



Australian Government



Jobs and Skills Australia

Building a better understanding of the VET workforce

Discussion paper

October 2025



Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	3
JSA's work to support the VET Workforce Blueprint	3
Key contacts	3
Building a better understanding of the VET workforce	4
Background and context	4
Supporting documentation	4
Action 1: Occupational Mapping.....	5
Context to this Action	5
The Occupational Mapping project.....	5
Action 2: VET Workforce Data Strategy	7
Context to this Action	7
The Data Strategy project	7
Action 3: VET Workforce Research Program.....	9
Context to this Action	9
The Research Program project	9
JSA research into VET Workforce Casualisation.....	11

Acknowledgement of Country

Jobs and Skills Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present.

JSA's work to support the VET Workforce Blueprint

JSA was tasked to undertake work to support the foundational national actions identified in the Blueprint, in partnership with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

This discussion paper has been designed, primarily, to assist with JSA's research and advisory work, and to understand what is important for design and advice relating to possible approaches for (1) occupational mapping of the VET workforce, (2) a VET workforce data strategy, and (3) an ongoing research program.

This paper reflects JSA's preliminary views and is not Government policy.

Share your views

JSA is releasing the 'Building a better understanding of the VET workforce: Discussion paper' as part of consultations on the foundational national actions and we're inviting stakeholders to share their views. For more information see [VET Workforce Blueprint National Actions | Jobs and Skills Australia](#).

[Make a submission online](#) or join us at the [JSA Roadshow](#) in November and December and chat with the team one-on-one.

Key contacts

General enquiries can be made to the JSA VET Workforce Analysis team at VETWorkforceAnalysis@jobsandskills.gov.au.

Building a better understanding of the VET workforce

Background and context

The VET Workforce Blueprint, released in October 2024, identifies 8 opportunities, and 14 associated actions, that address challenges concerning the attraction, retention and development of the VET workforce. The key goals of the Blueprint are:

- Understanding the workforce: by developing data collection systems for the VET workforce and undertaking foundational work and research to better understand the various roles and pathways across all VET contexts.
- Growing the workforce: by increasing the number of people entering the VET workforce to ensure long-term supply of staff to support quality training.
- Retaining and developing the workforce: by improving retention and supporting workforce capability to ensure a sustainable, highly skilled and quality VET workforce.

This discussion paper relates to Opportunity 1: Building a better understanding of the VET workforce, and will assist Jobs and Skills Australia in providing insights and research to contribute to the three corresponding actions:

- **Action 1:** Undertake comprehensive occupational mapping for the VET workforce to identify and inform broader actions to strengthen pathways into, and through, the VET workforce.
- **Action 2:** Develop a VET workforce data strategy to enable the collection of VET workforce data to support and enable informed policy and workforce strategies, and inform ongoing research.
- **Action 3:** Establish an ongoing research program to develop a robust evidence base for key workforce issues. As part of this work, JSA is also undertaking research on the impact of casualisation on the VET workforce, an area of immediate research need highlighted through the Blueprint consultations.

The remainder of this discussion paper sets out further context and options relating to the three National Actions JSA is working on under the VET Blueprint Opportunity 1, and seeks stakeholder views through discussion questions at the end of each section.

Supporting documentation

For further background and context, the Blueprint can be accessed through the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website at www.dewr.gov.au/vet-workforce-blueprint.

Additionally, the accompanying VET Workforce Study, undertaken by JSA to provide an evidence base for the Blueprint and profile the VET workforce to build a better understanding of the size, composition, characteristics and transitions of the current workforce, can be found at www.jobsandskills.gov.au/studies/vet-workforce-study.

