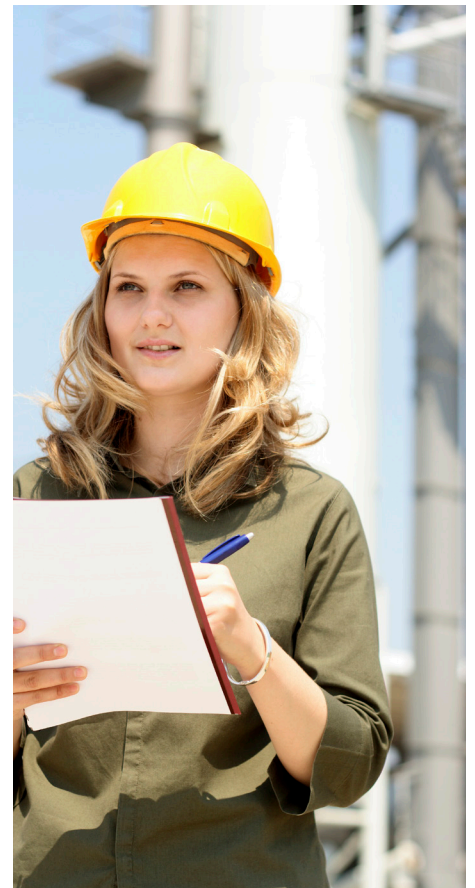




Education &
Communities

Smart and Skilled: making NSW number one

Discussion paper
September 2011



Smart and Skilled: making NSW number one

The NSW Government wants to rebuild our State and make NSW number one. To do this we need a skilled workforce that can contribute to increased productivity, workforce participation and business demand for high-level skills.

We must adapt our vocational education and training system to meet these future needs. We must encourage more people to take vocational education and training qualifications, particularly at higher-levels. We need to structure our vocational education and training system to meet student demand and the needs of business for an innovative and capable workforce.

Through this discussion paper we are seeking your advice on how we can improve the capacity of our vocational education and training system to meet these needs.

COAG Reform

To support a more skilled workforce, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed to a national framework to revitalise the vocational education and training system. This framework covers:

- a more flexible and demand-driven vocational education and training system
- greater contestability of funding for public training and greater competition between providers
- support for TAFE as the public provider
- greater transparency in the system to support informed choices by employers and students
- a drive for improved quality¹.

Doing what is best for NSW

New South Wales has agreed to the national framework for reform. In implementing reform we will do what is best for New South Wales. Our prime objective is to support growth and jobs.

In *NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One* we have set targets to increase attainment levels and make sure more people gain higher-level tertiary qualifications. These include national targets agreed through COAG. Our targets are:

- 50 per cent increase in the proportion of people between the ages of 20 and 64 with qualifications at Certificate III and above

- 100 per cent increase in completions in higher-level qualifications at Diploma level and above
- 20 per cent increase in the number of completions in higher-level qualifications at Certificate III and above by women, Aboriginal students and students in rural and regional New South Wales by 2020.

We have done this because future prosperity will rely on a highly-skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Our population is ageing and, to meet the resulting decrease in worker numbers, effort will be required to help more people gain the skills they need to participate in the workforce.

Businesses will rely more and more on having a high-skilled workforce to improve productivity and compete in a changing global economy. In the future, high-skilled jobs are expected to grow at two-and-a-half times the rate of low-skilled jobs. At current rates there is an expected shortfall of high-level qualifications to meet this demand by 2015.

We must strengthen our vocational education and training system to respond to these changing needs. Our State has the largest vocational education and training system

in the country with more than 2,000 training organisations and an estimated 830,000 students. TAFE NSW plays an important role with more than 550,000 student enrolments across ten Institutes and 130 campuses.

The investment we make in our vocational education and training sector must be in high-quality learning and training that has the greatest economic and social impact. Greater effort will be needed to increase access to training for more of the population and to increase the take-up and completion of higher-level qualifications.

Our modern economy requires both sophisticated technical skills and, importantly, substantial underpinning knowledge and ability to continue learning and enhancing one's skills. Our system needs to enhance and respond to this broader expectation.

