



Australian Government



Jobs and Skills Australia

2025 Occupation Shortage Drivers Report

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Contents

Introduction.....	5
Producing occupation shortage drivers	8
Transition to Occupation Standard Classification for Australia	8
Unit group level outcomes and analysis.....	8
Key changes to the OSD methodology	8
Concepts and definitions	9
Key strengths of the methodology.....	10
Looking ahead	10
2025 OSD results	11
Summary of results from 2023 to 2025	11
Shortage drivers of large employing unit groups	12
Shortage drivers that changed between 2024 and 2025	14
Transition to uncertainty.....	14
Transition to Suitability gap	14
Transition to Retention gap	14
Other observations	14
Deep dive into training and retention gaps.....	17
Observations and discussion.....	17
Unit groups with above average employment growth and high demand.....	17
Unit groups with below average employment growth and high demand	19
Data sources and methodology.....	22
Data sources	22
Criteria for classifying unit groups into shortage drivers.....	22
Creating a unit group shortage list.....	24
Appendix A Variable description.....	26
A.1. Replacement rates	26
A.2. Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised	27
Appendix B Additional Tables for Shortage Drivers.....	28
Appendix C The deep dive analytical framework.....	30
C.1. Implications of the framework	31

Tables

Table 1: Jobs and Skills Australia occupation shortage driver typology.....	9
Table 2: Top 10 largest employing unit groups by shortage driver	12
Table 3: Unit groups that changed shortage drivers between 2024 and 2025	14
Table 4: Unit groups with above average employment growth and IVI-to-UE.....	17
Table 5: Unit groups with below average employment growth and above average IVI-to-UE	19
Table 6: Data sources used for occupation shortage drivers methodology and analysis	22
Table 7: Occupation shortage driver classification criteria.....	22
Table 8: Metrics used, periods used to calculate, and transformations applied	23
Table B1: Unit groups that are no longer in shortage in 2025 with their, previous, 2024 shortage driver 28	
Table B2: Unit groups that were newly in shortage in 2025 that were not in shortage in 2024	29
Table B3: Unit groups with the same shortage driver in 2024 and 2025.....	29

Figures

Figure 1: Occupation shortage drivers by number of unit groups, 2023 to 2025.....	11
Figure 2: Number of qualified and suitable applicants per vacancy (no., lhs) and employment growth (% , rhs), 2020 to 2025.....	16
Figure 3: Standardised hourly earnings and fill rates at 4 digit ANZSCO, by major occupation group, 2021–22 to 2024–25 financial years	21
Figure 4: Representative chart of unit groups that fall into the uncertain zone or a shortage driver.....	24
Figure 5: Converting occupation ratings to unit group ratings	25
Figure C1: 5 year employment growth (no., y-axis), 5 year average IVI to UE (no., x-axis) for training and Retention gap unit groups. 30	
Figure C2: Distribution of LSI (no.), by known shortage drivers, 2025.....	32

Boxes

Box 1:The 2025 OSD insights in a nutshell.....	6
Box 2:The training pipeline for registered nurses is improving	16
Box 3: Weak inflow into construction trades worker with Training gaps.....	21

Introduction

The Occupation Shortage Driver (OSD) report was produced by Jobs and Skills Australia to present the results from a typology that groups occupations by their primary driver of shortage.¹ The analysis builds on the Occupation Shortage List, which first identifies the shortage among occupations.²

The purpose of the report is to identify the main cause of shortage and monitor whether the cause changes or remains consistent over time.³ With that, the intended impact of the OSD analysis is to inform government, employers, and education and training providers find solutions to shortage issues in the labour market.

The typology was informed by a classification framework produced by Emerita Professor Sue Richardson.⁴ For the 2025 report, Jobs and Skills Australia applied the conceptual framework in Richardson (2007) on 2 key sources of data to produce the 4 primary shortage drivers: Long training gap, Short training gap, Suitability gap and Retention gap.⁵ The 2 sources of data include:

- Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised (SERA)
- Data on Occupation Mobility (DOM).^{6,7}

While several metrics were used in the OSD methodology, 2 metrics (based on the two abovementioned sources) were pivotal. These include average qualified applicants per vacancy, and average replacement rates of workers.

The former metric was used to ascertain whether the level of qualified workers flowing into the labour market was adequate to meet employer demand. The latter was used as a measure of employers' ability to retain workers who may leave or stay due to pay, work conditions and other factors that affect retention.

As new data become available, the methodology used to identify the key cause of shortage will be refined to ensure accurate categorisation, discern trends, and add depth to analysis.

¹ The term, occupation, in the sentence is used as a general term to refer to a job. It is not the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classifications of Occupations (ANZSCO) definition of occupation. Refer to footnote 2 below.

² The Occupation Shortage List, produced by Jobs and Skills Australia, provides a list of occupations in shortage in Australia and in each state and territory. The OSL is released annually and is a point-in-time assessment of the labour market.

³ OSD analysis is produced at the unit group level. Refer to footnote 8 and Producing occupation shortage drivers section of the report.

⁴ Richardson, S. (2007), "What is a skill shortage?". National Institute of Labour Studies – Flinders University – NCVER.

⁵ Refer to Table 1 in the Concepts and definitions section of the report.

⁶ SERA is a survey that collects information on recruitment activity from over 11,000 employers with online advertised vacancies. Data covers 577 occupations as defined by ANZSCO. See footnote 1 on ANZSCO.

⁷ DOM was constructed using Australian tax returns data. The data set shows the inflows and outflows of workers to and from occupations on a financial year basis. For more information refer to: [Data on Occupation Mobility: Unpacking Workers Movements | Jobs and Skills Australia](#). More details on the replacement rate calculation are in Appendix A – Variables description.

Box 1: The 2025 OSD insights in a nutshell

Lack of qualified applicants (training gap) remain the common cause of shortages

From 2023 to 2025, a lack of qualified workers was the key cause of shortages. Many large employing unit groups – health jobs, teaching professions, and construction trades and related roles – experienced below average numbers of qualified applicants per vacancy. The lack of qualified construction trades and related applicants has implications for growth in construction and clean energy generation sectors.

Government policy, higher education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) will play a critical role in increasing the throughput of trained workers into the labour market.

There are many highly qualified professionals who lack employability skills (Suitability gap)

Many occupations with a university pathway to the labour market have above average flows of qualified workers and technical know-how. But the workers lack the employability skills and experience that employers seek. This is the lead driver of shortages for engineers, managers and various science roles.

Greater employer investment in staff training and application of work-integrated learning could alleviate this form of shortage. But employer-provided training is on the decline. Further, employers may have unrealistic expectations with many who require applicants to have up to 5 years of experience on average.

Factors that reduce retention rates of workers (Retention gap) need to be tackled

Low pay, poor work conditions and culture, and lack of access to social infrastructure means workers leave frequently. Aged and Disabled Carers, personal service jobs and roles in the food sector experience this form of shortage and remain the key problem.

Solutions to such factors will largely come from employers. But government will play a role in improving access to education, health and childcare services.

There are signs of complex and multi-faceted factors driving shortages, which can mean the primary shortage driver is unclear

The primary driver of several occupations changed. But the transition was mostly from a known driver in 2024 to an uncertain one in 2025. This suggests there was an intersection of factors that caused shortages.

For example, previously, there were insufficient registered nurses in the labour market, with training gap identified as the primary shortage driver. Now, the cause of their shortage is uncertain. Two things appear to be happening: the supply pipeline is growing, but the need to replace registered nurses due to them leaving is rising. Retention issues for registered nurses are not new but may be becoming a bigger contributor of their shortage.

Box 1 (continued): The 2025 OSD insights in a nutshell

For some occupations, sharp increases in demand are outpacing existing capacity of the education and training system to supply

Elevated demand and high employment growth impact many occupations in health, education, and those critical to construction and the clean energy generation. But the jobs remain in shortage with training gaps as the lead cause. This suggests that the flow of qualified workers into the labour market may only be partly meeting demand.

Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers, Medical Imaging Professionals, Electrical Distribution Trades Workers, and Plumbers are examples.

