



2025 Training Federal Conference Report

Anna McCorkle - NSW

ICPA (Aust) is committed to ensuring rural and remote students have equitable access to vocational education and training (VET), including Australian Apprenticeships. In 2024–25, the Training Portfolio focused on addressing systemic challenges and advocating for practical reforms that support regional, rural, and remote learners pursuing trade and vocational pathways.

Four motions were presented and carried at the 2024 Federal Conference in Sydney. These focused on:

- Financial supports for relocating Australian Apprentices
- Reform of the Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA)
- Apprenticeship Support Providers - Apprentice Connect Australia Provider (ACAP's)
- Improved recognition of apprentices who relocate

These and previous motions shaped the 2024–5 Training Portfolio, policy and our advocacy efforts throughout the council year. In 2024–25, ICPA (Aust) continued to advocate strongly for financial supports for rural and remote apprentices who must relocate. This included direct advocacy to Elected Members and Ministers; meetings with stakeholders and particularly Services Australia and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR).

The Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System was released in January 2025. ICPA (Aust) put forth a submission late in 2024. The release of the review's Final Report identified two specific regional, rural and remote Key Issues

The Review identified Two Key Issues that affect Regional and Remote apprentices:

- Apprentices in regional and remote areas often have to travel into major cities, otherwise they are limited to occupations and industries in their region.

This issue is exacerbated by low population density, resulting in low levels of enrolment in some courses. This can often result in apprentices working in regional and remote areas having to travel long distances to conduct off-the-job training in another area.

- The need to relocate or to travel long distances for training results in additional costs that apprentices in major cities often do not face.

[Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government](#)

The Review made 34 recommendations to the Government. Three of these are focused on regional and remote apprentices, and one has fortunately already been delivered.

- All Governments work together to provide more financial support to apprentices through subsidies for their travel and accommodation expenses, purchasing tools, and reforms to apprentice support payment to increase the amount and frequency of payment.
- Increase the LAFHA payment and then index payments on an ongoing semi-annual basis in line with the Consumer Price Index, consistent with Youth Allowance. (Delivered 1 July 2025)
- Training providers provide more flexible training options for Regional and Remote apprentices such as block release training or with 'pop up' training centres.



Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System – Fact sheet for regional and remote apprentices - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government

ICPA (Aust) is awaiting the release of the Governments response to the independent review from Minister Giles' office (Minister for Employment and Skills) and will continue to advocate for the realisation of the relevant recommendations.

Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA)

On the back of the Review release and after many Federal and State Conference motions and widespread advocacy ICPA (Aust) welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement in January 2025, of the first increase to LAFHA in over two decades. The new rates starting 1 July 2025, are

- First year: \$120/week
- Second year: \$90/week
- Third year: \$45/week

Overarching the initial increases is an important legislation change that indexes the LAFHA annually from 1 July in line with CPI.

Australian Apprentices must work with their Apprentice Connect Australia Provider (ACAP) regarding their relocation and eligibility for LAFHA. ACAP's are responsible for submitting the LAFHA form on behalf of the Australian Apprentices.

Discussion with Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)

Apprenticeship Support Providers - Apprentice Connect Australia Providers (ACAP's)

ICPA (Aust)

- *Acknowledges the lack of a formal mechanism to capture information about apprentices who have relocated.*
- *Suggests that providers should identify relocated apprentices during the initial assessment process to address potential barriers to completion.*

DEWR

- *Mentoring by ACAP's is available to those who relocate – doing so in the context of undertaking an Australian Apprenticeship would be considered a complex need and thus trigger the on-demand mentoring available.*
- *Encourage member families with Apprentices to seek the available mentoring from ACAP's*

Recognition of Regional, Rural and Remote (RRR) Apprentices who relocate

ICPA (Aust)

- *Clarification of data recorded in the Training Contract not Training Plan*
- *Raise the idea of capturing the apprentice's home/residential address within the training contract, currently only recorded as RRR if the Employer's address in one of these location classifications.*



DEWR

- *The Training Contract is localised, State by State, so this change would need to be individually implemented across each State and Territory. DEWR recommended an alternative option – to work with the Apprenticeship Data Management System (ADMS) team to explore the feasibility of two addresses within the Federally managed system to negate the need to work with States and Territories, yet still capture accurately the number of Australian Apprentices who need to relocate for their on and off-the-job training. DEWR representatives are looking into this, and ICPA(Aust) will continue to explore and seek resolutions.*

During the 2024-25 Federal Council year ICPA (Aust) has also monitored aspects that are relative to the Training Portfolio and its policy. Some of the events and developments are listed below –

Apprentice Connect Australia Providers (ACAP's)

ACAP's are the point of contact for all parties involved in Australian Apprenticeships and Traineeships. It is vital that Apprentices know and seek out support from their ACAP as they plan, commence and undertake an Apprenticeship. As federal funded bodies the current agreement see the individual organisations work in regions or within one or more of the following four specialisations -

- Generalist
- Women in Male Dominated Trades
- Clean Energy
- First Nations

DEWR encouraged all regional, rural and remote Apprentices to make sure their ACAP was aware if they had relocated for all or any aspect of their apprenticeship.

Details for the ACAP's and supporting documents can be found on the Australian Apprenticeships website. <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.au/>

The Key Apprenticeship Program (KAP)

The newly introduced KAP is part of the Australian Government's commitment for a Future Made in Australia and available to Australian Apprentices working in either the clean energy sector or the housing construction sector. There are over 65 occupations listed as clean energy and/or housing construction on the [Australian Apprenticeships Priority List](#). While this is a positive development for Australian Apprentices, ICPA (Aust) has raised concerns about the Key Apprenticeship Program (KAP), noting it is limited to specific industries and may not meet the broader needs of regional apprentices.

