

# TERTIARY, TRADE AND TRAINING REPORT

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## Changes to Apprenticeship Incentives

The Australian Government has updated the **Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System**, which affects both apprentices and employers.

Key changes include:

- A **Key Apprenticeship Program** targeting critical industries such as housing construction and clean energy
- Employers can receive **up to \$5,000** for training apprentices in priority occupations.
- Apprentices in priority trades may receive **up to \$10,000 in support payments**.
- Interest-free **apprenticeship loans of up to about \$25,983** remain available, with a **20% discount on completion**.

## **Sector specific & Regional support**

- **WA Construction Training Fund (CTF):** New and existing WA construction apprentices can receive a \$1,000 annual bonus payment for continuing their training from Jan 2025, plus a tool allowance rebate of up to \$1,000.
- **Priority Occupations:** Many new incentives are specifically tied to the **Australian Apprenticeship Priority List**, which includes many electrical, fabrication, and mechanical engineering trades.

## **Why it matters for rural students:**

These incentives are designed to increase the number of apprentices in high-demand trades

### **Increased Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA):**

From 1 July 2025, the allowance for apprentices who need to move for their training increases significantly:

- o **1st Year:** \$120 per week (up from \$77.17).
- o **2nd Year:** \$90 per week (up from \$38.59).
- o **3rd Year:** \$45 per week (up from \$25.00).

### **Australian Apprenticeship Support Loan (AASL)**

The [Australian Apprenticeship Support Loan](#) (AASL), formerly Trade Support Loan, is an interest-free, government-funded loan up to \$25,983 (2025-26) to help apprentices with living and tool expenses. Paid monthly in arrears, it is repaid via the tax system only when earning over \$67,000, with a 20% bonus reduction upon completion.

## **Key Aspects of the Apprenticeship Loan**

- **Eligibility:** Must be an Australian citizen/permanent resident undertaking a qualification on the [Australian Apprenticeship Priority List](#).

- **Loan Amount & Structure:** Up to \$25,983 (for 2025-26) can be borrowed over the apprenticeship duration. It is front-loaded to support lower wages: higher payments in early years, reducing in later years (\$816.41/month in Year 1, down to \$204.10/month in Year 4)
- **Repayment & Interest:** The loan is interest-free but subject to annual indexation (capped at the lower of CPI or Wage Price Index). Repayments start only when income reaches \$67,000 for 2025-26.
- **Completion Bonus:** Upon successful completion of the apprenticeship, a 20% discount is applied to the total amount borrowed.
- **Application:** Apprentices choose how much to borrow and can opt in/out for six-month periods.

The loan is intended for living expenses, tools, or other costs associated with training. As of Jan 1 2026, a 20% reduction applies to loans if you have a debt on 1 June 2025.

### Expansion of Fee-Free TAFE and Short Courses

Several states (including WA) continue to offer **fee-free training in priority skill areas**.

Examples include:

- Over **130 training courses available fee-free** under “Job Ready” programs.
- Courses include trades, construction, agriculture, healthcare and IT skills.

**Benefit for regional students:**  
Removing course fees lowers the financial barrier for students who might otherwise struggle to relocate or pay tuition.

### Advanced Apprenticeships and Industry-Linked Degrees

A newer model being explored is the “**advanced apprenticeship**”, where students:

- Work for an employer
- Complete structured training
- Graduate with a **university qualification as well as workplace experience**

Programs linked with the **Regional Education and Skills Program** have supported more than **1,400 students in regional Australia** through funded training and skills development opportunities.

This model aims to blend:

- university study
- vocational training
- paid employment.

### Support for Employers and Small Businesses to Take Apprentices

Recent reviews of the apprenticeship system have recommended:

- **Subsidies for Group Training Organisations** to help small businesses employ apprentices.
- Expansion of **shared apprenticeships** where multiple employers share training costs.

**Why it matters:**  
Many rural employers cannot commit to a full apprenticeship alone. Shared training models help overcome this barrier.

### **Growth in Regional Skills and Training Programs**

Government and industry partnerships are funding **regional training initiatives**, particularly where skill shortages exist.

Examples include programs focused on:

- agriculture and pastoral industries
- energy and resource projects
- construction and housing trades.

These programs provide **paid training and mentoring with employment pathways**, helping young people stay in regional areas rather than moving to cities.

### **WEST AUSTRALIANS NAMED NATIONAL WINNERS AT AUSTRALIAN TRAINING AWARDS IN 2025**

Western Australia's seven finalists have excelled at the 2025 Australian Training Awards, in its now 31<sup>st</sup> year of Australia's premier training awards, securing two of the nation's most coveted accolades, and as the Hon Andrew Giles MP, Minister for Skills and Training stated *"These Awards are an opportunity to celebrate the best of Australia's vocational education and training sector – and remind Australians that there's never been a better time to pursue new skills and qualifications. And as a nation we reap the benefits from the dedication and commitment of VET students, teachers and trainers. It is fitting that every year we celebrate their achievements through these awards"*.

When winners were announced our representatives from the State won the Vocational Student of the Year and Small Training Provider of the Year.

#### **Vocational Student of the Year (Winner) - Arabella Poole**

This award recognises outstanding achievement by a vocational student in a course of study leading to a nationally recognised qualification.

Emerging from a complex medical journey that spanned 13 years, Arabella rebuilt her life through vocational education. Inspired by her occupational therapist, Arabella enrolled in a fitness qualification to reconnect with her love of learning. It was an act of hope, and one that proved to be life-changing. Arabella turned a trial into triumph when she followed a vocational pathway in fitness. Now a personal trainer and group fitness instructor, Arabella is rebuilding her core strength in a new career. Her vocational journey marks the beginning of a new chapter in her life.