Structural factors such as population ageing, greater participation of women, demand for sustainable energy and housing are fuelling the demand. These factors are ongoing and unlikely to reverse. An implication of the above is that shortages are likely to persist as demand outpaces supply.

Constrained pipeline of trained workers, coupled with high demand, exacerbate shortages for occupations key to construction, clean energy, and food trades.

These jobs have been experiencing declining rates of training commencements in recent years. But constraints in the flow of trained workers may also be stemming from factors that affect retention and attraction of workers.

Examples include Structural Steel and Welding Trades Workers, Metal Fitters and Machinists, Bakers and Pastrycooks, and Cooks.

Increasing the inflow of workers into these jobs, through increasing the supply of more qualified workers and improving pay, working conditions and culture will be gradual. It will also require increased training investment by employers and increased capacity in the training system.

Producing occupation shortage drivers

Transition to Occupation Standard Classification for Australia

In December 2024, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released an update of the previous ANZSCO framework with a new Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA).

As the OSL results are used in Government policy related to skilled migration and apprenticeship incentives, the 2025 OSL is published for both ANZSCO and OSCA.

Due to a lack of available data on OSCA, strong assumptions were used regarding mapping ANZSCO to OSCA. However, there were added challenges with converting the occupation level 2025 OSL into OSCA unit groups. Given these difficulties, the 2025 OSD has only been produced on an ANZSCO 2022 basis.

The transition to an OSCA version of future OSD analysis may occur in 2026 as OSCA based data become available.

Unit group level outcomes and analysis

OSD results are produced at the unit group level.⁸ To do this, a unit group version of the OSL is first created. Unit group level analysis overcomes data limitations that arise when using occupation level data.⁹ The results also align better with other Jobs and Skills Australia and ABS data that are readily available for unit groups.

Unit groups are less detailed than occupations and have fewer job categories with more general titles. For instance, in the ANZSCO 2022 version of the 2025 OSL, there were 273 occupations in shortage out of 916 occupations.

These translate to 103 unit groups in shortage out of a total of 311 in the OSL scope. The methodology used to map occupations to unit groups is described in the Creating a unit group shortage list.

Key changes to the OSD methodology

The results in the 2025 report were based on an updated methodology from that first introduced in the inaugural 2023 Jobs and Skills Report, *Towards a National Jobs and Skills Roadmap*. The methodologies underpinning the 2023 and 2024 results were similar with slight data updates and minor variations.

For this report (2025 OSD), significant changes were made to the methodology. The key changes are summarised below:

- The introduction of data transformations, standardisation and placing boundaries around the mean of the various metrics used. This change was made to minimise data volatility, more accurately identify changes in shortage drivers and trends, and improve interpretability of results.

⁸ ANZSCO is a skill-based classification that is produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The framework is used to define all jobs in the Australian and New Zealand labour markets. It is organised into a 5 level hierarchy: major groups, sub-major groups, minor groups, unit groups and occupations. Unit groups level refers to a 4 digit ANZSCO whereas the occupations level refers to the most granular 6 digit ANZSCO.

⁹ Ibid.

- The use of Jobs and Skills Australia DOM instead of the ABS Participation, Job Search and Mobility Survey (PJSM) survey to calculate average retention rates.¹⁰

Given the above changes to the methodology and data source, the historical 2023 and 2024 OSD results were recreated. The previously published results are not shown in the report as comparison with those previously published results are not directly comparable, due to the data and methodology changes noted above.

Concepts and definitions

The 2025 OSD typology categorises unit groups in shortage into 4 primary drivers. These are based on SERA, DOM, the ABS Labour Force Survey (LFS) and ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021.

Table 1 describes the typology.¹¹

Table 1: Jobs and Skills Australia occupation shortage driver typology

Driver	Definition and suggested solution
Long training gap	A Long training gap shortage is when a unit group has few qualified applicants per vacancy and a long training pathway – corresponding to a certificate III or above. The solution may be to increase the number of available qualified workers but with significant time lags involved in the training process. An example includes Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers.
Short training gap	A Short training gap shortage when a unit group has few applicants per vacancy and a qualification less than a Certificate III is required. The solution may be to increase the number of available skilled workers, with shorter time lags involved in the training process. An example includes Bus and Coach Drivers.
Suitability gap	The Suitability gap shortage arises when a unit group has enough qualified applicants, but they are not regarded as suitable. Reasons cited by employers include a lack of employability skills and work experience. Unconscious bias of employers, including unrealistic expectations of graduates and workers may also be factors. This driver may also be impacted by employers underinvesting in training to upskill workers. Generally, the solution may be to improve the attributes of qualified workers through investing in their employability skills and work experience. An example includes Electrical Engineers.

¹⁰ The ABS have recently advised that PJSM data is not sufficiently robust for assessing annual trends in occupational mobility at the unit group level, and therefore not fit for purpose in this context of this analysis.

¹¹ The data-driven criteria used to classify the unit groups into the 4 drivers is described in Data sources and methodology section of the report.

Driver	Definition
Retention gap	A Retention gap shortage is when a unit group has below average rates of retention. Workers may not remain in the role due to low pay and poor working conditions. Poor workplace culture and a lack of access to education, childcare, health services and public transport also affect retention. As such, employers may be required to increase the frequency of recruitment activities to fill the vacant roles. Solutions will require improving pay, work conditions, workplace culture and access to social infrastructure. An example includes Bakers and Pastrycooks.
Uncertain	There may be cases where the shortage driver of a unit group is uncertain. This occurs when unit groups do not satisfy any of the above definitions.

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia.

Key strengths of the methodology

Key strengths of the methodology used to identify the shortage drivers are as follows:

- **Data-driven** – results are based on responses from employer surveys, with minimal scope for assumption-driven modelling to influence the outcomes.
- **Simple** (from a technical standpoint) – the methodology and the underlying data sources are transparent.
- **Useful** – the complex set of dynamics in the labour market may be more easily identified and analysed.

Looking ahead

The current methodology focuses on primary drivers; however, shortages are often the result of several factors. For example, a shortage may be the result of both training and retention gaps. Resolving the shortage may then require a multifaceted solution such as increasing training placements, improving pay and working conditions, and creating access to social infrastructure.

Going forward, Jobs and Skills Australia will investigate approaches to identify and report on multiple shortage drivers for a unit group, along with opportunities to deepen the understanding of individual shortage drivers and their underpinning characteristics.

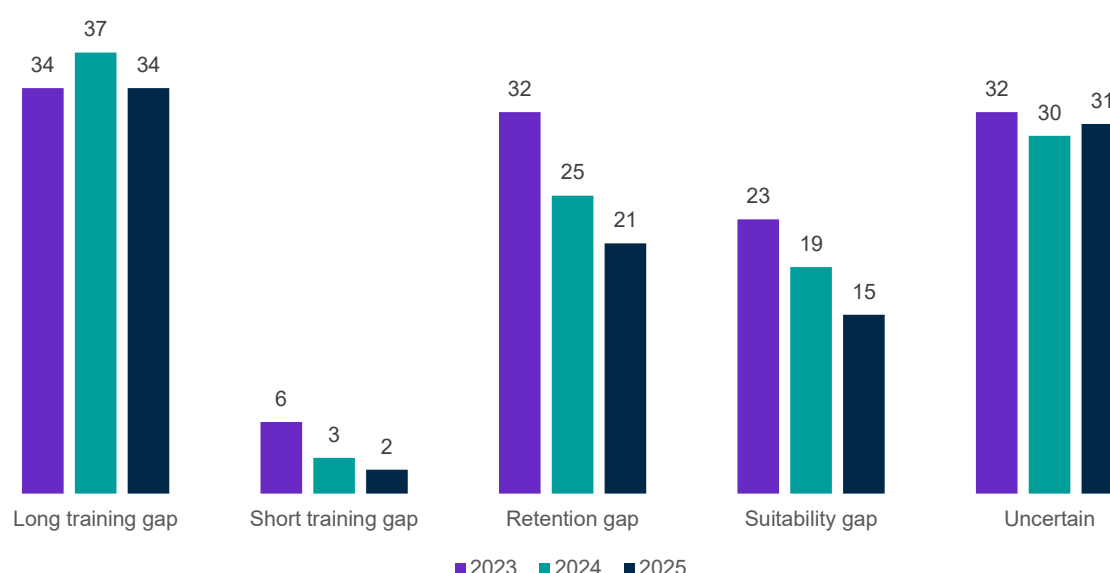
2025 OSD results

Summary of results from 2023 to 2025

In 2025, there were 103 unit groups in shortage, down from 114 in 2024 (Figure 1). This is in line with the 2025 OSL result, showing fewer occupations in shortage in 2025 than 2024. The most common shortage driver was Long training gap (34 of 103), followed by those with an uncertain driver (31 of 103) and then Retention gap (21 of 103).

