

Work and skills

This section provides analysis of the spending committed towards vocational skills and training. Please see other relevant chapters for workforce related investments in particular areas, such as green jobs in the ‘acting quickly and fairly on climate and disasters’ chapter.

SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES

- **Boosting the economy with Free TAFE and more skilled workers**
\$103.3 million in 2026-27 (243.9 million/2 yrs) to meet expected demand for eligible students to undertake government-subsidised training and to increase access for students to reskill in priority courses, enhancing their skills and employment opportunities.
- **TAFE Services Fund**
\$43.6 million in 2026-27 (\$87.2 million/2 yrs) to continue to support the TAFE Network including student inclusion and wellbeing programs, training delivery in thin markets and updating TAFE facilities, equipment and shared ICT platforms and services.
- **Delivering a Home and Community Care TAFE Centre of Excellence**
\$5.7 million in 2026-27 (17 million/3 yrs) to deliver a Home and Community Care TAFE Centre of Excellence at Holmesglen Institute to provide training to meet the growing demand for home-based care in Victoria.

WHAT'S GOOD

- VCOSS welcomes funding for expanded free TAFE places and three new TAFE Centres of Excellence, including one focused on community and care services, as part of the \$459.4m investment in skills and training. This is expected to support 15,000 additional students.
- VCOSS particularly welcomes the continuation of funding towards wraparound supports for students to access high-quality vocational and applied learning pathways. This includes funding for VET administration, VET cluster coordinators to provide schools with specialised assistance with VET provision and VET transport funding for

rural and regional students. This investment will make a considerable difference promoting equity by removing financial barriers to education and allowing disadvantaged, unemployed and 'second chance' learners to gain skills and enter the workforce.

- The Budget included welcome funding for the training of tradespeople in the work needed to electrify homes and improve energy efficiency. More workers are needed to realise the energy transition, and investment in jobs and skills has the potential to benefit Victorians on low incomes if efforts centre on equity and inclusion. These investments must have a focus on inclusion of women, those living in rural and regional areas where renewables are being located, and those experiencing barriers to employment. Bringing in workers from out of town will not benefit local workers and has the potential to disrupt communities. VCOSS also notes we await the release of the Victorian Energy Jobs Plan, which has a focus on increasing diversity in the energy workforce.

WHAT'S MISSING

- Free TAFE has enabled record levels of enrolment, with over 60,800 people currently enrolled in a Free TAFE course. However, this is only part of the picture. Students need support - including financial support – to complete their qualifications and mandatory placements. VCOSS continues to call on the Government to:
 - Provide financial support for students undertaking key community sector TAFE qualifications (such as the Diploma of Community Services) that are currently ineligible for the Commonwealth Government's Prac Payment.
 - Support community organisations to offer quality student placements through financial incentives and funding for workforce development.