

PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

TERTIARY, TRADE AND TRAINING REPORT

Chandra Ridley – Portfolio Leader, March 2025

REGIONAL UNIVERSITY STUDY HUBS

In March 2024 the Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, announced 10 new Regional University Study Hubs. Two of these are in WA, one in Katanning and one in Tom Price/Onslow. These are additional to the ones already operational in Albany and Denmark.

The hubs offer support to students to work towards achieving a tertiary education without having to leave family, support networks and the local community. They are free for registered students to access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Hub infrastructure includes study spaces, breakout areas, video conferencing, computer facilities and high-speed internet access. They also provide administrative and academic support services such as developing writing and research skills and managing administrative processes. There are also student support services such as pastoral support, study advice and help accessing student services.

The ultimate aim of the Regional Hubs is to enable students in rural, regional and remote Australia to access and complete higher education without having to leave their community.

Each hub reflects the community it serves and is established with the consideration of geographic location of the study hub in relation to the community, population size, demographic and cultural needs of the local community, local industry and businesses in the area and location of TAFE and VET providers.

CLEAN ENERGY SKILLS NATIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

The Commonwealth and State Governments announced in early June a joint investment of \$70.5 million over the next five years to establish a TAFE Clean Energy Skills National Centre of Excellence in Western Australia.

The Centre will operate across the WA TAFE network and be a skills leader in clean energy science, engineering, construction and operation supporting the net zero transformation.

It will equip students with practical skills and knowledge-based capabilities to support innovation in the clean energy sector. It will also partner with industry to drive skill development and support participation of more Western Australians in clean energy jobs.

It will expand access to clean energy skills training opportunities at TAFE campuses in metropolitan Perth and in regional areas including Kalgoorlie, Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Karratha and Broome.

There are a range of Career Conversation events being held around the state and online. They explore post-school options and career pathways. A link to register can be found at www.education.wa.edu.au and search career conversation events.

CURTIN REGIONAL ROAD TRIP

During Semester 2, Curtin University gave students the opportunity to undertake a Regional Road Trip Unit as part of their Regional Changemakers specialisation.

The unit is open to all undergraduate students. It gives students the opportunity to explore the role regional communities play in global sustainability. They will receive a unique insight into life and work in regional communities. This year students will be visiting towns across the Wheatbelt including Quairading and Corrigin.

The unit consists of four, three-hour workshops, a seven-day regional immersion and an overnight regional volunteer experience. The aim is for students to gain a deeper understanding of why regional, rural and remote Western Australia is pivotal to all our futures.

SKILLS WEST EXPO

The 2024 Skills West Expo was held on 25 - 27 July at the Perth Convention Centre. Over 160 organisations and employers participated in the three-day event.

This was an opportunity for people to engage directly with educators, course providers and employers to explore tailored career pathways.

There was also a 'Try-a Skill' zone with activities such as driving autonomous trucks in mining scenarios, pedal powered car races, virtual cybercrime investigations and creative jewellery workshops.

TERTIARY ACCESS PAYMENT

Applications for 2023 school leavers close on 31 December 2024.

Applications for 2024 school leavers open on 1 January 2025.

In the 2024-25 Mid-Year Economic Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO), the government announced it is removing the TAP eligibility requirement to commence tertiary studies within 12 months of completing Year 12. All other criteria remain in place, including the student being up to 22 years of age at the time of commencement of the course. Removing the access limit period will ensure more regional students are incentivised to pursue a tertiary education and can benefit from this cost-of-living support. This will enable more students to access the TAP and responds to feedback from regional stakeholders and the Accord Panel.

The changes to TAP eligibility require updates to the application and supporting systems. The government is working to make these changes to enable first-year students who have taken one or more gap years following Year 12 (or equivalent) and are aged up to 22 to apply for the TAP.

Students who have taken a gap year are eligible from 1 January 2025, however they cannot apply until mid-June 2025 through [Services Australia](#) as the system needs to be updated.

NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

In November 2024 Jodie Wallace was appointed to the position of Director General of the Department of Training and Workforce Development. Ms Wallace has worked in the Public Sector for more than two decades and has held Executive Director positions at the Department of Training and Workforce Development for the last six years. Ms Wallace's priorities will include continuing to deliver a high standard of service to the WA Community and provide accessible world-class training.

HIGHER TAFE ENROLMENTS

It was announced in November that the government investment in TAFE's has seen Central Regional TAFE achieve higher enrolments in automotive retail, service and repair courses in Kalgoorlie following the opening of a new state-of-the-art heavy trades and engineering workshops.

Enrolments were up more than 69 per cent in 2024 compared to the start of 2020.

The State Government announced an \$8 million top up for TAFE in the 2024-2025 State Budget to continue to meet high demand for the Fee Free initiative.

NEW LOOK JOBS AND SKILLS WEBSITE

A new look Jobs and Skills website was launched in December 2024. Improvements have been made to the course list and occupation profiles to make it easier to find information, support and services.

CHANGES TO STUDY AND TRAINING LOANS

In December there was an indexation rate change for study and training loans which will now be based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or Wage Price Index (WPI) – whichever is lower. The change is backdated to indexation applied from 1 June 2023.

The government has proposed changes for study and training loans. The changes will take effect from 1 July 2025 subject to the passage of legislation.

The minimum repayment threshold will change from \$54,435 in 2024-2025 to \$67,000 in 2025-2026.

HELP repayments will only be calculated on the income above the new \$67,000 threshold instead of the total annual income.

APPRENTICE INCENTIVE PAYMENTS

On the 24 January 2025, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced a \$10,000 incentive payment to encourage apprentices to complete their training in the residential housing sector. From July 1 2025, eligible apprentices will receive \$10,000 in incentive payments over the life of their apprenticeship to work in housing construction.

Apprentices will receive \$2,000 at 6, 12, 24,36 months and at the completion of their apprenticeship.