We need to make sure that our vocational education and training system responds to demand and students and employers have greater opportunities to select learning that is high quality, responsive and has flexibility to meet their changing needs. We need to encourage local training to meet local needs. Many

businesses, students and regional communities also rely on TAFE NSW to deliver training. A strong and responsive TAFE NSW is critical to meeting our future workforce needs.

These are some of the issues to consider. A snapshot with further details on the NSW economy, workforce and vocational education and training system is in the Appendix to this paper.

Increase participation in vocational education and training

Greater participation in vocational education and training for all age groups

To increase productivity and participation in the economy we must engage more people in vocational education and training and lift educational attainment levels across the working age population. We must support all age groups, particularly those who need skills and knowledge to be able to participate more fully in the workforce. It also means looking at new ways to assist disadvantaged learners to acquire the skills they need to gain sustainable jobs. And it involves making sure that those who live in rural and remote communities do not miss out on the learning they need to make a contribution to their communities.

Tell us what you think

- How can we engage more of the working age population in vocational education and training?
- How can we equip people with the skills they need to participate more fully in work?
- How can we improve training and job outcomes for disadvantaged learners?
- How can we maximise vocational education and training opportunities for people in rural and remote communities?

Increase attainment of higher-level qualifications

A more productive economy and workforce requires more of the population to have higher-level qualifications at diploma level and above. We need to make sure that New South Wales can meet future demand for high-level skills so that our businesses and industry can remain competitive in a global environment.

Tell us what you think

- How can we encourage more people to complete higher-level qualifications?
- How can we build better pathways to higher-level qualifications across our education sectors?

Entitlement to training

A reform principle agreed by the Council of Australian Governments is having a more demand-driven vocational education and training system. Both Victoria and South Australia have adopted a broader demand-driven entitlement to training as a key reform, and Western Australia and Queensland are considering an entitlement as a way to increase training participation.

An entitlement to a government-funded training place is an option to increase participation in vocational education and training and is often associated with a demand-driven system. The concept involves giving eligible students access to a subsidised training place with an approved registered training organisation.

An entitlement model of training is different from a supply-driven system where the government funds a fixed number of places using approved training organisations.

A broad-based entitlement can increase participation in vocational education and training if more people are eligible for a government-funded training place and they have more control over what and where they study. An entitlement may enable a student to gain an initial post-school qualification, to consolidate skills or to gain higher-level qualifications. The availability of training and the degree of subsidy can vary depending on the circumstances of the individual and the type of qualification undertaken.

A key consideration under an entitlement is aligning student demand with industry and economic skill needs.

There are already some examples of entitlement in the vocational education and training system in New South Wales. These include an entitlement to a government-funded place for young people aged 15 to 24 and for apprenticeships and most new-entrant traineeships. In areas of apprenticeship and traineeship training, the funding flows to the

approved training organisation chosen by the student or employer.

As well as increasing the State's productivity, TAFE NSW has a legislative requirement to provide vocational education and training services that are widely accessible. This includes training for apprentices and priority entry for young people and disadvantaged learners. There are also broad categories of exemptions and concessions for student fees to support access to training in TAFE NSW.

An entitlement would need to operate within Government budgets for vocational education and training. In offering a broader entitlement, the Government may need to consider what contributions individuals and employers should make to the cost of training. Research has shown that the higher the qualification, the higher the return to the individual in terms of earnings and employment prospects. Both individuals and employers already make some private investment in training, and the development of an entitlement should not displace that investment.

Some full fee-paying vocational education and training students are able to access student loans. However, the kinds of student loans

available to university students, such as HECS-HELP, are not available to most vocational education and training students in New South Wales. Improved access to such loans may need to be considered to increase student participation.

Tell us what you think

- To what extent could a training entitlement increase training participation and meet the future skill needs of individuals, businesses, regions and our economy?
- What should an entitlement to training cover?
- How do we match individual demand with industry needs under an entitlement model?
- Under an entitlement, how should the level of investment in training made by government, individuals and employers be determined?
- Should student loans be available for government-funded vocational qualifications? If so, what should they look like?