#### **Small Training Provider of the Year (Gold) - Taylor Weir Hairdresser and Barber Training**

The Small Training Provider of the Year Award recognises small, registered training organisations (RTOs) with fewer than 500 students that offer a range of training products and services and that demonstrate excellence and high-level performance in all aspects of vocational education and training.

Taylor Weir Hairdressing and Barber Training has been shaping careers and styling success in Western Australia for 29 years. Blending innovation with student-focused education, the long-established RTO delivers nationally recognised programs with passion and personalised support. Award-winning and

industry-recognised, Taylorweir is empowering the next generation of hair professionals with rewarding careers and proving itself a cut above the rest.

### **Apprentice of the year – Finalist - Lewis Italiano**

Growing up in the small town of Wokalup, Lewis enjoyed woodwork at school, with encouragement from his family and guidance from his teachers, Lewis began an apprenticeship at Studio Milton. He completed a Certificate III in Cabinet Making and Timber Technology through South Regional TAFE, and the support he received during his apprenticeship changed the trajectory of his life.

Lewis' cabinet making journey has been highlighted by success at WorldSkills Australia and WorldSkills International competitions. He committed countless hours to perfecting his craft, and his efforts were rewarded with gold medals and Medallions of Excellence. He has also been recognised by the Master Builders Association as the most outstanding cabinet making apprentice and overall apprentice of the year.

### **Trainee of the year – Finalist – Elisa Jane Thompson**

When a knee reconstruction derailed her budding career as a ballerina, Elisa Jane had to pivot. She loved teaching ballet to children, so she decided on a career in early childhood education. It was a life-changing moment. She is now completing a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care through Central Regional TAFE, and she is employed as a trainee at Toodyay Early Learning Centre (TELC).

Elisa Jane has embraced her leadership role as TELC's Toddler Room Leader, and she is proud to be one of the youngest educators in the Centre's history to hold the position. She strives to be a role model, advocate and safe presence for every child, and she is passionate about making a positive impact in her workplace.

### **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Student of the year – Finalist – Laurenzia Divilli**

Seeking a fresh career and a new challenge, Laurenzia completed a Certificate IV in Beauty Therapy at the Broome Campus of North Regional TAFE, gaining practical and theoretical skills in skincare, nail care, makeup, waxing, and salon operations.

In addition to her salon talents, Laurenzia holds a Certificate III in Leadership and a Certificate III in Business. This rich selection of vocational skills will empower her to fulfil her future goals, which include managing a salon and launching her own beauty business.

Proud of her cultural identity and strong community connection, Laurenzia hopes to represent Indigenous women and promote self-care in the beauty industry.

In her role as an Aboriginal Educational Support Officer with North Regional TAFE, Laurenzia supports current beauty students through their training, while providing a positive example to the young people in her community.

### **Australian School based Apprentice or Trainee of the year – Finalist – Cadie Doyle**

Cadie's interest in engineering was sparked in a Year 9 metalwork class. Her love of oxy welding led her to a school-based traineeship, and she's now working in a team at an ore car repair shop near Port Hedland.

Cadie is a Year 11 student at Hedland Senior High School. She is undertaking a Certificate II in Engineering through North Regional TAFE (RTO) and Category 5 (GTO), and she is employed part-time at BHP Rail.

Cadie's traineeship has been an incredible journey. She has worked on MIG and stick welding projects, ground burrs off couplers and cleared hazards from work bays. Along the way, she has also developed teamwork and leadership skills. Most importantly, her confidence and motivation have grown. With her hands-on technical skills and new-found confidence, Cadie is forging a bright future in engineering.

### **VET Teacher/Trainer of the year – Finalist – Chanelle Williams**

After working overseas as an early childhood caregiver, Chanelle returned to Australia to pursue a career in teaching. Now a lecturer at North Regional TAFE, Chanelle delivers Certificate III and Diploma-level qualifications in early childhood education and care. She also plays a pivotal role in leading the RTO's early childcare education and care team.

Taking excellence to a whole new level, Chanelle travels to the northernmost regions of Western Australia to deliver essential training to early childhood students. She is passionate about inclusion and adapts training to meet the regional needs of learners, empowering them to pursue meaningful careers. Chanelle has an ongoing collaboration with the Ngunga Group Women's Aboriginal Corporation in Derby. Having developed a culturally responsive, trauma-informed program for the corporation, there has been a significant increase in Aboriginal student participation in the area. Bright futures are being shaped across the Kimberley.

### **Skills West careers and employment Expo may 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> May 2026 & Skills West Expo July 2026**

These events are held every year and is for students, graduates and job seekers.

### **Emerging Issues Relevant to Rural Students**

- **Access to training facilities** remains a challenge for rural students.
- **Travel and accommodation costs** still limit participation in apprenticeships.
- **Online and hybrid learning models** are becoming more common but are not suitable for all trades.
- Increasing focus on **skills needed for clean energy, housing construction and agriculture technology**.

Recent reforms in apprenticeship incentives, fee-free training initiatives and industry-linked education pathways show a strong national focus on strengthening Australia's skilled workforce. However, ensuring equitable access to these opportunities for rural and remote students remains critical. Issues such as travel, accommodation, training availability and regional employer capacity continue to influence whether young people from isolated communities can fully benefit from tertiary trade and training pathways.