- The number of unit groups with a Long training gap fell from 37 in 2024 to 34 in 2025, after increasing from 2023 to 2024.
- There were 2 unit groups with a Short training gap and numbers have fallen since 2023.
- There were steady declines in the numbers of unit groups with either a Retention or a Suitability gap.
- The numbers of unit groups with an uncertain driver were similar across all 3 years.

Figure 1: Occupation shortage drivers by number of unit groups, 2023 to 2025



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia SERA; Jobs and Skills Australia DOM; ABS LFS.

The share of unit groups with a Long training gap shortage was stable in 2024 and 2025; both close to 33%. Similarly, over time, those with an uncertain driver was also stable. This suggests that unit groups that transitioned from a shortage in 2024 to a no shortage in 2025, generally were those with a previous Retention or Suitability gap driver.¹²

This means that the distribution of unit groups by the primary shortage driver is becoming more skewed towards those with a training gap. In 2023, during the peak of labour market tightness and shortage pressures, the number of unit groups across the drivers was relatively similar.

¹² Refer to Table B.1 in Appendix B for the list of unit groups that were no longer in shortage in 2025. Table B2 lists the unit groups that are newly in shortage in 2025 that were not in shortage in 2024. Table B3 summarises the number of unit groups that retained their shortage drivers from 2024 to 2025.

Shortage drivers of large employing unit groups

Table 2: lists Top 10 largest employing unit groups by shortage driver the top 10 employing unit groups for each shortage driver.

Table 2: Top 10 largest employing unit groups by shortage driver

Long training gap	Short training gap	Suitability gap	Retention gap	Uncertain
Secondary School Teachers (151,108)	Bus and Coach Drivers (41,225)	Electricians (186,371)	Aged and Disabled Carers (340,694)	Registered Nurses (338,910)
Metal Fitters and Machinists (120,895)	Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (9,748)	Construction Managers (132,040)	Carpenters and Joiners (145,184)	Truck Drivers (192,538)
Motor Mechanics (105,836)		Civil Engineering Professionals (74,528)	Hairdressers (63,632)	Child Carers (173,330)
Plumbers (103,675)		Electrical Engineers (30,172)	Painters (55,765)	Primary School Teachers (161,186)
Structural Steel and Welding Trades Workers (78,211)		Urban and Regional Planners (21,008)	Cooks (39,110)	Chefs (125,454)
Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers (70,305)		Mining Engineers (16,085)	Beauty Therapists (38,882)	Solicitors (92,166)
Psychologists (52,741)		Other Engineering Professionals (15,004)	Bakers and Pastrycooks (32,035)	General Practitioners and Resident Medical Officers (86,527)
Physiotherapists (47,330)		Civil Engineering Draftspersons and Technicians (13,296)	Plasterers and Renderers (30,273)	Drillers, Miners, and Shot Firers (63,592)
Pharmacists (42,413)		Geologists, Geophysicists and Hydrogeologists (12,640)	Bricklayers and Stonemasons (25,464)	Earthmoving Plant Operators (49,627)
Cabinet and Furniture Makers (34,914)		Surgeons (10,629)	Wall and Floor Tilers (22,028)	Vocational Education Teachers / Polytechnic Teachers (35,645)

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia; ABS LFS; ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021.

Several results are observable from Table 2.

- The Long training gap category includes a mix of large-employing unit groups where higher education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) are the pathway to the labour market. The list includes Professionals unit groups from health and education sectors, with the remaining from Technicians and Trades Workers.
- Suitability gap shortages mostly include engineering roles from the Professionals major group.
- Retention gap is the main driver for large employing roles in the care (Aged and Disabled Carers), personal care, construction, and food sectors.
- The uncertain group includes both high and lower skilled unit groups. The category includes Skill Level 1 unit groups in health, education, and legal sectors. Unit groups in the construction sector and Truck Drivers are also present.

Each of the shortage drivers affect one or more large employing unit groups in the Australian labour market. This suggests that alleviating shortages among large employing unit groups will involve some combination of the following:

- **Increasing** the throughput of qualified workers through our higher education and VET system. Solutions to shortages caused by a lack of qualified workers will largely come from government policy and education providers.
- **Equipping** qualified applicants with skills and experience to ensure they are job ready. The solution could be achieved through employers investing more in staff training and greater application of work-integrated learning. But work-related training has dropped by 14% since 2007, falling in 17 of 19 industries.¹³

Generally, employers in unit groups with a Suitability gap require high levels of experience, compared to those with a different shortage driver. Based on 2024–25 SERA data, for the (Suitability gap) roles in Table 2, employers required applicants to have between 3.5 and 5 years of experience. Employers of unit groups with a Long training gap required applicants to have experience of 2 to 3 years. This suggests that employers of Suitability gap unit groups may have unrealistic expectations of recent higher education or VET graduates.

- **Improving** remuneration, working conditions and culture, and access to social infrastructure and amenities will assist with attraction and Retention of workers. Solutions to pay, conditions and culture will largely come from employers. But government will play a significant role in improving access to education, health and childcare services.

Given the above, the factors underpinning the drivers are complex. This means that policy responses or other solutions to a shortage may be different from one driver to another and/or require multiple strategies.

Given the size of these unit groups, addressing shortages in them will have significant labour market impacts, including on productivity growth.

¹³ For more details refer to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA), “Learning Curve: Why Australia Needs a Training Boost” (2024). <https://www.ceda.com.au/researchandpolicies/research/workforce-skills/learning-curve-why-australia-needs-a-training-boost>

Shortage drivers that changed between 2024 and 2025

Labour markets are dynamic and evolve over time, which can mean that the balance of factors (such as training, suitability, and retention gaps) that drive a shortage will also evolve. The transitions can also reinforce the concept that reasons for shortage of a unit group, and therefore shortage driver types, are multifaceted.

The shortage driver changed for 10 unit groups from 2024 to 2025 (

Table 3:).

Table 3: Unit groups that changed shortage drivers between 2024 and 2025

Unit groups	2024	2025
Registered Nurses	Long training gap	Uncertain
Ambulance Officers and Paramedics	Long training gap	Uncertain
Telecommunications Trades Workers	Short training gap	Uncertain
Drillers, Miners, and Shot Firers	Short training gap	Uncertain
Agricultural, Fisheries and Forestry Scientists	Suitability gap	Uncertain
Earthmoving Plant Operators	Suitability gap	Uncertain
Urban and Regional Planners	Uncertain	Suitability gap
Surgeons	Uncertain	Suitability gap
Electricians	Uncertain	Suitability gap
Arboriculture Workers	Uncertain	Retention gap

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia.

Transition to uncertainty

In 2025, 6 unit groups shifted into the uncertain shortage driver category. Of these 6, in 2024, 4 were Training gap shortages in unit groups from Professional, Machinery Operators and Drivers and Technicians and Trades Workers. The other 2 were previously in Suitability gaps.

Transition to Suitability gap

In 2025, there were 3 unit groups that shifted into the Suitability gap category. They included Urban and Regional Planners, Surgeons, and Electricians. In 2024, the shortage driver for these 3 unit groups were uncertain.