Target vocational education and training to business, industry and regional needs

Aligning the Government's investment in vocational education and training with the State's priorities is vital to meeting the future skill needs of the economy. To do this, we need to ensure that the investment in vocational education and training flows to where there is critical demand for skills and we have the right mix of skills and knowledge to maximise economic benefits.

To do this, we need to make sure that the vocational education and training system can anticipate and respond to changing economic and social conditions. Modern workplaces have to deal with environmental changes, new technology, innovation and greater global competition. This requires workers with high levels of knowledge, skill and autonomy to undertake complex tasks, adapt to changes and solve problems. Our vocational education and training system must develop both technical competencies and broader knowledge capability.

The Government's investment in vocational education and training must also meet the diverse skill needs across our regions. Not all regions are the same. There are differences in demographics, industry base and in economic opportunities. Our regions

need to be equipped with a skilled workforce to service local business and industry demand and to capture new economic opportunities.

It is also important to maximise the outcomes from training. Businesses need access to training that is flexible, tailored and responsive to their needs. Having a vocational education and training system that can quickly respond to the changing needs of businesses or changes in the economy will increase the likelihood that the skills people learn are applied productively in workplaces and that businesses can expand and prosper.

Tell us what you think

- What is the best way to ensure that the Government's funds for vocational education and training flow to areas that maximise economic benefits for our businesses and the State?
- How can we maximise vocational education and training opportunities to meet the needs of our regions?
- How can our vocational education and training system adapt and be responsive to the changing needs of business and industry and changes in the economy?

Role and function of TAFE NSW as the public provider

TAFE NSW plays an important role in our vocational education and training system and makes a significant contribution to our economy and communities. Training through TAFE NSW is offered across ten institutes with over 130 campuses and specialist centres in regional and metropolitan areas.

In 2010, TAFE NSW delivered more than 70 per cent of all flexible vocational education and training in Australia and commenced delivery of its first degree. In the same year, there were over 550,000 enrolments in TAFE NSW and over half of those students were in regional areas. Some 89 per cent of TAFE NSW graduates were satisfied with the quality of the training they had received. TAFE NSW has also made an important contribution to shifting the balance toward higher-level qualifications by increasing training completions at Diploma level and above. Between 2005 and 2010, TAFE NSW greatly decreased its reliance on direct government funding, growing its external revenue by more than 70 per cent³. This external revenue is re-invested back into training more students across the State.

TAFE NSW is the largest provider of vocational education and training in the State. It has a unique role in servicing the training needs of industry and our regions and local communities, with its responsibilities spanning high-level workforce development for industries to improving skill and job outcomes for disadvantaged learners and communities.

We need to consider the role and function of TAFE NSW in supporting expanded training opportunities in the context of greater choice and make sure that TAFE NSW is well positioned to operate in an environment of increased contestability of government-funded training.

Tell us what you think

- What should the role of TAFE NSW be in the context of a broader entitlement to training in our vocational education and training system?
- How should TAFE NSW be better utilised to meet the future skill needs of our workforce?

Greater choice for individuals and employers

The Council of Australian Governments has acknowledged the role of contestability of funding for publicly-funded vocational education and training as a way of providing greater choice. While New South Wales invests the largest dollar amount of funding of any State or Territory in contestably-funded training, only a relatively small share of government funds is open to competition. At 19.6 per cent, the share invested in contestable training in New South Wales is below that in other large states and below the Australian average of 21.7 per cent.

Transparent and high-quality vocational education and training to inform choice

If we are to encourage more people to engage in vocational education and training, particularly in higher-level qualifications, we need to consider ways to expand the capacity of our vocational education and training system and provide greater choice for those who use our system.

A demand-driven system entails individuals and employers exercising a degree of choice in their selection of training qualifications and providers. Having government funds follow their choice and targeting training to the priority needs of the economy may enable the system to better respond to current and future demand.

To exercise greater choice, employers and individuals need to be able to make informed decisions. They need access to information on what training is available and what they can expect to gain from that training.

They also need to be assured that the vocational education and training they receive is of high quality and that it meets the needs of business for a knowledgeable, capable and competent workforce. If we are to offer greater choice to students and employers we need to consider whether our existing quality safeguards should be strengthened to ensure greater quality and viability of services and that the outcomes delivered meet the needs of industry and the economy.

