National Skills Taxonomy Newsletter

Jobs and Skills Australia
National Skills Taxonomy update
Issue 1 – August 2026

A new six-weekly series on Australia's common skills language

Welcome to the first issue in a new six-weekly National Skills Taxonomy update series.

Each issue will take one important idea behind the National Skills Taxonomy and explain it in plain English – what it means, why it matters, and how it connects to a more skills-first system. The series will also point to upcoming webinars and opportunities to hear more, ask questions and follow the work as it develops.

This month, we are starting at the foundation: how we define skill.

A skills-first system starts with people

If Australia wants a skills-first system, we need a clear and human-centred way to describe what a skill is.

That may sound simple, but it matters. The way we define skill shapes what gets recognised, what gets valued and what can be compared across education, training and work.

Jobs and Skills Australia has developed a national definition of skill to underpin the National Skills Taxonomy:

"A skill is a valued and purpose-driven human ability that is acquired or refined through learning and practice. It is a dynamic function of an individual's knowledge, experience, and personal attributes that is continuously influenced by context, interaction with others, and the demands of the environment in which it is exercised."

Put simply, this means skills are not just task lists. They are human abilities that grow through learning, practice and experience. They are shaped by the situation in which they are used, and they often rely on judgement, context, relationships and problem-solving.

This matters because many important skills can be hard to see. Communication, adaptability, ethical judgement, collaboration, cultural knowledge and problem-solving are often described as "soft" skills, but they are central to how modern work actually happens. A skills-first system needs to recognise these capabilities more clearly, not treat them as secondary.

The National Skills Taxonomy helps turn this definition into practical infrastructure. It provides a shared way to describe skills so they can be compared and used more consistently across systems. Over time, this can support clearer learning pathways, better

recognition of skills, improved workforce planning and stronger connections between education and work.

Read the full article: **A skills-first system can't work without a human-centred definition of skill**

Join the upcoming webinar

This newsletter is the first step in a six-weekly engagement cycle. The next step is a webinar where we will explore this month's theme in more detail: why defining skill matters.

The webinar will be a chance to hear more about the thinking behind the national skill definition, what it means for the National Skills Taxonomy, and why a human-centred approach matters for the future of work, learning and recognition. It will also provide an opportunity to ask questions and reflect on what a shared skills language could mean in practice.

If you know someone who is interested in skills, workforce pathways, tertiary education, recognition, or how Australia can better describe what people can do, please share this update with them.

- **Date and time:** Tuesday 8 September 2026, 11:45 am – 12:30 pm AEST
- Register now

What's happening next

The National Skills Taxonomy is moving from early design and testing into build readiness. Recent work has focused on testing the approach through a practical pilot, strengthening the policy case for a skills-first system, and preparing the governance and delivery arrangements needed for the next phase.

The next phase will focus on building carefully, testing with users and earning trust through real-world use. The work will continue to be staged, with quality assurance, governance and stakeholder engagement built in from the start.

Future issues in this six-weekly series will continue to unpack key ideas behind the National Skills Taxonomy, including how skills can be structured, connected and used across systems.

Stay informed

If you know someone who could benefit from a skills-first lens and should be following the National Skills Taxonomy, forward this newsletter and ask them to subscribe to the National Skills Taxonomy mailing list.