

Skills and training for Victoria

May 2021



A new approach at a critical time

Victoria is in a new era. Even before COVID-19, the skills needed for work were shifting. Now, as we recover, and as our industries expand and innovate, the great challenge is making sure that employers can find people with the right skills when they need them.

This is the key to our economic and social recovery – to our major new infrastructure projects, to health and social services, and to the vitality of our urban, regional and rural communities.

It's the key to getting people reskilled and back to work. And to ensuring the long-term prosperity of all Victorians.

That is why we are revitalising Victoria's approach to skills and training. Not only are we investing even more in TAFEs and affordable training, we are making sure that every element of our skills system is working seamlessly towards the same clear goal.

That is, giving Victorians the training they need to build a great career, and contribute to the success of our economy and communities.

A clear way forward

To do this, we are establishing two new entities:

- the Victorian Skills Authority
- the Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery.

We know, from listening to all those in the sector, that a more coordinated, purposeful way of working is needed to meet and anticipate the changing demands for skills. This was reinforced by the Skills for Victoria's Growing Economy review, in its final report earlier this year.

The Victorian Skills Authority and the Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery are a direct response to the review's recommendations. They will make our skills system easier to navigate and create clear, effective structures for working together to plan for and respond to skill demands.



Building on solid foundations

Importantly, our new approach capitalises on existing expertise, and on preceding reforms.

These include major investments since 2014 to restore and revitalise the quality of training, rebuild the community's pride in TAFE, and reinvigorate Learn Locals – crucial providers in setting those most disadvantaged on a path to a career.

They also include major recent investments in job creation, as well as a further boost to Free TAFE, which added an extra 60,000 places for students to gain in-demand skills at no cost.

Already, nurses are in our hospitals, and community workers are making a difference to people's lives, because of Free TAFE. And thousands more are now studying for jobs in areas of our economy that need people most.

On-the-job training

Meanwhile, Apprenticeships Victoria is supporting paid, on-the-job training in vital areas – including mental health, aged care, construction and infrastructure – by providing up to 1500 apprenticeships and traineeship opportunities a year.

Established earlier this year, the program is already helping apprentices kickstart careers by working on one of the Victorian Government's Big Build infrastructure projects, such as the North East Link or the new Footscray Hospital.

Almost a fifth of apprentices working on Big Build projects so far are women. They are among those who do not typically consider a career in the trades (others include First Nations peoples and those from multicultural communities) who will continue to be a particular focus of Apprenticeships Victoria.

Adult and community education

Access to high-quality adult and community further education is a vital part of the system, particularly for enhancing the job prospects of those most in need.

Record funding has been invested in adult and community further education in recent years. Now, a further boost has been made to increase places in pre-accredited digital literacy and employability skills courses.

The Ministerial Statement released in 2019 commits to a focus on adult literacy, numeracy, employability and digital skills training. The new Victorian Skills Authority will ensure clear pathways between adult and community further education and training for in-demand jobs.



Meeting the new era with confidence

Free TAFE and Apprenticeships Victoria show the power of collaboration with industry and a cohesive system in matching training with jobs.

We are drawing on the success of these programs to make collaboration and coordination key to everything we do. This will allow Victoria to align industry needs with training with greater confidence and clarity than ever before.

It will also ensure that, following secondary school, the skills and training system is high-quality, simple and easy to engage with, so that all Victorians can benefit, including First Nations peoples, culturally diverse communities and people with disability.

The Victorian Skills Authority

The creation of the Victorian Skills Authority is critical to meeting Victoria's skills and training needs. It will draw on existing expertise to build even stronger connections with industry.

It will analyse data and job-market insights, and publish for the first time a comprehensive annual skills plan. This will sharpen how Government, industry and providers respond to employment demands – and give students confidence that training will lead to a job and a career.

The Victorian Skills Authority will draw on these enhanced relationships to collect and verify local data and insights from employers, workers, community groups and others.

This will bring a critical evidence-base to planning, creating a more sustainable and adaptable approach to meeting training and job needs locally and state-wide.

It will help to generate place-based solutions to local problems, promote quality improvement and identify skills development needs for the State. The Authority's work will help us understand the complexities of Victoria's training needs as never before, meaning solutions can be found in new ways and areas that benefit everyone.

The Victorian Skills Authority will join up all parts of the system, from the adult and community further education delivered by Learn Local providers, to the vocational education and training offered through TAFES, dual-sector universities and registered training providers.

The Authority was a key recommendation of the Skills for Victoria's Growing Economy review. Its Board will be made up of people from across the sector, accountable to the Minister for Training and Skills for enhancing the relevance, quality and equity of the whole system.

A stronger, more strategic TAFE network

Victoria's TAFEs remain critical to helping get people into work. As public providers, they set the benchmark for training quality, and can innovate readily to meet the dynamic demands of Victoria's communities and economy. Their adaptability during the pandemic was impressive – but not surprising.

That is why, in addition to the Victorian Skills Authority, we're also establishing a new Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery within the Department of Education and Training.

The Office will foster collaboration across the TAFE network, helping TAFEs to share services and strategise together, rather than compete. This will mean even greater focus on enhancing quality, and on meeting the specific training needs of Victorian industries, students and communities.



Learning, working, succeeding

Few roles are more important than training people for work. Training makes a major contribution – to Victorian communities and to people’s lives.

A revitalised approach will connect the different parts of the sector, drawing together data and knowledge, and allowing us to better understand and respond to Victoria’s dynamic needs.

It will allow us to make the most of our collective efforts. It will complement and maximise significant investments in skills, training and jobs, including Free TAFE, Apprenticeships Victoria and Big Build infrastructure projects.

More sophisticated data will give people confidence that their vocational education and training will help them develop the right skills for in-demand jobs. The use of local insight about what employers need will also help create more opportunities for people to find work in their local communities.

Employers and employees will thrive together, and improve together. VET providers will have more certainty, and more evidence to prioritise what they offer and how. This includes private providers, which will continue to play an important role, including by offering specialist skills and training not covered by TAFEs.

Victorian communities will see clear benefits, with better data and analysis to help match local students with training and local employers. Communities and industries will have reliable access to the specific skills they need. A more collaborative TAFE network and an enhanced focus on adult and community education will also help to ensure people can adapt their skills as the economy changes and local needs evolve.

These changes will help everyone succeed and make the economy, and Victoria, more resilient and able to adapt. They will make sure people and the communities in which they live get the skills needed to meet the new era with confidence.



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