Action 1: Occupational Mapping

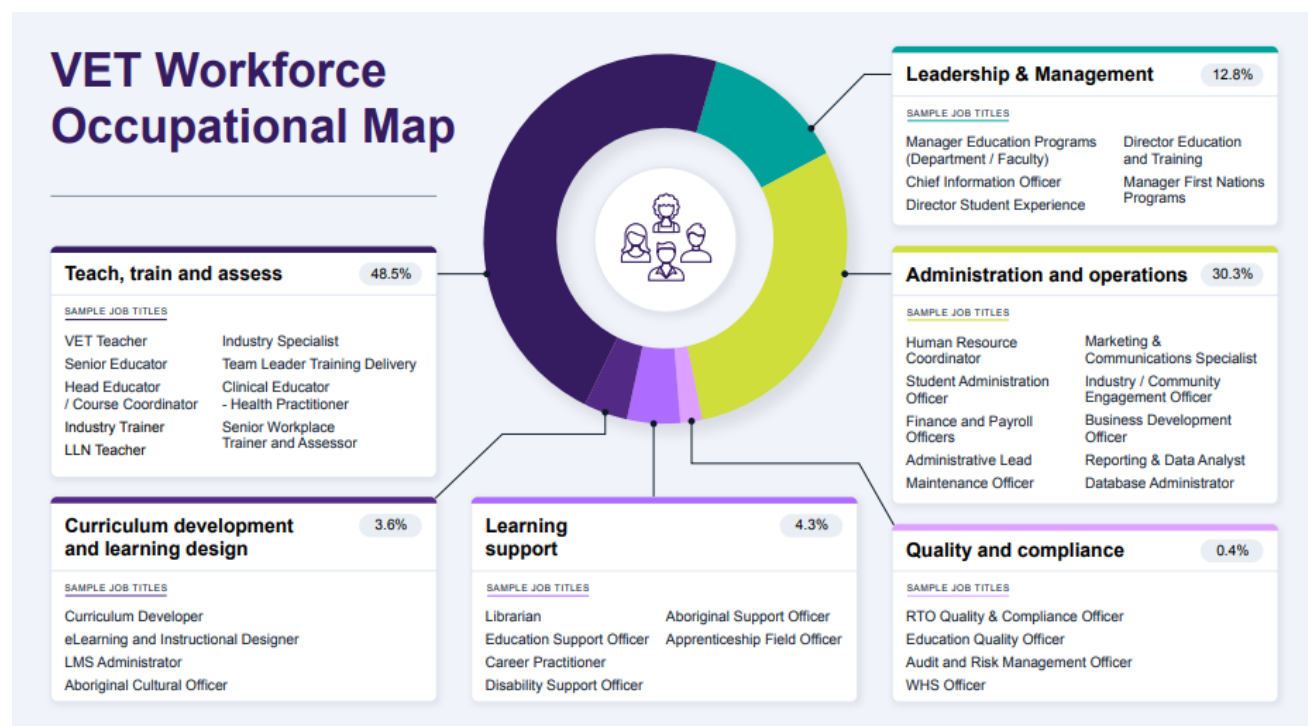
Context to this Action

The VET Workforce Study sought to categorise the VET workforce segments and roles, with details of how these operate within the sector (refer **Figure 1**). This figure was originally presented in the JSA VET Workforce Study (2024, p.13) and has since been revised to reflect feedback. The JSA VET Workforce Study occupational segments have been illustrated with sample job titles derived from real roles.

The Study also provided a rationale for developing an initial occupational framework building upon the VET workforce taxonomy based on the need to:

- increase understanding of the diversity of job roles in the sector and current industry practice
- provide a foundation to better understand the factors influencing attraction, retention and career progression within the VET workforce, and
- guide a more fit-for-purpose future workforce strategy, workforce planning, training pathways and data collection.