Transition to Retention gap

In 2025, only 1 unit group (Arboriculture Workers) shifted into the Retention gap category. Previously, in 2024, the driver was uncertain.

Other observations

In 2025, there were no unit groups that moved into a Training gap.

Unit groups with an uncertain driver in 2025 may reflect several drivers causing the shortage, without any particular driver being the primary.

For example, for Registered Nurses, initial analysis suggests that both Long training and Retention gaps may both be prevalent causes of shortage in 2025 (Refer to Box 2).

The shortage driver for the majority of unit groups (85 of 103) remained unchanged in 2024 and 2025.¹⁴

This suggests their existing shortage driver was the dominant cause of shortage. For example, Retention gap remains the cause of shortage for Aged and Disabled Carers. Research for this sector highlights that long working hours, a lack of career progression, and poor workforce training outcomes, despite the recent pay increases, remain the dominant causes of shortage and require the most attention.¹⁵

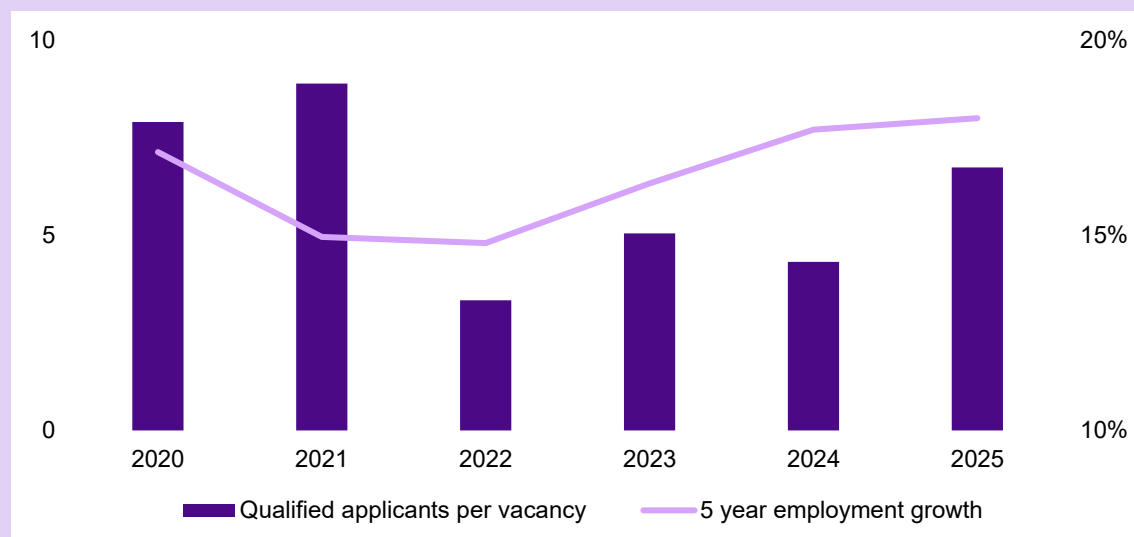
¹⁴ There was a total of 103 unit groups in shortage in 2025. Of these, 10 unit groups changed shortage drivers from 2024 to 2025. There were 85 unit groups (not 93) that retained their shortage drivers from 2024 to 2025. This is because, in 2025, there were 8 unit groups that newly came into shortage. Refer to Appendix B for unit groups that were no longer in shortage in 2025 (Table B.1), became newly in shortage in 2025 (Table B.2) and a summary of the number of unit groups that retained their drivers in 2025 (Table B.3).

¹⁵ Department of Health, Disability, and Ageing (2025) – Better and fairer wages for aged care workers.

Box 2: The training pipeline for registered nurses is improving

Although the unit group remains in shortage, the number of qualified applicants per vacancy has increased since 2022 (Figure 3). This suggests the training pipeline for Registered Nurses has been improving post the COVID-19 pandemic and the easing of lockdown restrictions. These improvements, in part, have supported strong employment growth. This is also likely underpinned by changes in government healthcare policies that are designed to impact demand, supply, and distribution of the workforce.

Figure 2: Number of qualified and suitable applicants per vacancy (no., lhs) and employment growth (%), 2020 to 2025.



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia SERA, 2020-21 to 2024-25; ABS LFS.

The increase in the supply pipeline could have reduced the prevalence of Long training gap, leading to an uncertain primary shortage driver in 2025. However, the change in primary driver does not mean that a lack of qualified workers (Long training gap) has been resolved. Rather, the change in shortage driver over the year may suggest various factors underpin the shortage of Registered Nurses and none are primary.

Retention gap may be becoming a key source of shortages. Replacement rates for the unit group have been increasing over time, as more Registered Nurses leave these roles. Incidents of bullying in the workplace, violence from patients, inadequate staff-to-patient ratios, and lack of professional satisfaction, could be factors underpinning the rising retention issues and uncertainty around the lead shortage driver.¹ These factors are not new but may be becoming a more dominant contributor of shortage in light of increased throughput of more qualified registered nurses.

¹ AHPRA (2025) – Research provides clues to boost health workforce retention.

Deep dive into training and retention gaps

There are likely to be additional factors that could be intersecting with training and retention gaps, leading to unit groups remaining in shortage for an extended period.

Two factors that could lead to training and retention gap shortages resolving over a longer span of time (rather than in the short term) are:

- high labour demand, with supply unable to keep pace with that demand
- weak inflow of labour into unit groups with training or retention gaps.

The purpose of this deep dive is to improve the nuanced understanding of what causes shortages, and therefore better target the most effective responses and actions to address the shortage. The analysis may further support the following strategic Commissioner's outcomes: *Understanding today's workforce*.

Appendix C includes details on the analytical framework used for this deep dive.

Observations and discussion

Unit groups with above average employment growth and high demand

This section of the figure mostly includes unit groups with Training gaps. There are also some Retention gap unit groups.

Table 4 lists the unit groups with above average employment growth and an above average ratio of job ads to unemployment (described below as the IVI-to-UE ratio).

Table 4: Unit groups with above average employment growth and IVI-to-UE

Unit groups	2025 shortage driver
Surveyors and Spatial Scientists	Long training gap
Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers	Long training gap
Medical Imaging Professionals	Long training gap
Pharmacists	Long training gap
Dental Practitioners	Long training gap
Occupational Therapists	Long training gap
Physiotherapists	Long training gap
Audiologists and Speech Pathologists / Therapists	Long training gap
Specialist Physicians	Long training gap
Other Medical Practitioners	Long training gap
Psychologists	Long training gap
Automotive Electricians	Long training gap
Plumbers	Long training gap

Unit groups	2025 shortage driver
Electrical Distribution Trades Workers	Long training gap
Cabinet and Furniture Makers	Long training gap
Aged and Disabled Carers	Retention gap

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia.

Training gap unit groups

Most are high skill, health sector unit groups, where higher education is the pathway to the labour market. This is consistent with the health sector being large employing, fast growing and where the share of economy-wide employment is rising over time. Underpinning this are shifts in consumer preference towards health services and population aging, increasing demand for health care.

Early Childhood (Pre-primary School) Teachers also have above average employment growth and demand. Strong growth in labour market participation of women and greater awareness of the importance of early childhood education is increasing the demand for this unit group. Unmet demand for early childhood education and care workers is particularly acute in regional and remote areas.¹⁶

Four trade-based unit groups also lie in this section of the figure, 3 of which (Electrical Distribution Trades Workers, Automotive Electricians and Plumbers) are critical to the clean energy generation workforce.¹⁷ The transition to clean energy is likely fuelling demand for these 2 unit groups.

The factors driving demand for Training gap unit groups are structural and ongoing and unlikely to reverse soon. An implication of all the above is that shortages for these unit groups are likely persisting due to demand outpacing supply.

The above suggests there might be constraints in the capacity of current higher education and VET infrastructure (number of placements and the size of education and training workforce) to increase the flow of qualified workers and meet the rising demand.

