ageing and increasingly diverse population, a transition from informal to formal care, and increased citizens' expectations of government.

Critical but undervalued workforces

The health care and social assistance workforce incorporates several care and support sectors, the combined workforces of which are comprised of 79 per cent women (where there are over 100 employees).[17] Firmly majority-female sectors include aged care and disability support (80 per cent female), children's education and care (78 per cent female), health and human services (77 per cent female).[7]

There is increasing recognition of the extent to which work in this female-dominated care and support industry is undervalued, with pay and conditions failing to reflect both the demanding nature of service provision and its intrinsic value to society. This makes it difficult for employers to build the new care, support, and recreation workforce needed to meet growing demand, and to retain existing workers.

As the previous Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations noted, "aged care work is hard work – but it's undervalued work".[18] In March 2024, the Fair Work Commission's expert panel found that those undertaking direct aged care work deserved an award increase "substantially" higher than the interim 15 per cent pay rise ordered in November 2022. Following the Commission's determination, the direct aged care workforce will receive an average salary increase of 23 per cent.[19]

Similarly, the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission) recommended higher remuneration through the Fair Work Commission for those in the disability support workforce.[20] And the Jobs and Skills Australia Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Workforce Capacity Study Report found pay for ECEC occupations is relatively low, even compared to sectors with lower training requirements.[21]

In August 2024, the ECEC sector received a substantial boost, with the Government's decision to fund a 15 per cent wage increase for ECEC workers to be phased in over two years from December 2024. These wage increases will help to retain existing care and support workers and educators, as well as attract new employees.

The welcome improvements to wages in the aged care and early childhood education and care sectors are yet to be fully implemented and flow through to impact the workforce. We will need to monitor their effects – both in terms of the need for further, broader measures that deal with other considerations in these workforces, and the impacts on other parts of the workforce in aligned sectors.

A dynamic policy and regulatory context

Care and support sectors have been the subject of intense scrutiny in recent years. This has shed light on systemic failings that have contributed to many people having negative experiences engaging with these sectors. There are areas where critical uplift is required.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (Aged Care Royal Commission) released its final report in March 2021.[21] [22] This was followed in September 2023 by the final report of the Disability Royal Commission,[20] and the final report of the NDIS Review[23] in December 2023.

All three reports contained recommendations on workforce development and articulated the need to improve skills and training in their sectors.

Workforce challenges were identified as causing system failures and harming service outcomes. For example, the Disability Royal Commission noted the negative impact casualisation of the workforce has had on those receiving care.

There is increasing recognition of the extent to which work in this female-dominated care and support industry is undervalued, with pay and conditions failing to reflect both the demanding nature of service provision and its intrinsic value to society.

The Government is implementing many of the recommendations from the Aged Care Royal Commission, including a significant increase in aged care worker pay, mandatory minimum levels of direct care minutes, and a restructuring of aged care pricing advice. The Government also recently released its response to recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission, which includes funding for a Disability Employment Centre of Excellence and establishing an NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce to provide advice on the design of a worker registration scheme. The Government's response highlights HumanAbility's role in supporting workforce development and training in the sector, including through improving training and assessment practice, and mapping career pathways for disability support workers.

Work is continuing on the National Nursing Workforce Strategy following significant stakeholder consultation in late 2023 to early 2024 and the development of a National Allied Health Workforce Strategy is underway. The disability worker registration scheme and other occupational licencing and 'scope of practice' reviews are being considered in several areas. HumanAbility welcomes the opportunity to continue to be engaged in and to inform these discussions, as their outcomes will have flow-on implications for the relevant qualifications.

The draft report from the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector also found that pay and conditions offered to the workforce are critical to recruitment and retention.[24]

As well as supporting improved pay and conditions in discrete care sectors, the Commonwealth Government is continuing to consider ways to support alignment across the care and support economy. Within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Care and Support Economy Reform Unit has been established to oversee the coordinated implementation of reforms through strong policy stewardship and strategic coordination. The Unit will focus on improving the alignment of policies, programs and actions across the care and support economy and tracking the implementation of reforms.

There are also several initiatives, recently released or being developed, through which governments at the national, state and territory level aim to address workforce shortages and boost training in the care and support industries. Initial advice from the Qualification Reform Design Group on the reform of vocational education and training (VET) qualifications has been endorsed and accepted by Skills Ministers. These initiatives recognise the role of Jobs and Skills Councils, and provide opportunities for Jobs and Skills Councils to work proactively with industry and key stakeholders. Additionally, the Fee-Free TAFE initiative,[25] which provides government-subsidised training places in areas of national priority such as aged care, healthcare, and disability care, is encouraging more enrolments in key training pathways.

The Australian Apprenticeships Priority List includes care sector occupations, making employers and Australian apprentices eligible for financial support under the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives System.[26] And early changes to the Standards for Registered Training Organisations commenced on 1 March 2024, with revised Standards expected to be released in August 2024 and come into full effect from 1 July 2025. The VET Workforce Blueprint will also identify actions to support and grow a sustainable VET workforce.[27]

The *Australian Universities Accord Final Report* was published in February 2024.[28] As well as highlighting a need to increase participation in tertiary education, it emphasised the importance of developing more flexible and efficient pathways for people to acquire skills throughout their careers. One way of achieving this, suggested by a broad range of stakeholders, is to improve universities' recognition of VET training and transfer/credit arrangements into higher education courses.

Workforce challenges

This section outlines the key cross-sectoral challenges experienced by the care and support industries, and their potential causes. It is informed by extensive research, updated data analysis, and insights from consultations with HumanAbility's stakeholders. Research and engagement strategies are detailed in the Methodology section.

Many of the workforce challenges we identify are similar across HumanAbility's industry sectors. They are multifaceted and inter-connected, and can be broadly grouped into the following categories:

Labour force shortages, esp. in rural and remote areas

Training and qualification issues

Skills gaps

Limited career pathways

Data deficiencies

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Policy and regulatory settings

There are also challenges specific to each sector. These are explored in the sector profiles.

Proposed initiatives and current approaches to address workforce challenges are described in the Priority Areas for Action section (pp.34–35). Each strategy is mapped to a key workforce challenge or challenges.

Addressing labour force shortages

Workforce shortages amid high demand

HumanAbility's industry sectors are experiencing remarkable growth in Australia. The demand for their services is skyrocketing, outpacing the overall growth of the national economy.[29] This surge in demand highlights the vital importance of these sectors to the wellbeing of Australians and the country's economic prosperity.

Demand for skilled professionals in these fields is outstripping available workforce supply, creating a pressing need for more workers, and for targeted workforce attraction strategies.

Job vacancies: a telling indicator

The surge in advertised job vacancies is an indicator of the high demand for care and support professionals. Internet job postings for occupations in HumanAbility's scope have grown at a rapid rate – nearly twice as fast as all other occupations combined over the past decade. This highlights the urgent need for skilled workers in these fields, and can present a range of opportunities for those seeking rewarding careers in care and support.

Actual and forecast growth in HumanAbility occupations is much higher than other jobs[2]

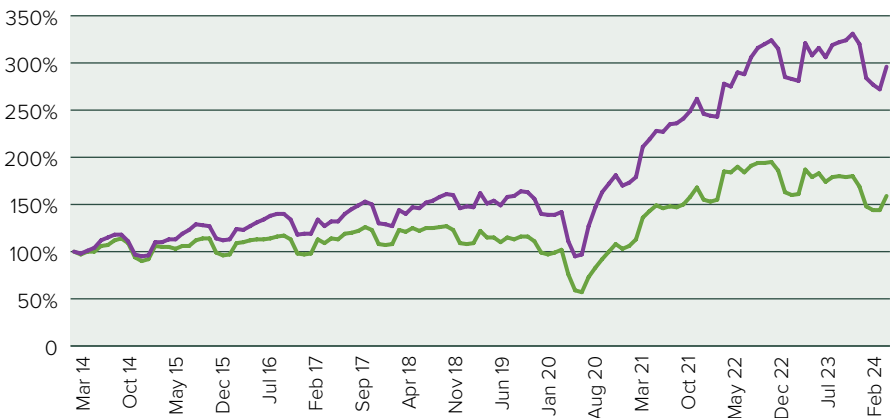Growth and forecast growth, HumanAbility occupations and all other occupations

— HumanAbility occupations

— All other occupations
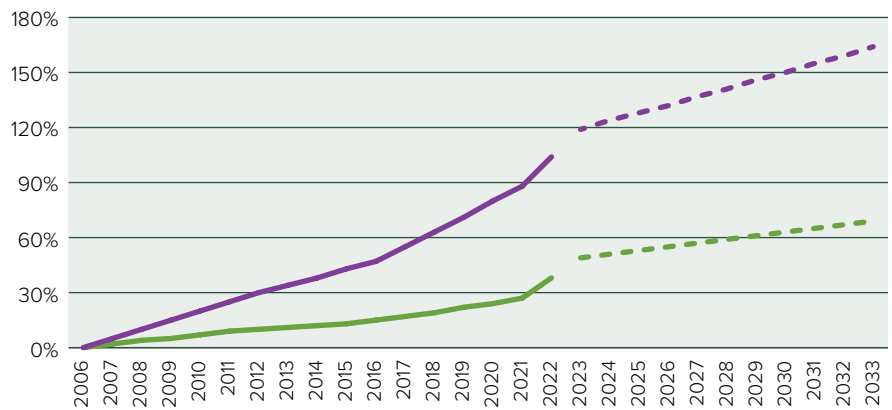
Internet vacancies in the care and support industries outstrip other workforces[30]

Internet Vacancy Index over the past 10 years, three-month average

— HumanAbility occupations

— All other occupations

Factors impacting labor force availability

Stakeholders have highlighted two major interconnected factors as significantly impacting the availability of workers in care and support sectors:

1. Low pay: a critical deterrent

Low wages combined with difficult working conditions have been consistently identified by industry stakeholders as significant barriers to attracting, training and retaining staff across various care and support sectors in Australia.

The low rate of pay in these sectors is a critical factor contributing to workforce shortages. Economic analysis indicates the undervaluation of care services is a significant issue. The remuneration offered in these fields often fails to reflect the demanding nature of the work, the skills and knowledge required, and the essential role these professionals play in supporting vulnerable populations. Inadequate remuneration can deter potential workers from pursuing careers or undertaking training, further exacerbating existing workforce shortages.

Jobs and Skills Australia has reported[31] that, while personal care and support worker wages are similar to some comparable occupations, low pay can still deter people from entering or remaining in these roles. Conversely, competitive remuneration helps attract and retain staff.[31]

In the early childhood education and care sector, the Productivity Commission[32] found higher wages are likely to attract more skilled workers and improve retention rates. Low pay contributes to qualified ECEC educators being lured away to alternative careers like school teaching.[33] An Australian Government report identifies "low wages and poor conditions" as the driving factors behind the sector's workforce shortages.[21]

Similarly, improving wages and conditions for aged care workers is "crucial for attracting and retaining a sustainable workforce to meet future demand".

Evidence to the Aged Care Royal Commission highlighted how providers paying above award rates had fewer staffing issues.[22] The Fair Work Commission's 2024[19] decision to increase minimum wages to address gender-based undervaluation and the sector's growing complexity is a step towards recognising the importance of improving remuneration, and the importance of quality aged care services. Low pay sends a signal that society undervalues vital care work.[34]

For all care and support sectors, including disability, ECEC and nursing, competitive salaries and improved working conditions are consistently identified as essential for addressing widespread staffing shortages and ensuring an adequate, sustainable workforce supply.[24] [26] [27]

The growth in demand for these sectors' services can present an opportunity for people to pursue fulfilling and sustainable careers. The recent wage increases in key sectors recognise that increasing wages and improving conditions are crucial for this opportunity to be realised. Better pay and conditions will attract new entrants, enable training pathways, and retain existing staff to meet growing care demands.
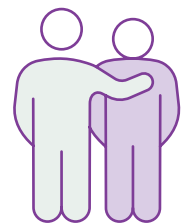
The remuneration offered in these fields often fails to reflect the demanding nature of the work, the skills and knowledge required, and the essential role these professionals play in supporting vulnerable populations.

2. High turnover rates: a persistent challenge

High staff turnover rates are a persistent challenge across the care and support industry in Australia, posing significant workforce issues. This revolving door of employees exacerbates existing labour shortages and compromises the quality and continuity of care provided.[35] [36–40] As previously discussed, relatively low remuneration is one factor contributing to high attrition rates in the industry. Other factors include the demanding nature of these roles, burnout, job dissatisfaction, limited career advancement opportunities and workforce casualisation.[35]

Across various sectors – including aged care, disability services, early childhood education and care (ECEC), and sport and recreation – annual turnover rates have been reported to be as high as 25–30 per cent, with some providers facing even higher rates of up to 40 per cent.[21] [41] [42]

Retaining skilled and experienced professionals in care and support sectors is a significant and high-stakes challenge given its potential flow-on effects to quality of care. The Australian Government has recognised the need to address workforce challenges including high turnover, to ensure a sustainable and skilled workforce in these vital industries. [18] [21]

Addressing high turnover rates through initiatives such as improved remuneration, better working conditions, and enhanced career development opportunities is crucial for ensuring a sustainable and skilled workforce in the care and support sector.[18] [21] [35]

It should be noted in this context that Australia's skilled migration schemes are not addressing important skills gaps in the care and support sector. Skilled occupation lists need to reflect changes in the labour market and current and future demands. Skilled migration is currently available to ECEC centre managers, teachers, nurses and allied health professionals. However, it is not available to fill lower-skill and lower-income roles like the personal care workforce or early childhood educators. Employers can apply for a Labour Agreement to engage the migrant workforce where there is a need that cannot be met locally. Last year, the Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement created pathways to access the potential direct care support workforce from overseas. Migration should be considered more broadly in relation to the care and support sectors, where it can provide much-needed labour without negative impacts like embedding low wages.

Released in late 2023, the Australian Government's *Migration Strategy – Getting migration working for the nation. For workers. For business. For all Australians.*[43] includes a proposal for an essential skills pathway with an emphasis on lower paid but essential occupations. To address labour force shortages and the skills and workforce needs of the care and support sectors, there is a need for this proposal to move rapidly to a migration strategy.

Addressing skills gaps and shortages

The scope of the workforce challenges facing the care and support sectors is evidenced by the high representation of these sectors on the Skills Priority List. Occupations in the care and support industry represent nearly 40 per cent of the roles identified as experiencing above-average future recruitment demand, underscoring the critical need for these skilled professionals across the nation.

As discussed, challenges in recruiting and retaining workers include:

- Low pay levels
- Poor perception of working in these industries
- Limited career progression and professional development opportunities in many roles
- Inadequate training or inadequate access to training

These challenges contribute to skills shortages across the industry and in specific sectors. Several care and support occupations have been categorised as experiencing a national or state shortage or are predicted to have future recruitment above the economy average.[44]

Cross-sectoral competition for skilled workers – such as nurses being recruited from primary/acute care to aged care – and the increasing use of employment agencies also contribute to workforce pressures and impact the viability of some services.

Further, the *Work-related Injuries Survey* shows that community and personal service workers have the highest rate of work-related injury, at 7 per cent.[45] The loss of these skilled workers exacerbates the sectors' skills and labour shortages. Ensuring workers have the skills to keep themselves safe, as well as those in their care, could be a focus within training package reviews.

Occupations in the care and support industries on the Skills Priority List with above average future recruitment demand[44]

Key: NS – No Shortage; S – Shortage; R – Regional Shortage

ANZSCO code	Occupation title	Current status	Future recruitment demand compared with economy average
4211	Child Carers	S	Above economy average
4231	Aged and Disabled Carers	S	Above economy average
4234	Special Care Workers	NS	Above economy average
4521	Fitness Instructors	NS	Above economy average
4522	Outdoor Adventure Guides	NS	Above economy average
4523	Sports Coaches, Instructors and Officials	NS	Above economy average
4524	Sportspersons	NS	Above economy average

High demand occupations

Out of 311 occupations at the 4-digit level on the Skills Priority List, 25 occupations in care and social support sectors fall into the category forecasting above-average recruitment demand.[44] While these occupations are not currently reported as being in shortage, they are likely to face shortages in the short-term future.

It should be noted that available data is limited, especially on workers within casualised, multiple-employer roles and employed through brokerage services (e.g. online service delivery platforms).

New skills needed

To address skills gaps in the care and support sectors, several key areas require attention.

There is a pressing need to improve digital literacy skills across the workforce to ensure proficiency in leveraging technology and digital tools essential for modern healthcare delivery.

It is also crucial to enhance cultural safety and awareness in the education and training sector, and among the broader health and care workforce, to attract more learners and foster inclusive and respectful workplace environments free from discrimination. Additionally, strategies to build and strengthen the First Nations workforce within these sectors are necessary to promote diversity and culturally competent care.

Investing in comprehensive training programs, professional development opportunities and clear career progression pathways is vital to equip workers with the skills and knowledge to excel and progress in their roles.

It is also crucial to enhance cultural safety and awareness in the education and training sector, and among the broader health and care workforce, to attract more learners and foster inclusive and respectful workplace environments free from discrimination.

Regional workforce challenges

Workforce and skills shortages are most pronounced in regional and remote areas, impacting service delivery for these communities. These areas also experience high workforce turnover levels, exacerbating workforce pressures.

State and territory shortages

Skills shortages are prevalent across the care and support industries in all states and territories. Approximately one-third of the occupations in these industries are on the Skills Priority List. Workforce shortages are most common in the Northern Territory.

HumanAbility's consultations with regional, rural, and remote stakeholders highlighted a range of issues contributing to the particularly acute workforce and skills shortages that regional and remote areas experience.

These include:

- Inadequate housing and availability of childcare
- Disparities between higher costs of living and salaries

- The need for better support in navigating regulatory and compliance burdens
- The need for geographically accessible training

There is also a particular need in many regional areas for more emphasis on enabling a culturally responsive and linguistically diverse workforce. The arrival of diverse migrant communities in these areas in recent years has highlighted the lack of bilingual skills and cultural diversity in the regional and rural workforce.

Regional and rural stakeholders have noted their workers often perform a range of tasks or are employed in a range of settings – such as aged care, disability and community health. Broader based training would support these workers to perform their wider range of job roles, as well as supporting worker mobility.

The unique challenges faced in regional, rural and remote areas have been acknowledged by governments. A range of initiatives are underway in response to these, including DoHAC's integrated

commissioning care trials[46] across health care and care sectors, NIAA's Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program,[47] and DEWR's Remote Training Hubs that support Central Australian First Nations people's access to On Country vocational education and training.[48]

4-Digit ANZSCO occupations covered by HumanAbility with national or regional shortages, and above average future demand.[44]

Number of occupations in the care and support industries with national or regional shortages, and above average future demand.

National Shortage	Above average future demand	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
10 of 31	9 of 31	11 of 31	10 of 31	7 of 31	10 of 31	11 of 31	9 of 31	18 of 31	9 of 31

"The cost of living and access to transport in the rural areas are [barriers to workforce recruitment]. The cost and limited access to childcare also affects the workforce."

Providing training and qualifications that meet industry and student needs

The training and qualifications that underpin the care and support workforce are facing significant challenges. Variable completion rates in relevant courses, a shortage of high-quality work placements, and the need for adaptability to changing demographics and societal needs are key issues impacting the supply of skilled graduates from the VET system. Overcoming these obstacles is crucial to developing a pipeline of skilled and sustainable workers capable of meeting the growing demand for care and support services.

Contemporary and responsive training

Contemporary training packages (qualifications and skills sets) aligned to industry needs underpin the skilled workforce required by our industry sectors. Nationally, HumanAbility's suite of nationally endorsed training packages attracts a high proportion of total enrolments, providing our sectors with a pipeline of skilled graduates. There are opportunities, however, to improve and update training packages and deliver better outcomes for learners and employers. This is a core focus and priority for HumanAbility.

Updating and developing new qualifications needs to be agile and responsive to meet industry's changing needs, as well as changes in government policy, new reform initiatives, and recommendations arising from key inquiries, such as the recent Royal Commissions.

Variable completion rates

Completion rates for many of the key nationally accredited qualifications in the community services and health training packages are a concern. Several factors contribute to non-completions, including a lack of emphasis on essential skills required for particular job roles, financial challenges students face when undertaking mandatory unpaid work placements, and inadequate support for students.

Projected completion rates for the 2020 VET cohort are 61 per cent in the education field and 60 per cent in the health field. This is higher than the all-field average, which is 51 per cent.[9][10] Anecdotal evidence and stakeholder feedback indicates non-completions are influenced by a range of factors, including:

- A lack of emphasis on essential skills such as numeracy and literacy, and whether students possess the foundational skills needed to undertake qualifications.
- Students accessing free TAFE courses without the intention to complete but rather with an interest in a specific unit or units that, on completion, enable students to secure employment. This leads to a misleading number of incomplete enrolments, and potentially impacts students' eligibility to enrol in further government subsidised courses (noting that course eligibility requirements and fee regimes may vary between states and territories).

- A lack of wrap-around support for students.
- Suitability of courses for people with a disability (including general accessibility and suitable placements).

However, there are some potential positives with some non-completions. Many Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) confirm that some students gain employment during their course of study and consequently withdraw from the course. For example, students may secure jobs in occupations such as the personal care workforce that don't require a minimum qualification but do require a level of underpinning knowledge, skills and demonstration of appropriate personal attributes.

Stakeholders expressed strong support for further research to fully understand factors that contribute to low completion rates, particularly in the key pre-employment qualifications aligned to entry level roles in the disability and aged care sector.

Work placements: placement poverty and a shortage of quality opportunities

Students often face 'placement poverty' due to the unpaid nature of mandatory work placements. This poses significant financial challenges, especially for those relying on part-time employment to support themselves. Travel and accommodation expenses further exacerbate these burdens.
To address this issue, the Australian Government has announced the Commonwealth Prac Payment, which will provide financial support for eligible students undertaking placements in fields like nursing, teaching and social work from July 2025. This includes VET students studying the Diploma of Nursing. This initiative is welcomed and HumanAbility will continue to consult with key stakeholders to gauge the impact following its implementation.

The shortage of high-quality work placements is another challenge faced by students. In HumanAbility's stakeholder forums, the lack of practical work placement opportunities in regional and remote areas was consistently raised as a barrier to students attaining a necessary breadth of on-the-job experiences.

Supporting workforce training

A range of factors impact existing workers' ability to undertake further training. These can include the fact that workers may be juggling multiple low-paying jobs and be unable to afford to take time off or meet course costs. Initiatives such as Fee-Free TAFE, which offer fee-free courses in priority industry sectors including to eligible existing workers, aim to alleviate these financial barriers and support upskilling.

Adaptability: embracing innovation and demographic shifts

Training in the care and support industries must be adaptable to changing demographic and societal needs, such as the ageing population and demographic spread of the Australian population. Training should incorporate innovative approaches, including more flexible design and delivery. Development of specific foundational, technical and specialist skills and knowledge is also needed, particularly to build digital literacy skills and cultural safety and competence. This adaptability is crucial to ensuring the workforce is equipped to meet the evolving demands of the sector.

Integrated and seamless education systems

The disconnect between various educational systems, including VET and higher education, makes it difficult for students to transition smoothly across sectors and into higher qualifications, resulting in lost opportunities to develop a skilled workforce pipeline. Stakeholders call for a national accreditation system to support learning and mobility across care and support sectors. While this may be difficult to achieve, more work needs to be done with the tertiary sector to improve accreditation and articulation arrangements that enable more students and workers to progress onto tertiary qualifications.

Avoiding unintended consequences

Industry stakeholders and RTOs have noted the introduction of restrictive entry requirements or pre-requisites for career progression or entry into employment has, in some cases, had unintended negative consequences. For example, in Early Childhood Education and Care the requirement to have completed the current Certificate III before pursuing a diploma presents a significant barrier to entry.

HumanAbility will assess any restrictive entry requirements as qualifications are reviewed, to ensure issues such as grandparenting arrangements, transition pathways and sufficient time for transition are taken into account.

HumanAbility will also seek to inform and influence the design and implementation of occupation licensing, worker registration or accreditation schemes (such as the aged care and a proposed disability worker registration schemes) to ensure the relevant qualifications are aligned with, and support the schemes, and that factors described above are taken into consideration.

Innovation and connectivity

Stakeholders advocate for RTOs to adopt innovative training approaches, such as workplace education, more accessible recognition of prior learning practices, assessing current competency, and offering microcredentials for enhanced flexibility. Fostering connectivity between RTOs, students and providers is essential, with strategies like pre-qualification exposure in South Australia or 'tasters' aiding recruitment, retention, and commitment to the sector.

Addressing demographic barriers

VET delivery can become more adaptable, possibly through modular or stackable courses, to cater to a workforce that includes individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences, not just school leavers. Modular or stackable courses that allow those living outside of metropolitan cities to undertake study in a manner that is more accessible are options that have been raised by stakeholders.

Incorporating lived experience

The care sector faces challenges with new employees, particularly in disability and community services, where role expectations fail to match reality, leading to high turnover at the placement stage. Encouraging people with lived experience to enter these fields is seen as a potential way to improve retention and service quality. Some stakeholders emphasise the need to focus on personal skill sets over formal qualifications in certain areas like peer work, suggesting a more holistic view of candidates' suitability. Industry and RTOs need to consider more innovative and inclusive recruitment strategies to attract those with lived experience.

