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**MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**A *skilled* labour market is an *employed***

**labour market**

**NATIONAL SKILLS WEEK: 21-27 AUGUST 2023**

* ***What are the critical skill shortages?***
* ***Top 20 Occupations in-demand***
* ***What are the future skills and how to train for them?***
* ***Meet the inspiring success stories of the VET sector***

**21 August 2023( revised)** – **National Skills Week** from **21-27 August** aims to raise the status of practical and vocational qualifications and training, enabling all Australians to gain a greater understanding of the opportunities, their potential, and how skill attainment and upskilling can contribute to the nation’s economy.

**National Skills Week Chair, Brian Wexham says** the need to strengthen the image of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and debunk the perception that VET is a secondary option rather than first choice and is somehow less prestigious or valuable than a university qualification, is essential in filling the skills gaps and attracting students to consider apprenticeships and traineeships.

“The focus is on changing and challenging the perceptions of what is on offer in VET and provide opportunities for industry to promote opportunities and diversity of careers and pathways across VET.

“This is of upmost importance especially with women in trade, indigenous programs, regional and remote programs, mature aged training/retraining, and apprenticeships,” he said.

Over the past year, 60 per cent of total employment growth has been in occupations that require a vocational qualification, while just 36 per cent of that growth has been in university-qualified professions. The present skills gap in Australia is one of the biggest economic challenges the country has faced in decades. (*Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, March 2023*)

Mr Wexham says overwhelmingly, there is a need to disseminate career information to students and the wider public providing a more comprehensive understanding of the sector, the roles, its diversity and the job needs of the future.

Some of the most **critical shortages** are highlighted below:

**HEALTHCARE** (Source: Human Services Skills Organisation <https://hsso.org.au/>)

Health Care and Social Assistance was Australia’s largest employment sector in 2021 at 14.3% of total national employment with more than 1.8 million workers. This workforce is expected to grow at almost double the rate of any other industry with an additional 250,000 jobs needed to meet the escalating demand for these services by 2025.

**DIGITAL SKILLS** (Source: Digital Skills Organisation)

AI Group says 46% of businesses said their greatest priority is the need to attract digital workers.

Digital Skills Organisation says key challenges facing the industry:

* Solve the shortage of digital skills
* Urgently reskill and upskill
* Ensure training meets industry needs.

The goal is 1.2m people in tech jobs by 2030. We need 600,000 additional tech workers to reach the goal.

**AGRICULTURE**

Significant labour shortages across food supply chain weighing on growth, cost of living

National Farmers Federation estimates an additional 172,000 workers are required, from paddock to plate.

Figures released in June 2023 confirmed Australia’s GDP growth has slowed to a crawl. Meanwhile, the food supply chain which represents more than 10% of GDP is operating at reduced capacity due to workforce constraints.

Farmers, food suppliers, distributors, independent supermarkets, grocers, butchers, food processors and hospitality are all sending a united message: if you want a stronger economy, just add workers.

With almost 80% of Australians concerned about the price of food, labour shortages are, from a ‘cost of business’ perspective, one of the contributing factors to food price increases to the consumer as well as the ability to process and move food along the supply chain.

**RETAIL**

Nearly a quarter of retail businesses (23%) have reported job vacancies in February 2023, down 8.5% from November 2022, according to the ABS.

Job vacancies in the retail sector have dropped from 49,000 to 36,400 over the quarter.

**HOSPITALITY**

Accommodation and food services saw the highest amount of vacancies at 57,800 up from 56,300 in the last quarter.

**DEFENCE**

**New investment in skills paves the way for AUKUS workforce**

The Albanese Government’s Budget invests nearly $150 million to start delivering the skills and workforce we need to deliver Australia’s nuclear-powered submarine program through AUKUS.

The AUKUS plan for Australia to acquire and manufacture nuclear-powered submarines will create around 20,000 direct jobs over the next 30 years across industry, the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Public Service.

The biggest challenge Australia’s nuclear-powered submarine program faces right now is to develop the skills and workforce needed to build this sovereign capability here in Australia.

