# Appendix A: Bilateral Implementation Plan – National Skills Agreement Policy Initiatives

## PRELIMINARIES

1. This implementation plan is made between the Commonwealth of Australia (Commonwealth) and NSW under the 2024–2028 National Skills Agreement (the NSA) and should be read in conjunction with the NSA and the NSA Bilateral Implementation Plan Guidance.

2. Once executed, this implementation plan and any updates agreed with the Commonwealth, will be appended to the NSA and will be published on the Commonwealth's Federal Financial Relations website (https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au).

3. This implementation plan is expected to expire on 31 December 2028 (in line with the NSA), or on completion of the initiative, including final performance reporting and processing of final payments against milestones.

4. In all public materials relating to the policy initiatives, NSW will acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution with the following statement: Paid to Learn is a joint initiative between the Australian Government and NSW Government.

## REPORTING AND PAYMENTS

### Reporting

5. Performance reporting will be due by 31 March and 30 September each year until the cessation of this Implementation Plan, or the final payment is processed.

6. NSW will provide to the Commonwealth a traffic light status and activity summary on all policy initiatives.

7. The Commonwealth will provide templates for the purposes of reporting.

### Payments

8. The Commonwealth will make payment subject to performance reporting demonstrating the relevant milestone has been met. After the initial payment, second and subsequent milestone payments will be assessed and processed in the following reporting period.

9. As part of the performance reporting, NSW will provide evidence of what has been delivered in the reporting period. Payments will be processed once performance reports have been assessed and accepted.

10. Where a payment is due at a reporting period (31 March and/or 30 September), NSW will complete the relevant section of the reporting template and provide the evidence required as agreed in the Milestones and Payments associated with this Implementation Plan.

MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE VET WORKFORCE (Clause A124 to A129 of the NSA)

## A) PAID TO LEARN PROGRAM

1) Outline activities that will support, grow and retain a quality VET workforce (including relationship to the VET Workforce Blueprint):

This implementation plan supports the expansion of the Paid to Learn (PTL) Program. TAFE NSW will deliver the PTL Program to qualify up to 136 new VET teachers (with Commonwealth matched funding) from July 2024 to June 2025.

The PTL program provides industry professionals with the opportunity to be paid to study the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) full time – fast tracking them to be qualified to teach a TAFE NSW class within 14 weeks:

- Week 1: Orientation and onboarding, Digital Skill and Strategies for Learner Success
- Week 2: Certificate IV TAE commences
- Weeks 3 to 14:
    - Monday/Tuesday - Teacher Practicum
    - Wednesday - Capability Uplift
    - Thursday/Friday – TAE Studies

With Commonwealth matched funding, TAFE NSW will run two cohorts of scholars in 2024-25, commencing in approximately September 2024 and March 2025.

Expected Benefits of the PTL program

Since commencing with a pilot in August 2022, Paid to Learn (PTL) has proven itself to be an effective strategy to attract a high-quality VET workforce, including industry-experienced professionals, dual professionals and adult educators. This supports Opportunity 3 in the VET Workforce Blueprint to make it easier for high quality teachers to enter the VET workforce. This also aligns with Action 9 in the Blueprint to invest in innovative VET workforce pathways through scaling existing initiatives to uplift VET workforce capacity. The Program has demonstrated a number of positive outcomes:

- 96% Completion rate – since launching in late 2022 204 new teachers trained. Only 8 teachers did not complete program.
- 96% Retention rate – retained 196 teachers out of the 204 who graduated. More than 40% of PTL teachers from regional areas.
- Over 71,000 additional teaching hours (up to semester 1, 2024) delivered by PTL trained teachers.
- Reduced delayed apprenticeship starts from 2848 (Oct 22) to 1050 (Aug 23) in Construction & Energy Skills Excellence Network (SEN).
- 6.5% of all Paid to Learn teachers are Aboriginal compared to less than 3% of overall TAFE NSW teachers.
- 48% of all Paid to Learn teachers are regional/remote (this includes Newcastle, Central Coast, Wollongong) compared to 36.4% of overall TAFE NSW teachers.