Moreover, the shortage among VET education and training workforce needs addressing as the VET teaching workforce is older and ageing and not being sufficiently replaced.¹⁸ Over the decade to 2023, the number of VET teachers have declined and numbers of people undertaking training for such roles have fallen over a similar period.¹⁹

These issues are additional challenges to addressing shortages among Training gap unit groups with VET pathway in the short term.

¹⁶ Jobs and Skills Australia (2024), The Future of the Early Childhood Education Profession report. Further, the report's modelling results on the ECEC workforce indicate a lack of around 21,000 qualified professionals required to meet existing demand and to support sustainable working conditions.

¹⁷ These 2 unit groups are among the 38 occupations that are classified as critical in the clean energy workforce according to the Jobs and Skills Australia's Clean Energy Capacity Study (2023).

¹⁸ Jobs and Skills Australia 2024 VET Workforce Study Report. The report suggests that VET teacher numbers have shrunk by between 11% and 18% over the last decade to 2023 and training providers are struggling to attract suitable applicants to fill teacher vacancies, with a lower vacancy fill rate than universities, secondary and primary schools. Projections show Australia will need 3,800 more VET teachers in the next 5 years.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Lowering shortages and improving the pipeline of qualified applicants, over a longer period, might require greater funding and investment to increase:

- the size of the education and training workforce
- training placements
- the number of education and training institutions and their reach
- employer provision of apprenticeships and traineeship opportunities.

Retention gap unit groups

Aged and Disabled Carers is the only unit group with a Retention gap in this section. As mentioned in the previous section, workers in this unit group work long working hours, have a lack of career progression and other issues, despite the recent pay increases.²⁰ However, Jobs and Skills Australia's Recruiting Employer Outlook Survey shows that the recruitment difficulty rate for this unit group was slightly below the average in 2024–25 (44% compared to 46%).

Unit groups with below average employment growth and high demand

This section includes mostly technicians and trades roles with VET as the pathway to the labour market.

Table 5 shows the unit groups with below average employment growth and an above average ratio of job ads to unemployment (described below as the IVI-to-UE ratio).

Table 5: Unit groups with below average employment growth and above average IVI-to-UE

Unit groups	2025 shortage driver
Secondary School Teachers	Long training gap
Midwives	Long training gap
Motor Mechanics	Long training gap
Sheetmetal Workers	Long training gap
Structural Steel and Welding Trades Workers	Long training gap
Metal Fitters and Machinists	Long training gap
Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics	Long training gap
Dental Hygienists, Technicians and Therapists	Long training gap
Agricultural, Agritech and Aquaculture Technicians	Retention gap
Bakers and Pastrycooks	Retention gap
Cooks	Retention gap

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia.

²⁰ Department of Health, Disability, and Ageing (2025) – Better and fairer wages for aged care workers.

Training gap unit groups

Most of the Training gap unit groups are Technicians and Trades Workers unit groups critical to the clean energy generation workforce.

Below average qualified applicants per vacancy and below average employment growth also suggests there might be a lack of people undertaking (or completing) training for these unit groups.

National Centre of Vocational Education Research (NCVER) data indicates declining training commencements in recent years for the broader subgroups, that these unit groups belong to.²¹

However, the constrained trained pipeline for these unit groups could be due to factors that affect Retention and attraction of workers (refer to Box 3).

Retention gap unit groups

The Retention gap unit groups include various technicians and trade roles, most of which are from the Food Trades Workers sub-major group.

Retention of workers is the main source of shortage for these unit groups. The weaker employment growth might then suggest low pay and poor working conditions, including workplace culture and access to social infrastructure, are leading to a low inflow of people undertaking or completing training. NCVER data suggests there are wide gaps between the enrolments and completions for formal qualifications associated with these unit groups.²²

The training and Retention gap unit groups are mired by weak inflow of people undertaking training and poor working conditions. Solutions to shortage for these unit groups will require:

- increasing inflow of workers into the unit groups
- increasing outflow of qualified workers
- improving pay and conditions and the other previously mentioned factors that affect retention of workers.

Achieving the above concurrently will be gradual but will also through a combination of increased training investment by employers and increased capacity in the training system.

²¹ NCVER (2025), Apprentices and trainees 2024: December quarter.

²² NCVER, VOCSTATS: TVA Program enrolments and completions 2015 to 2023. Program occupation (ANZSCO) group.

Box 3: Weak inflow into construction trades worker with Training gaps

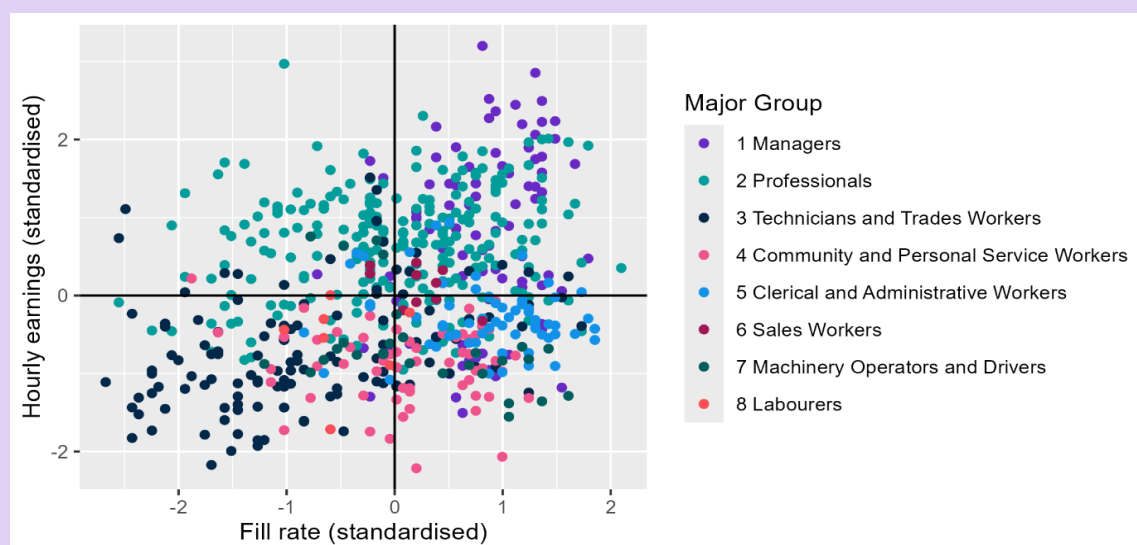
Construction trades workers unit groups are mostly in shortage due to a Training gap. But the source of shortage may be due to a lack of training commencement, which in turn could stem from negative perceptions of work conditions when employed.

The supply of workers for constructions trades is often through an apprenticeship training pathway. However, recent NCVER data on apprentices and trainees for the subgroup shows training commencement of apprenticeships fell 16.0% from 2023 to 2024.¹

Further, unit groups within construction trades received small pools of applicants, with an even smaller proportion being suitably qualified. The above mentioned constraints in the supply pipeline may be related to people's awareness or perceptions of low pay and poor working conditions.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of unit groups categorised into 4 groups, based on their vacancy fill rates and hourly earnings in the period from 2021–22 to 2024–25. The bottom left corner of Figure 6 is the cluster of unit groups with below average fill rates and below average hourly earnings. This is where construction trades workers and other key parts of the sector are clustered.

Figure 3: Standardised hourly earnings and fill rates at 4 digit ANZSCO, by major occupation group, 2021–22 to 2024–25 financial years



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia SERA, 2021–22 to 2024–25 financial year; ABS Characteristics of Employment, August 2024, TableBuilder.

While replacement rates remain below average for some of these construction-related roles, they have been rising for others — a possible signal that retention issues might be a growing problem. This, coupled with low hourly earnings, a gendered culture — the workforce of construction trades are almost entirely men — and existing perceptions of poor working conditions could be dissuading young people and women from pursuing training related to careers in construction trades.²

¹ NCVER, VOCSTATS: Apprentices and Trainees, December 2024.

² Ghanbaripour, A. N., Tumpa, R. J., Sunindijo, R. Y., Zhang, W., Yousefian, P., Camozzi, R. N., Hon, C., Talebian, N., Liu, T., & Hemmati, M. (2023). Retention over Attraction: A Review of Women's Experiences in the Australian Construction Industry.