KAP Recipients are eligible for:

- Up to \$10,000 (\$2,000 at 6, 12, 24 and 36 months and on completion)
- Personalised non-financial support services (peer-support, networking).
- An income contingent loan, as part of the Australian Apprenticeship Support Loan program.

Employers of KAP recipients are also eligible to receive a Priority Hiring Incentive of up to \$5,000.



Jobs and Skills Australia

The development and release of the **Jobs and Skills Atlas** – a national tool designed to provide insights into workforce needs, emerging occupations, and training gaps across regions. This interactive resource is valuable in highlighting localised skill shortages and supports the case for more responsive and accessible vocational training in rural and remote communities. Its data will be instrumental in strengthening the evidence base for ongoing advocacy and planning.

[Link to the Jobs and Skills Atlas](#)

Jobs and Skills Australia's (JSA) - Work Plan 2024-25

The JSA Work Plan includes the development of a [Regional, Rural and Remote Jobs and Skills Roadmap](#). The Roadmap will meet all five of the JSA's outcomes whilst also intersecting with regional, rural and remote focused reforms and initiatives across education, skills and employment policy. ICPA (Aust) will contribute to the review early in the 2025-26 Council Year and would appreciate members' contributions regarding their experience in the RRR space when they or their children are accessing skills and training.

Post School Pathways Harmony.

The release of the Department of Education's "Towards a Tertiary Education System: A Unified Tertiary Education System Roadmap". This roadmap outlines proposed reforms aimed at greater integration and consistency across vocational education and higher education sectors, "Towards a Harmonisation". ICPA (Aust) welcomes the move toward a more coherent system that could simplify pathways for rural and remote learners. However, we caution that any reform must explicitly address the barriers faced by geographically isolated students—particularly those who must relocate or travel long distances to study—and ensure that flexibility and affordability remain core priorities.

To support this alignment, the report outlines 19 key recommendations, across 3 pillars
Pillar 1: Key players: roles and relationships A roadmap to tertiary harmonisation will require co-operation among diverse system actors. This includes relationships between state and territory governments and the Australian Government, providers, employers, unions and licensing and accreditation authorities.

Pillar 2: Knowledge, skills and qualifications: architecture and perceptions. Tertiary harmonisation involves developing a common language that will facilitate innovation in qualification design, expand career opportunities that draw on combinations of skill and knowledge levels and that better support industries, especially those in transition.

Pillar 3: Legislative, regulatory, financial and data architecture Legislative, regulatory and funding arrangements will need to be reformed to put VET and Higher Education on a level playing field and incentivise harmonisation.



2025 Federal Conference – Adelaide SA

Pillar 1: Key Players – Roles & Relationships	Pillar 2: Knowledge, Skills & Qualifications – Architecture & Perceptions	Pillar 3: Legislative, regulatory, financial & data architecture
State and territory and Australian Government relations	VET and Higher Education system connection through skills and knowledge	Governance, regulation and legislative frameworks
Industry: Employers, unions and accrediting bodies	Qualification design and the AQF, NST	Funding incentives
Provider collaboration	RPL and Credit Recognition to support student access and mobility	Financial support for students to participate
Ownership of system elements	Culture and perceptions in and of the tertiary system/sectors	Coherent data collection and reporting

Access to and increases of National State based travel and accommodation programs to access Vocational and Educational Training (VET).

Australian Apprentice Travel Assistance for Training and Assessment as of May 2024.

Location and Scheme Name	Travel Rates per Kilometer	Accommodation Rates per Night
SA Travel and Accommodation Allowance (TAA)	30c	\$60
QLD Travel and Accommodation Allowance	32c	\$55
NSW Vocational Training Assistance Scheme(V TAS)	33c	\$56
WA Travel and accommodation Allowance(TAA)	40c	\$100
TAS Travel and Accommodation Allowance	41-45c (zone variation within TAS)	\$55
NT Apprenticeship travel and accommodation subsidy scheme	50c	\$100

The above table highlights the disparity in state systems that are in place to assist apprentice travel to training, the inconsistency is a state by state issue, ICPA(Aust) encourage all State Councils to take the issue to their respective Government departments.

Australian Apprenticeship/ Traineeships - Data Snapshot

As at 31 December 2024, there were 311,760 apprentices in training nationwide,

Of those 39 % are located as follows, based on the apprentice's residential address

- 74,935 were in inner regional areas
- 37,860 were in outer regional areas



2025 Federal Conference – Adelaide SA

- 6,390 were in remote areas
- 2,660 were in very remote areas

This breakdown of location is based on the ARIA+ index of remoteness (2021 version) (which has been adopted as the ABS standard for measuring remoteness) <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3e64dfb19529465dbcc09ed838da6557>

In the 12 months ending 31 December 2024, there were 98,665 Apprentice or Traineeship completions. Of those:

- 25,220 were in inner regional areas
- 12,400 were in outer regional areas
- 2,000 were in remote areas
- 935 were in very remote areas

In the January-March 2025 quarter (the most recent nationally released data) there were 55,845 commencing apprentices. Of those:

- 14,160 were in inner regional areas
- 7,770 were in outer regional areas
- 1,295 were in remote areas
- 805 were in very remote areas

All of this data comes from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, and is available here: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/data/databuilder#>

The Training Portfolio remains focused on practical reforms that address real barriers faced by rural and remote learners. Looking at the data above we know RRR Apprentices are still represented in the national data, yet it is well documented that disparities are present, and these are reducing the commencement, retention and completion of post school training for our members children.

ICPA (Aust) acknowledges the valuable input from members and branches through motions, lived experiences and case studies. These contributions directly shape our advocacy with decision-makers and enhance the credibility of our recommendations.

May our member families continue to grow and prosper as lifelong learners.