

About Tourism Training Australia

Tourism Training Australia has been a driving force in developing a flexible and effective training system for the tourism and hospitality industry since 1982. The association unites a diverse range of training partners, including industry leaders, government bodies, unions, private and public training providers, industry associations, universities, students, and trainees.

Each year Tourism Training Australia holds a skills summit to prioritise policy initiatives that the industry needs to progress in the following 12 months. At the summit for 2025 (held on the 22nd September) it was concluded that the inclusion of key occupations on the CSOL was a priority for the hospitality sector.

About the Hospitality Industry

The Australian hospitality industry, classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as Accommodation and Foodservice, Division H of the ANZSIC framework, is still in a significant growth phase following a strong recovery after the COVID restriction period.

The growth in revenues has not been matched by profit growth given increases in the cost of goods and the cost of labour. For the restaurants, cafes and takeaway food sub-sector of the broader Division H, the turnover reached \$66.3 Billion for the Financial Year to June 2025.

The ABS reports that 'The Accommodation and food services industry recorded growth in most key data items in 2023-24, though profit declined (OPBT fell 6.2% (-\$777m), driven by the food and beverage services subdivision (18.4%, -\$1.9b)). Total expenses increased 11.1% (\$14.4b), reflecting higher purchases of goods and materials (11.9%, \$5.3b), and Total labour costs (6.3%, \$2.7b)'.

Contrary to the popular narrative, the number of businesses in the sector, including the foodservice component of the sector, have increased over the reporting period with a 1.2% growth in the number of businesses being recorded to June 2025¹. The challenge for the industry is this net increase incorporates a 20% turnover of businesses each year.

Cooks and Chefs

Cooks and Chefs together account for 22% of the workforce in the Accommodation and Foodservice sector². At over 211,000 in the current workforce the demand per annum, including attrition and growth, sits at 34,000 per annum.

There are three basic sources of cooks and chefs for the Australia hospitality industry. They are the Australian Apprenticeship System, international students studying in Australia transitioning to work in Australia as cooks / chefs and the skilled migration system.

¹ ABS Business Register Counts, June 25

² Jobs and Skills Australia, Workforce Profile, Accommodation and Foodservice, 2025

The Apprenticeship System enrollments in the food trades has reduced from 7,635 in 2019 to 5,650 in 2024³. This 29% reduction has continued into 2025. The number of annual completions from this number of enrollments accounts for less than 2,000 per annum.

International Students studying cookery that have completed their studies, gained paid placements in the industry and transitioned to work in the hospitality sector, as cooks and chefs, have been a key feature of the workforce for over 10 years. The numbers of students undertaking the trade level qualification have decreased from 7,159 in 2019 to 2829⁴ in 2025 (on a YTD basis). This reduction of 55% of numbers of students studying cookery will most likely result in approximately 3,500 students transitioning to cook and chef roles in 2025.

The combination of the sources of cooks and chefs through the Australian education system, including local students through apprenticeship and international students is in the order of 5,500 per annum. This compares to an industry demand for 34,000 cooks and chefs each year.

The balance of the industry demand will be met through either skilled migration or manifest as a further shortage of cooks and chefs. In the 23-24 Financial Year, 3,957 chefs came to Australia under the skilled migration program⁵. Whilst not officially reported as yet, it is understood that chefs in the 24/25 year will be over 6,000 for the year. Even at this level there is a net deficit between industry demand and supply of Cooks and Chefs in the order of 22,000 in the Accommodation and Foodservice sector.

RECOMMENDTION

That the occupations of Cook and Patsry Cook (3223) and Chef (321131) are retained on the Core Skills Occupation List.

Restaurant Managers

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) reports 65,700 Café and Restaurant Managers working in the Accommodation and Food Service sector. At this level, given the above-mentioned growth results and consistent with JSA projections, the industry demand for this occupation will be in the order of 10,512 per annum.

The skill shortage in this occupation have become substantially worse since the removal of Café and Restaurant Managers from the CSOL in December 2024. JSA reports that 698,700 (73%) of employment in the Accommodation and Food Service sector is in the Cafes, Restaurants and Takeaway Food Sub-Sector. This, in part, explains the larger demand for managers in the Café and Restaurant stream as opposed to other occupational streams in the sector.

The traditional pathway for training and recruitment of café and restaurant managers has been through higher level vocational education (VET) and Higher Education through Diplomas, Advanced Diploma and Degree programs. NCVER reports total enrolments in Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas, in Food and Hospitality of 10. Data from the Department of Education cites 556 students undertaking hospitality or tourism degree level programs in 2023 (2024 is not yet reported at this level).

At the time of submission Seek reports 7,218 vacancies of café and restaurant managers⁶. This is significantly higher than in 2024. This is a result of the removal of the occupation from the CSOL in late 2024.

³ NCVER Data Builder, Food Trades Workers, Time series 2019-2024

⁴ International Student Data for the year-to-date (YTD) July 2025, Department of Education, 20025

⁵ 2023-24 Migration Program Report - Program year 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, Department of Home Affairs, 2025

⁶ Seek Occupational Vacancy Search, 26th August 2025

Industry demand and current vacancy levels suggest that the net demand for Café and Restaurant Managers is in the order of 10,000 people per annum.

RECOMMENDTION

That the occupations of Café and Restaurant Manager (161231) is ADDED to the Core Skills Occupation List.

Travel and Tourism Occupations

Employment in the travel and tourism sectors are a function of the level of activity in inbound and outbound travel. Inbound travel to Australia grew 5.5% (increase in visitor arrivals) compared to the previous year, reaching 8.4 million by the end of June 2025⁷. Outbound travel from Australia for the 2024/25 financial year was 12.3 million trips (10.6% growth) for the year ending July 2025⁸.

The key occupations impacted by this growth are Travel Consultants (Outbound) and Tour Guides (Inbound). The training pathway to these positions is a Certificate III qualification in travel and tourism (both defined in the SIT Training Package). In the case of Travel Agents this qualification is required to operate a travel agency.

NCVER reports that total completions for travel and tourism Certificate III programs in 2024 were 1,340. This was a 56% reduction on the number of completions in 2019. This reduction in training completions, combined with the significant growth in both inbound and outbound travel, has created significant skills shortages in these two occupations.

RECOMMENDTION

That the occupations of Travel Consultant (451612) and Tour Guide (321131) are retained on the Core Skills Occupation List.

26th September 2025

- INDUSTRY DIRECTIONS
- QUALITY TRAINING RESOURCES
- NATIONAL CONFERENCES
- GLOBAL TOURISM TRAINING NETWORK
- NATIONAL ACCREDITATION



⁷ Tourism Research Australia, Inbound Arrivals 2025

⁸ ABS Overseas Arrivals and Departures, Australia, 2025