Data sources and methodology

Data sources

Table 6: Data sources used for occupation shortage drivers methodology and analysis

Data source	Source owner
SERA	Jobs and Skills Australia
Australian Skills Classification (ASC) ²³	Jobs and Skills Australia
2025 Occupation Shortage List	Jobs and Skills Australia
Internet Vacancy Index	Jobs and Skills Australia
Labour Force Trending	Jobs and Skills Australia
Data on Occupation Mobility (DOM)	Jobs and Skills Australia
Labour Force Statistics, Australia, Detailed	ABS

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia.

Criteria for classifying unit groups into shortage drivers

Table 7: Occupation shortage driver classification criteria.

Shortage driver	Criteria
Long training gap	0.15 standard deviations below average job mobility (replacement rate) 0.15 standard deviations below average qualified applicants per vacancy - Either Skill Level 1 or 2; or Skill Level 3 and above average proportion of job vacancies requiring Certificate III or above qualification (weighted by the proportion of employers needing a qualification).
Short training gap	0.15 standard deviations below average job mobility (replacement rate) 0.15 standard deviations below average qualified applicants per vacancy - Excluding Skill Levels 1 and 2 - Skill Level 4; or Skill Level 3 and below average proportion of job vacancy requiring Certificate III or above qualification (weighted by the proportion of employers needing a qualification)²⁴
Retention gap	0.15 standard deviations above average job mobility
Suitability gap	0.15 standard deviations below average job mobility 0.15 standard deviations above average qualified applicants per vacancy
Uncertain	Above criteria were not satisfied or there was insufficient data to assess

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia SERA; Jobs and Skills Australia ASC; Jobs and Skills Australia DOM.

²³ OSD analysis uses occupation similarity scores from the ASC, which was developed to provide a common language of skills to increase understanding and recognition of skills across occupations, sectors and contexts. More information on the ASC is available on the Jobs and Skills Australia webpage.

²⁴ There are cases where employers may not need applicants with a qualification but rather choose experienced candidates as reported through the SERA questionnaire. This later cohort may be able to be employed more quickly than those workers whom employers have mandatory qualifications requirements.

The variables used in the criteria were transformed and then standardised.

Data that are highly skewed are generally transformed to approximate a normal distribution. The transformation then allows for more accurate standardisation of the data.²⁵ This process helps identify and control for outliers, minimise the impact of data volatility, and convert different metrics into the same scale. As a result, interpretation and analyses of observations becomes easier and more meaningful.

The metrics, the particular transformation applied, and periods used to calculate the means are summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Metrics used, periods used to calculate, and transformations applied

Variable	Periods used for mean	Transformation
Replacement rate	3 years 2020-21 to 2022-23 ²⁶	Square root ²⁷
Qualified applicants per vacancy	3 years 2022-23 to 2024-25	Base 10 logarithm
Internet Vacancy Index-to-Unemployment	5 years 2020-21 to 2024-25	Base 10 logarithm
Employment trend growth	5 years Feb 2020 to Feb 2025	Raw data ²⁸
Proportion of job vacancy requiring Certificate 3 and above ²⁹	3 years 2022-23 to 2024-25	Raw data

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia SERA; Jobs and Skills Australia IVI; Jobs and Skills Australia Labour Force Trending; Jobs and Skills Australia ASC; Jobs and Skills Australia DOM.

The methodology applies a standard deviation boundary around the mean. Specifically, a threshold of 0.15 standard deviation around the mean is applied.

If a data point shifts from 0.15 standard deviation to -0.15 standard deviation around the mean, this corresponds to roughly 12% of the data distribution. In practice, this means that for a dataset to move from one shortage driver to another, the unit group needs to overcome at least 12% of the data distribution centred around the mean. This restriction prevents the methodology from overreacting to small or random noise while still being sensitive enough to detect genuine shifts.

By choosing this threshold 0.15 standard deviation, a balance is achieved between stability (insignificant changes do not trigger a change in driver) and responsiveness (substantial changes are recognised as meaningful).

The categorisation of unit groups into drivers or the uncertain group is illustrated in Figure 4.

²⁵ A z-score standardisation is used to quantify the number of standard deviations a data point is away from the mean. It is calculated by subtracting the mean from the data point and dividing the result by the standard deviation: $z = \frac{x - \mu}{\delta}$

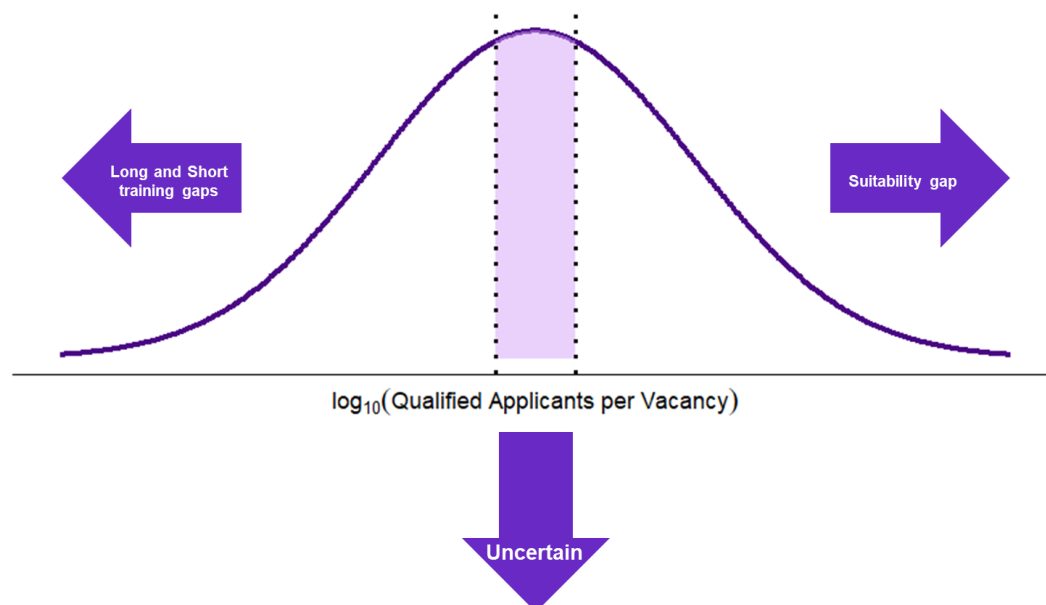
²⁶ The replacement rate is calculated using the DOM, which utilises administrative data on individuals' Income Tax Returns from the Australian Taxation Office. The lag from the DOM data is induced from the due date and the processing of the income tax.

²⁷ Square root transformation is applied to replacement rates as it produces the required normalisation shape similar to Figure 4.

²⁸ Raw data is used for the 5 year average of employment growth. This is because the distribution of employment growth is close to a normal curve already.

²⁹ Raw data was used as transformation did not result in a more normal shape like distribution.

Figure 4: Representative chart of unit groups that fall into the uncertain zone or a shortage driver



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia.

Creating a unit group shortage list

The OSL is converted into a unit group shortage list for the purpose of producing OSD analysis.

The data sources used to apply a shortage rating to a unit group are as follows:

- Jobs and Skills Australia 2025 OSL.³⁰
- ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021.
- ABS ANZSCO 2022 (mapping between occupations and unit groups).

As each unit group has multiple occupations within it, determining an appropriate shortage rating at the unit group-level can be a challenge. Where the OSL ratings for occupations within a unit group all match, this rating becomes the rating for the unit group.³¹

Where the occupation ratings do not match, the occupations are weighted by their employment size using the ABS 2021 Census of Population and Housing employment figures to make a determination for the unit group rating.³²

³⁰Please refer to the 2025 OSL Methodology Report for details.