**MINING**

One of the top issues for mining companies in Australia is there simply isn’t enough qualified skilled staff to fill critical gaps in mining operations.

A recent McKinsey report on global mining talent says that 71 percent of mining leaders are finding the talent shortage is holding them back from delivering on production targets and strategic objectives.

This is being acutely felt in Australia, according to Justin Lejeune, Global 24-7’s Client Relationship Manager – Asia Pacific.

**BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION**

Master Builders Association estimates around 486,000 workers will need to enter the building and construction industry by 2026 to keep up with demand and replace retirees.

Nearly half of that required workforce will have to fill technician and trade roles, the vast majority of which will break into the sector through a trade apprenticeship.

“Construction is the backbone of the Australian economy, employing approximately 1.3 million people, providing infrastructure, commercial and community buildings, and homes for the growing population,” Master Builders Australia CEO Denita Wawn said.

“With Australia's population projected to grow by over 50 per cent between 2022 and 2060, reaching nearly 40 million people, the industry will require a significant workforce to undertake the necessary building and construction work.”

**What are the Top 20 Occupations in demand?**

Jobs and Skills Australia identifies the following Top 20 occupations in demand nationally:

(Table 6, JSA Labour Market Update)

Notes: IVI data are October to December 2022 monthly average

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Occupation** | **IVI job ads\*** |
| 1 | Registered Nurses | 8,377 |
| 2 | Software and Applications Programmers | 6,269 |
| 3 | Aged and Disabled Carers | 4,642 |
| 4 | Child Carers | 4,277 |
| 5 | Construction Managers | 4,230 |
| 6 | Motor Mechanics | 3,924 |
| 7 | Retail Managers | 3,777 |
| 8 | Chefs | 3,725 |
| 9 | Generalist Medical Practitioners | 3,352 |
| 10 | Metal Fitters and Machinists | 3,137 |
| 11 | ICT Business and Systems Analysts | 3,053 |
| 12 | Civil Engineering Professionals | 2,871 |
| 13 | Electricians | 2,839 |
| 14 | Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers | 2,493 |
| 15 | Contract, Program and Project Administrators | 2,392 |
| 16 | Advertising and Marketing Professionals | 2,265 |
| 17 | Physiotherapists | 1,262 |
| 18 | Gardeners | 1,015 |
| 19 | Mining Engineers | 957 |
| 20 | Database and Systems Administrators, & ICT Security Specialists | 942 |

**What are the future skills needed and how to train for them?**

Launching in Melbourne on 25 August by City of Melbourne Lord Mayor, Sally Capp, ‘Monash College Future Skills’ is a newly established division of Monash College focusing on equipping students with skills aligned to meet industry challenges and future workforce needs.

The College will offer students, corporates and the community a suite of vocational skills-based programs, initially focused on IT, cyber security, leadership and business, and later courses to support the health and care industry.

Program offerings will include micro skills and credentials, as well as accredited qualifications in artificial intelligence (AI), data analytics, digital leadership and project management.

**Monash College Executive Director, Future Skills, Jane Trewin said** the establishment of the ‘Monash College Future Skills’ is in response to industry demand for micro-credentials and digital skills, as well as challenges around shortage of trained staff in emerging technologies.

“The establishment of the Future Skills division will see the College enhance industry collaboration and explore innovative ways to embed technology into its program design and teaching.

“These new skills-based programs will continue to support students transitioning into Monash University but will also support students looking to complete a vocational qualification or acquire practical skills to gain employment,” Ms Trewin said.

**Meet the inspiring success stories of the VET sector**

National Skills Week also provides an energetic platform for VET Alumni such as Australian Training Award winners, WorldSkills Competitors to tell their stories to inspire other Australians – of all ages and ethnic backgrounds.

Please refer to the attached media release featuring this year’s 15 VET Alumni and Ambassadors for National Skills Week from around Australia.

**Partners of National Skills Week**

Numerous industry leaders and VET organisations partner with National Skills Week and promote the week through their own marketing / social media platforms and networks.

**VERTO who supports all apprentices and employers in NSW, CEO Ron Maxwell says:**

“VERTO is proud to support National Skills Week, and in turn raise the profile of the life-changing opportunities available through vocational education and training.”