Tell us what you think

- What type of information is needed by individuals and employers to inform their choice of vocational education and training?
- How can we continue to assure the quality of vocational education and training in the context of greater choice?

Role of competition

In New South Wales both public and private training organisations are able to compete for funding through a contestable training market to deliver traineeships, apprenticeships and other priority industry qualifications.

New South Wales has one of the most open contestable training markets with all registered training organisations in Australia eligible to compete for funding. At the same time, we have the lowest share of funds invested in contestable training of all large states.

The contestable training market has made an important contribution to training participation and supporting the needs of business and industry in New South Wales.

Students undertaking training in apprenticeships and new-entrant traineeships under the contestable training market have increased by 20 per cent since 2006, and over 70 per cent of training delivered through these arrangements is work-based. Some 87 per cent of training participants who receive government-funded training with private training providers in New South Wales are satisfied with the quality of training⁴.

We need to consider what role increased contestability of government-funded training could play in helping to meet the future workforce needs of New South Wales. This includes our need for higher-level qualifications, increased participation in training and greater choice for the users of training.

We also need to consider how a community service obligation may be managed in a contestable market to ensure support for critical government priorities including improving outcomes for groups including Aboriginal people or people with a disability and to ensure access for those in remote areas.

Tell us what you think

- How could increased contestability of government-funded training support greater participation in vocational education and training and greater take-up of higher-level qualifications?
- What factors should the Government consider in increasing contestability of training funds?
- How should community service obligations be managed in a contestable market?
- What criteria and what accountabilities should training organisations meet to be eligible for government-funding?

Improve vocational education and training completion rates

New South Wales has one of the highest training completion rates in the country (34 per cent versus 27 per cent nationally). Overall, however, completion rates in vocational education and training in Australia are generally low². In comparison, undergraduate degree completion rates trend between 70 and 80 per cent.

We need to increase the number of people who both start and complete a vocational qualification. The more people who complete their study, the more skills we have available to be applied in the workforce and to meet future demand for skills.

Vocational education and training completions need to increase across all qualification levels and for apprenticeships and traineeships, particularly in skill shortage areas.

Tell us what you think

- How can we improve vocational education and training completions?
- In what critical areas should they be improved?
- How can we improve completions for apprentices and trainees?

Consultation process

This discussion paper is designed to facilitate public debate on how best to equip the vocational education and training system in New South Wales to meet our future workforce needs.

The NSW Government is keen to hear your views and will conduct a series of consultations around the State. An electronic version of this discussion paper and the schedule for consultations can be found at www.training.nsw.gov.au.

Additional information on the consultation process, including how to make a submission, can be accessed from this site. All submissions will be treated as public documents unless you tell us otherwise. Written submissions close on 4 November 2011.

Other useful information can be found at:

NSW State Plan - www.2021.nsw.gov.au/index.php

Council of Australian Governments
- www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/agenda/skills.cfm

Appendix: A snapshot of NSW

New South Wales is a large economy with a population of over seven million people and production of goods and services worth over \$400 billion⁵. Our State comprises over 30 per cent of the nation's economy with exports worth \$56 billion in 2009-10 and the largest share of private business investment in Australia⁶.

Our economy is diverse, covering value-added services, manufacturing, construction, mineral resources and agriculture. Around 74.6 per cent of the State's economy is made up of services⁷. Our comparative strengths are in high-end services which are the fastest growing component of world trade. Services account for about 70 per cent of employment in New South Wales and service exports generated over \$20 billion in 2009-10⁸.

Small and medium businesses account for most of the employment in New South Wales and will continue to play an important role in generating jobs for the State.

The next ten years will see an increased demand for higher-skilled jobs in New South Wales. Across the nation higher-skilled jobs are expected to grow at two-and-a-half times the rate of low-skilled jobs⁹.

The Economy

The growth that New South Wales has achieved over the last ten years has been unlike the growth attained in states that have benefited from the resources boom. Growth in New South Wales has come from strong economic fundamentals and a diverse industry base with good long-term economic prospects.