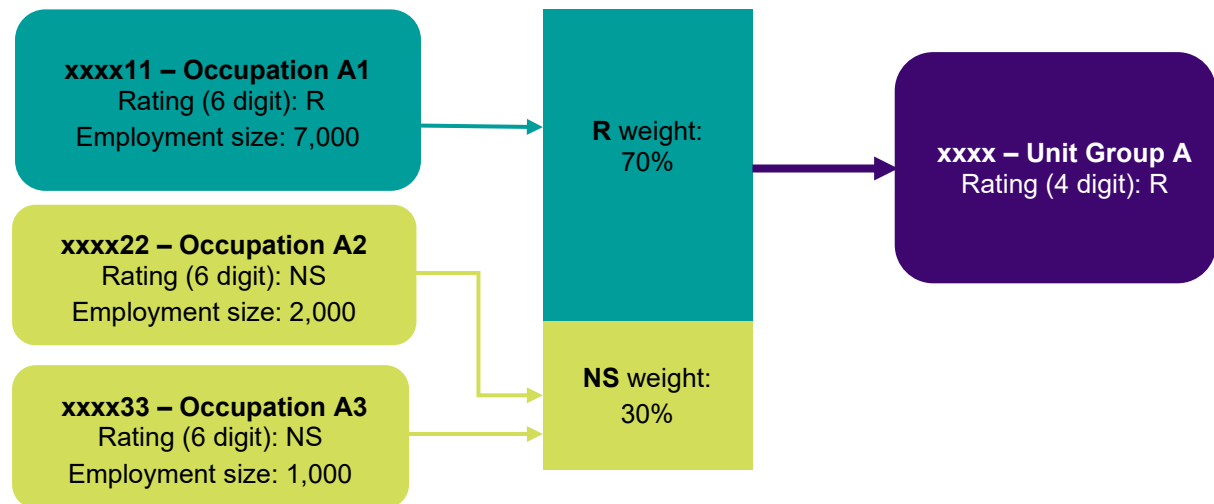
³¹ The OSL ratings are: Shortage, No shortage, Regional shortage, and Metropolitan shortage.

³² The ABS 2021 Census of Population and Housing employment figures used is the Occupation experimental update version 1 (OCCEV1P) which updates the census with ANZSCO 2022 as opposed to the ANZSCO 2013 published with the original census in 2021.

That is, the unit group shortage rating is the rating of the occupations that had a majority employment share within that unit group. Only occupations within scope of the OSL are used to generate unit group ratings.³³

The mapping is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Converting occupation ratings to unit group ratings



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia.

³³ Please refer to 2025 OSL Methodology Report for further details on scope.

Appendix A Variable description

A.1. Replacement rates

DOM is derived from administrative data on individuals' Income Tax Returns from the Australian Taxation Office. The data set shows the inflows and outflows of workers to and from occupations on a financial year basis. A net inflow indicates there are more workers entering the occupation than leaving. Conversely, net outflow indicates there are more workers leaving than entering the occupation.³⁴

$$\text{Replacement rate} = 100 * \frac{\text{Gross replacements}}{\text{Previous year stock of workers}}, \text{ where:}$$

- $\text{Gross replacements} = \text{gross outflows, if new employment growth} \geq 0$
- $\text{Gross replacements} = \text{gross inflows, if new employment growth} \leq 0$

Box A1: Example with 2 hypothetical scenarios

Scenario 1: Employment Growth (starting the year with 100 employees)

- 70 of the initial 100 employees are still present by the end of the year.
- Over the year, the total number of employees has grown to 110 (10 additional employees)
- Therefore 40 new employees were hired (110 in total; 70 who stayed from initial stock).
- 30 people needed to be replaced (as 30 workers left during the year).
- In this scenario, the replacement rate is 0.3, representing the proportion of workers who left.
- The extra 10 hires are classified as additional stock (employment growth), not replacements.

Scenario 2: Employment Decline (starting the year with 100 employees)

- By the end of the year, 70 are still present.
- But over the year, the total number of employees has shrunk to 90.
- Therefore 20 new workers were hired over the year (90 workers in total; 70 workers who stayed).
- 30 workers left (100 workers initially; 70 workers who stayed).
- In this scenario, the replacement rate is 0.2, representing the proportion of workers hired.
- All the hires are considered as replacement for the workers who left, with no employment growth.

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia.

³⁴ Refer to Data on Occupation Mobility: Unpacking Workers Movements | Jobs and Skills Australia.

A.2. Survey of Employers who have Recently Advertised

The OSD uses 2 variables from SERA, which are weighted by SERA data for similar unit groups. Similar unit groups are based on the similarity scores from the ASC. The SERA variables are:

- the number of qualified applicants per vacancy
- the proportion of job vacancy requiring Certificate III or above.

$$\text{Qualified applicants per vacancy} = \frac{\sum_{i=0}^n \text{similarity}_i * \text{qualified applicants}_i}{\sum_{i=0}^n \text{similarity}_i * \text{vacancies}_i}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Proportion of job vacancy requiring Cert. III or above} \\ = \frac{\sum_{i=0}^n \text{similarity}_i * \text{vacancies requiring Cert. III or above}_i}{\sum_{i=0}^n \text{similarity}_i * \text{vacancies}_i} \end{aligned}$$

- *i* represents the index of each similar unit group. When *i* is zero, it is referring to the unit group itself.
- *n* is the number of similar unit groups.
- Similarity is the similarity score for each unit group. When *i* is zero, the similarity score is 100%.

Appendix B Additional Tables for Shortage Drivers

Table B1 shows the unit groups that were in shortage in 2024 but were no longer in shortage in 2025.

Table B1: Unit groups that are no longer in shortage in 2025 with their, previous, 2024 shortage driver

Unit group title	2024 OSD
Optometrists and Orthoptists	Long training gap
Nurse Educators and Researchers	Long training gap
Hotel and Motel Managers	Retention gap
Nurserypersons	Retention gap
Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers	Retention gap
Security Officers and Guards	Retention gap
Other Mobile Plant Operators	Retention gap
Meat Boners and Slicers, and Slaughterers	Retention gap
Advertising, Public Relations and Sales Managers	Suitability gap
Engineering Managers	Suitability gap
Financial Investment Advisers and Managers	Suitability gap
Architects and Landscape Architects	Suitability gap
Chemical and Materials Engineers	Suitability gap
Electronics Engineers	Suitability gap
Industrial, Mechanical and Production Engineers	Suitability gap
Software and Applications Programmers	Suitability gap
Social Workers	Uncertain
Print Finishers and Screen Printers	Uncertain
Wood Machinists and Other Wood Trades Workers	Uncertain

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia.

Table B2 shows the unit groups that were not in shortage in 2024 but were in shortage in 2025.

Table B2: Unit groups that were newly in shortage in 2025 that were not in shortage in 2024

Unit group title	2025 OSD
Precision Metal Trades Workers	Long training gap
Bus and Coach Drivers	Short training gap
Paper and Wood Processing Machine Operators	Retention gap
Chiropractors and Osteopaths	Suitability gap
Electrical Engineering Draftspersons and Technicians	Suitability gap
Electronic Engineering Draftspersons and Technicians	Suitability gap
Jewellers	Uncertain
Outdoor Adventure Guides	Uncertain

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia.

Table B3 summarises the number of unit groups that retained their shortage drivers from 2024 to 2025.

Table B3: Unit groups with the same shortage driver in 2024 and 2025

Shortage Drivers	Number of Unit groups
Long training gap	33
Short training gap	1
Retention gap	19
Suitability gap	9
Uncertain	23
Total	85

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia.