Some stakeholders emphasise the need to focus on personal skill sets over formal qualifications in certain areas like peer work, suggesting a more holistic view of candidates' suitability.

More flexible training options

Stakeholders express the desire for more flexible, shorter forms of training to support skills development, particularly for upskilling of existing workers or to develop technical or specialist skills. In these discussions, the terms 'microcredentials' are 'skills sets' are often used interchangeably.

Skill sets are nationally recognised and refer to a unit/s of competency that respond to a specific industry need. Skills sets are subsets of a qualification. Microcredentials is a broader term that captures a range of accredited/unaccredited short courses (e.g. short courses delivered by universities, industry and peak bodies, employers and governments).

Feedback received in HumanAbility's consultations highlights the need for microcredentials to:

- be stackable
- be linked to full qualifications
- not undermine or be seen as a replacement for completion of training and qualifications
- improve quality, and support upskilling for existing workers.

Stakeholders have noted these outcomes can currently be achieved through the use of skills sets or completion of additional accredited units. Given this, further discussion is needed to develop an understanding of skills sets' role in HumanAbility's sectors in meeting quality standards and requirements of education, as well as the needs of industry and learners. This will require further consultation with industry, unions, RTOs and state and territory governments on the role and design of shorter forms of training, their accreditation and articulation with broader qualifications, and funding arrangements.

Stakeholder perspectives: microcredentials

Ensuring appropriate use and levels of quality:

"We need to be careful with microcredentials.. They can be useful as building blocks towards a full qualification. But for those who are already qualified, they can be a potential barrier. There are already many requirements for professional development."

Ensuring appropriate language:

"If we are talking about the notion of careers for existing and future workers, would it not be better to use the language of professional development rather than microcredentials?"

Tackling these workforce challenges is essential for developing a skilled and sustainable care and support workforce. Stakeholders emphasise the need for:

- integrated educational systems
- avoiding unintended consequences of restrictive entry requirements or pre-requisites for specific job roles or to enrol in qualifications
- fostering connectivity between training organisations, students and providers.

Incorporating innovative approaches – such as greater use of skill sets, workplace-based training, and modular or stackable courses – can enhance flexibility and cater to diverse learners. Encouraging individuals with lived experience to enter these fields and adopting a more holistic view of candidates' suitability can improve retention and service quality. By addressing these challenges and embracing innovation, the care and support industries can develop a workforce equipped to meet the evolving demands of the sector and provide high-quality services to those in need.

Enabling clear and accessible career pathways

The lack of clear and accessible career pathways in the industry not only impacts workforce attraction and retention but also restricts the potential for personal growth and career fulfillment among those already employed in these sectors.

Stakeholders have identified the need for more visible and accessible career pathways and professional development opportunities, and that financial support for work placements and training is necessary to attract and retain workers, particularly from underrepresented groups.

The workforce faces a lack of clear and accessible routes for professional advancement and development, with limited visibility of career options, unclear progression routes, and inadequate support for training, skill recognition and mobility between sectors.

The identification and promotion of career pathways and opportunities for progression was identified as the highest priority initiative in addressing workforce shortages by HumanAbility's Industry Advisory Committees. Developing and supporting workers' career pathways is also recognised as a key priority by governments.[21] [36] [39] The HumanAbility CEO Roundtable in April 2024 identified career pathways as one of the top three most important initiatives for HumanAbility.

Stakeholder consultations for this year's Workforce Plan showed a need to:

- Provide financial support for work placements
- Engage with the VET system to drive enrolments in particular areas
- Promote positive perceptions of care and support roles to facilitate these being seen as a career of choice

Our consultations showed there are approaches to addressing career pathway challenges that are working. For example, Indigenous Allied Health Australia focuses on strengthening and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals and builds visibility of careers and pathways. The organisation offers services such as the High School to Deadly Careers Program, which is increasing Indigenous participation in health services.

Addressing the challenges surrounding career pathways in the care and support industry is crucial for fostering a thriving and sustainable workforce. By providing financial support for work placements and training, engaging with the VET system, and promoting positive perceptions of these roles, we can create a pipeline of talented individuals who view these professions as rewarding and fulfilling career choices. Initiatives like the High School to Deadly Careers Program by Indigenous Allied Health Australia exemplify the positive impact of proactive approaches in raising awareness, fostering representation, and guiding individuals towards meaningful careers. By prioritising career pathways and professional development opportunities, we can unlock the full potential of the care and support workforce, ensuring these vital sectors continue to deliver exceptional services and contribute to the wellbeing of our communities.

High School to Deadly Careers Program[(49)]

Indigenous Allied Health Australia's (IAHA) 'High School to Deadly Careers Program' aims to inspire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students to pursue allied health careers through interactive workshops, career expos, and mentorship opportunities with Indigenous allied health professionals. The program promotes cultural safety, raises awareness of diverse allied health roles, and provides guidance on educational pathways.

IAHA takes a proactive approach by engaging students early, fostering Indigenous representation in the healthcare workforce, and contributing to culturally responsive care. Participants gain exposure to rural and remote health career opportunities, build cultural knowledge through community visits, and complete IAHA's Cultural Responsiveness in Action Framework training.

The program facilitates two-way learning, allowing students and allied health members to share experiences, advice on goal setting, career aspirations, and pathways. By addressing barriers and challenges faced by Indigenous Australians in accessing allied health careers, the High School to Deadly Careers Program plays a crucial role in increasing Indigenous participation and improving health outcomes.
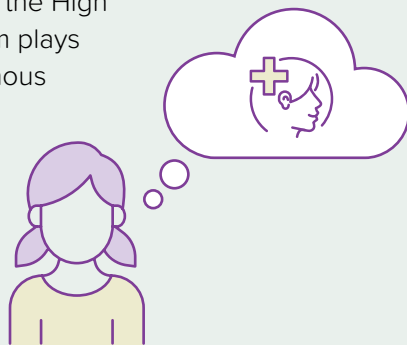
Stakeholder perspectives on career pathways

"The career progression within Outdoor Education is reasonably pointy. There are not enough jobs at program coordinator or program manager and beyond to really promote detailed and available career progression."

"The certificate IIIs and qualifications in the care sector signal to prospective students 'this is the job' not 'this is the career'. Universities say, 'come for an experience and a springboard to a range of future jobs or career opportunities' while [the nature of VET qualifications] signals to prospective students 'come to train for this job'."

"The marketisation of care has incentivised providers to deliver more services rather than quality services. This has undermined investment in upskilling and training the workforce."

Building a more diverse and inclusive workforce

Fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce is crucial for the care and support industry to effectively serve the diverse needs of the population. However, at present the care and support sectors do not reflect the diverse experiences of those using their services, particularly in terms of gender, age, and cultural background.

Underrepresentation

The workforce does not adequately reflect the diversity of the population it serves, particularly in terms of gender, age, cultural background, and inclusion of First Nations people and people with disabilities. This underrepresentation can lead to a lack of understanding and sensitivity towards the unique needs and experiences of various groups, potentially compromising the quality of care and support provided. It also contributes to some people or communities not engaging with services they need.

Gender imbalance and pay disparity

The dominance of women in the care and support sectors has been linked to the lower average pay across the workforce in these areas. The Productivity Commission's draft report, *The Jobs and Skills Australia Early Childhood Workforce Capacity Study*[21], found that 93 per cent of the early childhood workforce identify is female.[6] And the health, care, recreation, and social assistance sectors remain highly gendered. This gender imbalance and pay disparity can perpetuate gender inequalities and discourage a diverse range of individuals from pursuing careers in these fields.

Cultural and linguistic barriers

There is a significant need to further develop a bilingual and bicultural workforce to reduce language and cultural barriers, ensuring effective communication and culturally responsive care.

Inclusion and cultural safety

Providing more opportunities for people with lived experience in the workforce – in the disability sector and more broadly across all settings – is essential. People with lived experience can provide valuable insights and foster a more empathetic and responsive workforce, ultimately enhancing service quality and retention. In the 2024–25 Commonwealth Budget, the Government announced reforms to Disability Employment Services, with a new specialist disability employment program commencing on 1 July 2025,[50] which will enable more opportunities for people with disability to access a wider range of job roles. Our consultations highlighted the need for significant improvements in cultural safety across various industries.

Empowerment of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations

Several reports[51][52] have identified the need for greater empowerment of Aboriginal community-controlled service delivery organisations (ACCOs) in the care and support industries. The transfer of services to ACCOs is ongoing, and some ACCOs have expressed frustration at being treated solely as funding recipients rather than essential partners in program design and delivery.[51] Delays in implementing reform priority three actions (transforming government organisations) highlighted in the *Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2023 Annual Report* further emphasise the ongoing challenges in achieving meaningful progress.[52] One positive shift has been an expansion of investment in the Aboriginal Community-Controlled and First Nations Owned training sector under the National Skills Agreement.[53]

Stakeholder perspectives on ensuring inclusion

"[We need to address] barriers to entry into employment in the sector for disabled people to gain jobs, including training assessment adjustment, recruitment approach and communication."

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"People with a disability are not separate from a workforce, and not only the recipients, they have capability and capacity to meet the flexibility and needs of the workforce."

"Good practice involves appropriately matching those in the workforce with people who share similar backgrounds and experiences."

Building the data and evidence base

Effective workforce planning and decision-making rely heavily on the availability of comprehensive, granular, and high-quality data. Currently, data gaps hinder the ability to accurately assess and address workforce needs across various sectors. These gaps manifest in several interconnected challenges, including the lack of granularity in industry and occupation codes, limited insights into unmet demand for services, and inadequate data on educational outcomes and training quality.

The notional allocation of ANZSCO and ANZSIC codes to each Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) provides a base level of understanding of workforce data. There are, however, challenges in trying to understand the nuance of sectors as the structure and coding of these two data tools does not perfectly align. Some of this will be addressed through the review of ANZSCO codes that is currently underway.

JSA's mapping of occupations to each JSC was undertaken in 2023 and is largely based on Census data on occupation by industry. This concordance has not been finalised and a further examination of occupational alignment at the unit group (4-digit ANZSCO) is in progress, including looking more closely at training package responsibility. JSA expects there will be further discussion around the occupation mapping over the coming months and it will take some time before it is settled. Once the revisions to ANZSCO are implemented this will help to address some of the issues and provide greater granularity.

The current data collection practices face several interconnected challenges that impact workforce planning and policymaking. ANZSCO and ANZSIC codes often lack the granularity needed to differentiate between distinct roles and sectors. For example, the ANZSCO code 423111 – Aged or Disabled Carer, the sole six-digit occupation within the four-digit group Aged and Disabled Carers – does not distinguish between workers in the aged care and disability sectors. Similarly, registered nurse vacancy rates do not specify the sectors with the most vacancies (i.e. hospitals or aged care facilities). This broad categorisation prevents effective resource allocation and planning.

Additionally, counts of delivered services frequently do not reflect actual demand, leading to misunderstandings about future workforce needs. Higher education data may overstate tertiary-level incompletions, providing a misleading picture of educational performance. Limited data on the quality and consistency of training providers can result in individuals being inadequately prepared for the workforce, wasting resources.

Workforce measurement in some sectors relies on ad hoc and survey data. Infrequent workforce censuses may provide outdated information, especially problematic in sectors undergoing substantial reform. Addressing the multifaceted data gaps is crucial for enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of workforce planning and policymaking initiatives. By bridging these gaps, stakeholders can gain a more

nuanced understanding of the workforce landscape, enabling targeted interventions and resource allocation. Collaborative efforts between industry, government and educational institutions are essential to improve data collection practices, foster data sharing, and ultimately support a well-informed and responsive workforce strategy. Overcoming these data challenges is a critical step towards building a resilient and future-ready workforce capable of meeting the evolving needs of the sectors within HumanAbility's scope.

Stakeholder perspectives on data related difficulties

"There are big data gaps. Things that if we knew the 'what' we could explore the 'why' and find some ways to address the workforce issues."

"It is baffling to me that we talk about increasing the number of allied health assistants when we don't have a clue how many there are."

"We could have been tracking data for a decade… how many students come in, how many stay, whether they come back. But we can't. We are told there are computer problems. So, we have to purchase data from governments. We try and build a picture from that. But we only get a rough idea of trends."

Workforce planning and evidence gaps

A lack of detailed, accessible and high-quality data hinders the ability of all actors to make informed decisions, allocate resources efficiently and make improvements across the care and support industries. Stakeholders indicated a need for:

- Increased data collection
- In-house data collection expertise
- Improved data utilisation

The following table summarises planning and data gaps affecting the care and support sectors, the impact these gaps have on workforce planning, and where strategies or initiatives to address these gaps are either underway or proposed.

Noting that some of these data gaps may be outside of HumanAbility's scope, it is, however, important to highlight these and consider strategies to overcome data and evidence gaps to ensure workforce planning is based on sound evidence and reliable data.

Workforce planning and evidence gap	Impact of gap	Addressing the gap
Mapping occupations to industry/industry sectors. Defining the workforces is not straightforward due to overlaps across industries (ANZSIC), jobs (ANZSCO) and skills (National Training Register).	Potential for a sector's workforce to be over or understated.	Explore potential solutions with the data custodians – JSA and ABS
ANZSCO codes are too broad in some occupations to accurately capture the character of the workforce.	Policymakers and workforce planners lack the ability to differentiate between distinct and diverse occupations and industry sectors.	HumanAbility will engage with the ABS on the current ANZSCO code review due to be completed in late 2024. HumanAbility will support and encourage industry stakeholders to engage in the review to ensure occupational roles are accurately reflected.
The Health Care and Social Assistance Division of ANZSIC does not provide granularity of insight. E.g. Class 8790 *Other Social Assistance Services* aggregates: Adoption service; Adult day care centre operation; Aged care assistance service (but not aged care residential service); Alcoholics anonymous operation; Disabilities assistance service; Marriage guidance service; Operation of soup kitchen (including mobile); Welfare counselling service; and Youth welfare service.	Policymakers and workforce planners lack the ability to differentiate between distinct and diverse industry segments.	HumanAbility will engage the ABS and JSA on potential changes to ANZSIC codes to address data gaps.
Counts of the number of delivered services often do not accurately reflect demand or waitlists.	Service use can act as a false base in projecting future demand, meaning future workforce need can be misunderstood.	HumanAbility to encourage greater data sharing between agencies to improve workforce planning.
Workforce censuses provide valuable insights but can be infrequent and the data generated can provide an incomplete picture of workforce numbers, specialisations, qualifications and job roles and functions.	Policymakers and workforce planners making decisions with out-of-date information. This can be particularly problematic if workforces are in shortage or operating in sectors undergoing substantial reform.	HumanAbility will engage lead agencies regarding the frequency and quality of workforce censuses.

"There is a need to strengthen the use of data and evidence to inform workforce planning and development, including keeping pace with accurate job role and skills."

Getting policy and regulatory settings right

Stakeholders have identified the need for better support in navigating regulatory and compliance burdens, especially in regional and remote areas. To promote the sustainability and stability of the care and support industries, policy and regulatory changes are essential. The *Modern Awards Review 2023–24 Final Report*[54] and the Fair Work Australia's *Stage 2 Research Report on Gender Pay Equity*[55] provide critical insights. These reports highlight the need to update skilled occupation lists to reflect current labour market demands and address gender-based occupational segregation. By amending remuneration and recognition frameworks, particularly in highly feminised occupations, these changes can ensure fair pay and better workforce retention.

Additionally, integrating findings from these reviews can lead to more inclusive migration settings that fill essential roles, including lower-skill and lower-income positions, without embedding low wages. Such reforms will help create a more equitable and responsive workforce, ultimately enhancing service quality and accessibility across these vital sectors.

By amending remuneration and recognition frameworks, particularly in highly feminised occupations, these changes can ensure fair pay and better workforce retention.

Priority areas for action

This section outlines HumanAbility's priority areas for action that will be the focus for HumanAbility's activities over the next 12–24 months. The priority areas for action respond to the sector's workforce challenges and have been identified through HumanAbility's data analysis and research, and extensive stakeholder engagement. It is important to note HumanAbility is not the sole driver of change in each of the priority areas.

Address workforce shortages and skills gaps

Contemporary training and qualifications

A diverse and inclusive workforce

Priority areas for action

Build the data and evidence base

Policy and regulatory settings support the sector's workforce

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

Priority areas for action		Challenges addressed
Address workforce shortages and skills gaps	Improve workforce attraction and retention by enabling people to make informed decisions about career trajectories and supporting mobility between related sectors.	
	Increase the supply of suitably skilled graduates and address current skills shortages by better understanding the factors that contribute to students not completing key qualifications.	
Improve quality of, and access to, contemporary training and qualifications	Develop and support the delivery of training which meets the needs of regional/remote communities and supports greater access to employment opportunities in these areas. Identify systemic barriers to training delivery in regional areas. Ensure training packages are meeting industry and student needs, particularly responding to recommendations of the Aged Care and Disability Royal Commissions. Support the delivery of structured, quality training programs aligned to industry need.	
Enable a diverse and inclusive workforce	Enhance workforce diversity through improvements in participation, representation, cultural sensitivity and awareness. Attract more workers into the sector by tapping into new talent pools for a more diverse workforce.	
Build the data and evidence base	Bridge information gaps, supporting and informing workforce planning and development, and training product development and delivery.	
Ensure that policy and regulatory settings support the sector's workforce	Influence policy settings, ensuring they continue to be informed by the current and future needs of the workforce.	

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

HumanAbility workforce initiatives

HumanAbility's strategic focus is on developing a skilled and adaptable workforce, to empower individuals to achieve personal growth and advancement, drive industry-wide progress, and positively shape the care and support industries and their capacity to support the broader community.

In collaboration with key stakeholders, we have identified high impact initiatives for this workforce plan. Based on stakeholder engagement, existing government priorities and initiatives, and research, these priority areas underscore our commitment to helping foster an environment that not only addresses current workforce needs but also anticipates and prepares for future demands, driving continuous improvement and excellence across the care and support sectors.

The initiatives listed below reflect:

- **Initiatives underway:** activities and projects in progress.
- **Proposals in development:** projects and activities identified as priority areas for action reflecting perspectives of HumanAbility's Industry Advisory Committees and stakeholder consultations that are in the detailed scoping and design phase.

Labour force shortages	Skills gaps	Training and qualification issues	Limited career pathways
Lack of diversity and inclusion	Data deficiencies	Policy and regulatory settings	

Initiatives Underway

Industry sector	Initiative	Challenges addressed
Cross-sectoral	Map and promote career pathways for the care and support sectors, including aged care, disability services and veterans care (Phase 1)	🧍 🧩 ⛔
Cross-sectoral	Contribute to the development and implementation of industry workforce strategies being developed by Commonwealth and state and territory governments and national peak bodies.	🧍 🧩 🎓 ⛔ 🙏 🔍 ✏️
Cross-sectoral	Build the VET workforce capability.	🧍 🧩 🎓
Cross-sectoral	Occupational data – continue to work with ABS and JSA to improve ANZSCO data and reporting to reflect current and emerging job roles, and differentiation in job roles within sectors.	🔍 🎓
Cross-sectoral	Industry data - continue to work with ABS and JSA to improve ANZSIC data and reporting to reflect industry trends and changes.	🔍 🎓
Cross-sectoral	Contribute to, and influence, workforce related policy initiatives: • Development of the Skills Priority List and Core Skills Occupation Lists • National Skills Taxonomy • Qualifications Reform Design • National VET Workforce Development • National Skills Passport design consultations	🔍 🎓
Cross-sectoral	Research the drivers/causes of low completion rates in key qualifications.	🧍 🧩 🎓
Cross-sectoral	National Qualifications Reform Demonstration Project – testing reform principles in the volunteering sector/workforce and mapping a sample of HA's qualifications to the Reform's 'purpose' framework.	🧍 🧩 🎓 ✏️
All sectors	Identify the priority qualifications requiring reviews or updates and work with sectors to create fit-for-purpose training that meets sector needs.	🧩 🎓 🙏

🧍 Labour force shortages

🧩 Skills gaps

🎓 Training and qualification issues

⛔ Limited career pathways

🙏 Lack of diversity and inclusion

🔍 Data deficiencies

✏️ Policy and regulatory settings

Industry sector	Initiative	Challenges addressed
Aged Care and Disability Support	Undertake an Implementation Review of the Certificate III in Individual Support and Certificate IV in Disability qualifications	Labour force shortages; Skills gaps; Training and qualification issues
ECEC	Review entry requirements for the Diploma in Early Childhood, Education and Care	Labour force shortages; Skills gaps; Training and qualification issues
ECEC	ECEC Review and update the CHC Out of School Hours Care qualifications	Skills gaps; Training and qualification issues
Health	Review and update the HLT Pathology qualifications	Skills gaps; Training and qualification issues
Health	Review and update the HLT Optical Dispensing qualifications	Skills gaps; Training and qualification issues
Health	Review and update the HLT Audiometry qualifications	Skills gaps; Training and qualification issues
Health	Review and update the HLT Health Services Assistance qualifications	Skills gaps; Training and qualification issues
Human (Community Services)	Review and update the CHC Community Services qualifications	Skills gaps; Training and qualification issues
Human (Community Services)	Review and update the CHC Mental Health and Alcohol and other Drugs qualifications	Skills gaps; Training and qualification issues
Human (Community Services)	Review and update qualifications that include CHC Case Management units in their core	Skills gaps; Training and qualification issues
Sport and Recreation	Review and update the SIS Outdoor Recreation and Leadership qualifications	Skills gaps; Training and qualification issues

Legend

- Labour force shortages
- Skills gaps
- Training and qualification issues
- Limited career pathways
- Lack of diversity and inclusion
- Data deficiencies
- Policy and regulatory settings

"There needs to be an increased engagement with industry about training."

Workforce initiatives in detail

Following are the current and proposed actions developed in consultation with industry to address the cross-sector and sector-specific issues identified.

These include actions to:

- undertake qualification reviews prioritised by HumanAbility's Industry Advisory Committees
- address the workforce challenges discussed in the Workforce Plan
- contribute to national workforce priorities
- support implementation of broader VET reforms.

Research the drivers/causes of low completion rates in key qualifications

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Increasing the supply of suitably skilled graduates is critical if the sector is to address current skills shortages and meet the increasing demand for workers, particularly in early childhood education, aged care and disability sectors.

Research is required to better understand the causes and timing of students' non-completion in these training packages, which have some of the highest national enrolments.

Status: Proposal in development

Timing: Late 2024 – Nov 2025

Activities

- Survey of current and former students in key qualifications to identify factors that contribute to non-completion.
- Develop a research report with recommendations on strategies to address the identified causes/drivers of non-completion.
- Scoping pilot initiatives to address research report findings.

Impacts

- Increased understanding of the causes of non-completion.
- Strategies to increase course completion rates.
- An increase in the supply of skilled graduates.

| Labour force shortages | Skills gaps | Training and qualification issues | Limited career pathways |
| Lack of diversity and inclusion | Data deficiencies | Policy and regulatory settings | |

Map and promote career pathways for the care and support sectors, including aged care, disability services and veterans care (Phase 1)

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Clearly visible and accessible career pathways are vital to attracting and retaining workers in these sectors. This initiative will Identify and support new approaches to workforce development, highlighting alignment of career progression and opportunities within and across aged care, disability services and veterans' care.

Status: Initiative underway

Timing: To be completed in early 2025.

Activities

- A functional analysis of key job roles across aged care, disability services and veterans' care sectors.
- Mapping career pathways and training that supports the pathways.
- Developing a Careers Pathway Framework including identification of opportunities to increase participation of First Nations workers, young people, people with disability and men, who are underrepresented in the care and support workforce.
- Developing a Good Practice Guide for RTOs, industry bodies and employers to support practice change in industry and training delivery.
- Mapping career journeys of 16 individuals – producing videos and promotional materials to attract people to the sector.

Impact

Improved workforce attraction and retention, by enabling people to make informed decisions about career trajectories and supporting mobility between related sectors.

Improve access to an increasing range of microcredentials for educators and teachers in areas of identified need.

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Education Ministers have endorsed a range of actions to implement the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy 2022–2032.[38] Focus Area 3.2 – *Improve access to increasing range of microcredentials* was identified as a medium term action. Following HumanAbility's establishment it is proposed HA lead this initiative.

Status: Subject to endorsement by the Australian Government's Early Childhood Policy Group.

Timing: To be completed by the end of 2027.

Activities

- Map and review existing microcredentials.
- Provide recommendations to Education Ministers that will inform future priorities and areas of identified need.
- Develop and promote a priority list of microcredentials for educators and teachers in recognised areas of demand and need.

Impact

Improved workforce attraction and retention, by providing upskilling and career development opportunities for experienced workers in the sector.

Labour force shortages	Skills gaps	Training and qualification issues	Limited career pathways
Lack of diversity and inclusion	Data deficiencies	Policy and regulatory settings	

Aged Care and Disability Support Qualifications: Implementation Review

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The first phase of the project will examine the current issues, challenges and barriers in implementing the *Certificate III in Individual Support* and *Certificate IV in Disability*, and explore potential measures to broaden and enhance the delivery and uptake of these qualifications across Australia.

Status: Initiative underway

Timing: Due to be completed late 2024.