Figure 1: JSA VET Workforce Study occupational map

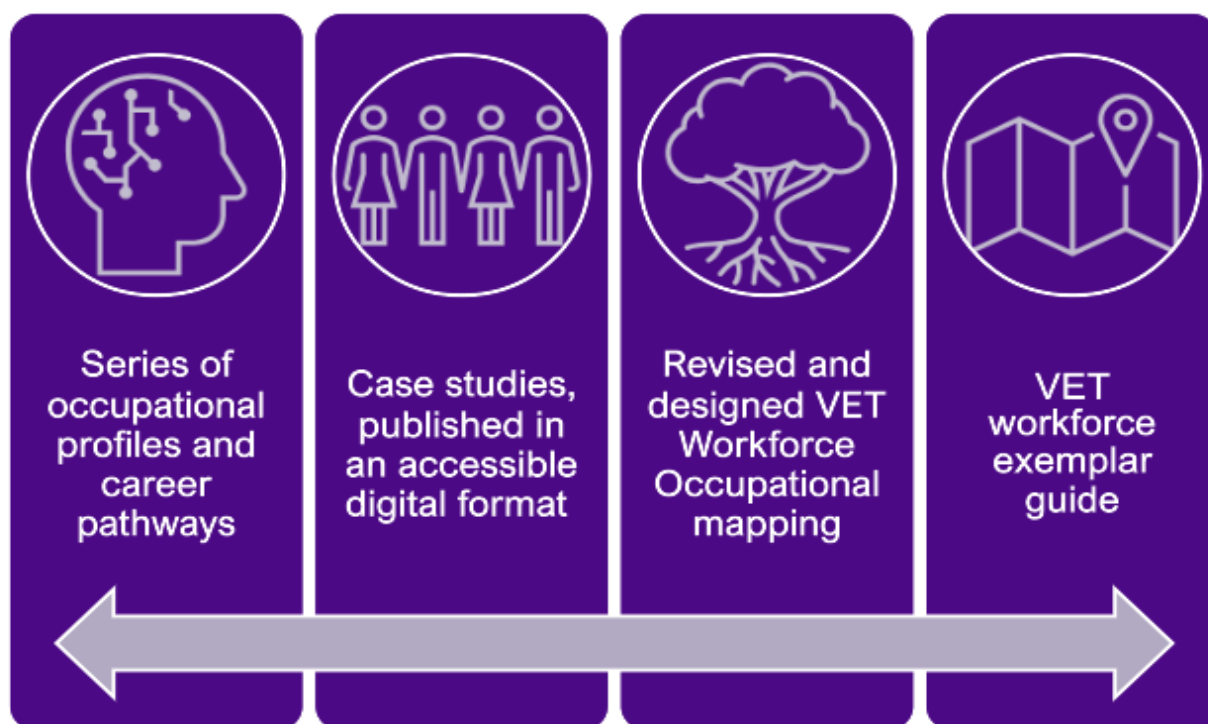


Source: The percentages displayed in the segments are derived from JSA analysis of the 2021 ABS Census of Population and Housing as detailed in pages 12-15, [JSA VET Workforce Study](#) (2024).

The Occupational Mapping project

To implement Action 1, JSA commenced an Occupational Mapping project in early 2025 with a completion date of mid-2026. The objective is to develop occupational profiles and mapping of pathways in and through for key VET workforce roles. The key resources are outlined in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Occupational Mapping proposed resources to be developed



Resource 1 – Series of occupational profiles and career pathways

Occupational profiles will be developed which provide insights into critical VET roles, linked to career pathway diagrams which illustrate entry to, and progression in, the VET workforce.

Resource 2 – Case studies, published in an accessible digital format

To assist with occupational awareness of VET workforce roles, case studies will illustrate practice in the sector across the RTO Typology, including in ACCO RTO settings.

Resource 3 – Revised and designed VET workforce occupational mapping

Building upon learnings from the VET workforce mapping in the JSA VET Workforce Study, an occupational mapping based on role analysis methodology, stakeholder feedback and available data will be produced.

Resource 4 – VET workforce exemplar guide

A tool which outlines in practicable and useable terms a practice guide for benchmarking, drawing on the project's methodology will be produced to assist VET workforce analysis.

Discussion questions:

In your view, how would a profile and pathway-based approach to occupational mapping contribute to understanding the VET workforce?

- Does the VET workforce mapping presented in the VET Workforce Study (see figure 1 above) reflect your understanding of the current VET workforce? Could any roles be added?
- What would be most useful to know, or which resources would be beneficial to have, related to VET workforce roles and career pathways?

Action 2: VET Workforce Data Strategy

Context to this Action

A nationally consistent collection which focusses on gathering quality, accurate data on the size and composition of the VET workforce has been a significant issue for some time. A comprehensive data strategy would assist in identifying gaps, providing a more fulsome and contemporary understanding of the VET workforce over time. This could be beneficial in tracking the progress of initiatives, identifying what is and is not effective, and enabling the workforce to remain responsive to changes within the VET sector, and the Australian economy more broadly.