The success of the PTL Program to date is due to the rigorous wrap around support by the PTL Capability Specialists and strategic recruitment processes, the innovative reporting system, the continuous improvement approach, and ongoing commitment to clear communication with all stakeholders.

Additionality and reach

- The Paid to Learn program will be delivered by TAFE NSW, with Commonwealth Government support, to qualify up to 136 teachers in total in FY24-25.

- expand to other areas of national priority such as essential care services and the Net Zero transformation. The Program is currently delivered across the state with a primary focus on skills shortage areas such as plumbing, electrical, carpentry, heavy vehicles, auto electrical and manufacturing.

- have a greater geographic focus on hard to fill areas including Western Sydney, Northern Beaches, and regional locations such as Broken Hill, Wagga Wagga, Tamworth and Dubbo.

TAFE NSW expects the program will primarily support the following priority cohorts in 2024-25:

- First Nations – TAFE NSW is incorporating additional one to one support from Aboriginal Employment team, from recruitment phase, and weekly yarning circles conducted.
- Regional /Remote – Learners are grouped in Regional HUBs including face to face tutorial support and additional local campus wraparound support as required.
- Mature age (55+ years) – Learners are provided with Digital and LLN skills support. For example, testing to enable creation of an individual development plan bespoke to their needs including computer skills need additional support.

2) Engagement arrangements, including relevant partnerships with First Nations peoples:

Existing TAFE NSW networks and relationships with local industries are accessed for the Paid to Learn Program's engagement arrangements. TAFE NSW Industry Innovation Specialists and staff in local campuses are actively consulting with industries to identify skill shortage areas, which helps inform future teaching needs.

With this information, the PTL Program then seeks to identify and fill teaching capacity gaps in growth areas, where there are existing workload issues and hard to fill industry sectors and locations. For example, recruitment for the most recent cohort of PTL included a large number of engineering roles because this was informed by the needs of the newly established TAFE NSW Manufacturing Centre of Excellence.

Once positions are identified for the PTL Program, roles are advertised using a range of sourcing strategies such promoting through industry partners and previous TAFE NSW student alumni to maximise the pool of industry professionals.

In addition, throughout the process the Aboriginal Employment Team will be engaged to maximise the opportunity to advertise identified and targeted First Nations positions. This aligns with the NSA's priority to grow the First Nations VET workforce (Priority Reform 3 in the Closing the Gap Agreement).

| Commonwealth Investment ($) | State Investment ($) | Planned Start Date | Planned End Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| $4.9M | $4.9M | 1/7/24 | 30/9/25 |

Measures to strengthen the VET workforce - approach to matched funding arrangements (clause A126 refers) – to be reconciled over the life of the NSA.

| Details of matched funding | 2024-25 | 2025-26 | 2026-27 | 2027-28 | 2028-29 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *NSW Government contribution* | $4.9M | - | - | - | - | $4.9M |

The NSW Government will provide details of their matched funding contributions at the end of each financial year, commencing 1 July 2024 until 31 December 2028. Final payments under this implementation plan may be reduced where the total contribution by the NSW Government over the life of the project does not align with the Commonwealth contribution.

**Performance Indicators**

TAFE NSW will commit to reporting the following quantitative indicators annually:

- Completion rate – as a percentage of the total number of teachers who start the program.
- Retention rate – the number of teachers retained after graduating the program.
- The number of additional teaching hours delivered by PTL trained teachers, since the program started in 2022
- Reduced Excess Teaching Hours – the number of excess teaching hours as a percentage of total teaching hours
- Reduced delayed apprenticeship starts due to additional teaching capacity in all skills shortage areas – since the program started in 2022. For example, reduced from 2848 (Oct 22) to 1050 (Aug 23) in Construction of Energy Skills Excellence Network (SEN).

TAFE NSW will also be able to provide a breakdown of completion and retention rates for the following priority cohort students: First Nations, Regional, and mature age (55+ years).