Activities

A comprehensive review of the implementation of the qualifications will be undertaken to:

- Assess effectiveness and efficiency of how the qualifications have been integrated into relevant systems and practices.
- Identify issues, challenges or barriers encountered during the implementation of qualifications.
- Consider alignment with contemporary job roles.
- Inform a future review of the Aged Care and Disability qualifications.
- Prepare a final report to Skills Ministers on findings, insights identified, best practices, and potential strategies and solutions.

Impact

Strategies for increasing delivery of training and sharing of identified best practices currently being applied by RTOs.

	Labour force shortages		Skills gaps		Training and qualification issues		Limited career pathways
	Lack of diversity and inclusion		Data deficiencies		Policy and regulatory settings		

Review entry requirements for the Diploma in Early Childhood, Education and Care

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Enrolment in the current *CHC50121 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care* requires an individual to have either the *CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care* or *CHC30113 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care*. This entry requirement doesn't recognise previous versions of the Certificate III and/or equivalent qualifications, which is restrictive and a barrier to entry to the sector at a time when the sector is suffering skills and workforce shortages.

Status: Initiative underway

Timing: Completed by Dec 2024

Activities

This project aims to support existing and previous workers who hold similar qualifications to have their skills and experience recognised. The project will:

- Review the entry requirements for the Diploma.
- Undertake a mapping exercise between current and past *Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care* qualifications.
- Create a bridging skill set to support more flexible entry requirements and develop a pre-assessment toolkit to assist RTOs to map earlier qualifications, skills and experience to the current qualifications.
- Inform the future review of the ECEC qualifications (timing: TBD).

Impact

An increase to workforce supply by improving graduate completion rates.

This research and its findings will inform a future activity submission (in 2025–26) designed to improve completion rates.

Review the *CHC Out of School Hours Care* qualifications

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The nationally accredited course, *1098NAT Certificate III in Outside School Hours Care* is not currently part of the national Training Package. This is limiting opportunities to create pathways from this qualification to *CHC50221 Diploma of School Age Education and Care* and early childhood education and care qualifications.

The National Outside School Hours Service Alliance (NOSHSA) has created a nationally accredited course, *1098NAT Certificate III in Outside School Hours Care*. The intention being that following establishment of the new Jobs and Skills Councils, the course would be adapted and included in the national Training Package.

Status: Initiative underway

Timing: Late 2024 – Nov 2025

Activities

- Review the nationally accredited course, *1098NAT Certificate III in Outside School Hours Care* qualification, which contains 16 units of competency.
- Ensure new and revised units meet the skills and knowledge requirements related to new technologies.
- Identify and map potential pathways to *CHC50221 Diploma of School Age Education and Care* and early childhood education and care qualifications.

Impact

Training Packages are meeting industry and student needs.

Labour force shortages	Skills gaps	Training and qualification issues	Limited career pathways
Lack of diversity and inclusion	Data deficiencies	Policy and regulatory settings	

Review and update the *CHC Community Services* Training Package

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The community services qualifications support a range of different occupations in areas such as family support, tenant advice and advocacy, domestic violence, case workers, women's health educators, court support workers, Homelessness support workers, and Aboriginal health education officers.

Three of the five CHC qualifications have not been reviewed since 2015 and include a large proportion of superseded units.

Status: Initiative underway

Timing: Late 2024 – Nov 2025

Activities
- Review and update the five qualifications, eight skill sets and 69 units of competency.
- Undertake a functional analysis of job roles in the sector.
- Review all five qualifications ensuring the qualifications reflect contemporary roles and provide opportunities for pathways and professional development through usage of qualifications and skill sets.
- Review 22 cross-sector units of competency listed in multiple qualifications in the CHC Training Package. The units will be reviewed to reflect current knowledge, skill requirements and industry practice.

Impact
Training Packages are meeting industry and student needs.

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

Review *CHC Mental Health and Alcohol and other Drugs* qualifications

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs services have seen new job roles emerge to meet the rise in service demands and other shifts in service delivery. The skills requirements of these roles intersect with principles underpinning mental health services, such as the provision of holistic person-centred care and trauma-informed care.

The Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs qualifications and skill sets require review to ensure they reflect current industry knowledge and practices and provide a foundation for addressing emerging industry challenges.

The current products were endorsed in 2015 as part of the transition to the *Standards for Training Packages*. Minor changes were made in 2022 with three qualifications incorporating the new First Aid units of competency combined with the release of one new skill set. All qualifications include superseded units in their respective elective banks.

Status: Initiative underway

Timing: Late 2024 – Nov 2025

Activities

The sector has advocated for a combined review of the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs qualifications given the synergies between the qualifications and the skills and knowledge requirements of workers in the sector.

The review will consider five qualifications, six skills sets and up to 192 units of competency currently contained in these packages.

The review will ensure alignment with recent significant policy and service delivery initiatives, which need to be reflected in the training products. These include:

- National Mental Health Workforce Development Strategy 2022–2032
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031
- National Mental Health Commission: Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Development Guidelines and companion documents (including sample job roles)
- Productivity Commission Inquiry Report: Mental Health (2020)

Impact

Training Packages are meeting industry and student needs.

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

Review and update the *HLT Health Services Assistance* qualifications

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

An update is required to include the introduction of technology and contemporary practices in the Health Care and Social Assistance Industry.

This qualification is mapped to the Nursing Support and Personal Care Worker job role (ANZSCO 4233) which has been impacted by the increased adoption of technology, the increasing emphasis on patient-centred care and cultural competency, and preparedness for outbreaks of infectious disease. The Certificate III in Health Services Assistance was last reviewed in 2015 and needs to be updated to reflect these changes. This update would provide an opportunity to ensure training products serve the dynamic nature of the healthcare industry and the ongoing efforts to improve patient care and safety, and adapt to evolving healthcare challenges.

Status: Initiative underway

Timing: Late 2024 – Late 2025

Activities
- A functional analysis workshop with participants being drawn from across all states and territories, and including metropolitan, regional and remote settings.
- 16 interviews with employers to discuss current roles, functions and tasks.
- Development of draft units of competency, qualification and a consultation discussion paper.
- 12 face-to-face workshops and three virtual workshops.
- Consultation tool enabling stakeholders to provide feedback via HumanAbility's website.
- Three virtual professional development workshops on the new qualification and good practice for delivery and assessment will be conducted.

Impact
Training Packages are meeting industry and student needs.

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

Review and update the *Certificate III in Pathology Collection* qualifications

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

This qualification plays a crucial role in training pathology collectors, who are responsible for millions of tests annually. The qualification has not been reviewed since 2015. A review is necessary to maintain a skilled and supported workforce. This is especially relevant with the increasing demand for pathology services, due to factors including the ageing population and advancements in diagnostic methods.

HumanAbility industry consultations have identified a shortage of qualified pathology collectors, despite the career opportunities and nearly 83 per cent employment rate associated with the Pathology Collection qualification.[56] Some employers are running in-house training programs to address these shortages. Furthermore, the need has been identified to develop career pathway resources to highlight progression opportunities across the broader health and social services sector, as the qualification ranks among the top 20 for pathways to further education in both higher education and VET.[56]

Status: Commenced

Timing: Due for completion – June 2025

Activities

The review will address various aspects, including relevance to industry needs, digital skills to meet technological advances, and skills required for working with complex clients, which supports both client care and staff wellbeing.

Key activities to be undertaken include:

- Updating two qualifications, one skill set and 15 units of competency.
- A functional analysis workshop with participants being drawn from across all states and territories, and including metropolitan, regional, and remote settings.
- Explore and include common skills gaps identified specifically for pathology and reiterated as cross-sectorial across Health and Social Assistance industries
- Identify specialist skills such as paediatric collection and cultural competence, which are in demand.
- Identify and make explicit the career pathways available to those who complete the qualification, while also considering relevant core skills for these pathways.

Impact

Training Packages are meeting industry and student needs.

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

Review and update the *Certificate IV in Optical Dispensing* qualifications

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Rapid technological advancements, shifts towards corporate practices, and increased consumer demand for specialised eyecare services highlight the necessity for an updated curriculum that reflects current industry standards and future needs. Geographic disparities in training access, the unregulated nature of the industry, and the lack of professional standardisation have led to skill shortages and inconsistent service quality.

The qualification was last reviewed in 2015. Of the nine core units, two have been superseded. Of the elective unit options, 13 have been superseded, two deleted and only two are current.

Status: Commenced

Timing: Due for completion – June 2025

Activities

A comprehensive review of the qualification will be undertaken to:
- Evaluate how effectively and efficiently the qualification has been integrated into the relevant systems and practices within the industry.
- Identify issues, challenges, or barriers encountered during the implementation of these qualifications.

To achieve this, the review process will include:
- Conducting a functional analysis of job roles and settings within the sector.
- Examining existing qualification frameworks to identify areas needing improvement.
- Engaging industry experts through extensive stakeholder consultations to collect diverse perspectives and insights.

Impact

Training Packages are meeting industry and student needs.

HEALTH

Review and update the *HLT Audiometry* qualifications

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The sector faces critical issues that have arisen since their last update in 2015. Rapid technological advancements, evolving professional standards, and an increased demand for specialised hearing care services highlight the necessity for this review.

The Certificate IV in Audiometry has eight core units and three electives. Of the elective units available, seven are superseded. The Diploma of Audiometry has 11 core units and eight electives, many of which are superseded.

Status: Commenced

Timing: Due for completion – June 2025

Activities

A comprehensive review of the qualification will be undertaken to:
- Evaluate how effectively and efficiently the qualifications have been integrated into the relevant systems and practices within the industry.
- Identify issues, challenges, or barriers encountered during the implementation of these qualifications.

To achieve this, the review process will include:
- Conducting a functional analysis of job roles and settings within the sector.
- Examining existing qualification frameworks to identify areas needing improvement.
- Engaging with industry experts through extensive stakeholder consultations to collect diverse perspectives and insights.

Impact

Training Packages are meeting industry and student needs.

	Labour force shortages		Skills gaps		Training and qualification issues		Limited career pathways
	Lack of diversity and inclusion		Data deficiencies		Policy and regulatory settings		

Review the *SIS Outdoor Recreation and Leadership* qualifications

KEY CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The sector's workforce challenges include shortages of skilled professionals, a highly casualised workforce, high turnover rates, and an increased demand for outdoor activities and services. The review will ensure the four qualifications, seven skill sets, and 195 units of competency meet the current industry demands, and are adaptable enough to support future growth, assist with career development by outlining pathways and address forthcoming challenges.

Status: Initiative underway

Timing: Late 2024 – Late 2025

Activities

A comprehensive review of the outdoor recreation and leadership qualifications will be undertaken to:

- Evaluate how effectively and efficiently the qualifications have been integrated into the relevant systems and practices within the outdoor recreation and leadership sectors.
- Identify issues, challenges or barriers encountered during the implementation of these qualifications.

To achieve this, the review process will include:

- Conducting a functional analysis of job roles and settings within the sector.
- Examining existing qualification frameworks to identify areas needing improvement.
- Engaging with industry experts through extensive stakeholder consultations to collect diverse perspectives and insights.

Impact

Training Packages are meeting industry and student needs.

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

Existing workforce strategies and measures

HumanAbility's mapping of selected existing national or cross-government reforms, including workforce strategies, allows us to examine the relationships between various initiatives, while also identifying areas that HumanAbility may inform, complement, and/or contribute to.

The list of strategies is not exhaustive; and it is evolving and dynamic and includes initiatives with a broad, systemic or cross-sectoral focus. A range of sectoral or occupational workforce strategies have either been, or are being, developed by the Commonwealth Government and state and territory governments. Detailing all of these is beyond the scope of this document. Select sector specific strategies are highlighted in the 'industry sector profiles' sections of this document.

HumanAbility will continue to engage across governments and with responsible lead agencies to inform, contribute to, and support development and implementation of these strategies. For strategies specific to the sectors within HumanAbility's scope please refer to the relevant sector profile.

Labour force shortages	Skills gaps	Training and qualification issues	Limited career pathways
Lack of diversity and inclusion	Data deficiencies	Policy and regulatory settings	

Strategy / Initiative / Report	Link to HumanAbility's role and priorities	Challenges
The National Skills Agreement	The 2024 National Skills Agreement highlights the critical importance of the care economy as one of eight priority areas. As the Jobs and Skills Council for the care and support sectors, HumanAbility plays a pivotal role in implementing the strategy. HumanAbility contributes to the agreement's objectives by conducting industry-led research, identifying workforce needs, developing responsive training packages, and spearheading workforce development initiatives. By collaborating with stakeholders across these sectors, HumanAbility seeks to ensure the VET system remains aligned with industry demands, particularly in addressing skills shortages and improving the quality and sustainability of the care workforce. This strategic involvement supports the National Skills Agreement's goal of creating a more responsive and high-quality VET sector that meets the evolving needs of essential care services.	
Intergenerational Report 2023	The 2023 Intergenerational Report provides an outlook for Australia's economy to 2062–63, focusing on five major forces shaping the nation's future: population ageing, technological transformation, climate change, increasing demand for care services, and geopolitical risks. HumanAbility is well-positioned to contribute to strategies that address the rising demand for care and support services, identified as a key force in the report by leveraging its expertise in workforce planning and development.	
National Jobs and Skills Roadmap (2023)	The National Jobs and Skills Roadmap, introduced in 2023, assesses the national skills system, and identifies current, emerging, and future skills needs. HumanAbility will assist in the implementation of the roadmap and contribute to its objectives by conducting industry-led research, identifying workforce needs in the care and support sectors, and developing responsive training packages. By collaborating with industry stakeholders, education providers and government bodies, HumanAbility aims to ensure the VET system remains aligned with industry demands, particularly in addressing skills shortages and improving the quality of the care workforce.	

Legend:

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

Strategy / Initiative / Report	Link to HumanAbility's role and priorities	Challenges
Care and Support Economy Reform	The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Care and Support Economy Reform Unit has outlined the government's vision for a sustainable and productive care and support economy that delivers quality care with quality jobs. HumanAbility will support the reform goals through its training package development work, and delivery of priority workforce initiatives, such as the Career Pathways Project and Implementation Review of the Disability and Aged Care related qualifications.	
The Employment White Paper	The Employment White Paper outlines the Australian Government's vision for a dynamic and inclusive labour market, aiming to provide secure, fairly paid work opportunities for all while enabling people, businesses, and communities to thrive amidst economic changes. HumanAbility's focus on workforce planning and development aligns with the White Paper's emphasis on filling critical skill needs and building a future workforce capable of meeting the rising demand for quality care services. By fostering collaboration between industry stakeholders, government bodies and educational institutions, HumanAbility helps ensure that the vocational education and training system remains responsive to industry needs, supporting the White Paper's goals of promoting job security, sustainable wage growth, and inclusive employment opportunities.	
National Agreement on Closing the Gap	The National Agreement on Closing the Gap, developed in genuine partnership between Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (the Coalition of Peaks), aims to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This landmark agreement sets out four Priority Reforms to change how governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. HumanAbility is working and collaborating with ACCHO's in implementing strategies that address workforce challenges and contribute to closing the gap in areas such as health, education and employment. By leveraging its expertise in workforce planning and development, HumanAbility supports the agreement's objectives of fostering stronger partnerships, building community-controlled sectors, and improving service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

Strategy / Initiative / Report	Link to HumanAbility's role and priorities	Challenges
Education and Training		
TAFE Centres of Excellence	The Australian Government is partnering with states and territories to create nationally networked TAFE Centres of Excellence (CoEs). These centres aim to develop a skilled workforce for strategically crucial industries to address national challenges. Within HumanAbility's scope, two significant centres have been announced: • Health Care and Support (based in Queensland) • Early Childhood Education and Care ECEC (in South Australia) These specialised centres will foster collaborations and partnerships between industry, education providers and government bodies. The Centres of Excellence are designed to enhance the quality and relevance of vocational education and training, ensuring the workforce is well-prepared to meet current and future industry demands in these critical areas. HumanAbility will work closely with the CoEs through its training package development work, and delivery of priority workforce initiatives.	(Labour force shortages, Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues)
The Universities Accord	Aims to create a long-term reform plan for the higher education sector to meet Australia's future skills needs. The Accord identifies the need for providing better access to higher education, and more seamless entry pathways. HumanAbility will contribute to the Accord's goals through delivery of priority workforce initiatives, such as the Career Pathways Project that aims to develop and promote pathways from VET into higher education for care and support related qualifications.	(Labour force shortages, Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues, Limited career pathways, Data deficiencies)
VET Workforce Blueprint	Anticipated to identify actions to address VET workforce issues, such as attraction, retention, development and career progression, and succession planning. HumanAbility will undertake research to understand issues within the care and support training sector and to identify mitigation strategies to overcome key issues.	(Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues)
Fee-Free Tafe	The Commonwealth Government has partnered with states and territories to deliver **funding for 500,000 Fee-Free TAFE and VET places across Australia over 2023 to 2026**. Training places are supported in priority industry sectors including the following HumanAbility specific occupational areas: aged care, health care and disability care, and early childhood education and care.	(Labour force shortages, Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues)

Icon	Label	Icon	Label	Icon	Label	Icon	Label
	Labour force shortages		Skills gaps		Training and qualification issues		Limited career pathways
	Lack of diversity and inclusion		Data deficiencies		Policy and regulatory settings		
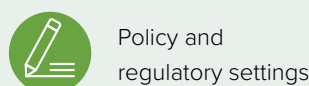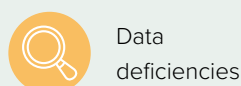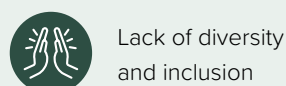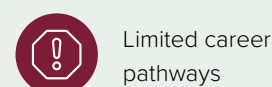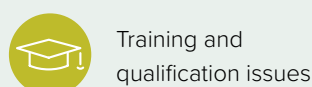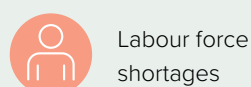
The way forward

This Workforce Plan has assessed the current state of the care and support sectors, drawing on extensive data analysis and stakeholder consultation. It aims to set a clear course for HumanAbility's future workforce development initiatives.

As the Australian Government's partner in advancing education and workforce development in the health and human services, aged and disability support, sport and recreation, and children's education and care sectors, HumanAbility aims to drive positive change. Through the actions identified in this plan, we will strive to work closely with stakeholders and counterpart bodies to support skilled and adaptable workforces.

However, the issues facing these industries are complex and often deeply rooted. Addressing them requires sustained effort and a willingness to adapt to evolving workforce needs.

To work towards our goals, HumanAbility aims to:

Produce research and insights

We will produce high-impact research and insights that influence policy and decision-making for government and the sectors we support. This will be achieved through:

- Building a strong research and development capacity

- Engaging in widespread and representative stakeholder consultation

- Seeking critical feedback and input from global experts to broaden and challenge our thinking

Building on the research, we will producing an annual flagship workforce report that grows in breadth and depth over the three-year cycle, which will contribute to developing a stronger workforce development ecosystem.

Identify priority issues for action

We will pinpoint key issues requiring action through training product development, project activity, or other initiatives. This will involve:

- Reviewing existing training products to potentially remove outdated content, improve quality and ensure industry relevance

- Undertaking timely, efficient, and high-quality reviews to develop training products that can be embraced by industry, education providers and regulators

- Contributing to the form and content of future training materials

- Engaging in projects that foster innovation in workforce and skills development

Improve attraction and career pathways

We will gather and share evidence to enhance attraction to the industries we support, working closely with the National Careers Institute and relevant state and territory bodies. Key actions will include:

- Actively engaging education providers, students and regulators in the review and design of new materials to maximise successful implementation and uptake

- Identifying and creating options for career pathways and progression within and across sectors, including greater integration between the VET and higher education systems

- Referring non-training/education-related barriers to career progression to other organisations as appropriate

By pursuing these strategic priorities, HumanAbility aims to drive positive change and support the development of skilled, adaptable and valued workforces in the care, support and recreation sectors. However, addressing the undervaluation of work in these sectors remains a critical challenge that requires a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach. HumanAbility is committed to working with partners to find solutions that ensure a sustainable and thriving workforce for the evolving needs of all Australians.

Methodology

Modelling to provide workforce projections and wage impact

HumanAbility uses a range of data and modelling to understand the current and future workforce needs in the care and support sectors.

This includes two different models developed by Victoria University:

1. A workforce projection model commissioned by Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA)[2] to forecast employment growth across industries and occupations based on economic and demographic factors.

2. A wage impact model commissioned by HumanAbility to analyse how increasing wages in low-paid care roles could affect the workforce, training choices, and ability to meet projected staffing needs.

JSA Workforce Projection Model

The JSA model uses a detailed macroeconomic approach to forecast employment trends in Australia. It incorporates structural changes like the retirement of baby boomers, the entry of younger generations into the workforce, and the continuing shift towards service industries. The model is based on a computable general equilibrium (CGE) framework that links industries, regions, occupations, and household consumption patterns. Key assumptions include:

- Service sectors like healthcare, professional services and education will drive employment growth as the economy moves away from manufacturing and agriculture.

- Around 600,000 new jobs requiring degrees will be created by 2025.[2]

- Over 75 per cent of 1.2 million projected net new jobs will be in capital cities due to urban population growth and dominance of service industries.[2]

For the healthcare and social assistance industry division specifically, the model projects:

- The sector will be the largest contributor to employment growth over the next five to eight years.

- It will see growth of 12.1 per cent over five years and 25.2 per cent over 10 years, compared to 6.5 per cent and 14.2 per cent for the overall economy.

- The strongest growth will be in occupations like aged and disability care, and nursing support and personal care.

HumanAbility Wage Impact Model*

The model commissioned by HumanAbility examines how increasing wages by 20 per cent in health services, preschool and sports/recreation, and 50 per cent in other care sectors, could impact workforce supply through factors like:

- New workforce entrants attracted by higher wages

- Existing workers increasing hours

- Workers moving from other sectors

It uses two scenarios – one with training choices fixed based on past trends, and another allowing people to change training in response to higher wages.

The model finds that, under the flexible training scenario, higher wages could lead to substantial increases in employment and hours worked in care sectors by 2032, such as:

- Over 15 per cent increase in total childcare hours worked

- Over 17 per cent increase in total aged care hours worked

This demonstrates the potential gains from responsive training systems and wage increases to attract and retain staff to meet projected workforce needs in care and support services. Increased wages are one modifiable factor that will influence workforce, but even at a 50 per cent increase in wages over the next eight years, which is a modelling figure rather than proposed wage increase, we are unlikely to meet the projected workforce need.

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* Data sources, modelling findings and charts are set out on pages 134–136.

Stakeholder consultation for the 2024 Workforce Plan

HumanAbility's tripartite governance structure – with unions, government and industry – is threaded throughout the way we work, including our approach to stakeholder engagement.

Our engagement approach is based on collaboration and inclusion, ensuring our wide range of stakeholders have a voice in shaping our priorities and initiatives. We are committed to consulting with industry at every stage. This involves actively seeking input on what we have discovered in the research, listening to feedback, sense-checking what we have heard, and seeking out additional insights to enhance our understanding. We have done this through ongoing dialogue with Jobs and Skills Australia, Commonwealth and state and territory departments, our Industry Advisory Committees (IACs) and broader group stakeholders in our partners program.

Our IACs – with members drawn from industry, unions, government, and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) – meet six times a year, including two in-person gatherings where they collaborate with other IACs. The IACs act as conduits between HumanAbility and the sectors they represent, facilitate two-way flow of information and advice, and ensure alignment between our objectives and the needs of industry. IAC members also provide advice on training package and workforce development projects and priorities, provide industry intelligence, and identify the skills required by industry now and into the future, which informs our priority activities and work program.

For the 2024 Workforce Plan, HumanAbility undertook comprehensive stakeholder engagement across its sectors and across Australia. The identification and mapping of relevant stakeholders was followed by consultative forums and interviews with CEOs from across our industries. Interviewees included those with lived experience, First Nations people, and organisations representing people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and representatives from unions, government, peak bodies, providers and RTOs.

Industry forums held to date include:

- HumanAbility's inaugural National Forum in Canberra in 2023 and 2nd National Forum in Canberra in August 2024.
- A Rural and Regional Forum in Alice Springs.
- State and Territory Roadshows and CEO Roundtables in South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, Northern Territory and Western Australia.

The forums, roadshows and roundtables connected us to stakeholders across our sectors, including engagement with Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and enabled broad and inclusive discussions on workforce development priorities, and training and skills needs at the industry, state and regional level. The consultations contributed to this workforce plan by identifying common workforce issues and challenges, and by providing advice on our priority activities. The capital city forum and regional consultations in each state and territory enabled place-based connection and provided opportunities for people to collaborate and share intelligence, issues and ideas across our industry sectors.

An example of one of the outputs from our forums is shown below.

A visual record from HumanAbility's Rural and Regional Forum in Alice Springs

Our approach to stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder mapping and identification

Key stakeholders: We have identified key stakeholders, including the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, State Training Authorities, Jobs and Skills Australia, industry representatives, employers, unions, educators, and peak bodies. Each stakeholder group is engaged based on their relevance to specific sector issues or broader macro insights.

Rationale for engagement: Each stakeholder is engaged with a clear rationale, ensuring their input is relevant and valuable to the workforce planning process.