Like most advanced economies our future ability to compete in a global environment will involve increasing productivity, and offsetting the impact of an ageing population on workforce participation.

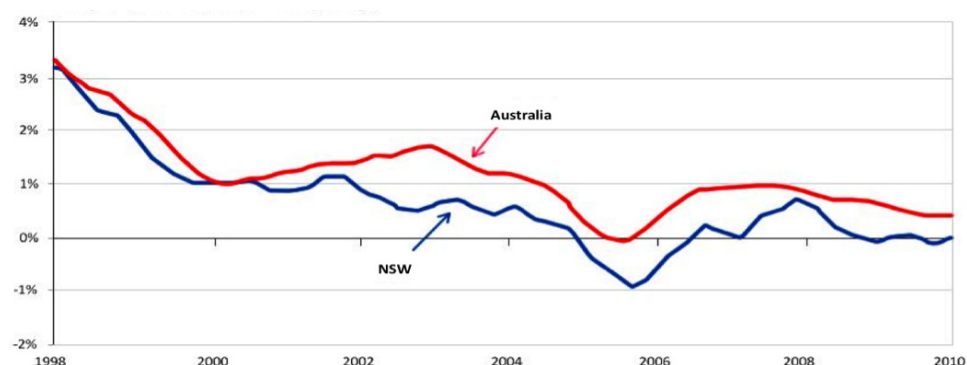
Productivity

The mid 1990s was a period of high productivity growth where New South Wales led the country. Over the last

ten years our productivity growth has been slightly below the national rate. Importantly though, more than half of our industries have productivity levels above the national average, including: professional, scientific and technical services; manufacturing; health care and construction¹⁰.

Projections from the Commonwealth Government's Intergenerational Report 2010 show that over the next 40 years, productivity growth in Australia could fall from the average of 1.8 per cent a year achieved over the past 40 years to 1.6 per cent. The corresponding growth in living standards (as defined by real Gross Domestic Product per capita) could decline from 1.9 per cent to 1.5 per cent per year.

Growth in labour productivity, NSW and Australia¹¹



Meeting productivity needs of business

Businesses need skilled workers to start and grow. Only 52 per cent of employers believe that the skills of their employees are adequate for what is needed in the workplace¹². A more productive workforce requires people to learn skills that can be readily applied to the workplace needs of businesses.

Research has found that higher-level skills increase earnings and productivity:

- those with a Bachelor degree earn almost two-and-a-half times more than people whose highest level of education attainment is Year 11¹³
- firms with more qualified managers are better managed and more productive¹⁴.

Workforce participation

In 2010-11, the rate of labour force participation in New South Wales was 64 per cent, below the national average of 66 per cent¹⁵. Historical changes in the structure of the economy have involved a shift from heavy manufacturing to more high-end services and this has resulted in some decline in male participation rates over time.

An ageing population has the potential to reduce workforce participation even

further. Current projections indicate that ageing will shrink the size of the working age population relative to total population from 70 per cent to 61 per cent by 2025¹⁶. Research has shown that higher-level skills increase the chance of sustainable employment:

- people with a Diploma or Advanced Diploma have an 80 per cent chance of employment compared to 55 per cent for those with a Year 10 School Certificate or below¹⁷.

The Workforce

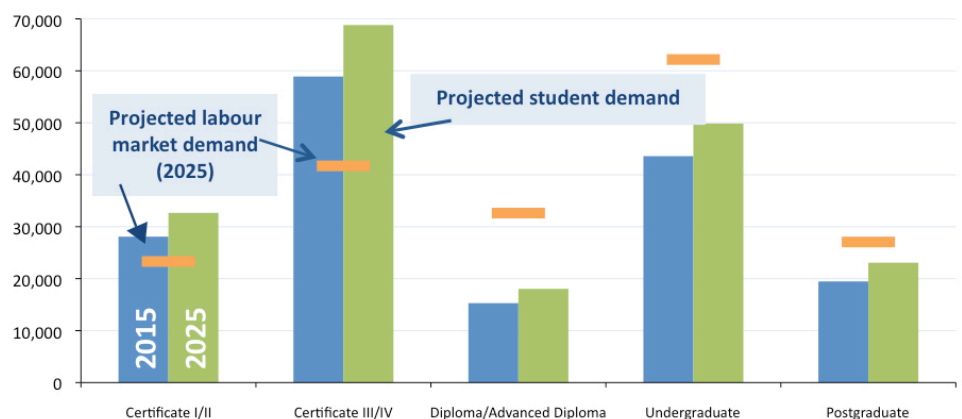
In New South Wales about 60 per cent of the population aged 15 years and over are in employment¹⁸. The top five employing sectors are: healthcare and social assistance; retail trade; professional, scientific and technical services; construction; and manufacturing.