Appendix C The deep dive analytical framework

Jobs and Skills Australia uses the following metrics for the analysis:

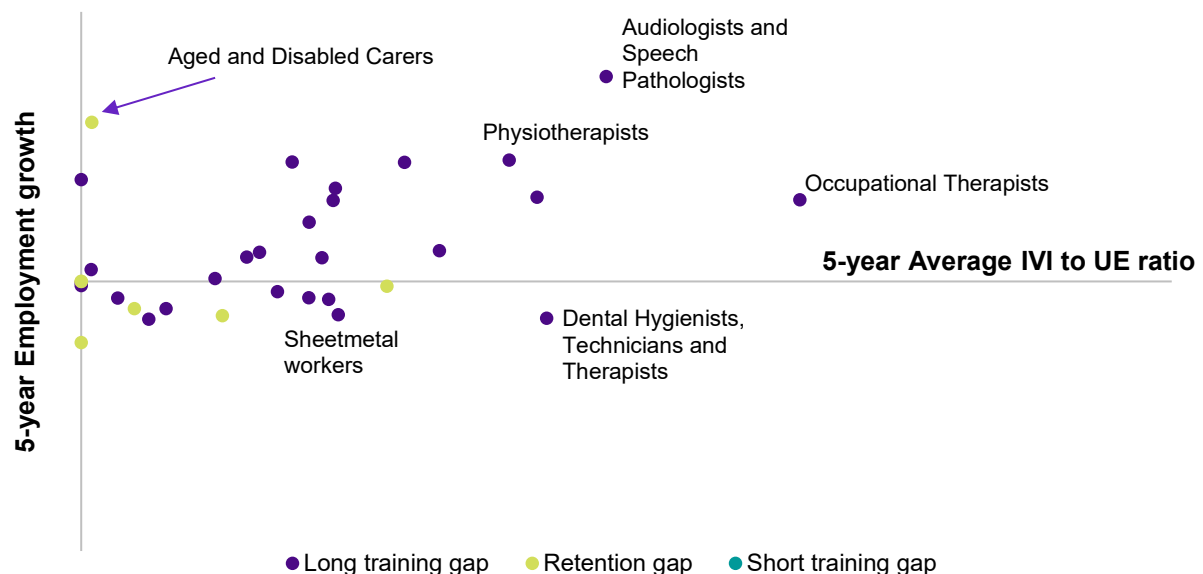
- A 5 year trend employment growth as a proxy of medium-term employment growth
- A 5 year average of Jobs and Skills Australia's Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) to ABS unemployment ratio (IVI-to-UE) as a proxy of medium term labour market tightness.³⁵

Employment growth is used as a metric in this analysis as changes in employment growth can indirectly reflect response of labour supply to changes in demand. On the other hand, the IVI-to-UE provides an indication of labour market tightness (or elevated demand). A higher ratio (tighter labour market) suggests there are more job opportunities relative to job seekers. Conversely, a lower ratio (looser labour market) indicates fewer job opportunities relative to the number of available job seekers.

The values of these metrics for unit groups are plotted in Figure C1.

Employment growth is represented on the vertical axis (y-axis), while the IVI-to-UE is represented on the horizontal axis (x-axis).

Figure C1: 5 year employment growth (no., y-axis), 5 year average IVI to UE (no., x-axis) for training and Retention gap unit groups.³⁶



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, SERA; Jobs and Skills Australia, IVI; Jobs and Skills Australia Labour Force Trending; Jobs and Skills Australia, DOM; ABS LFS.

³⁵ 5 year employment growth was based on data from Jobs and Skills Australia Labour Force Trending database. More information on the Labour Force Trending database can be found on the Jobs and Skills Australia website: [Labour Force Trending | Jobs and Skills Australia](#)

³⁶ Values are based on the standardised values of 5 year employment growth and 5 year average IVI to UE ratio. Refer to Criteria for classifying unit groups into shortage drivers section of the report for more details.

Using these 2 metrics, unit groups are categorised as shown in Figure C1 into those with:

- above average employment growth and above average IVI-to-UE (top half)
- below average employment growth and above average IVI-to-UE (bottom half).³⁷

The intersection of the vertical and horizontal axis occurs at the average of the 2 metrics, with the average being standardised so that the intersection occurs at zeros. Above average values are represented by positive values and below average values are represented by negative values.

C.1. Implications of the framework

Only the 2 previously mentioned combinations of employment growth and IVI-to-UE are considered for the analysis. This is due to the below implications that arise for unit groups with training and retention gaps.³⁸

Top half of Figure C1

- As Training gap unit groups have below average qualified applicants per vacancy – and generally longer lead time for training – strong employment growth and tight labour markets suggest that flow of qualified workers into the labour market may be, only in part, meeting demand.
- Retention gap unit groups with strong employment growth, amidst elevated demand, suggests there is enough supply of workers, but Retention of those workers is the critical issue that needs to be resolved first.

Bottom half of Figure C1

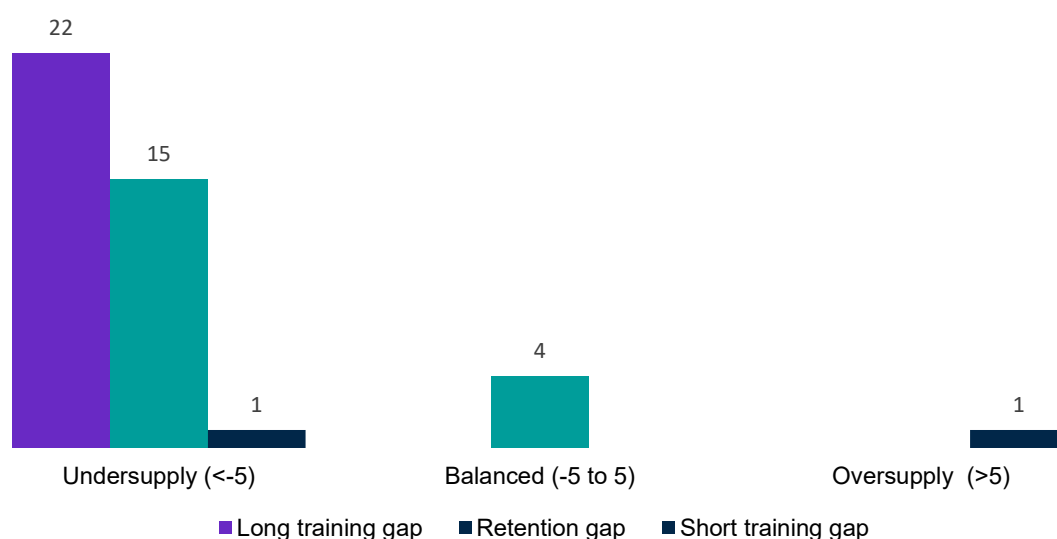
- Below average employment growth and elevated demand suggests that, for unit groups with training and retention gap, there might be an inadequate supply of workers flowing into those unit groups. That is, there are constraints in the supply pipeline, acknowledging that constraints in the flow of trained workers may also be stemming from factors that affect retention and attraction of workers.

Existence of supply pipeline constraints for training and retention gap unit groups, particularly those with below average employment growth, is supported by Jobs and Skills Australia's Labour Supply Index (LSI) (Figure C2).

³⁷ The metrics have also been transformed and standardised. Refer to Data sources and methodology section of the paper for more details.

³⁸ Suitability gap unit groups are not considered for the analysis. The majority of Suitability gap unit groups have above average employment growth and above average IVI-to-UE. They are also mostly Professionals unit groups, with a higher education pathway. This is expected as these unit groups are those where there are enough qualified workers in the labour market. Consequently, there are fewer stark implications (compared to training and retention gap unit groups) other than the education and training system (in collaboration with industry) needing to ensure workers are equipped with all skills and experience in demand by employers.

Figure C2: Distribution of LSI (no.), by known shortage drivers, 2025



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia SERA; Jobs and Skills Australia Recruiting Employer Outlook Survey (REOS), Jobs and Skills Australia Australian Skills Classification.

Note: The LSI does not include all unit groups due to data limitations. Only those unit groups with LSI values are shown in Figure C2. Consequently, the sum of the training or retention gap unit groups in the figure will not match the number of training or retention gap unit groups in Figure 1.

The LSI measures how far the applicants per vacancy for a specific unit group deviates from the overall average as a measure of how oversupplied or undersupplied the unit group is. A large negative LSI indicates an undersupply of applicants, while a large positive LSI indicates an oversupply.³⁹

The LSI indicates that training and retention gap unit groups are mostly concentrated in the undersupplied category.

³⁹ For more information on the LSI, refer to the [Occupation Shortage Report – March 2025](#).