Consultation timing and staging

Advance notice: Stakeholders are given advance notice about consultation activities, allowing them adequate time to prepare feedback and advice.

Staged consultations: Consultations are staged to align with key milestones in the workforce planning process, ensuring timely and relevant input.

Cross-council collaboration

Collaborative efforts: We actively seek opportunities for cross-JSC collaboration, leveraging insights and expertise from other Jobs and Skills Councils to enhance our workforce planning efforts.

Continuous improvement

Feedback loop: We maintain a continuous feedback loop with stakeholders, ensuring their input is not only gathered but also acted upon. Where incorporation of feedback is not possible, we provide clear explanations to stakeholders.

Outcomes of stakeholder consultation

The stakeholder consultation process provided valuable input that shaped our workforce planning. Stakeholder feedback validated the key workforce challenges, evidence gaps, and proposed strategies we had identified. Through consultation, we also uncovered new emerging workforce challenges and priorities that require further examination.

Overall, stakeholder input allowed us to refine our understanding of workforce issues and develop strategies that reflect real-world conditions and policy directions.

Developing the 2025 Workforce Plan

An overview of our approach

Our approach to developing the 2025 Workforce Plan will ensure our diverse range of stakeholders have a role in shaping our priorities and workforce initiatives. We are dedicated to consulting with industry at every step, while maintaining continuous dialogue with:

- Jobs and Skills Australia – to ensure we maintain a close and collaborative approach to delivering engagement and stakeholder relations for initiatives like the Early Childhood Education and Care Capacity Study.

- Commonwealth Government agencies to ensure:
  - Our work continues to be informed by, and informs, cross-government policy and programs
  - The national policy landscape is an enabling environment for achieving a sustainable and thriving care and support sector workforce
  - There is cross-Ministerial engagement with and support for initiatives that will contribute to achieving a sustainable and thriving care and support sector workforce

- State and territory governments to ensure:
  - Skills Ministers, State and Territory Training Authorities and Skills Boards/Commissions (or equivalents) and associated cross-jurisdictional forums are engaged in the effective development, delivery, and support of HumanAbility initiatives
  - Our strong relationships across Ministerial portfolios and departments means our work is informed by and complementary to jurisdictional policies, projects, and priorities
  - We identify opportunities to test or pilot projects in collaboration with state government initiatives where appropriate

- Our Industry Advisory Committees to leverage their depth and breadth of expertise, and

- The broader group of industry stakeholders, unions and partner organisations.

We will bring stakeholders and subject matter experts together to support our research, workforce development and training package projects we undertake. Project reference groups and technical committees will have a specific, targeted and timebound role distinct from the IAC function.

For our workforce development projects we will establish Project Reference Groups (PRGs) and undertake targeted, bespoke engagement activities that provide opportunities for a range of stakeholders to engage in and contribute to our initiatives.

Training Package Development projects will be guided by the Training Package Products Policy, leveraging Technical Committee (TCs) members' expertise, and involve extensive consultations with industry stakeholders and RTOs. At every stage of consideration of priority training package updates, review and redesign, we will be collaborating with State Training Authorities and their industry advisory groups. Through this process, we ensure our training package qualifications meet industry skills needs and are aligned to current and future job roles.

We will collaborate with other JSCs on projects or issues that intersect with our focus areas, such as digital skills, leadership or outdoor adventure tourism, leveraging collective expertise and resources to address common challenges and take opportunities for innovation and growth. Through joint initiatives and knowledge sharing, we support cross-sector collaboration and achieve outcomes that benefit all stakeholders.

Evidence gaps

As part of our focus on working collaboratively with stakeholders regarding data and evidence, we will work with the sector to explore ways to address gaps and gather, collect and share workforce data.

Mechanisms

Stakeholders will be invited to engage with us through diverse channels, ensuring their voices shape our projects and priorities. To ensure our projects are co-designed with industry and address the ongoing issues faced by employers across Australia in our sectors, we will use the following mechanisms:

- State and territory roadshows
- Our National Forum
- Work-site visits
- Targeted interviews and focus groups
- Website, social media and newsletters
- Surveys
- Webinars
- Attendance at peak body events and forums
- Sector specific workshops and events

Stakeholder engagement

We will undertake activities to connect with a broad range of stakeholders about the findings in our Workforce Plan.

Online webinars: tailored to specific sectors offering an interactive platform for discussing the Workforce Plan, facilitating sector-specific discussions, and soliciting feedback from stakeholders.

Thought leadership: we will use the key themes from the Workforce Plan and what industry have shared with us to inform public discourse on the future of workforces, skills and training in our sectors. This will include working with industry media and mainstream media, where appropriate.

Industry stewardship: we will continue to actively engage with industry sectors by providing keynote presentations based on the insights gleaned from our Workforce Plan at sector-specific conferences, workshops, and events. We will promote the Workforce Plan more broadly through presentations and attendance at industry and sector conferences, forums, events, and other relevant gatherings. This multi-faceted approach ensures that our insights reach a wide audience and contribute to informed decision-making and collaborative efforts across our industries.

Deeper dives: we will engage stakeholders in more in-depth discussions on the key workforce challenges and opportunities discussed in this plan that will inform our future plan, our priority activities and identify opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

Scheduled events to end 2024

SEPTEMBER
State and Territory Roadshow — WA:
engaging stakeholders in capital cities and a regional centre to create dialogue on key themes from the Workforce Plan, and gather insights to inform strategic workforce initiatives.

OCTOBER
State and Territory Roadshow — ACT:
engaging stakeholders in capital cities and a regional centre to create dialogue on key themes from the Workforce Plan, and gather insights to inform strategic workforce initiatives.

NOVEMBER
State and Territory Roadshow — NSW:
engaging stakeholders in capital cities and a regional centre to create dialogue on key themes from the Workforce Plan, and gather insights to inform strategic workforce initiatives.

Aged Care and Disability Support

Industry sector overview

Aged Care and Disability Support enhance the quality of life for older people and people with disabilities. Care and Support Staff, Nurses, and Allied Health workers form the core workforce in this sector, providing direct care in a range of settings: in the community, private homes, supported living environments, and aged care facilities.

Their roles encompass a wide range of services, from essential personal support to specialised clinical care, aimed at improving participation, health, welfare, comfort, and quality of life. They assist with daily activities, deliver medical treatments, implement rehabilitation programs, and provide emotional support. Their collective efforts are crucial in promoting independence, ensuring safety, and enhancing the overall well-being of older people and people with disabilities.

The top three occupations groups (based on ANZSCO codes) are:

- Registered Nurse (Aged Care ANZSCO 254412, Developmental Disability 254416, Disability Rehabilitation 254417)
- Health and Welfare Support Workers:
  – Enrolled Nurse (ANZSCO 411411)
  – Community Care Worker (ANZSCO 411711),
- Carers and Aides:
  – Nursing Support Worker (ANZSCO 423312),
  – Aged or Disabled Carer (ANZSCO 423111)
  – Personal Care Assistant (ANZSCO 423313),
  – Personal Care Worker (ANZSCO 423111)
  – Therapy Aide (ANZSCO 423314).

"The main data gap is that the ABS doesn't collect any data on the actual Disability Workforce (aged and disability care is far too broad)".

SECTOR DEMOGRAPHICS[7]

1,019,000 people engaged in aged care and disability support sector

80% are female

42 years average age

3% are First Nations

55% are part-time

33% Bachelors Degree or above

Residential Care Services 10 year projected workforce growth[2] **30.9%**

While they represent a smaller portion of the Aged and Disability sector, other essential occupations include: Welfare Support Workers, Health and Welfare Services Managers, Indigenous Health Workers, Social Workers, and Welfare, Recreation, and Community Arts Workers. These professionals play a crucial role in delivering, planning, organising, and coordinating care and support services.

Supply, Demand and Gap insights

Across the HumanAbility sectors, it is projected that an additional 20.9%[2] increase in the workforce in the ten years to May 2033 will be needed to meet future demands driven by growth in an ageing and increasingly diverse population, a transition from informal to formal care, and increased citizens' expectations of government. This projection includes the aged care and disability sectors, which are particularly significant. Given the strong drivers of demand in these areas the actual workforce needs may potentially exceed this estimate.

Drivers of demand in Aged Care

Increasing Demand

As the population continues to age, there has been an almost **300% increase** in home care supports, and the number of people entering residential aged care[4] [58]

Low retention of staff

"Retention is a major issue. Of course, we need to increase supply, but there is no point pouring more people without fixing the holes in the system. Because it's like a sieve".

Population Ageing

16.3%[59]

of the population is over 65. Projections indicate an increase to

21–23%

by 2066[60].

Some states are already nearing these proportions, with **Tasmania at 20.4%** and **South Australia at 19.6%** according to the last census[6]

Access to Care Programs (2022)

818,000

people accessed the Commonwealth-funded Home Support Program

216,000

people used Home Care Packages

188,000

people were in residential aged care[60]

"In short, burnout. Beneath that, there are a whole lot of factors. High turnover rates caused by workers' stress. Workers exit, which then puts more pressure on workers that are left".

Age Distribution in Aged Care

59%

of people in aged care are over the age of 85[60]

Drivers of demand in Disability Support

610,500

NDIS participants in 2023

43%

under 14 years of age[61]

40%

of people with a disability (1.7 million) need assistance from a formal provider[61]

"The need for training is significant, and there is a need for consistent training. NDIS quality and safeguards will require staff to be trained in the right way".

The number of people with a disability requiring NDIS support is **expected to continue to increase**, further driving demand for support services[40]
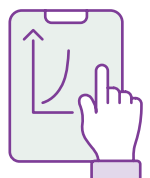
Decrease in availability of informal care[62]
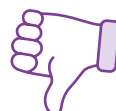
"Port Pirie is 60% above national average of people requiring daily care and twice as many people on Disability Support Pension than in Port Augusta".

We need to "debunk myths that the only career pathway is a Registered Nurse" and make people "aware of the possibilities".

Current workforce initiatives

This is an evolving and non-exhaustive list of key government-led workforce strategies or initiatives that will inform or be informed by HumanAbility in some way. For overarching or cross-cutting list of key government-led workforce strategies, see p.50.

Initiative	Key areas	Challenges
Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability	The Government has committed to progressing Royal Commission recommendations relating to workforce and training, including: • **Recommendation 10.8:** A national disability support worker registration scheme. The Australian Government should establish a national disability support worker registration scheme by 1 July 2028. (see more on this further down). • **Recommendation 6.25:** Expand the scope of health workforce capability development to include all forms of cognitive disability at all stages of education and training. • **Recommendation 6.26:** Expand the role of the Health Ministers Meeting to monitor health workforce capability development. • **Recommendation 10.8:** A national disability support worker registration scheme • **Recommendation 10.9:** The Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award. The Australian Government has released its initial response to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, accepting 13 of the 222 recommendations (the Australian Government has primary or shared responsibility for 172) in full and 117 in principle. Considering this response, HumanAbility is committed to integrating the training and workforce issues identified by the Royal Commission into our core operations. We will focus on developing qualifications to enhance the skills of disability support workers and collaborate with industry and government related to the establishment of a workforce registration scheme along with supporting workforce growth to meet the increasing demand for services.	
Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031	HumanAbility is focused on integrating the key priorities of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 into our core work. Training programs developed will consider the education and training needs along with the skills of educators and support staff to effectively deliver inclusive education.	

Legend:

- Labour force shortages
- Skills gaps
- Training and qualification issues
- Limited career pathways
- Lack of diversity and inclusion
- Data deficiencies
- Policy and regulatory settings

Initiative	Key areas		Challenges
Closing the gap – Disability sector strengthening plan *Sector strengthening plan – Action updates 2023 annual report – Disability'*	HumanAbility will collaborate with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector in implementing the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan, which supports Priority Reform Two of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.		(icons)
	As the Jobs and Skills Council for the disability sector, HumanAbility is committed to partnering with community-controlled organisations on initiatives within the plan's Workforce stream. This stream includes key sub-actions focused on growing and supporting the First Nations disability workforce, such as mapping workforce strengths, challenges and gaps; developing attractive and accessible pathways; and strengthening culturally safe and inclusive capabilities.		
	HumanAbility will work with these organisations to develop training packages that foster the growth, training, and retention of a skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability workforce, while also addressing workforce challenges through initiatives like improved career pathways and increased employment security.		
NDIS Review – Working together to deliver the NDIS	**Recommendation 15:** Attract, retain and train a workforce that is responsive to participant needs and delivers quality supports: • **Action 15.1:** The Australian Government should design and trial workforce attraction and retention initiatives • **Action 15.2:** The Australian Government should develop targeted and flexible migration pathways for care and support workers • **Action 15.3:** The Australian Government should develop an integrated approach to workforce development for the care and support sector **Recommendation 17:** Develop and deliver a risk-proportionate model for the visibility and regulation of all providers and workers, and strengthen the regulatory response to long-standing and emerging quality and safeguards issues. The NDIS Review – Working together to deliver the NDIS, emphasises the need to attract, retain, and train a skilled workforce that meets the diverse needs of NDIS participants, highlighting initiatives such as targeted workforce attraction programs, flexible migration pathways for care workers, and an integrated approach to workforce development. HumanAbility is committed to aligning our training and workforce development programs with these objectives to help build a responsive and sustainable NDIS workforce capable of delivering high-quality supports.		(icons)

(icon)	Labour force shortages	(icon)	Skills gaps	(icon)	Training and qualification issues	(icon)	Limited career pathways
(icon)	Lack of diversity and inclusion	(icon)	Data deficiencies	(icon)	Policy and regulatory settings		

Initiative	Key areas		Challenges
NDIS Review: Building a More Responsive and Supportive Workforce	The NDIS Review: Building a More Responsive and Supportive Workforce has identified key recommendations to strengthen the disability support workforce.		
	Recommendation 1 emphasises the need to design and trial workforce attraction and retention initiatives, addressing the critical challenge of building a stable and skilled workforce.		
	Recommendation 3 calls for an integrated approach to workforce development across the care and support sector, recognising the importance of coordinated efforts to enhance workforce capabilities.		
	HumanAbility acknowledges the significance of these recommendations and is committed to implementing training and workforce development programs that support the growth of a more responsive and sustainable NDIS workforce.		
NDIS Provider and Registration Taskforce Advice	The NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce's recommendations include the development of a Provider Risk Framework, which may have significant implications for workforce training needs, particularly in areas identified as higher risk.		
	Recommendation 10 specifically calls for the establishment of a Worker Registration Scheme for all workers, including a public register, professional development requirements, and a worker training and qualifications framework.		
	The Taskforce explicitly identifies training providers as key stakeholders to be engaged in the development of this framework, which will underpin the new registration scheme.		
	The Taskforce's proposed arrangements for platform providers and situations where participants directly employ workers could lead to new or modified training requirements for these specific segments of the NDIS workforce. HumanAbility will closely monitor these developments to ensure our training programs remain aligned with and support evolving regulatory standards and workforce needs.		

 Labour force shortages

 Skills gaps

 Training and qualification issues

 Limited career pathways

 Lack of diversity and inclusion

 Data deficiencies

 Policy and regulatory settings

Initiative	Key areas	Challenges
Aged Care Royal Commission	**Recommendation 51:** Employment and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care	
	Recommendation 75: Aged care workforce planning	
	Recommendation 76: Aged Care Workforce Industry Council Limited	
	Recommendation 77: National registration scheme	
	Recommendation 78: Mandatory minimum qualification for personal care workers	
	Recommendation 79: Review of certificate-based courses for aged care	
	Recommendation 80: Dementia and palliative care training for workers	
	Recommendation 81: Ongoing professional development of the aged care workforce.	
	HumanAbility recognises the importance of the Aged Care Royal Commission's recommendations focusing on workforce development and training.	
	HumanAbility is committed to developing and delivering specialised training programs that address the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care workers, support the implementation of a national registration scheme, and enhance the skills of personal care workers in areas such as dementia and palliative care.	
	Our ongoing training and workforce initiatives will align with and support the implementation of these recommendations to contribute to building a more skilled, diverse, and culturally competent aged care workforce, supporting the broader goals of improving care quality and outcomes for older Australians.	
Aged Care Act	The new Aged Care Act will be instructive for the delivery of aged care services with implications for the skilling and upskilling of care workers. HumanAbility is committed to adapting our training package development to align with the Act's requirements. Focus may need to be on developing specialised training that addresses the needs of a skilled workforce, particularly in areas such as dementia and palliative care, while ensuring qualifications meet the new requirements.	

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

Initiative	Key areas	Challenges
Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) Workforce Initiatives	HumanAbility is committed to engaging with the Department of Health and Aged Care's (DoHAC) workforce initiatives to address critical needs in the aged care sector. We are committed to aligning training and workforce development programs with key initiatives, including the Regional, Rural and Remote Home Care Workforce Support Program, Aged Care Transition to Practice Program, Aged Care Clinical Placements Nursing Program and the Aged Care Skills Development Program.	
The strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards – Final draft (November 2023)	The strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards, outlined in the final draft released in November 2023, emphasise the necessity for the workforce to receive regular competency-based training in cultural safety to support the diverse cultural needs of older individuals. HumanAbility is committed to developing qualifications that enhance cultural competence among aged care workers, ensuring they are equipped to provide respectful and culturally appropriate care.	

Labour force shortages

Skills gaps

Training and qualification issues

Limited career pathways

Lack of diversity and inclusion

Data deficiencies

Policy and regulatory settings

"We need huge numbers of people, more than we have ever needed. Partly because the number of people needing care is going up, partly because the staffing ratio is going up."

Enrolments and completions

Since 2015, the Aged Care and Disability Support sector has experienced consistent growth in both enrolments and completions, reflecting the increasing demand for skilled professionals. While completions have risen alongside enrolments, they still represent only a fraction of the total enrolments, indicating a need for strategies to boost graduation rates and meet the sector's demands.

Between 2021 and 2022 enrolments remained relatively stable (declining approximately 0.4%), and completions have continued to rise (+10.7%).

Demographic trends show that a higher number of women are enrolling and completing across the sector. The 30–39 age group represents the largest share of enrolments and completions. However, the sector has room for growth in terms of supporting First Nations learners and students with disabilities, who are underrepresented in both enrolments and completions.

Enrolments and completions by qualification

Certificate III in Individual Support
- Enrolments: 86,423
- Completions: 33,888

Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance
- Enrolments: 6867
- Completions: 1034

Certificate III in Health Services Assistance
- Enrolments: 15,053
- Completions: 6546

Certificate IV in Ageing Support
- Enrolments: 16,026
- Completions: 5350

Certificate IV in Disability
- Enrolments: 29,391
- Completions: 11,985

Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance
- Enrolments: 9048
- Completions: 2172

Diploma of Nursing (HLT54115 and HLT54121)
- Enrolments: 27,986
- Completions: 7289

Enrolments   Completions

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

Need "NDIS psychosocial disability workers gaining a relevant skill set such as Course In Mental Health Recovery Work to ensure people are trained to deliver the service on day one".

"People need to understand the role before they start."

"If they last 1 year they are likely to stay."

Since 2015, enrolments in aged care and disability qualifications have seen an upward trend, starting with just 531 enrolments and rising sharply to 188,571 in 2022. Completions have followed a similar growth pattern, increasing from 66 in 2015 to 68,264 in 2022. **Despite this rise, the gap between enrolments and completions has persisted, highlighting the need to continue improving completion rates to meet the growing demand for qualified professionals in these sectors.**

Total enrolments and completions for aged care and disability qualifications[9] [10]

Where graph appears to start at 0, this reflects release of new qualifications and is also due to scale.
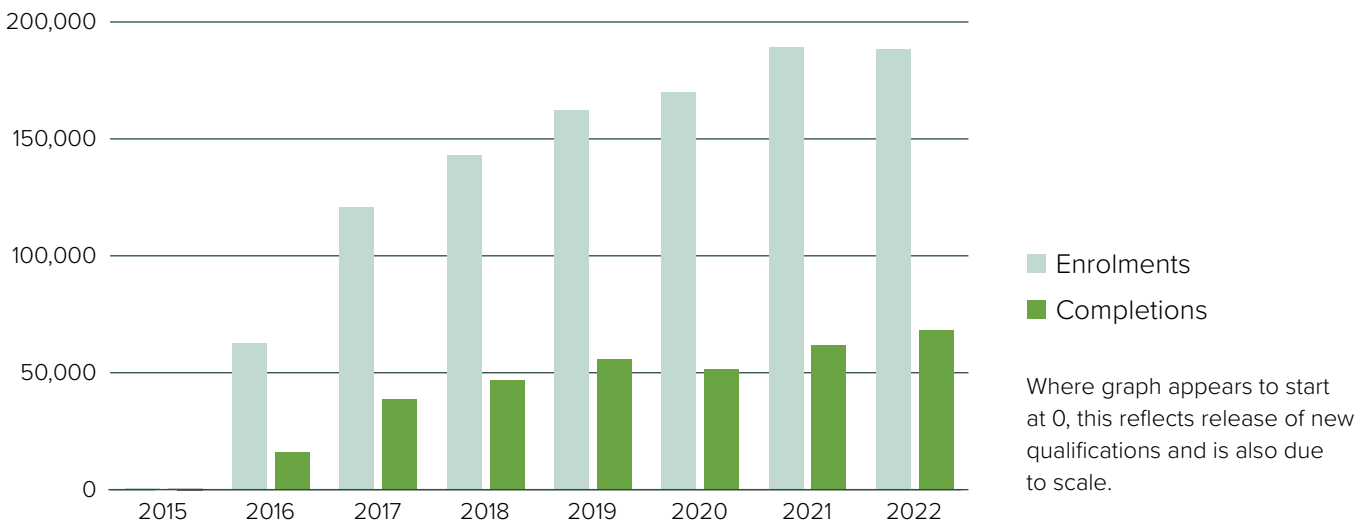
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Enrolments	531	62,623	120,920	143,005	162,161	169,897	189,376	188,571
Completions	66	16,030	38,615	47,009	55,820	51,325	61,624	68,264

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

"Relevant short courses and micro credentials. Intensive short training would be helpful."

"Hire the person and train the skills."

Gender[9][10]

Females accounted for
75.5%
of enrolments and
71.8%
of completions
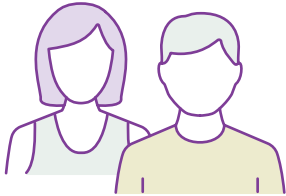
Males represented
23.6%
of enrolments and
26.4%
of completions

People who identified as 'Other' made up
0.1%
of completions

Enrolments and completions by gender

Females
142,320
49,039

Males
44,525
18,007

- Enrolments
- Completions
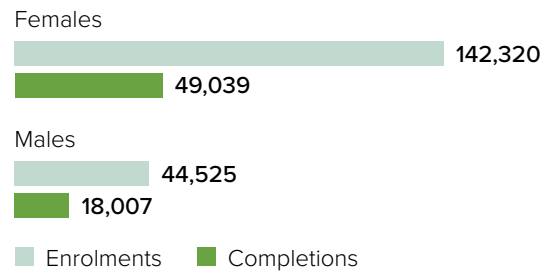
* Other: 115 Enrolments; 37 Completions
Not known: 1610 Enrolments; 1202 Completions

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

The gender distribution in aged care and disability qualifications shows a female majority. This gender imbalance underscores a potential need for strategies to encourage greater male participation and diversity in these fields.

Age[9][10]

% of overall enrolments by age

- 15 to 19 years **14.2%**
- 20 to 24 years **17.0%**
- 25 to 29 years **14.2%**
- 30 to 39 years **23.9%**
- 40 to 49 years **16.9%**
- 50 to 59 years **10.8%**
- 60 to 64 years **2.2%**
- 65 years and over **0.7%**
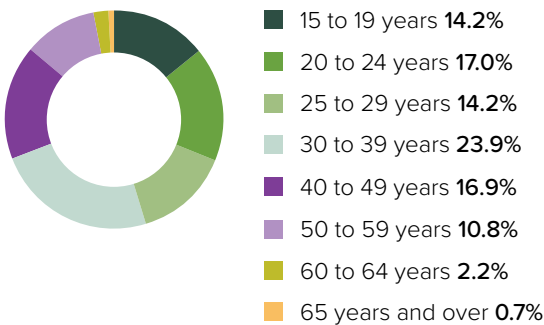
The **30 to 39 years age group** accounted for the largest proportion of enrolments, with **23.9%**, and the highest percentage of completions at **25.9%**.

The figures for the **30 to 39 years** age group are higher than the overall VET program trend, where enrolments are more evenly distributed across younger age groups (**20%** for enrolments and completions for this group).