The next ten years will see demand for 470,000 net new jobs in New South Wales¹⁹. Most of these jobs will be higher-skilled jobs with the growth greatest in services such as healthcare; professional and technical services and in construction. This will increase demand for professionals, managers, technicians and trades.

Most people of working age in New South Wales have a qualification and some 35 per cent have a qualification at Diploma level and above²⁰. To meet future demand for high-level skills we will need to lift the attainment levels of working age people, including the 45 per cent without a non-school qualification²¹.

Forecasts indicate that there will be a shortfall of higher-level qualifications by 2015.

Forecast labour market and student demand for qualifications, NSW²²

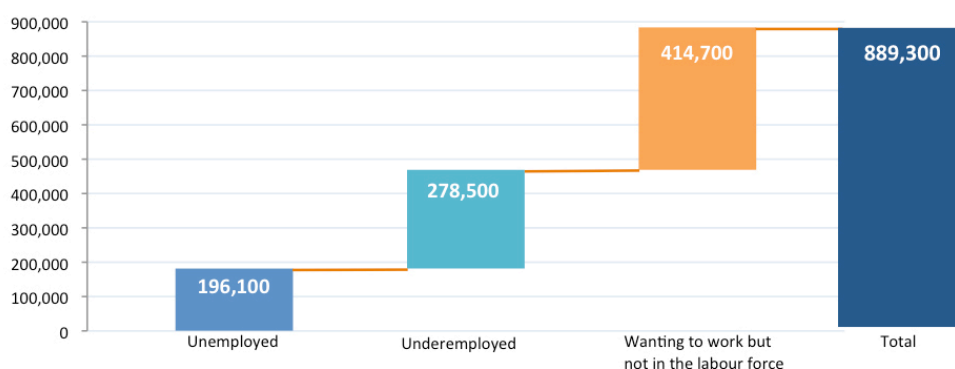


Young people under the age of 25 are less likely to have a higher-level qualification (Diploma level and above) as they are just starting out in their working life. The likelihood of having a higher-level qualification increases for 25 to 34 year olds, but for those aged above 35, the possibility of attaining a higher-level qualification starts to decrease²³.

Making use of the skills we have available to us is important for increasing productivity. Degree-qualified migrants who are not from an English-speaking country are at least twice as likely to be unemployed and almost twice as likely to be in a low-skilled job compared to other degree-qualified people²⁴. Often this is due to a lack of recognition of their qualifications and the low level of English language skills.

There are also many people in the State who are willing to work but are not fully engaged in the workforce. There are some 900,000 people able to work and almost half of these are not currently in the labour force. Most are women (65 per cent) and most people who are not in the labour force do not have a non-school qualification. There are a further 278,500 who are employed but would like to work longer hours.

Potential additions to employment, NSW, 2011²⁵



Again, most are women (59 per cent) and almost half do not have a vocational education and training or higher education qualification.

Of those unemployed, 57 per cent do not have a vocational education and training or higher education qualification²⁶. Young people make up 43 per cent of unemployment and Aboriginal people are three to four times more likely to be unemployed²⁷²⁸.

While New South Wales has many prosperous regions, others rely heavily on industries that are vulnerable to economic change and/or have large populations of disadvantage. These communities also tend to have higher rates of unemployment. In achieving our growth potential we need to make sure that people across the

entire State have access to training so they too can benefit from growth and sustainable jobs.