JSA has been building on the existing insights identified in the Blueprint, and the VET Workforce Study, by gathering requirements as they relate to VET workforce data for the sector. Research analysis has been undertaken to understand:

- key requirements of a proposed new VET workforce data collection
- potential approaches to collecting these data, and
- key users and use cases for the data collected, including in relation to potential future research programs (see Action 3).

The Data Strategy project

The VET Workforce Study outlined three possible options which could provide a more systemic and regular collection of data:

- *A regular but minimum collection of data via regulatory bodies such as ASQA*
- *The universal implementation of a VET Workforce Standard where RTOs submit workforce data as part of their annual Total VET Activity returns, and/or*
- *A regular census style survey of RTOs and employees which is piloted systematically, can be extrapolated across the diversity of provider types and includes attitudinal data on why VET teachers leave and what will make them stay.*

(JSA 2024, p.25)

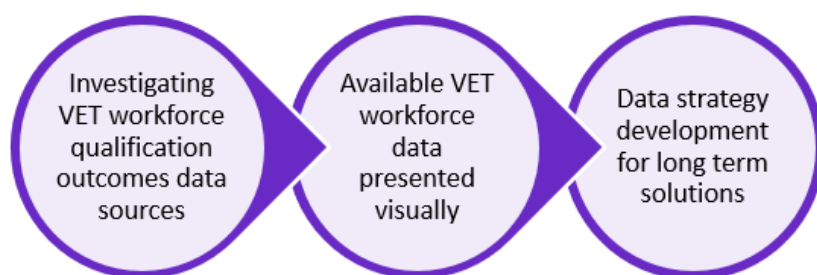
Further and more in-depth JSA research analysis, together with sector feedback, suggest these options are not immediately deliverable.

In the short to medium term, drawing upon obtainable administrative data, and other data already collected, there is a potential to:

- deepen understandings of post-qualification trajectories for teacher, trainer and assessor pathways through enhanced outcome surveys
- present VET workforce administrative data information by category (e.g. with demographics, by region or RTO type), and
- visualise this work in a dashboard form.

While undertaking this work, JSA will contribute to planning and scoping (**Figure 3**) a longer-term data strategy which may involve the development of systematic collection of VET workforce data possibly through VET information standards.

Figure 3: Proposed work on VET workforce data collection and collation under consideration



While questions of implementation will continue to be explored over the medium term, JSA are seeking to specifically support the development of a national VET workforce data strategy which will provide sustained data stewardship and consider governance of Indigenous data. Draft principles for the data strategy are outlined below in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4: Data Strategy draft principles

Stakeholder acceptance and engagement	Embedded in sectoral context	Stewardship across jurisdictions
<i>Collaborative and inclusive design</i> - Ensuring broad-based stakeholder buy-in (including RTOs, JSCs, regulators, government, peak bodies, unions and industry) through co-design and transparent communication. - Building trust by articulating the intended purpose and value of data collection to build an evidence base, and data driven understanding of the VET workforce, to facilitate workforce planning and support. - Reflecting on past projects and international examples in this space to ensure broad participation and beneficial, useable outputs.	<i>Context-aware and adaptable</i> - Understanding the work of VET teachers, trainers and assessors, and other VET workers, and their employment and development needs into the future. - Alignment with the regulatory and operational requirements of the VET sector. - Awareness of the workforce challenges and reporting burden faced by RTOs as reported in the Blueprint.	<i>Policy informed, jurisdictionally engaged</i> - Alignment with relevant national regulatory frameworks and data standards (including liaison with JSCs, ASQA & state regulators, NCVER, ABS, state and territory governments). - Accordance with national skills policy initiatives, agreements and industry skill priorities (e.g. National Skills Agreement, Closing the Gap). - Inform consideration of national coordination roles and oversight in the collection, reporting, analysis, and maintenance of VET workforce data.

Discussion questions:

Do you believe the proposed work on VET workforce data collection and collation under consideration could contribute to building a better understanding of the VET workforce?