Enrolments and completions by age
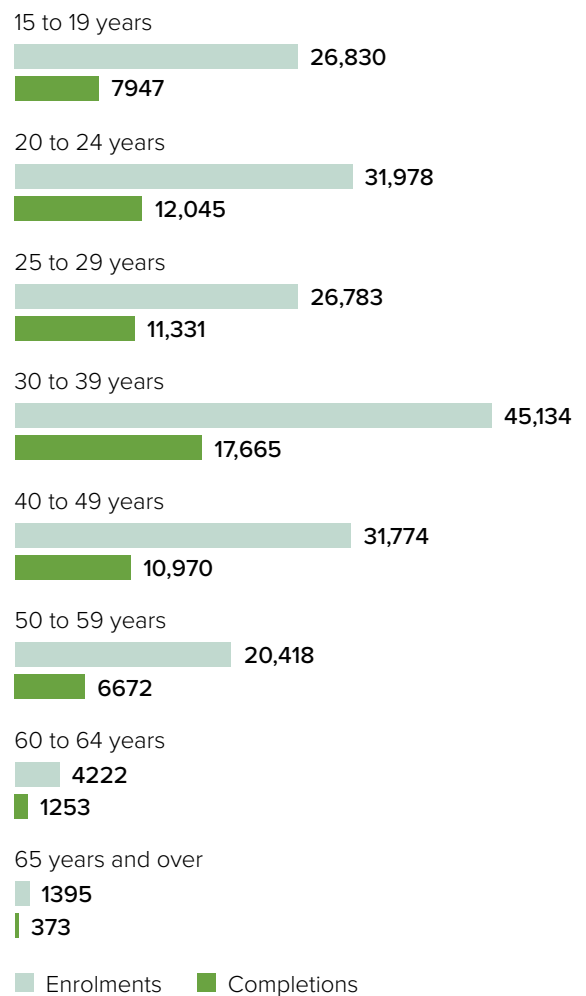
15 to 19 years
26,830
7947

20 to 24 years
31,978
12,045

25 to 29 years
26,783
11,331

30 to 39 years
45,134
17,665

40 to 49 years
31,774
10,970

50 to 59 years
20,418
6672

60 to 64 years
4222
1253

65 years and over
1395
373

- Enrolments
- Completions

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

First Nations students[9] [10]
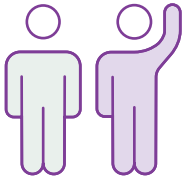
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners represented **3.9%** of enrolments and **2.2%** of completions

Non-Indigenous learners accounted for **84.7%** of enrolments and **76.7%** of completions

Not known status comprised **11.4%** of enrolments and **21.1%** of completions

Compared to overall VET program data, where **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** learners typically represent a slightly higher proportion of enrolments (**5.0%**), the aged care and disability sector has a smaller share of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. This may indicate a need for targeted support and strategies to improve participation and completion rates for this group. The gap between enrolments and completions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners suggests that barriers may affect their ability to complete these qualifications.

Students with disability[9] [10]

Learners with a disability made up **6.4%** of enrolments and **4.4%** of completions in the Aged Care and Disability Support sector*

* 3009 students

What is working?
"Community based support program [in Tasmania] that focuses on training people with a disability to work in the industry".

The aged care and disability sector reflects comparable trends for enrolments and completions of learners with disabilities to overall VET trends.
Still, there may be room for improvement in supporting these learners to achieve higher completion rates.

Geographic location[9][10]

Remoteness

% of overall enrolments by remoteness

- ■ Major cities **65.6%**
- ■ Inner regional **18.4%**
- ■ Outer regional **8.4%**
- ■ Remote **0.8%**
- ■ Very remote **0.3%**
- ■ Offshore **5.4%**
- ■ Not known **1.0%**
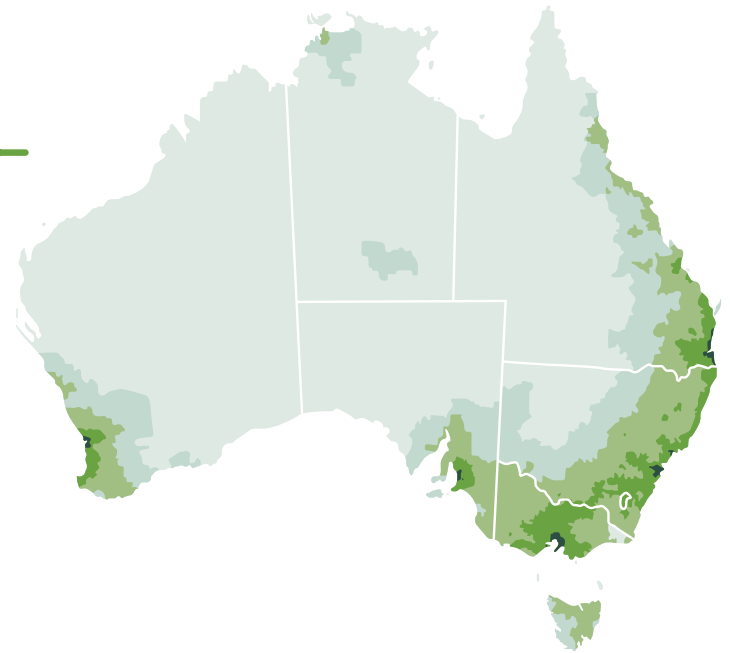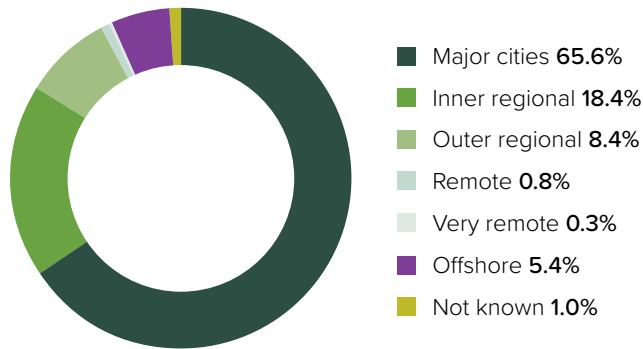
Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

Major cities had the **highest enrolments (65.6%)** and **completions (71%)**.

Students in **Very remote** and **Remote** areas comprise approximately **1%** of **overall enrolments and completions**.

Compared to overall VET program data, major cities have a larger share of participation and remote and very remote areas have fewer in aged care and disability enrolments and completions.

State/territory

% of overall enrolments by state/territory

- ■ Victoria **28.4%**
- ■ New South Wales **26.3%**
- ■ Queensland **18.7%**
- ■ South Australia **8.1%**
- ■ Western Australia **7.9%**
- ■ Tasmania **2.2%**
- ■ Australian Capital Territory **1.0%**
- ■ Northern Territory **0.9%**
- ■ Offshore **5.4%**
- ■ Not known **1%**

Number of completion of qualifications by state/territory

State/territory	Number
Victoria	17,540
New South Wales	19,056
Queensland	12,523
South Australia	6120
Western Australia	5696
Tasmania	1451
Australian Capital Territory	947
Northern Territory	543
Offshore	3597
Not known	779
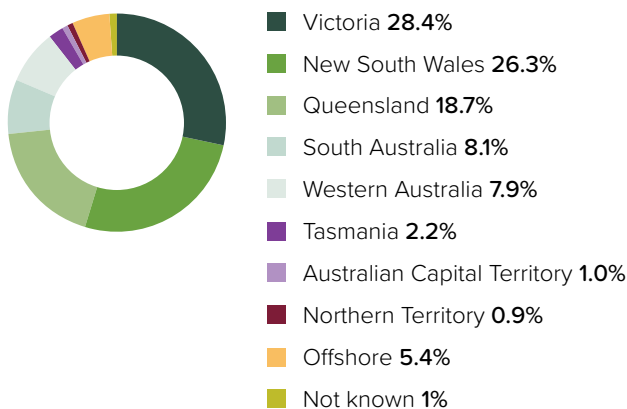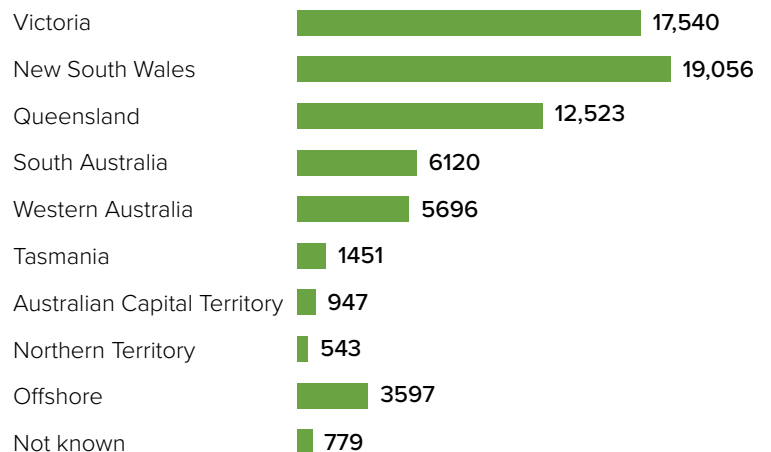
Victoria and **New South Wales** led enrolments and completions in aged care and disability qualifications.

Victoria accounted for **28.4% of enrolments and 25.7% of completions**, while **New South Wales** followed closely with **26.3% of enrolments** but had the highest **completion rate at 27.9%**.

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

Actions

Consultation and review of the implementation of the 2021 Certificate III in Individual Support and Certificate IV in Disability. Including:

- Considering any further updates required.
- Developing learning and assessment resources for RTOs.
- Professional development for RTO teachers and trainers.
- Increasing access to training.

Career pathway analysis for care and support sector. Including:

- Articulate job role and career pathways.
- Identification of new approaches to workforce development and training matched with opportunities for career progression.
- Increased alignment of career progression opportunities across aged, disability and veterans' care.

Children's Education and Care

Industry sector overview

The Children's Education and Care sector provides development, education and care from birth to school age.

The sector primarily consists of Early Childhood Educators and Teachers (including Educational Leaders), Family Day Care Educators, Outside School Hours Care and Education Aides. Services operate in a variety of settings including Long Day Care, Pre-Schools and Kindergartens, Occasional Care and in school settings.[3] [7] [38]

> "We must consider the language we use to describe this profession. As recommended by Early Childhood Australia 'language matters'. Government and agencies must use current terminology – 'children's education and care' to describe the workforce. Please stop referring to the profession as 'childcare'."

> "Children's education is vital – not only an enabler of children, as an enabler of workforce participation particularly in our sector but increasingly lack of access to childcare is a barrier to people accessing healthcare services for themselves. How can we raise the profile of the Childhood Education and Care sector as a super enabler for all of us?"

The sector plays a crucial role in supporting children's cognitive, emotional, and social development during their formative years, laying the groundwork for lifelong learning and wellbeing. By ensuring all children have equal access to quality early education and care, the sector also promotes social equity. Additionally, it supports families by allowing parents to engage in the workforce, thereby contributing to the broader economy and social structure.

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

- Early Childhood Educator (Child Carers)*
- Education Aides
- Early Childhood Teachers

While they represent a smaller portion of the Children's and Early Childhood Education and Care Sector, other essential occupations not included in the data for this sector include: support staff such as administrative staff, cooks, maintenance staff, centre managers and directors. There are also a number of allied health roles that support this sector such as psychologists, social workers, speech, behaviour and occupational therapists.

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* While Child Carer is the term used in the ABS, it is no longer considered acceptable to use this term as it does not describe the encompassing roles and activities of these occupations. We have used Early Childhood Educator throughout this document.

SECTOR DEMOGRAPHICS

Children's Education and Care Workforce Key Industries[7]

728,000
people working in Preschool and School Education

78%
are female

43 years
average age

2%
are First Nations

46%
are part-time

65%
Bachelors Degree or above

Early childhood educators workforce growth projection[2]
19%

Key Occupations

Early Childhood Educator, Education Aides, Early Childhood Teachers

The data above is grouped by ANZIC codes which is aggregated at a high industry level and does not provide a great deal of specificity for the Children's Education and Care sector. The Productivity Commission and other ABS data provide information at a more nuanced level of industry data specifically for this sector. These sources report workforce estimated at 241,000 with 93% women, 24% in casual roles with an average age of 37.[63]

Supply, Demand and Gap insights

The drivers for demand are:

Government policies and funding
aimed at improving access to services[64], increased quality[65] to reduce the number of 'developmentally vulnerable' children[66] [67], and universal access to early childhood education and care

Average hours of attendance per week at centre-based childcare **rose by 3 hours** or **10%** between 2019 and 2023[3]

Inclusive education policies and practices
as children with a disability and additional educational needs are increasingly taking part in universal education, additional support staff are required[68] [20]

Increasing workforce participation of parents
particularly mothers, increasing the need for long day care and outside school hours care[70] [71]

Quality and safety regulations
requiring ratios and minimum qualification levels[72]

Reduction of Grandparents and other informal childcare[69] [70] [71]
commonly due to their own work commitments, health and other responsibilities

"Within Children's Education and Care, current data gaps extend to understanding the profile of employees, turnover rates, and how families utilise services, particularly in the context of post-COVID changes."

"Placement for students is a challenge, particularly for in-home [family day care] educators."

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 p.50.

Strategy	Key sections / recommendations	Challenges
Shaping Our Future – National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy	This strategy aims to foster a sustainable and high-quality workforce of early childhood teachers and educators. Investment in the workforce has significant benefits for children and young people. HumanAbility's immediate projects and qualification reviews in the Early Children's Education and Care sector are part of the role we'll play in addressing to current and future workforce planning, skills shortages and workforce challenges.	🧑 🧩 🎓 ⚠️ 🙏 ✏️
Productivity Commission ECEC Inquiry	The Productivity Commission's inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) examined Australia's diverse ECEC sector, including centre-based daycare, preschools, family daycare, outside school hours care, and in-home care. Their final report examined ECEC sector workforce requirements and the capacity to meet these requirements within current Commonwealth, state and territory initiatives. HumanAbility's development of contemporary, nationally endorsed qualifications and skillsets will form part of our role in contributing to strengthening the sector's workforce capacity.	🧑 🧩 🎓 ⚠️ 🙏 ✏️

🧑	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
The Future of the Early Childhood Education profession	Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), in collaboration with HumanAbility, has recently undertaken a comprehensive Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Capacity Study, *The Future of the Early Childhood Education Profession*, to develop a deep understanding of critical workforce issues in the sector. This collaborative effort aimed to gain deeper insights into current and future workforce demand and supply factors, with a focus on improving attraction, retention, and development of ECEC professionals across Australia. HumanAbility's development of contemporary, nationally endorsed qualifications and skillsets will form part of our role in contributing to strengthening the sector's workforce capacity. This includes a project HumanAbility has commenced reviewing the entry requirements to the Diploma of ECEC qualification.	
Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Pay Boost	The 2024–25 Federal Budget included the provision of a 15% pay rise to many early childhood education and care (ECEC) professionals over two years and is announced in aimed at addressing longstanding workforce issues. This wage boost is expected enhance staff retention and attract new workers to the sector, ultimately benefiting children and families through improved quality and consistency of care.	

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 Children's Education and Care sector plays a crucial role within the VET program, accounting for 6.7% of total completions in 2022. Enrolments have remained strong, though completions continue to trail behind. This discrepancy between enrolments and completions indicates challenges within the sector that impact student retention and progression.

The sector is heavily female dominated, with women representing over 93% of both enrolments and completions. Age distribution data shows a concentration of learners in the 30 to 39 age group, reflecting the participation of individuals re-entering the workforce, while younger learners under 30 also make up a significant share.

Geographically, most learners are from major cities, with New South Wales and Victoria leading in enrolments and completions. Despite strong enrolment numbers, the sector faces ongoing challenges, such as ensuring sufficient completions to meet the growing workforce demand. Exploring and addressing barriers to completion could complement increased enrolments and provide a more robust supply of qualified early childhood education and care professionals.

Enrolments and completions by qualification[9] [10]

Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (CHC30113 and CHC30121)
- Enrolments: 73,860
- Completions: 17,820

Certificate III in School Based Education Support (CHC30213 and CHC30221)
- Enrolments: 19,820
- Completions: 6891

Certificate IV in School Based Education Support (CHC40213 and CHC40221)
- Enrolments: 17,298
- Completions: 6177

Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (CHC50113 and CHC50121)
- Enrolments: 39,237
- Completions: 18,410

Diploma of School Age Education and Care (CHC52013 and CHC50221)
- Enrolments: 1442
- Completions: 486

Legend: Enrolments, Completions

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

Stakeholders consistently told us there are several key factors affecting completion rates:

"The current entry requirement for the Diploma in ECEC is impacting enrolments and reducing the number of highly skilled people entering the workforce or upskilling for Unpaid placement career progression."

"Entry requirements add an additional challenge and impact course completions."

"It can be difficult for training providers to find qualified educators."

"The Certificate III in ECEC is pitched too high and is challenging to complete which disincentivises further study for career progression."
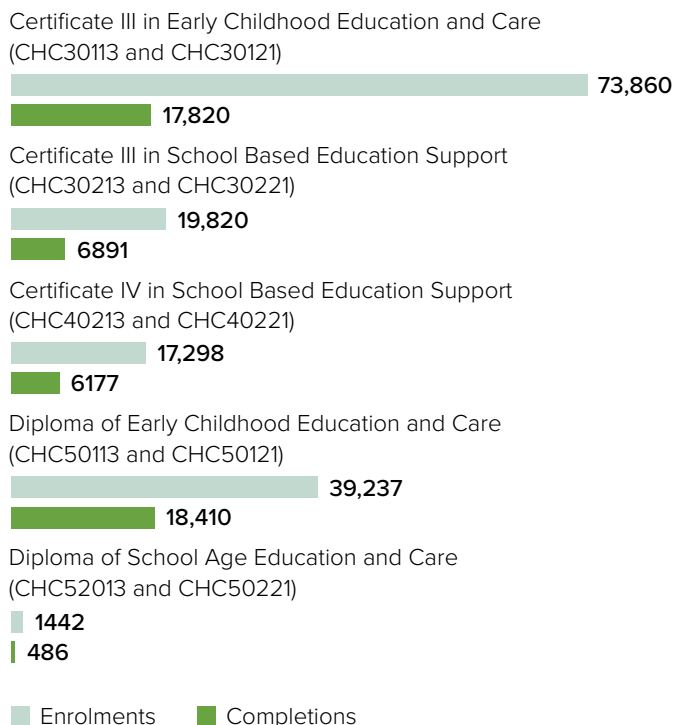
Enrolments for qualifications in the early childhood education and care sector remained relatively stable between 2015 and 2022. However, **completions have continued to lag significantly**. This trend is reflected across all qualifications in this sector, suggesting the need for further investigation into factors influencing student retention and course completion to address the rapid growth in demand within the industry.

Total enrolments and completions for Children's Education and Care sector qualifications[9] [10]
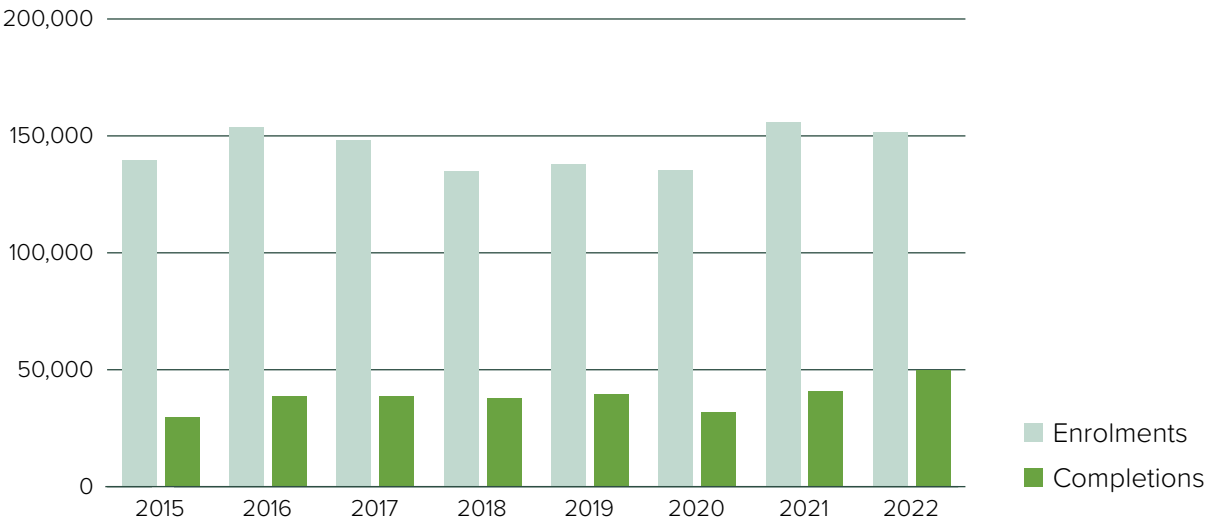
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Enrolments	139,619	153,550	148,217	134,883	137,915	135,424	155,912	151,612
Completions	29,525	38,847	38,524	37,922	39,712	31,896	40,722	49,784

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

Gender[9] [10]

Females accounted for
93.9%
of enrolments and
95.0%
of completions

Males represented
5.5%
of enrolments and
4.5%
of completions

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

Learners whose gender is **not known** comprised
0.5%
of enrolments and completions

Enrolments and completions by gender

Females
142,366
46,632

Males
8368
2189

Enrolments   Completions
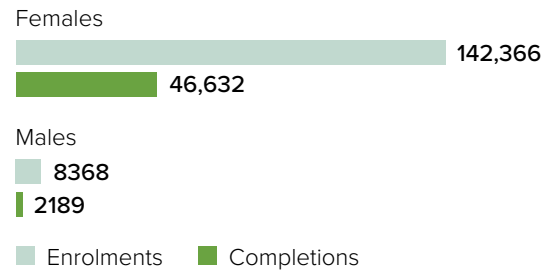
* Other: 115 Enrolments; 37 Completions
  Not known: 100 Enrolments; 34 Completions

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

The sector is heavily female-dominated, with women representing over 93% of enrolments and completions in 2022. The gender disparity in this sector is pronounced, indicating an opportunity to consider how to best support males in lifting both enrolments and to understand the barriers to male completions.

Age[9] [10]

% of overall enrolments by age

- 15 to 19 years **19.0%**
- 20 to 24 years **19.2%**
- 25 to 29 years **13.2%**
- 30 to 39 years **27.3%**
- 40 to 49 years **14.9%**
- 50 to 59 years **5.2%**
- 60 to 64 years **0.8%**
- 65 years and over **0.3%**
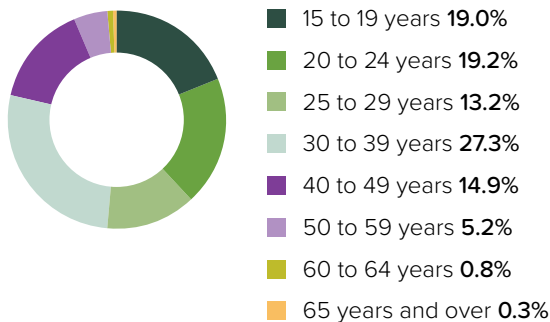
Compared to overall VET program data, the Children's Education and Care sector has a greater concentration of learners in their 30s and 40s. In 2022, individuals aged **30 to 39 years** had the highest share of both enrolments (**27.3%**) and completions (**30.7%**), followed by those in the **40 to 49 age group**. In contrast, the overall VET sector typically has a stronger representation of younger age groups. This highlights the sector's appeal to mid-career individuals, possibly linked to workforce re-entry or career shifts.
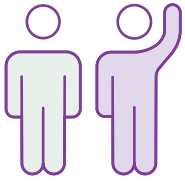
Younger learners aged **15 to 29 years** also contribute significantly to the sector, representing **51.4% of enrolments**. However, completions for this demographic are lower than those of older age groups. Even a modest increase in completions among this younger demographic could significantly contribute to addressing workforce shortages in the sector.

Enrolments and completions by age
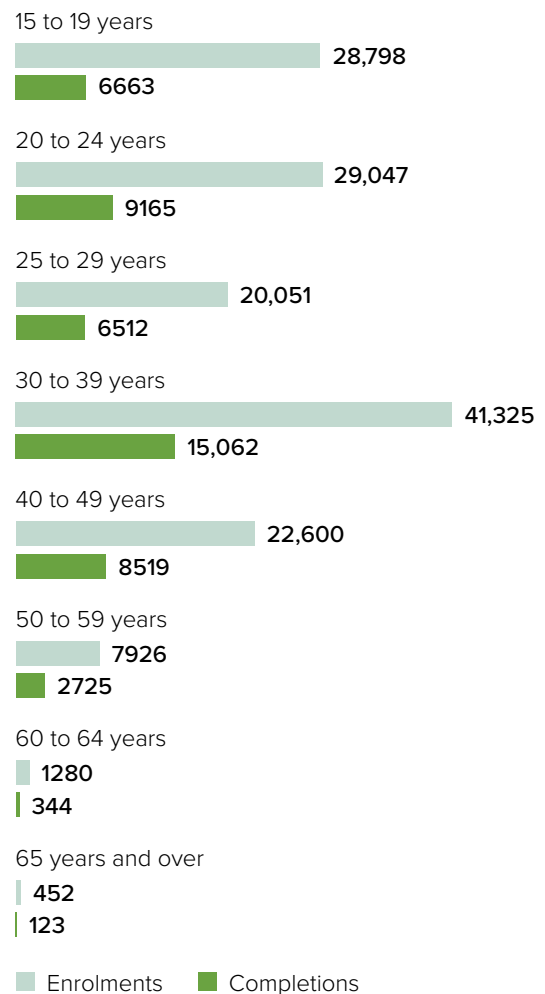
15 to 19 years
28,798
6663

20 to 24 years
29,047
9165

25 to 29 years
20,051
6512

30 to 39 years
41,325
15,062

40 to 49 years
22,600
8519

50 to 59 years
7926
2725

60 to 64 years
1280
344

65 years and over
452
123

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 **5.2%** of enrolments and **3.3%*** of completions

* 1625 students

Non-Indigenous learners made up **88.3%** of enrolments and **87.6%** of completions

Not known learners represented **6.5%** of enrolments and **9.1%** of completions

In 2022, **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** learners represented **5.0%** of enrolments across the overall VET program, while in the children's education and care sector, they represent a slightly higher proportion of learners (**5.2%**).