The Vocational Education and Training System

New South Wales has the largest vocational education and training system in the country with over 2,000 training organisations and an estimated 833,000 students. This includes 583,000 students trained in public institutions and through government-funded private training provision, and an estimated 250,000 students studying under private fee-for-service arrangements²⁹³⁰.

Servicing the diverse needs of a large and complex economy like New South Wales has its challenges and our vocational education and training system has served us well in creating better opportunities for learners by:

- expanding the availability of training to workers and job seekers, especially for higher-level qualifications (Diploma and Advanced Diploma)
- increasing provision of flexible training through on-line and workplace delivery
- increasing high-quality vocational education in schools
- developing partnerships with universities to create pathways into higher education
- lifting Aboriginal participation in training and improving outcomes for apprenticeships and traineeships
- producing one of the highest training completion rates in the country, with a significant increase in completions of Diploma qualifications and above for TAFE NSW and other providers

- raising the numbers of apprentices taking advantage of competency-based progression
- creating partnerships with industry to skill the workforce for innovation and with community groups to gain better job outcomes for job seekers.

These results come from a commitment to reform where New South Wales is:

- leading the adoption of national regulation of the vocational education and training system
- driving greater competency-based progression for apprentices
- implementing a training entitlement for 15 to 24 year olds
- leading the development of a nation-wide unique student identifier
- changes in TAFE NSW for greater local responsiveness, competitiveness and commercial activity.

This puts us in a good starting position to strengthen areas of our training system that need attention.

Participation in vocational education and in training

New South Wales has the largest share of government-funded student commencements in the country. While in the past year there has been some growth in government-funded student commencements, since 2006 there has been a decline of five per cent. This compares with growth of 19 per cent in government-funded student commencements for the rest of Australia. The decline in student commencements has been evident across all age groups but particularly for those aged between 25 and 44³¹.

Participation in higher-level qualifications

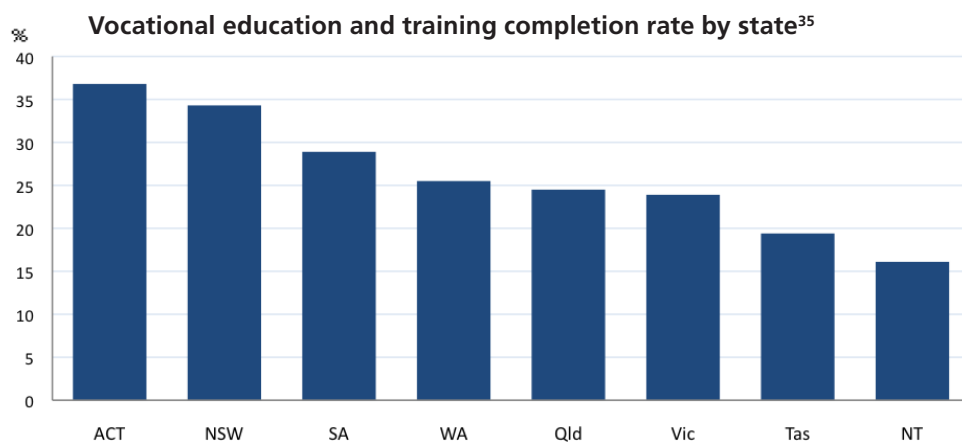
In recent years there has been growth in the share of students training in higher-level qualifications. At 12 per cent, the share of students commencing training in higher-level government-funded qualifications (Diploma and Advanced Diploma) in New South Wales is below the national average of 14 per cent.

In 2010, vocational training graduates made up about seven per cent of university enrolments in

New South Wales, down from just over eight per cent in 2008³². Building pathways to higher-level qualifications from school to vocational to higher education will help build a skilled workforce.

Vocational education and training completions

New South Wales has one of the highest vocational education and training completion rates in the country (34 per cent versus 27 per cent nationally). Overall, however, completion rates in vocational education and training in Australia are generally low³³. In comparison, undergraduate degree completion rates trend between 70 and 80 per cent³⁴.