- Are there any alternative approaches to what is presented that you think would be important to consider as part of a VET workforce data strategy?
- Do you know of any particular considerations in your workforce context (e.g. regional skills mix or student cohort needs), relating to VET workforce data collection activities, that should be considered?

Action 3: VET workforce Research Program

Context to this Action

The consultation and data work that led to the development of the Blueprint highlighted a range of challenges affecting the VET workforce that are unable to be fully understood with currently available data and existing research. An ongoing program of VET workforce research would help fill remaining knowledge gaps and support strategies and initiatives in key areas.

A national VET workforce research program could, for example, assist the development of initiatives to attract people to, and support and retain people in, VET workforce careers. Amongst other things, it might also provide opportunities to build the capability of existing highly capable educators in applied research.

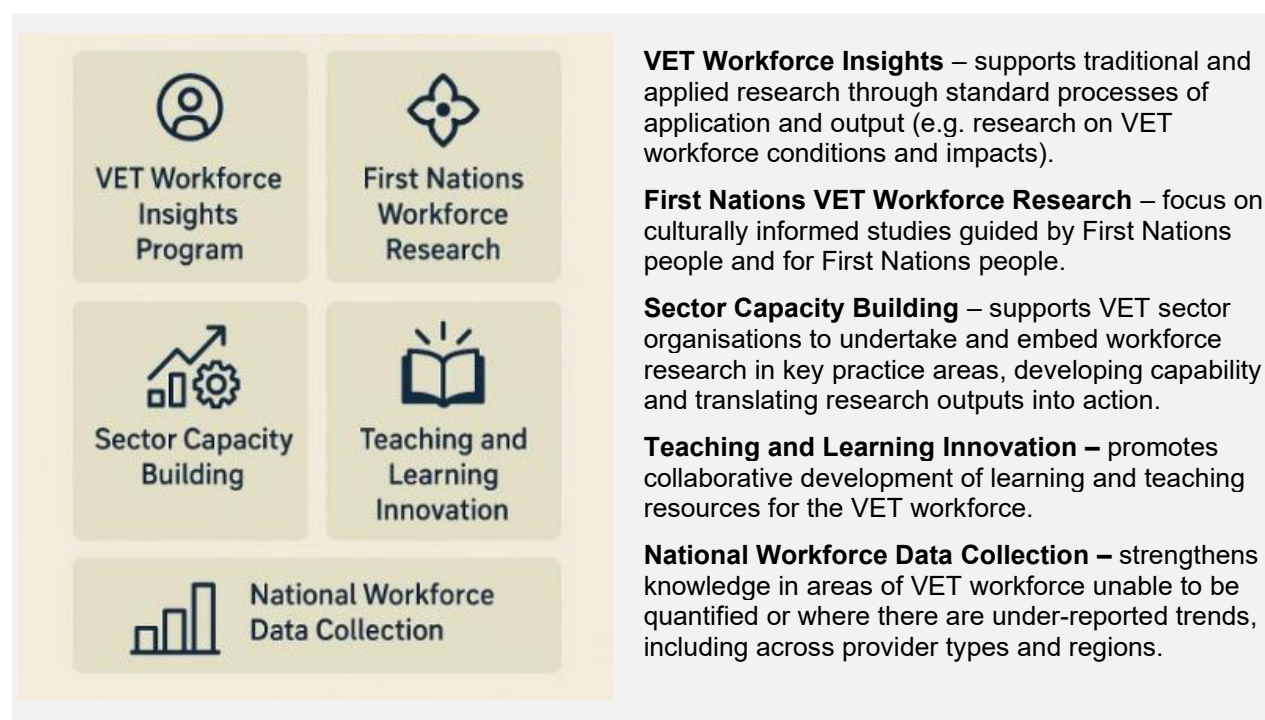
The Research Program project

JSA is helping to inform the establishment of an ongoing program of VET workforce research through stakeholder-informed advice that describes various program elements related to different possible funding streams and priority areas for research, and which incorporates principles for maximising impact from the research.