However, despite higher levels of enrolment, these learners comprise only **3.3%** of completions, revealing a considerable gap between these numbers. This points to possible challenges in retention and progression for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the sector.

Students with disability[9] [10]

Learners with a disability represented **6.9%** of enrolments and **5.5%** of completions in the Children's Education and Care sector*

* 2704 students

Compared to overall VET program data, the participation of learners with disabilities in this sector is similar to or slightly higher. Still, the completion gap remains consistent, highlighting the need for targeted support to improve these learners' outcomes.

Geographic location[9] [10]

Remoteness

% of overall enrolments by remoteness

- Major cities **65.1%**
- Inner regional **18.3%**
- Outer regional **8.3%**
- Remote **1.4%**
- Very remote **0.8%**
- Offshore **4.8%**
- Not known **1.4%**
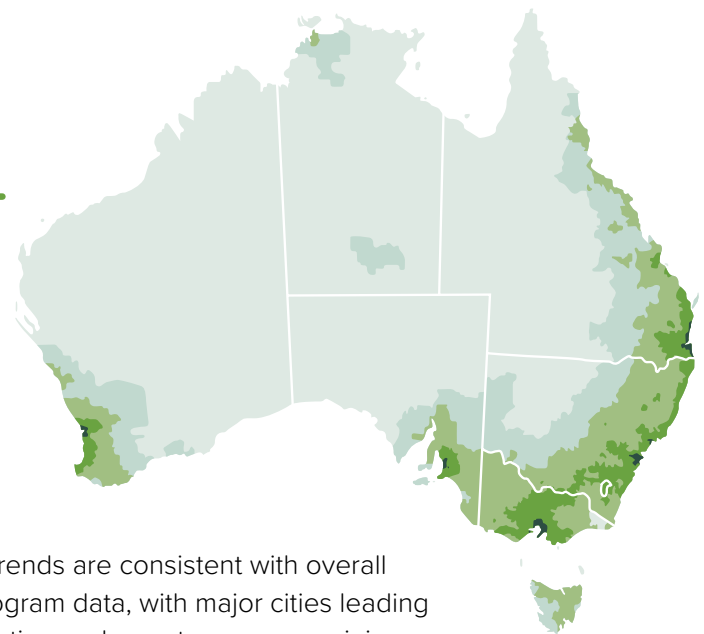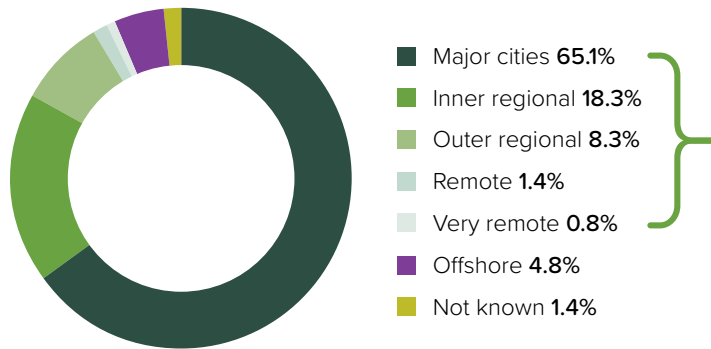
Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

Major Cities represented **65.1%** of enrolments and **65.8%** of completions

These trends are consistent with overall VET program data, with major cities leading participation and remote areas remaining underrepresented. This highlights the ongoing challenge of accessibility and support for learners in remote locations.

State/territory
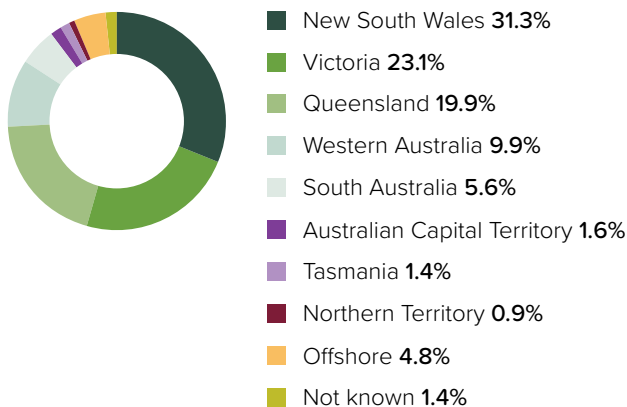
% of overall enrolments by state/territory

- New South Wales **31.3%**
- Victoria **23.1%**
- Queensland **19.9%**
- Western Australia **9.9%**
- South Australia **5.6%**
- Australian Capital Territory **1.6%**
- Tasmania **1.4%**
- Northern Territory **0.9%**
- Offshore **4.8%**
- Not known **1.4%**

Number of completion of qualifications by state/territory

State/territory	Number
New South Wales	12,237
Victoria	13,272
Queensland	10,514
Western Australia	5245
South Australia	2513
Australian Capital Territory	992
Tasmania	616
Northern Territory	346
Offshore	3255
Not known	764
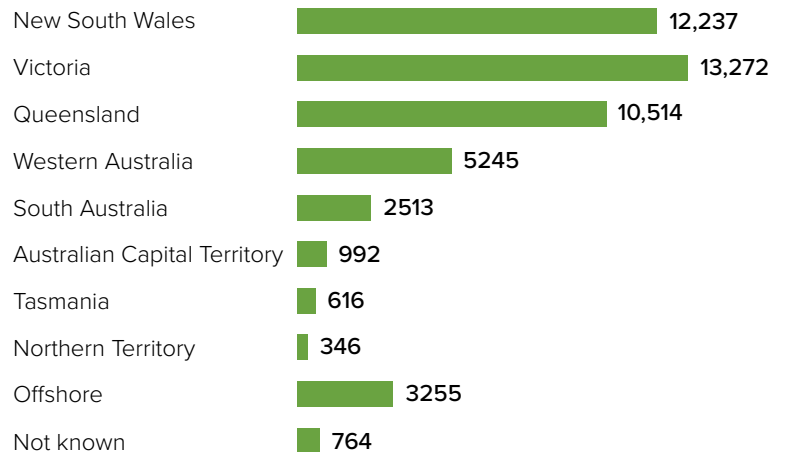
New South Wales had **31.3% of enrolments and 24.6% of completions**, while **Victoria** made up **23.1% of enrolments and 26.7% of completions**.

Queensland followed with **19.9% of enrolments and 21.1% of completions**. Less populous states like Western Australia and South Australia had less participation, contributing under 10% of both enrolments and completions. Compared to overall VET program data, the trends are similar, with larger states dominating participation.

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.

Project to review entry requirements for Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care: Using several mechanisms, this review aims to increase accessibility to the *CHC50121 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care*. By developing tools to support pathways into the Diploma, the project will address workforce needs, available places and service quality.

Creation of a nationally endorsed Outside School Hours Care qualification: In response to the training needs of the outside school hours care sector, work with industry to transition the existing accredited qualification into the CHC Community Services Training Package, resulting in the qualification being available to all Registered Training Organisations to respond to industry's training needs.

Health

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.

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

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

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]
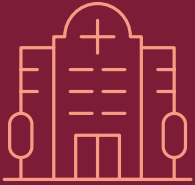
77%
are female[7]

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 p.50.

Strategy	Key sections / recommendations	Challenges
National Nursing Workforce Strategy *(being developed)*	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. 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. HumanAbility is closely monitoring these developments and planning for integration of the strategy's recommendations into future workforce planning and qualifcation design.	(Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues, Lack of diversity and inclusion, Policy and regulatory settings)
National Allied Health Workforce Strategy *(being developed)*	The National Allied Health Workforce Strategy is currently under development and will be considered as part of future workforce planning initiatives. 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. 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 qualifcation design.	(Labour force shortages, Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues, Limited career pathways, Lack of diversity and inclusion, Data deficiencies, Policy and regulatory settings)

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	The Framework and Implementation Plan outlines several strategic directions relevant to HumanAbility's role: • 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.	Labour force shortages, Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues, Limited career pathways, Lack of diversity and inclusion
First Nations Health Worker Traineeships Program	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.	Labour force shortages, Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues, Limited career pathways, Lack of diversity and inclusion
National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021–2031	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. 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.	Training and qualification issues, Limited career pathways

Legend:

- 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
The "Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce" Scope of Practice Review	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. 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. 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.	(Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues, Limited career pathways)
National Agreement for Closing the Gap	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). 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.	(Labour force shortages, Skills gaps, Training and qualification issues, Limited career pathways, Lack of diversity and inclusion, Policy and regulatory settings)

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)
- Enrolments: 1386
- Completions: 1048

Certificate II in Health Support Services
(HLT23215 and HLT23221)
- Enrolments: 7821
- Completions: 4402

Certificate III in Ambulance Communications (Call-taking)
(HLT31015 and HLT31020)
- Enrolments: 361
- Completions: 190

Certificate III in Non-Emergency Patient Transport
(HLT31115 and HLT31120)
- Enrolments: 913
- Completions: 457

Certificate III in Basic Health Care
(HLT31215 and HLT31220)
- Enrolments: 195
- Completions: 135

Certificate III in Dental Assisting
(HLT35015 and HLT35021)
- Enrolments: 7001
- Completions: 2301

Certificate III in Dental Laboratory Assisting
(HLT35115)
- Enrolments: 44
- Completions: 27

Certificate III in Population Health
(HLT36015)
- Enrolments: 320
- Completions: 93

Certificate III in Sterilisation Services
(HLT37015)
- Enrolments: 2028
- Completions: 776

Certificate III in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support
(HLT37115)
- Enrolments: 135
- Completions: 35

Certificate III in Pathology Collection
(HLT37215)
- Enrolments: 8060
- Completions: 3433

Certificate III in Health Administration
(HLT37315)
- Enrolments: 3398
- Completions: 789

Certificate III in Pathology Assistance
(HLT37415)
- Enrolments: 169
- Completions: 97

Certificate IV in Ambulance Communications (Dispatch)
(HLT41015)
- Enrolments: 86
- Completions: 87

Certificate IV in Ambulance Communications (Dispatch)
(HLT410)
- Enrolments: 59
- Completions: 10

Certificate IV in Health Care
(HTL4115 and HLT41120)
- Enrolments: 1029
- Completions: 429

Certificate IV in Massage Therapy
(HLT42015)
- Enrolments: 1252
- Completions: 528

Certificate IV in Dental Assisting
(HLT45015 and HLT45021)
- Enrolments: 1511
- Completions: 544

Legend: 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 101.

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 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.

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

25,763

7289

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 101.

Total enrolments and completions for health qualifications[9] [10]
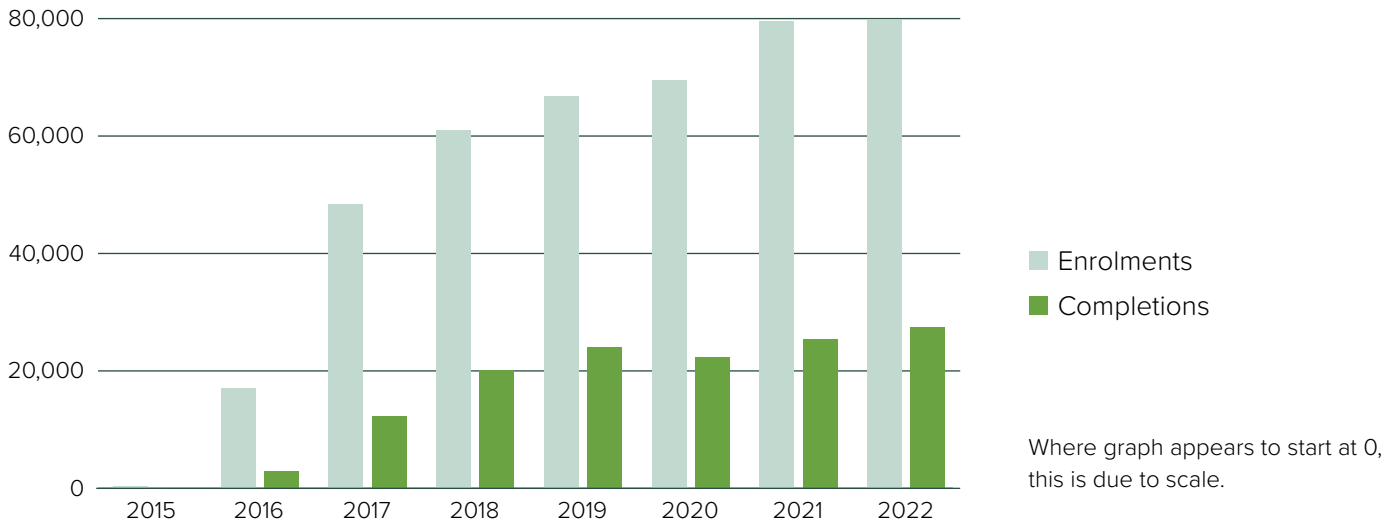
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Enrolments	340	17131	48,445	61,087	66,843	69,525	79,545	79,703
Completions	44	2932	12,330	20,121	24,114	22,280	25,349	27,379

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 101.

Indigenous health qualifications[9] [10]

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

131
28

Certificate II in Indigenous Environmental Health (HLT26120)

10
0

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

298
46

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

90
32

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

663
129

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

77
19

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

25
8

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

Females
64,703
22,133

Males
14,155
4766

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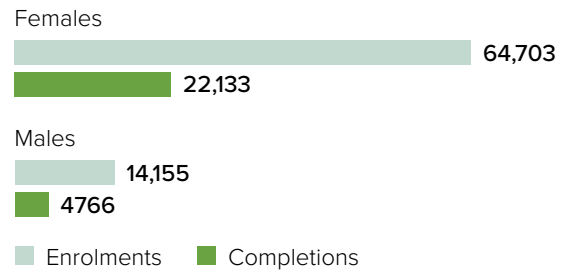
* Other: 85 Enrolments; 37 Completions
Not known: 457 Enrolments; 241 Completions

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

■ 15 to 19 years **19.7%**
■ 20 to 24 years **21.3%**
■ 25 to 29 years **14.4%**
■ 30 to 39 years **22.7%**
■ 40 to 49 years **13.5%**
■ 50 to 59 years **6.9%**
■ 60 to 64 years **1.0%**
■ 65 years and over **0.4%**
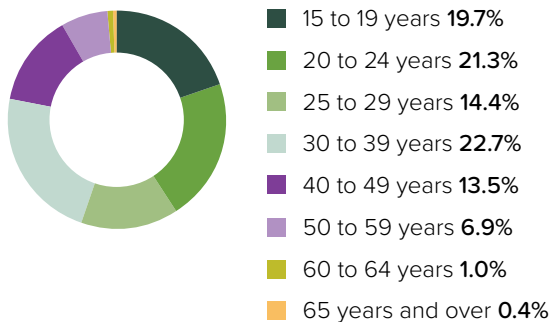
In the health sector, the **30 to 39 years** age group had
the highest share of enrolments (**22.7%**) and completions
(**21.7%**) in 2022, followed closely by those aged **20 to 24
years**, who made up **21.3%** of enrolments and **20.5%** of
completions. Learners aged **15 to 19** and **25 to 29** 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
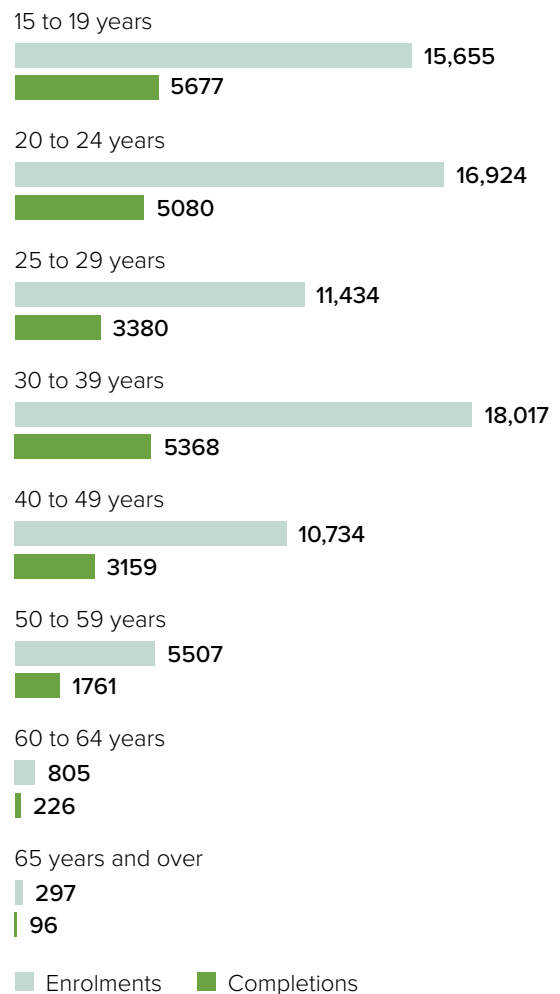
15 to 19 years
15,655
5677

20 to 24 years
16,924
5080

25 to 29 years
11,434
3380

30 to 39 years
18,017
5368

40 to 49 years
10,734
3159

50 to 59 years
5507
1761

60 to 64 years
805
226

65 years and over
297
96

■ Enrolments   ■ Completions

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.
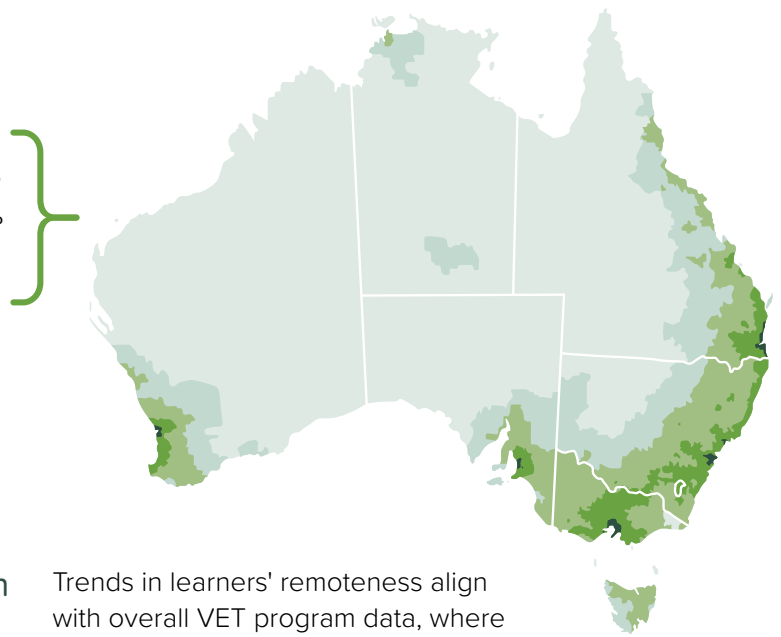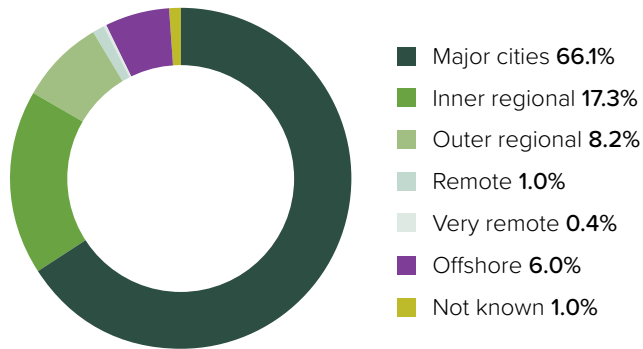
* Not including Indigenous specific qualifications. These are reported on page 101.

Geographic location[9] [10]

Remoteness

Remoteness Index of Australia

% of overall enrolments by remoteness

- Major cities **66.1%**
- Inner regional **17.3%**
- Outer regional **8.2%**
- Remote **1.0%**
- Very remote **0.4%**
- Offshore **6.0%**
- Not known **1.0%**

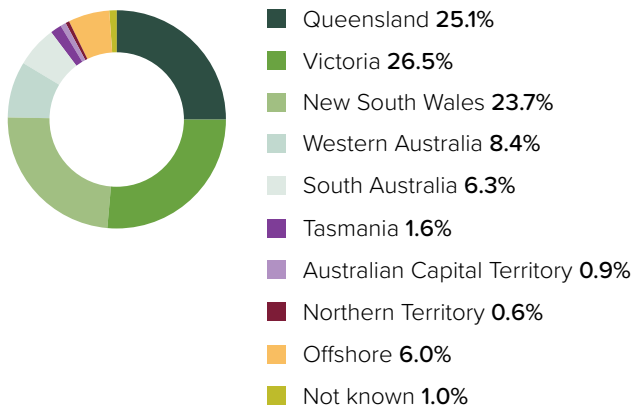Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

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

- Queensland **25.1%**
- Victoria **26.5%**
- New South Wales **23.7%**
- Western Australia **8.4%**
- South Australia **6.3%**
- Tasmania **1.6%**
- Australian Capital Territory **0.9%**
- Northern Territory **0.6%**
- Offshore **6.0%**
- Not known **1.0%**

Number of completion of qualifications by state/territory

State/territory	Number
Queensland	8524
Victoria	6359
New South Wales	5676
Western Australia	2394
South Australia	1554
Tasmania	350
Australian Capital Territory	230
Northern Territory	107
Offshore	1690
Not known	285
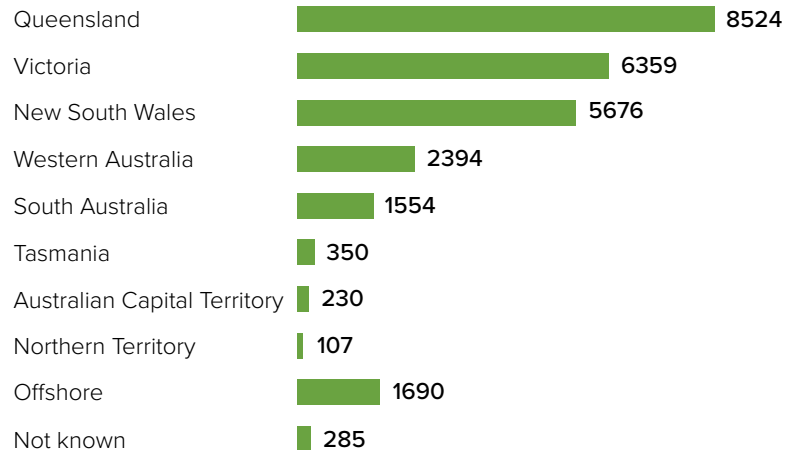
Victoria led in enrolments with **26.5%**, followed by **Queensland** with **25.1%** and **New South Wales** with **23.7%**. Together, these three states accounted for most enrolments and completions, with **Queensland** having the highest proportion of completions, at **31.4%**. **Western Australia**, **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.

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

Human (community) Services

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[80] [81]

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 p.50.