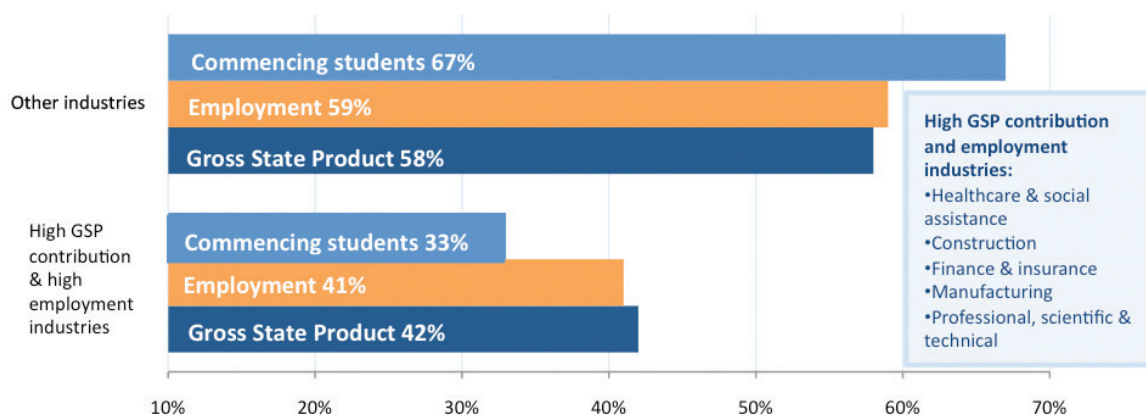


Targeting priorities

Aligning the Government's investment in training with the State's priorities is fundamental to meeting the future skills needs of business. The five sectors in New South Wales that make the highest combined contribution to Gross State Product and employment

are: finance; professional services; healthcare; manufacturing and construction. In 2009-10, these sectors accounted for a combined 42 per cent of Gross State Product and 41 per cent of employment. The share of government-funded student commencements in these sectors was 33 per cent.

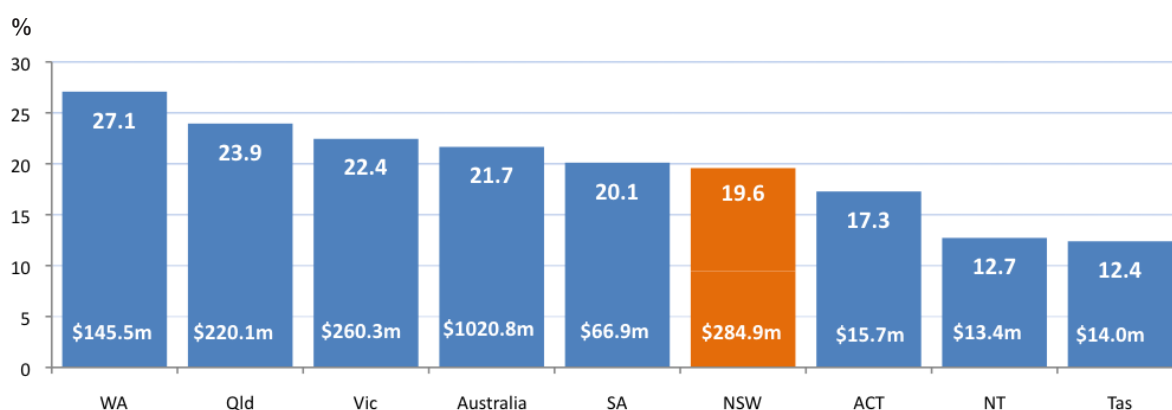
Share of government-funded commencing students compared to economic contribution, NSW³⁶



Choice for users

New South Wales has a highly competitive vocational education and training market. There are over 2,000 training organisations operating in the State. There are some 750 training organisations registered across Australia which are approved to compete for NSW government-funded training. While New South Wales invests the largest amount of funding of any State or Territory in contestably-funded training, only a relatively small share of government funds is open to competition. At 19.6 per cent, the share invested in contestable training in New South Wales is below that in other large states and below the Australian average of 21.7 per cent.

Proportion of Government recurrent funds for competitive tendering and user choice, 2009³⁷



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- ³⁰This is based on the Productivity Commission's estimate that NCVET data capture at least 70 per cent of training activity. Productivity Commission (2011) *Vocational Education and Training Workforce*.
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