“While there is a common misconception that apprenticeships are for those who don’t make it into university, the reality couldn’t be further from the truth. Apprenticeships offer a wide range of career options that can even see you [earning more than university graduates on qualification](https://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/news/vet-graduates-trumping-uni-degree-holders-in-many-areas-report-says/news-story/a7152e1e7bb4bd8ce81107a92b36f824).

“Whether you want a professional career as a tradie, business manager or IT expert, a role in hospitality, or even a creative career like wine or cake-making, an apprenticeship or traineeship has you covered.  There are [more than 500 apprenticeship and traineeship careers](https://www.apprenticeshipsupport.com.au/Apprentices/Qualifications) available, so there really is something for everyone.”

Now in its 13th year, National Skills Week garners bipartisan support as educating the community about the current skills shortages and future job demand remains critical to the economy.

**Brick and Block Careers, Chief Executive Officer, Michael Morrissey said**:

“Bricklaying is a highly sought-after trade that is in high demand across Australia. The construction industry is shifting, with a greater emphasis on career paths, and qualified bricklayers now expect job security and a bright future with the possible career pathways.

“Brick and Block Careers offers dedicated services in each state, where efforts are focused on candidate placement. Schools and school leavers are being educated about the opportunities in Brick and Blocklaying. Bricklaying jobs in all states are in high demand; job security is good and will continue to be so.”

**Chambers Apprenticeship Support Australia, CEO, Lee Xavier said:**

*National Skills Week* is a celebration of the range and diversity of our VET sector and also a time to put the spotlight on how an apprenticeship and traineeship will open doors for you. It is a fantastic opportunity to highlight the value and benefits of technical training to a wider audience and allows people to reach out to find out more about what is on offer and how to access these future prospects.

**Apprenticeship Support Australia** is very proud of our long-term partnership with the organisers of the week, and for the opportunity to come together to showcase how apprenticeships and traineeships have changed so many lives for the better. We want to further build on this momentum by continuing to promote the development of the skills and knowledge required for a rewarding career, with the emphasises on the importance of finding meaningful work based on people’s passions and talents.

**Matthew Hick, CEO, MEGT:**

“For more than four decades, MEGT has seen a wealth of evidence about the value of Vocational Education and Training. Given the current skills shortages, VET pathways have, in fact, never been more important”.

“The National Skills Week theme of ‘What are you looking for?’ speaks very clearly to the wealth of VET pathways which don’t just apply to young Australians starting out in the workforce, but mature-aged workers wanting to upskill or even change careers. We see examples of this every day at MEGT”.

“MEGT has always had an ethos of ‘leave nobody behind’. VET pathways don’t just open doors to great careers, they safeguard a pipeline of critical skills which the Australian workforce will need well into the future”.

“What MEGT is looking for are enough apprentices and trainees getting opportunities to become qualified to ensure our Australian workforce won’t be short of skills in years to come”.

As we are experiencing skills shortages across all parts of the country, the central theme of **"*What Are You Looking For*?"** aims to highlight the diversity of career pathways available and to celebrate the positive impact apprenticeships and traineeships have on our local communities. We also come together to focus on the range of emerging skills needs and opportunities available, including New Energy and Women in Non-traditional apprenticeship programs, as we drive towards a skills-led economy. The focus must be to ensure we provide current quality information and all the resources to develop a talented homegrown skills pipeline that is equipped with the skills now and for the future.

**2023 theme: What are you looking for?**

This year’s theme for National Skills Week is “What are you looking for?” focused on the idea of matching what people are looking for in a career and their life to skills training through Vocational Education. It is also about employers and industry showcasing what they are looking for in their team and the role that VET has in this space.

**Interview options / talent:**

**Capital has access to a wide range of Government leaders, CEOs of industry bodies and organisations across industries facing the biggest skills shortages (healthcare, manufacturing, construction etc) as well as more than 15 VET Alumni from all parts of the country who have completed VET courses and won awards.**

**National Skills Week Chairman Brian Wexham is also available for interviews upon request.**

For further information, visit nationalskillsweek.com.au

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