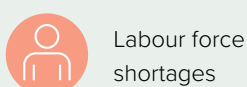| Initiative	Of relevance or instruction to HumanAbility	Challenges
Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence	A workforce that is skilled and sustainable will underpin the successful achievement of improved prevention and response to family, domestic, and sexual violence. HumanAbility will collaborate 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.	(icons: 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.	(icons: 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

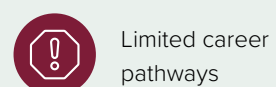| Initiative	Of relevance or instruction to HumanAbility	Challenges
National Housing and Homelessness Plan (in development)	When finalised, HumanAbility will work with government to progress recommendations relating to workforce development and training and consider these in future workplans. This includes 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.	🧍 🧩 🎓 ❗ 🙌

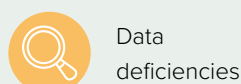|							
🧍	Labour force shortages	🧩	Skills gaps	🎓	Training and qualification issues	❗	Limited career pathways
🙌	Lack of diversity and inclusion	🔍	Data deficiencies	✏️	Policy and regulatory settings		

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)
- 4842
- 803
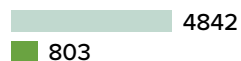
Certificate IV in Youth Justice (CHC40513)
- 360
- 99

Diploma of Child, Youth and Family Intervention (CHC50313)
- 1245
- 286
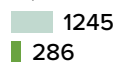
Graduate Certificate in Statutory Child Protection (CHC81215)
- 14
- 0

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

Youth Work

Certificate IV in Youth Work (CHC40413)
- 6257
- 1389

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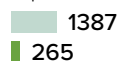
Career/Employment Services

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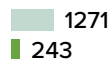
Certificate IV in Celebrancy (CHC41015)
- 2762
- 858
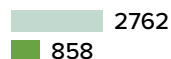
Alcohol and Other Drugs

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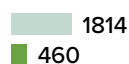
Diploma of Alcohol and Other Drugs (CHC53215)
- 602
- 113

Mental Health

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

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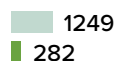
Diploma of Mental Health (CHC53315)
- 4535
- 814

Other

Certificate IV in Social Housing (CHC42215)
- 152
- 86

Certificate IV in Housing (CHC42221)
- 250
- 29

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

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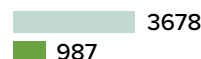
Diploma of Counselling (CHC51015)
- 8710
- 1809

Diploma of Financial Counselling (CHC51115)
- 640
- 205

Diploma of Leisure and Health (CHC53415)
- 234
- 40

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

Graduate Diploma of Relationship Counselling (CHC81015)
- 33
- 3

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

Graduate Certificate in Career Development Practice (CHC81315)
- 252
- 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]
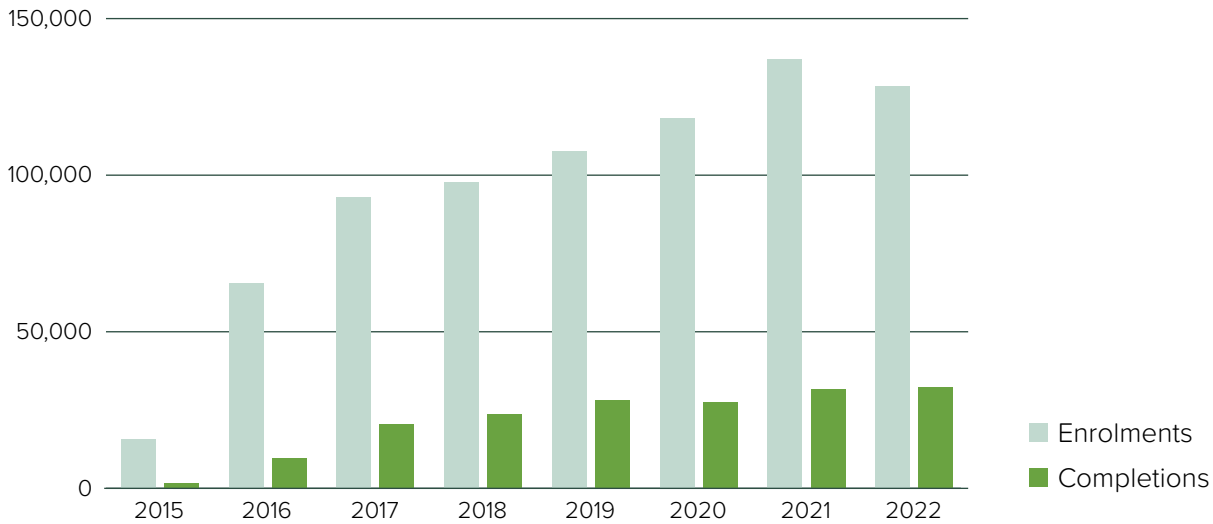
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Enrolments	15,561	65,586	92,866	97,835	107,597	118,157	137,168	128,516
Completions	1817	9534	20,525	23,582	28,299	27,480	31,691	32,353

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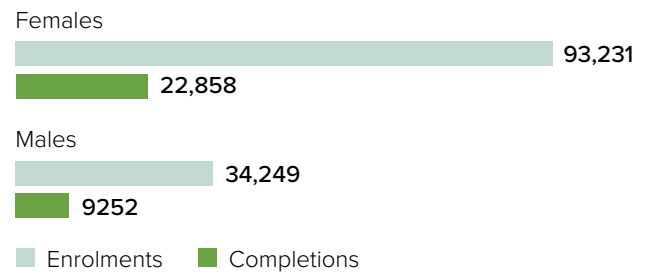
* Other: 221 Enrolments; 71 Completions
  Not known: 817 Enrolments; 215 Completions

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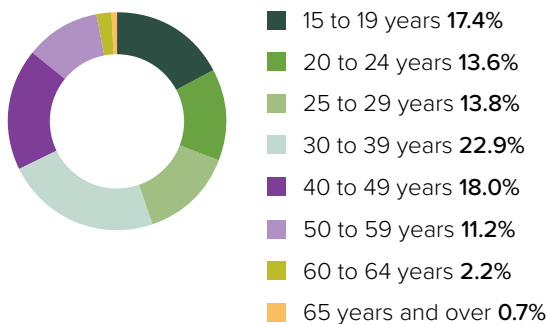
In the Community Services sector, learners aged **30 to 39 years** had the largest enrolment share at **22.9%**, followed by those aged **40 to 49 years** at **18.0%**.

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.
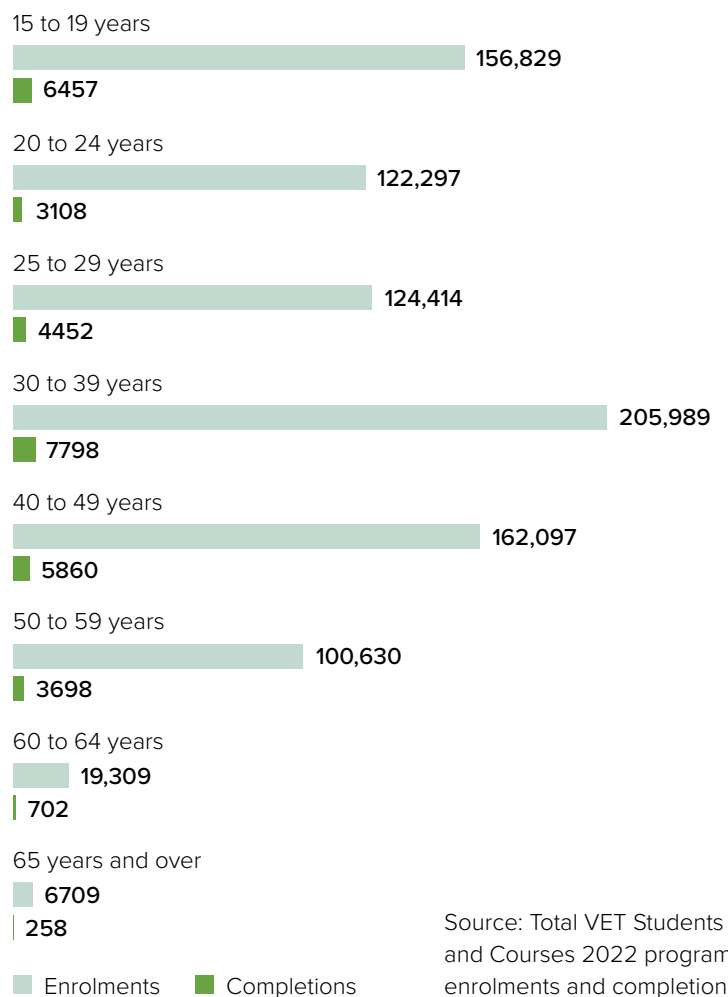
Enrolments and completions by age

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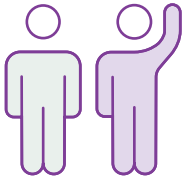
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners accounted for **8.7%** of enrolments and **5.6%** of completions

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
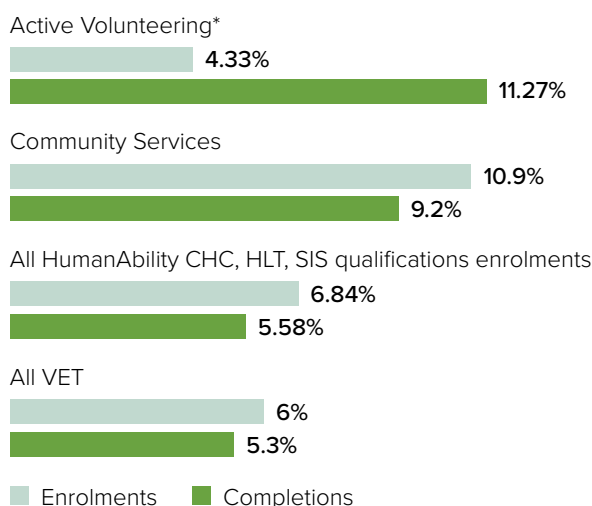
* CHC14015, CHC24015, CHC34015

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

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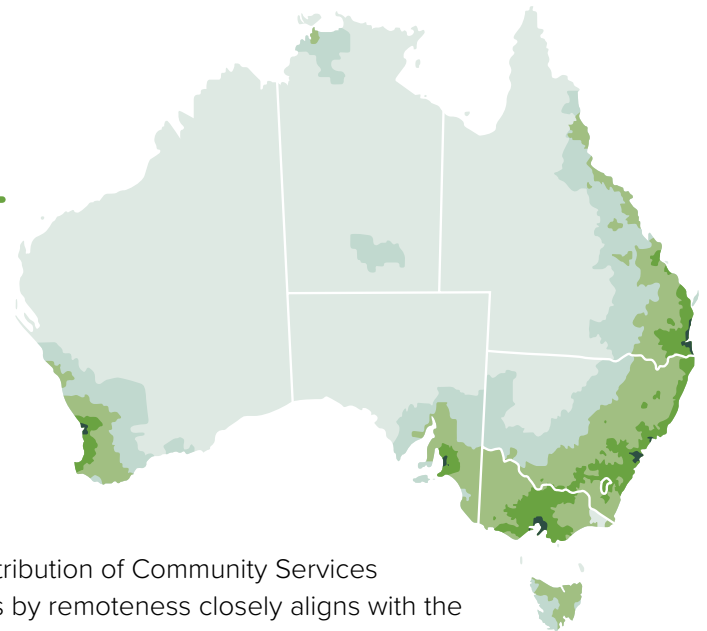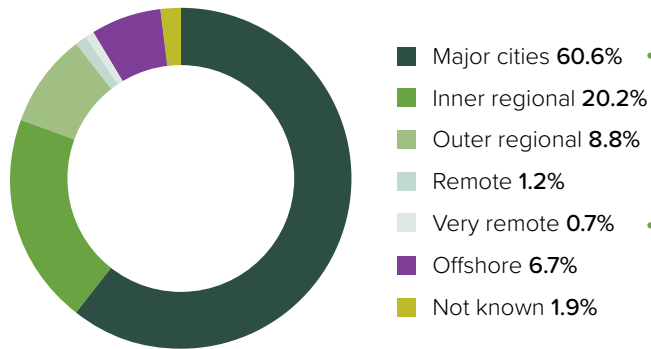
Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

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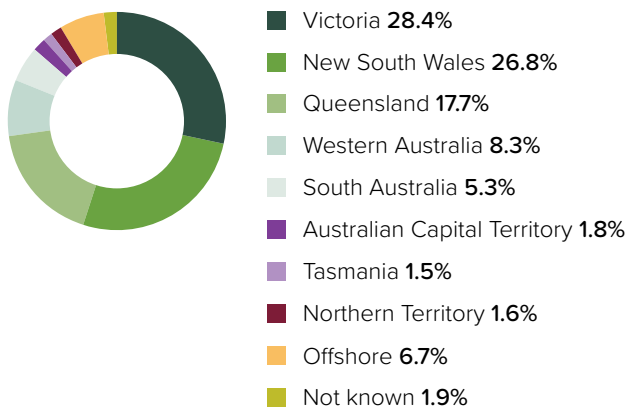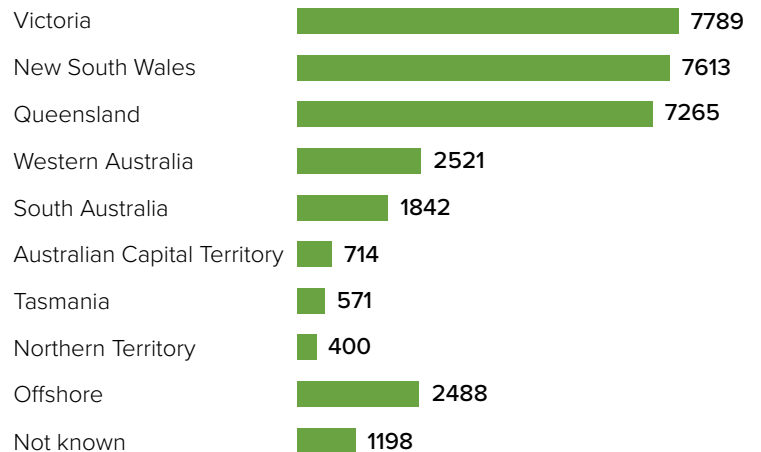
Victoria made up **28.4%** of enrolments and **24.0%** of completions. **New South Wales** had a similar learner profile, accounting for **26.8%** of enrolments and **23.5%** of completions.

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.

"Limited space available in the mental health, lived experience courses can lead to limited qualified staff ready to join the workforce."

Sport and Recreation

Industry sector overview

The sport and recreation sectors contribute significantly to the economic, health, and social fabric of society.

The industry is diverse, intersecting with and enhancing other industry sectors such as tourism, education, and community services. It plays a crucial role in achieving public health and social policy goals. The positive and preventative impact of sport and recreation on the health of Australia's population is well recognised[94] [95].

"The terminology used to categorise 'sport and recreation' does not accurately and inclusively describe the entire active industry."

Training for the workforce can be undertaken through both higher education and VET and through training provided and by professional associations. VET workforce occupations include: personal trainers, gym instructors, coaches, sports managers, and outdoor leaders. While there are opportunities for career progression and permanent full-time work, a high percentage of roles are seasonal, part-time or casual (such as swimming instructors and lifeguards), and voluntary (such as scouts or local community sports coaches).

The sector plays an important role in promoting active lifestyles, skill development, and social cohesion. It generates measurable health and social benefits, such as reducing the burden of disease, improving mental health, decreasing absenteeism, and enhancing skill development. It also plays a key role in supporting other human services to achieve better outcome for individuals. For example, through partnerships with mental health services, aged care, disability services, and veterans care, the sector provides exercise, recreation and adventure-based services.

"Active industries within Sport and recreation, should be recognised as providing broad preventative health benefits, that could provide cross-sectoral support to other sectors such as Aged Care, Health, Disability, and Early Childhood Education. Benefits could be provided to both the workforce within these sectors, their clientele, and communities they serve."

The industry's focus on lifelong learning and personal growth for the Australian population is evident in programs that teach essential life skills, such as leadership training and swimming skills[94] [95]. Overall, the sport and recreation sectors contribute to building healthier, more connected, and resilient communities[95] [96] [97].

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

- 4523 Sports Coaches, Instructors and officials
- 4521 Fitness Instructors
- 4524 Sportspersons

While they represent a smaller portion of the sport and recreation sector, there are emerging job roles that interconnect between the early childhood education sector, mental health and social services, such as nature play educators, bush kindergarten, bush adventure therapists.

There are also roles in managing, planning, training and delivering the full range of sport and recreation services, that provide career paths. However, these are not captured well in the national data sets.

"Actively promoting the sector in schools will give students an understanding of career pathways and improve attraction."

SECTOR DEMOGRAPHICS

Sports and Recreation Workforce Key Industries[7]

153,000
people working in Sports and Recreation

34 years
average age

50%
are female

2%
are First Nations

62%
are part-time

23%
Bachelors Degree or above

Sports and Personal Service Workers 10 year projected workforce growth by 2033[2]

12.9%

"[I'd like] to see some positive movement towards recognising the Outdoor Education sector as a hybrid between recreation and Education as it helps recognise the educator skills needed."

So "many opportunities for cross over and career pathways into other industries such as business, allied health, disability and aged care".

Key Occupation Estimates[98]

45,000
Fitness Instructors

62,000
Sports coaches, instructors, and officials

3,000
Outdoor Adventure Guides

12,000
Sportspersons

Supply, Demand and Gap insights

Drivers of demand

Increased health consciousness has led to more participation in sports and recreation[97]

A million more Australians are participating in weekly sports today than in 2017[97]

Participation in swimming was at a 20-year high in 2020, with 1.4 million considering starting to swim[94]
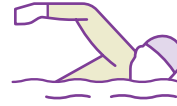
Stakeholder experience indicates this is **a growing industry with significant employment demands**

Supply

7,850 gyms and fitness centres employ **30,781** people[99]
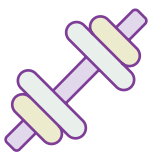
1,473 private sport and recreation facilities, employ **17,519** people[99]

2,326 sport and recreation clubs, employ **22,217** people[99]

2,113 aquatic facilities nationally, employ **65,000** people[100]
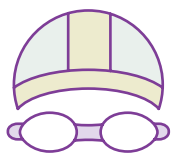
Outdoor recreation supports a broad range of full-time roles across a range of occupations, with **up to 30,000 full time roles**, part of which are outdoor educators and guides[101] [102] [103]

Significant volunteer involvement in Sports and Physical Recreation Activities[104]

High demand for occupations like fitness instructors, outdoor adventure guides, sports coaches, instructors and officials, with **6 out of 31 occupations on the Skills Priority List**[44]

Workforce shortages are most pronounced **in rural and remote areas**, with high turnover rates.

In the Northern Territory, **11 out of the 31 sport and recreation occupations are on the Skills Priority List**, the highest of any state or territory[44]

While there has been decline in some parts of Australia, there have also been **large regional employment increases** in some locations:

Sports coaches, Instructors and officials have seen up to an **85% increase over last 5 years** in some areas (New England and Northwest)[101]

Fitness instructors have increased by **8% nationally over the last 5 years** [44] [101]

"There is a need to create year-round work and less seasonal work to provide stable local employment and job security."

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 p.50.

Strategy	Key sections / recommendations	Challenges
National Sport Plan – Shaping the future direction of sport in Australia	The Plan outlines four key priority areas, with a focus on ensuring an adequate supply of suitably qualified workers to meet the sector's growing demands. HumanAbility collaborates with industry stakeholders to identify current and future workforce needs, allowing us to develop adaptive qualifications and skill sets that address emerging skills gaps, ultimately enhancing the capability of the workforce. HumanAbility has a focus on mapping clearer career pathways and promoting opportunities within and across the sector while addressing barriers to participation and volunteering.	👤 🧩 🎓 ⚠️
National Sport Participation Strategy	The strategy outlines six key themes critical to engaging more Australians in sport, including 'Elevate - Creating a capable and engaged workforce'. HumanAbility's collaborates with industry stakeholders to identify current and future workforce needs, allowing us to develop adaptive qualifications and skill sets that address emerging skills gaps. By creating clear career pathways and promoting opportunities within the sector, we aim to enhance the capability of the sport and recreation workforce.	👤 🧩 🎓 ⚠️
National Sport Strategy	Currently under development, this strategy aims to set a shared vision and priorities for sport in Australia, replacing the existing Sport 2030 plan and aligning with state and territory strategies. It includes a priority to 'strengthen Australia's sport industry'. HumanAbility will work with the sector and government to ensure training package development and workforce work are aligned with the strategy on its release.	👤 🧩 🎓

Icon	Meaning	Icon	Meaning	Icon	Meaning	Icon	Meaning
👤	Labour force shortages	🧩	Skills gaps	🎓	Training and qualification issues	⚠️	Limited career pathways
🤲	Lack of diversity and inclusion	🔍	Data deficiencies	✏️	Policy and regulatory settings		

Given that the industry attracts adventurers, who want short term work who travel interstate and match their work with holiday making there is a need for portability and nationalising child safe certificates and the types of drivers licences needed to transport groups of people.

Enrolments and completions

Enrolments in the Sport and Recreation sector remain concentrated in a few key qualifications and completions, and while these are steady in some areas they still lag behind the growth in enrolments across the sector.

Some qualifications, like the Diploma of Sport and Certificate IV in Outdoor Leadership, continue to perform well in terms of completion. In contrast, completion outcomes remain challenging in others, such as fitness and entry-level sport and recreation.

The data highlights the need to improve completion outcomes, particularly in qualifications with strong initial interest but lower course completion rates.

Enrolments and completions by qualification[9] [10]

Certificate I in Sport and Recreation (SIS10115)
396
72

Certificate II in Sport and Recreation (SIS20115)
14,620
5100

Certificate II in Sport – Developing Athlete (SIS20219 and SIS20221)
0
0

Certificate II in Sport Coaching (SIS20319 and SIS20321)
4980
2154

Certificate II in Outdoor Recreation (SIS20419)
5209
1609

Certificate III in Sport and Recreation (SIS30115)
19,729
4485

Certificate III in Sport – Athlete (SIS30419 and SIS30421)
35
27

Certificate III in Sport Coaching (SIS30519 and SIS30521)
3761
1283

Certificate III in Outdoor Leadership (SIS30619)
1187
371

Certificate III in Fitness (SIS30315 and SIS30321)
36,238
11,576

Certificate III in Aquatics and Community Recreation (SIS31015)
1146
564

Certificate IV in Sport and Recreation (SIS40115)
159
58

Certificate IV in Fitness (SIS40215 and SIS40221)
16303
5563

Certificate IV in Sport Coaching (SIS40319 and SIS40321)
113
24

Certificate IV in Sport Development (SIS40419 and SIS40421)
810
80

Certificate IV in Outdoor Leadership (SIS40619 and SIS40621)
635
322

Diploma of Sport and Recreation Management (SIS50115)
364
124

Diploma of Sport (SIS50319 and SIS50321)
945
573

Diploma of Outdoor Leadership (SIS50419 and SIS50421)
117
61

▢ Enrolments ▢ Completions

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

Total enrolments and completions for sport and recreation qualifications[9] [10]
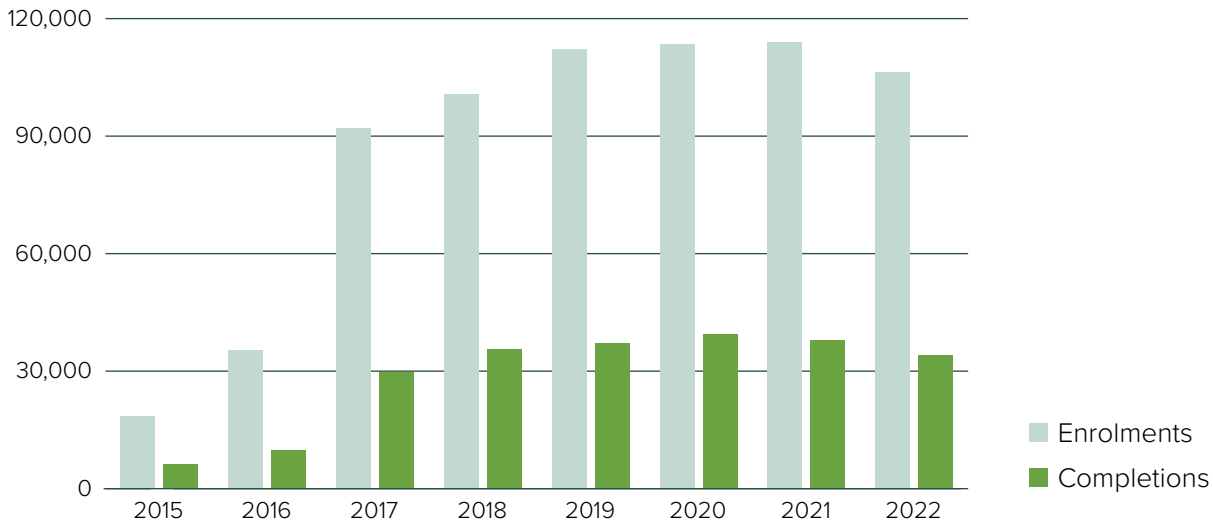
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Enrolments	18,573	35,383	92,073	100,785	112,108	113,369	114,041	106,391
Completions	6136	9890	29,740	35,506	37,125	39,346	37,969	34,062

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

Data shows that while enrolments consistently showed a gradual increase between 2017 and 2021, there has been a decline more recently. Completions have remained relatively consistent during this time yet have also seen a slight decline between 2021–2022.

"Vocational student placements, and workplace experience [are needed] to consolidate skills and build connections."

"[There is a] lack of qualified applicants for outdoor adventure instructors"

Gender^{(9) (10)}

Females accounted for
41.2%
of enrolments and
42.1% of completions

Males represented
56.4%
of enrolments and
54.2% of completions

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

Learners whose gender is **not known** comprised
2.2%
of enrolments and
3.6% of completions

Enrolments and completions by gender

Females
Enrolments: 43,796
Completions: 14,690

Males
Enrolments: 59,997
Completions: 18,922

■ Enrolments ■ Completions
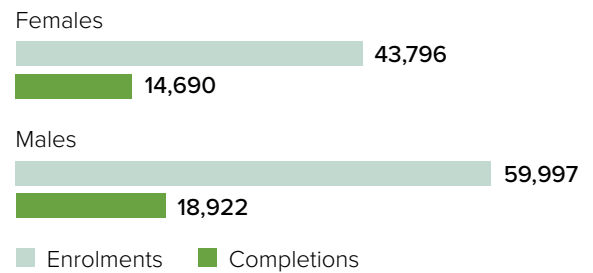
* Other: 127 Enrolments; 48 Completions
Not known: 2391 Enrolments; 1266 Completions

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

In the Sport and Recreation sector, **males** make up the majority of both enrolments (**56.4%**) and completions (**54.2%**), while **females** represent a smaller share, with **41.2%** of enrolments and **42.1%** of completions. A small proportion of learners whose gender is **not known** accounted for **2.2%** of enrolments and **3.6%** of completions, and those identifying as '**Other**' make up a very small fraction of both enrolments and completions. Compared to overall VET program data, this sector shows a slightly higher **male** participation, as the broader VET sector tends to have a more balanced gender distribution across many fields.