JSA has built on existing knowledge and insights from the Blueprint by gathering requirements from the VET sector and has synthesised these with findings from a gap analysis of current VET workforce research, and a review of existing education sector research program models.

JSA is presenting a multi-faceted research program that supports VET workforce research, which is collaborative, evidence-based, impactful, accessible, and outcomes-focused. A high-level overview of the research program elements is presented in **Figure 5**, with additional detail further below.

Figure 5: Research Program elements



Program element 1 - VET Workforce Insights

This element could provide funding to support traditional and applied research conducted through standard systems of application and output. University or research institute researchers would be eligible to apply to undertake studies that produce impactful findings relevant to the VET sector under this element.

Program element 2- First Nations VET Workforce Research

Principles of 'by First Nations, for First Nations' would be at the heart of further development and design of this program element. It would be advised by First Nations expert advisors to address how the VET workforce intersects with and impacts First Nations communities, staff and learners. It might explore cultural, systemic, or community-focused factors that influence participation, retention, and VET workforce outcomes.

Program element 3 - Workforce Research for Sector Capacity Building

This element could support practitioners and other members of VET sector organisations (or collectives) to conduct and disseminate workforce research, or also potentially extend access to existing findings. Support would be focused on translating that research into practical implementation. Funding would enable VET stakeholders to develop and embed research in their practice areas.

Program element 4 - Teaching and Learning Innovation

This element could focus on facilitating collaboration and sharing of innovative teaching resources and learner support practices information. It could support a group of educators working together to develop practice guides, case studies and materials.

Program element 5 - Support of the National Consistent Collection of Workforce Data

This element supports research focused on adding to the evidence base in areas unable to be easily collected and analysed through a future nationally consistent collection of VET workforce data. Funded projects might uncover previously unrecorded workforce factors and details that can only be identified through finely targeted research. The research may also seek to reveal national trends across provider types, geographic regions, or workforce roles that siloed data collection might obscure.

Discussion questions:

What opportunities do you foresee for the research program to embed and apply research to strengthen the VET workforce?

- How do you think the various elements of the VET workforce research program that JSA is presenting in this discussion paper could best achieve this?
- What outputs and dissemination methods from the research program are key to maximise impact from the research?

JSA research into VET workforce casualisation

Context

The Blueprint found VET teaching roles tend to have higher rates of casual and fixed-term contract employment than the Australian workforce generally. It noted that, while casual employment can be a preferred arrangement for some employees, stakeholders in the Blueprint consultations identified high rates of casual work among the VET teaching workforce as a challenge for attraction and retention.

In light of this, it called for further research to quantify rates of VET workforce casualisation and identify the related factors that may influence workforce attraction and retention. The Blueprint also found significant limitations in data for identifying VET teachers, given these roles may not be their 'main job', with some working primarily in industry.

The research project

JSA is undertaking a research project to better understand working arrangements in the VET workforce, focusing on gauging the extent of casual and fixed-term contract employment and to describe its drivers and impacts, including impacts for VET teachers, trainers and assessors in undertaking training delivery. It will explore these working arrangements and the extent to which these may vary across different provider types and sizes, and delivery contexts, given the diversity of the VET workforce.

The project will take a mixed methods research approach using complementary quantitative and qualitative methods. It will seek to quantify rates of casual and fixed-term contract employment for VET teachers and the wider VET workforce and address remaining gaps in data. Analysis of multiple job holdings will help better understand those working as VET teachers in a secondary job, including in casual and fixed-term roles. Qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews and case study analysis will enable insights into workers' lived experiences and help profile practices from across the VET workforce to inform findings.

Figure 6: Research approach



Through analysing the extent of casual and fixed-term contract employment in the VET workforce, and exploring key drivers and impacts, the project will set out findings that can support improved workforce planning outcomes and better access to professional development opportunities and career pathways for teachers, trainers and assessors.

Discussion questions:

What do you consider are the main drivers and impacts of using casual and fixed-term contract employment in the VET sector?

- Do you see any benefits of using casual employment in VET, and have you seen examples of where casualisation has been useful for staff, providers or students?
- What effect do you think casualisation has on teaching quality and learner outcomes?