Age^{(9) (10)}

% of overall enrolments by age

■ 15 to 19 years **65.0%**
■ 20 to 24 years **11.5%**
■ 25 to 29 years **7.7%**
■ 30 to 39 years **9.5%**
■ 40 to 49 years **4.1%**
■ 50 to 59 years **1.7%**
■ 60 to 64 years **0.3%**
■ 65 years and over **0.1%**
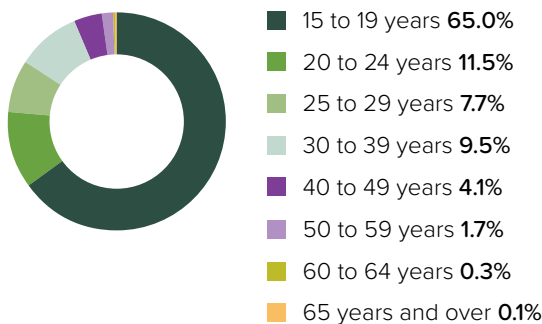
The Sport and Recreation sector is dominated by younger learners, with the majority of enrolments (**65.0%**) and completions (**63.1%**) by learners aged **15–19 years**, reflecting a high level of participation through VET in school programs.

Participation declines significantly for learners aged 25 and over.

Enrolments and completions by age
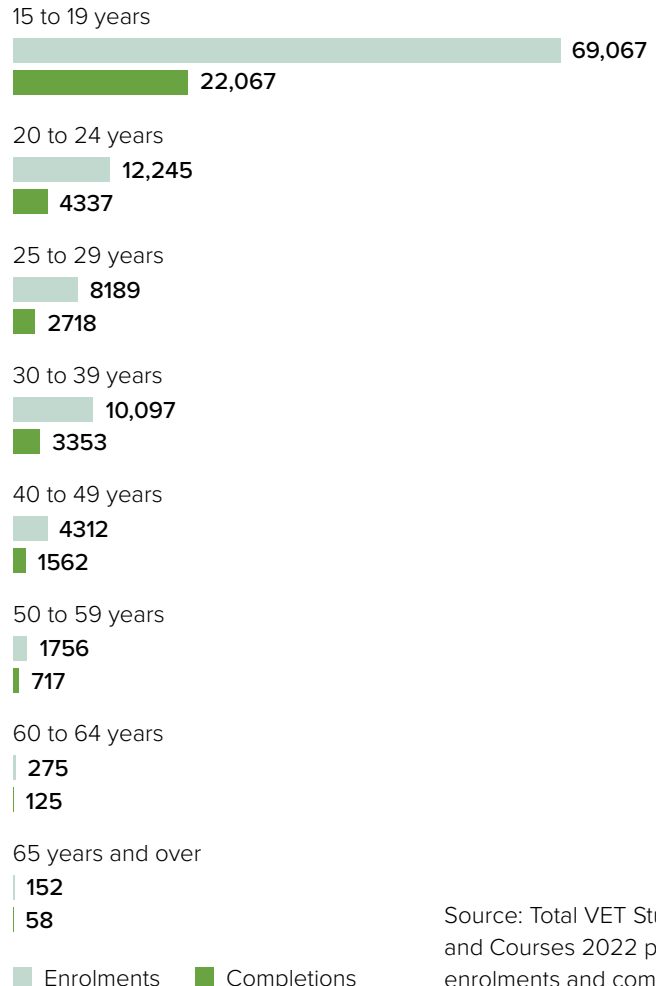
15 to 19 years
Enrolments: 69,067
Completions: 22,067

20 to 24 years
Enrolments: 12,245
Completions: 4337

25 to 29 years
Enrolments: 8189
Completions: 2718

30 to 39 years
Enrolments: 10,097
Completions: 3353

40 to 49 years
Enrolments: 4312
Completions: 1562

50 to 59 years
Enrolments: 1756
Completions: 717

60 to 64 years
Enrolments: 275
Completions: 125

65 years and over
Enrolments: 152
Completions: 58

■ Enrolments ■ Completions

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

First Nations students[9] [10]
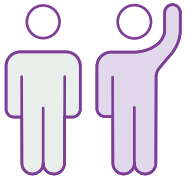
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners accounted for **4.0%** of enrolments and **3.2%** of completions

Non-Indigenous learners made up **85.0%** of enrolments and **81.1%** of completions

Not known learners comprised **11.0%** of enrolments and **15.7%** of completions

Students with disability[9] [10]

Learners with a disability represented **4.0%** of enrolments and **3.5%** of completions in the sports, recreation, and outdoor leadership sector

This is slightly lower than the overall VET program, where **learners with a disability** account for **6.0%** of enrolments and **5.3%** of completions.

Geographic location[9] [10]

Remoteness

% of overall enrolments by remoteness

- Major cities **61.5%**
- Inner regional **18.7%**
- Outer regional **8.7%**
- Remote **1.0%**
- Very remote **0.5%**
- Offshore **1.8%**
- Not known **7.8%**
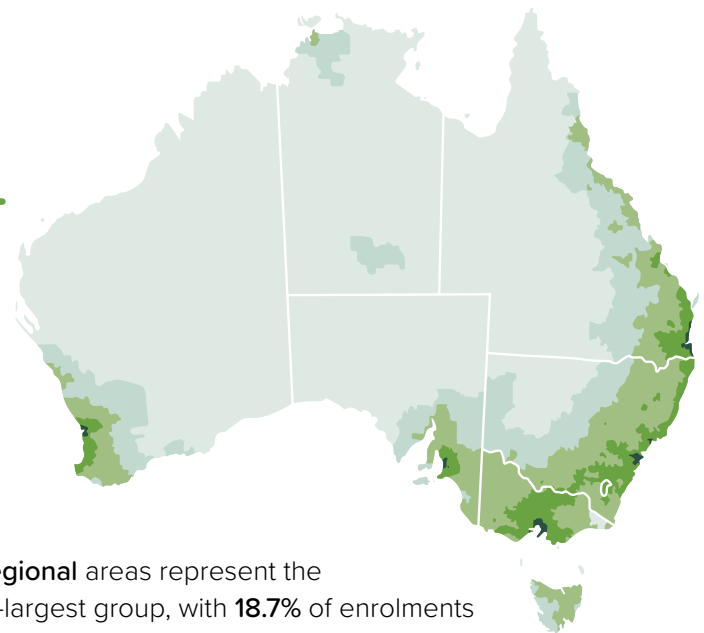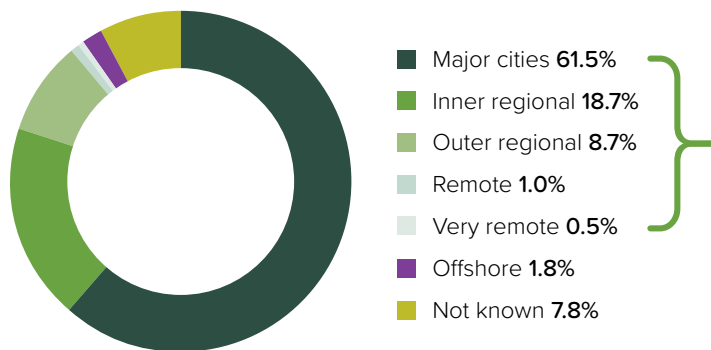
Source: Total VET Students and Courses 2022 program enrolments and completions.

Major Cities made up **61.5%** of enrolments and **58.9%** of completions

Inner regional areas represent the second-largest group, with **18.7%** of enrolments and **16.7%** of completions, followed by **outer regional** areas with **8.7%** of enrolments and **12.5%** of completions. The lowest completion rates were in **very remote** locations (**0.4%**).

State/territory

% of overall enrolments by state/territory

- Queensland **31.6%**
- Victoria **26.5%**
- New South Wales **16.0%**
- Western Australia **10.2%**
- South Australia **3.2%**
- Australian Capital Territory **1.2%**
- Tasmania **1.0%**
- Northern Territory **0.7%**
- Offshore **1.8%**
- Not known **7.8%**

Number of completion of qualifications by state/territory

State/territory	Number
Queensland	13,043
Victoria	6916
New South Wales	5548
Western Australia	2346
South Australia	1160
Australian Capital Territory	356
Tasmania	408
Northern Territory	223
Offshore	589
Not known	4370
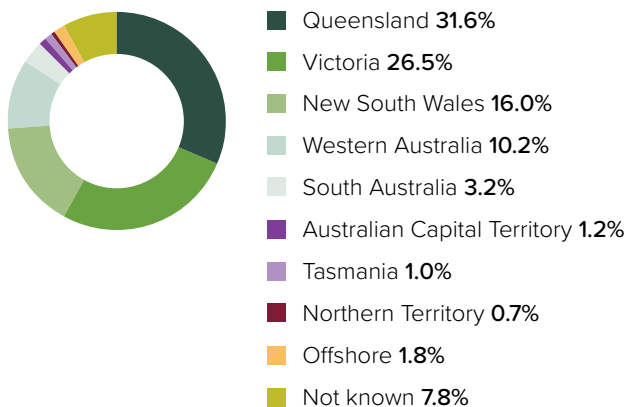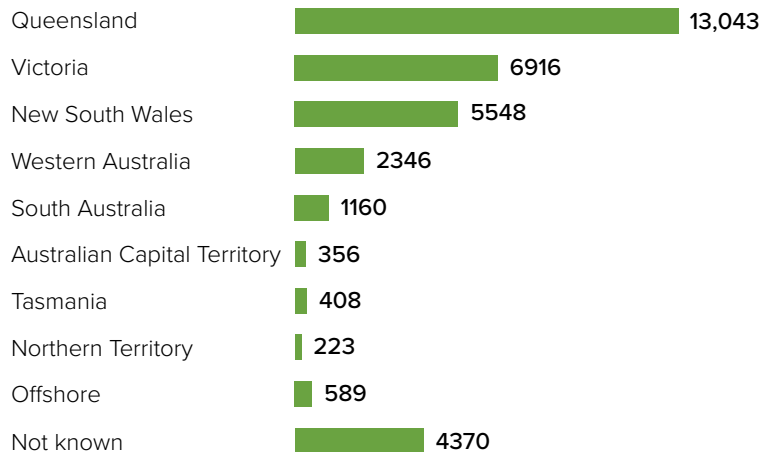
Queensland accounted for **31.6%** of enrolments and **37.3%** of completions.

Victoria follows, accounting for **26.5%** of enrolments and **19.8%** of completions, while **New South Wales** represents **16.0%** of enrolments and **15.9%** of completions.

Understanding the factors that may influence Queensland's success in completion in the sector has the potential to inform other jurisdictions and potential sectors.

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 SIS Outdoor Recreation and Leadership qualifications: the review will ensure the four qualifications, seven skill sets, and 195 units of competency meet the current industry demands, and are adaptable enough to support future growth, assist with career development by outlining pathways and address forthcoming challenges.

Modelling greater labour supply and workforce projections in the care and support sectors

Workforce projections

Wage increases and subsequent training choice changes

The care and support industries face significant challenges, including persistent labour shortages, low wages, and poor working conditions. The current situation is unsustainable, with fewer people willing to work in these sectors at the prevailing wage rates than providers can employ. Furthermore, insufficient new workers are entering these fields. Existing workers may be underutilised due to their inability to work more hours or because the benefits of working additional hours do not outweigh the costs, such as caring for their own children.

Economic theory suggests that these outcomes occur when care and support services are undervalued, and wages are lower than they would be in a well-functioning market. Several factors contribute to this situation, including government intervention in regulating quality, prices, and labour market standards, as well as financing providers and subsidising households. However, these interventions may not be sufficient to provide wages that reflect the full social value of the work being undertaken.

As a result, normal market mechanisms cannot be relied upon to address imbalances between supply and demand in the market. The shortages in the care and support workforce have broader economic implications, as informal carers are left to fill the gap, making it harder for them to participate in the labour market themselves. This adversely affects workforce participation across the entire economy, with disproportionate impacts on women.

To address these challenges, we commissioned Victoria University to use economic modelling to examine how labour markets would adjust if there was increased expenditure on care services. The model considers how higher wages in the sector would influence the movement of people between occupations and the types of training courses they choose. It also models people's decisions to enter the workforce, change their hours worked, or to use informal or formal care services, taking into account the interactions between these decisions as the supply of formal care services increases.

The modelling assumes that higher wages are introduced gradually over eight years to eliminate the undervaluation of health, care, recreation, and social assistance work. It is assumed that wages would need to increase by 20 per cent for health services, preschool, and sports and recreation, and by 50 per cent for the other care and social assistance sectors. The model also accounts for the flow-on effects to the economy as a whole (i.e., macroeconomic effects).

Results

Modelling undertaken for HumanAbility by Victoria University shows that higher wages would lead to a significant increase in employment and hours worked. For example, by 2032, total hours worked in the childcare sector would be over 15 per cent higher, and total hours worked in the aged care sector would be over 17 per cent higher. The JSA modelling undertaken by VU related to projections shows that over the five years from May 2023 to May 2028, employment in the healthcare and social assistance industry is projected to increase by 15.6 per cent, compared to 6.5 per cent for the economy as a whole. Over the ten years from May 2023 employment in the healthcare and social assistance industry is projected to increase by 33.5 per cent, compared to 14.2 per cent for the economy as a whole, and the occupations expected to experience the most significant growth over the next five years include Aged and Disabled Carers and Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers, who all fit within the HumanAbility remit.

Workforce projections

Increasing wages

With an increase in wages, we see growth in the sector as higher wages in the sector industries would attract new workforce entrants (e.g. students who have completed their qualification), enable existing workers to work more hours, and cause some workers elsewhere in the economy to change their occupation and move into the sectors. As the supply of labour in the sectors increases, the increase in wages is moderated, and wages settle at a new level which is above the pre-existing wage rate.

Chart 1 shows the total increase in labour supply at an industry sub-sector level, Chart 2 shows the increase for selected occupations (i.e. those with the greatest increase), and Chart 3 for workers with different types of qualifications.

The headline results in the modelling (the total increase in labour supply) are sensitive to the assumed wage increases that were inputted. However, the modelling provides useful insights into the economic adjustments that would occur.

Training choices

Training choices (i.e. which qualification people undertake) play a key role in the economic adjustment. If we assume that training choices are fixed based on the courses that people have chosen in the past, then the total increase in labour supply is lower (scenario 1 in the charts). There is a relatively large increase in labour supply for occupations requiring lower-level qualifications or where there are workers elsewhere in the economy with suitable qualifications (e.g. aged and disabled carers). In contrast, there is a relatively small increase in labour supply for occupations requiring higher-level and more specialised qualifications (e.g. nurses and medical practitioners). This is because the available pool of suitably qualified workers is more constrained.

Alternatively, if we assume that people change their training choices in response to higher wages in the care and support sectors, then the total increase in labour supply is higher (scenario 2 in the charts). This is because the economy can operate more efficiently. In effect, the gap between scenario 1 and 2 shows the gains to the sector from a flexible and accessible training system that enables workers to enter courses (or to retrain) based on demand for labour across the economy. This gap is greatest for occupations that require more specialised qualifications.

Chart 1: Projected employment growth by 2032 (deviation from baseline) – sub-sectors

Legend: Scenario 1, Scenario 2

Categories (top to bottom): Other Social Assistance: Other, Residential Care: Aged, Residential Care: Other, Child care, Residential Care: Disabled, Preschool, Health Services, Other Social Assistance: Disabled, Sport and recreation

X-axis: % increase in employment by 2032 (0 to 20)
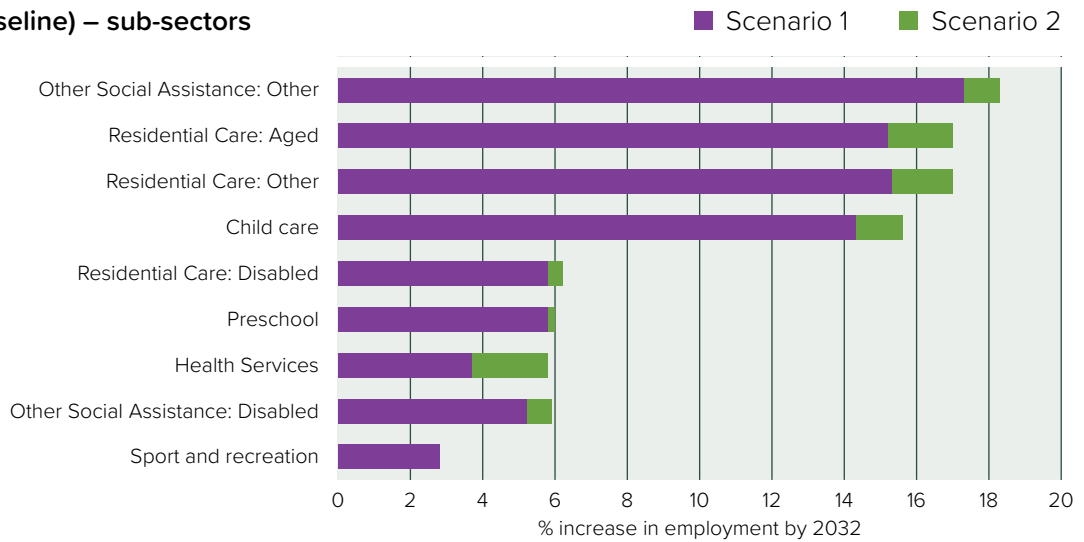
Chart 2: Projected employment growth by 2032 (deviation from baseline) – top 10 occupations

Legend: Scenario 1, Scenario 2

Categories (top to bottom): O4113 Diversional Therapists, O4231 Aged and Disabled Carers, O4233 Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers, O421 Child Carers, O4117 Welfare Support Workers, O4114 Enrolled and Mothercraft Nurses, O2544 Registered Nurses, O2543 Nurse Managers, O2541 Midwives, O252 Health Therapy Professionals

X-axis: % increase in employment by 2032 (0 to 20)

Chart 3: Projected employment growth by 2032 (deviation from baseline) – selected qualifications

Legend: Scenario 1, Scenario 2

Categories (top to bottom): Society and Culture, Certificate III and IV level; Health, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate level; Health, Bachelor Degree level; Health, Advanced Diploma and Diploma level; Health, Certificate III and IV level; Society and Culture, Advanced Diploma and Diploma level; Health, Postgraduate Degree level; Health, Certificate I and II level; Society And Culture, Certificate I and II level; Education, Advanced Diploma and Diploma level

X-axis: % increase in employment by 2032 (0 to 20)

Data notes

The analysis above has relied on the ANZSCO and ANZSIC data to enable comparability with and across sectors. The inclusion of industries and occupation data has been aligned to the HumanAbility training packages and occupation codes. This approach enables data harmonisation, facilitates industry comparison and may support cross JSC collaboration opportunities.

The ANZSIC data provides a broad overview of all industries within HumanAbility's remit and includes industry sectors or occupations that broadly fit within HumanAbility's scope but do not align with the clearly defined objectives of HumanAbility to focus on the workforce and training of the VET sector. HumanAbility's industry sectors employ a diverse workforce within a range of occupations, many of which have tertiary and VET qualification entry pathways. The focus of this workplan is predominantly on the VET qualified workforce and occupations aligned to HumanAbility's industry sectors and our role in developing and maintaining quality VET training products supported by industry and partners. There are a range of Commonwealth-led workforce development strategies and initiatives that have a whole-of-sector workforce focus.

Due to some limitations in the way the ANZSCO data clusters and classifies specific occupations, and to provide a comprehensive and contextual understanding, we are incorporating complementary sources of evidence, including key government reports and industry intelligence. This ensures that while ANZSCO data remains our core dataset, we address its limitations by integrating additional reliable data sources to enhance the accuracy and relevance of our workforce planning.

Data sources used in this report include:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (Various). 2006 to 2021 Census.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024). Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, March 2024.
- Jobs and Skills Australia (2024). Internet Vacancies March 2024.
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6-digit Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) granularity is available for Census and Skills Priority List data. 4-digit data is available for the Labour Force Survey, Employment Projections, and the Internet Vacancy Index. Industry-based data collections have also been referenced, including the Aged Care Workforce Census and the National Disability Services Workforce Census.

The following table shows a list of the 4-digit ANZSCO classifications utilised in this report and referred to throughout the report as HumanAbility Occupations. Many people covered by these codes work in industries outside HumanAbility coverage. Similarly, many people employed in HumanAbility industries work under codes that are not listed or used. These occupations have been employed to provide a high-level understanding of movement across the care and support industries and are limited as a result of the granularity of available data.

In regards to enrolments and completions data throughout the report, we note that the 2015 numbers are impacted by releases of qualifications in the same year.

Code	Occupation
1399	Other Specialist Managers
1491	Amusement, Fitness and Sports Centre Managers
2231	Human Resource Professionals
2513	Occupational and Environmental Health Professionals
2522	Complementary Health Therapists
2523	Dental Practitioners
2544	Registered Nurses
2721	Counsellors
2722	Ministers of Religion
2725	Social Workers
2726	Welfare, Recreation and Community Arts Workers
3112	Medical Technicians
3999	Other Miscellaneous Technicians and Trades Workers
4111	Ambulance Officers and Paramedics
4112	Dental Hygienists, Technicians and Therapists
4114	Enrolled and Mothercraft Nurses
4115	Indigenous Health Workers
4117	Welfare Support Workers
4211	Child Carers
4221	Education Aides
4231	Aged and Disabled Carers
4233	Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers
4234	Special Care Workers
4412	Fire and Emergency Workers
4518	Other Personal Service Workers
4521	Fitness Instructors
4522	Outdoor Adventure Guides
4523	Sports Coaches, Instructors and Officials
4524	Sportspersons
5999	Other Miscellaneous Clerical and Administrative Workers
7119	Other Machine Operators

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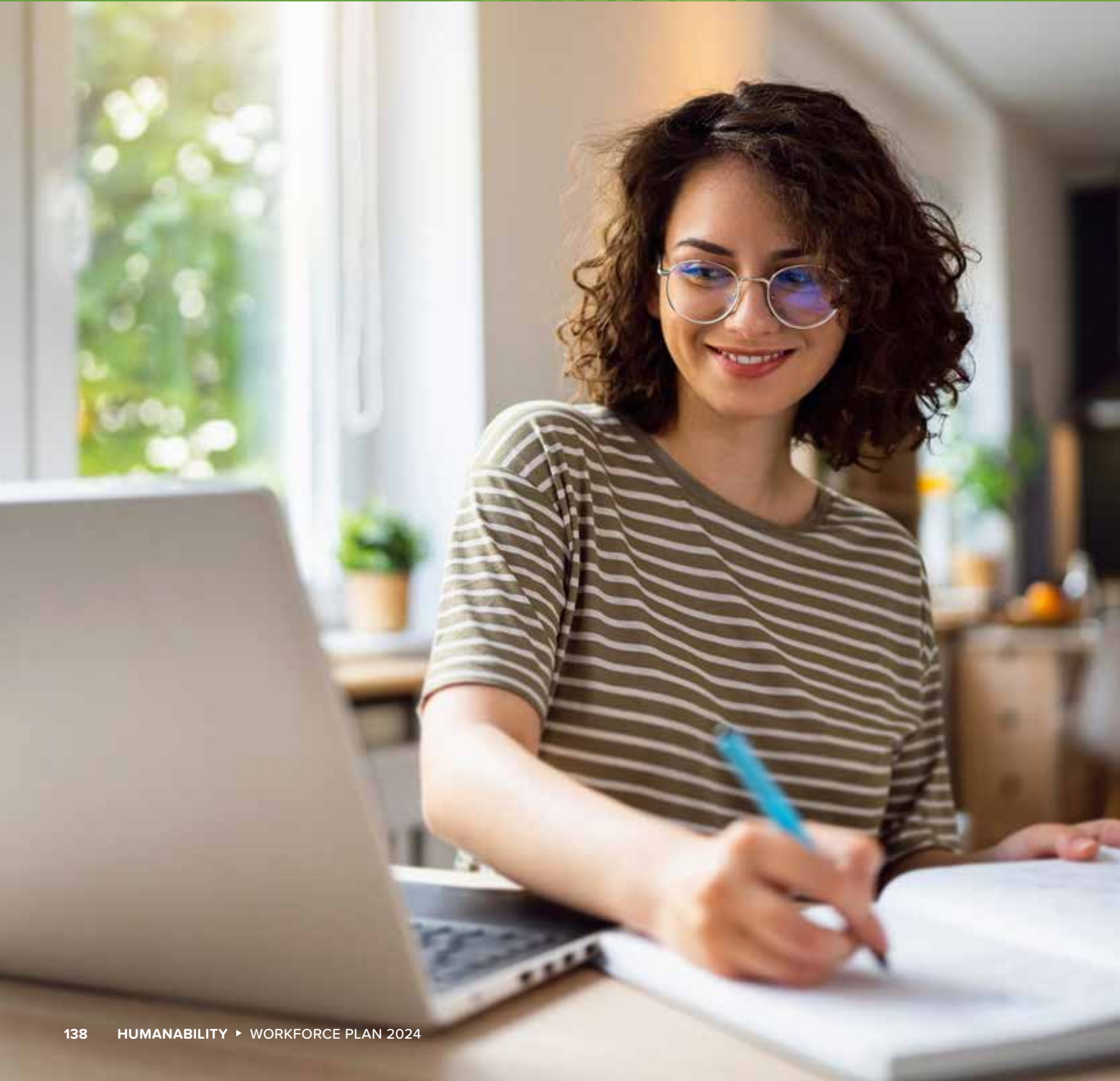
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