**Evaluation arrangements**

**Program evaluation will identify:**

- What lessons were learned during implementation
- What adjustments were made along the way
- Observed results and comparison against expectations
- Whether results varied across priority cohorts including First Nations and women.
- Cost-efficiency of the initiative.

To maximise the uptake and benefits of the Paid to Learn Program, findings will be shared with other TAFEs through current networks and the proposed National TAFE Network (once established).

**Evaluation methodology and timing**

The program will be evaluated at regular intervals by the TAFE NSW Capability Group. Qualitative & quantitative artefacts to be used to complete evaluation including:

- Key findings from consultations with stakeholders including:

    - Weekly surveys conducted by each scholar to assess progress and enable early intervention and risk management.
    - Post-Orientation Week surveys gather valuable feedback from scholars and stakeholders, facilitating continuous improvement and refinement of the orientation program.
    - Monthly post-program surveys with graduated scholars focus on early intervention and retention.
- Completion rates
- Retention rates
- The number of additional teaching hours delivered by PTL trained teachers compared to when the program started in 2022
- Reduced Excess Teaching Hours – the number of excess teaching hours as a percentage of total teaching hours compared to when the program started in 2022
- Reduced delayed apprenticeship starts due to additional teaching capacity – compared to when the program started in 2022.
- Lessons learnt summary (successes and challenges)
- Organisational evaluation of head teachers and team leaders occurs at the conclusion of each cohort to assess the impact of PTL at a section level.

For 2024/25 cohorts, TAFE NSW commits to providing evaluation findings by 30 June 2026.

Final evaluation methodology and timings will be subject to the outcomes of the 2025-26 NSW Budget process and any subsequent decision to update the Implementation Plan prior to June 2025 to seek Commonwealth matched funding in the forward estimates (2025-26 to 2028-29).

## MILESTONES AND PAYMENTS – MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE VET WORKFORCE – PAID TO LEARN

| Milestone | Evidence | Payment Value Up To (Commonwealth funded) | Commonwealth reporting period |
|---|---|---|---|
| Milestone 1:<br>Initial payment on agreement of bilateral implementation plan (February 2025) | Bilateral implementation plan agreed with Commonwealth | $400,000 | N/A |
| Milestone 2.<br>Commonwealth acceptance that New South Wales has operated an expanded Paid to Learn Program in 2024-25 with a total of at least 120 participants:<br>• a first cohort of participants, commencing in September 2024 and concluding in December 2024, and<br>• a second cohort of participants, commencing in March 2025. | Report signed by relevant New South Wales senior official that outlines progress implementing the Paid to Learn program and includes details of:<br>• Completion rate – as a percentage of the total number of teachers who start the program.<br>• Retention rate – the number of teachers retained after graduating the program.<br>• The number of additional teaching hours delivered by PTL trained teachers, since the program started in 2022.<br>• Reduced Excess Teaching Hours – the number of excess teaching hours as a percentage of total teaching hours<br>• Reduced delayed apprenticeship starts due to additional teaching capacity – since the program started in 2022. For example, reduced from 2848 (Oct 22) to 1050 (Aug 23) in Construction of Energy Skills Excellence Network (SEN). | $4,500,000 | 31 March 2025 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Milestone 3:<br>Commonwealth acceptance that New South Wales has operated an expanded Paid to Learn Program in 2024-25 with:<br>• completion of 120 commencing participants up to June 2025. | Report signed by relevant New South Wales senior official that outlines progress implementing the Paid to Learn program and includes details of:<br>• Completion rate – as a percentage of the total number of teachers who start the program.<br>• Retention rate – the number of teachers retained after graduating the program.<br>• The number of additional teaching hours delivered by PTL trained teachers, since the program started in 2022.<br>• Reduced Excess Teaching Hours – the number of excess teaching hours as a percentage of total teaching hours<br>• Reduced delayed apprenticeship starts due to additional teaching capacity – since the program started in 2022. For example, reduced from 2848 (Oct 22) to 1050 (Aug 23) in Construction of Energy Skills Excellence Network (SEN).<br>• The outcomes to date of the evaluation of the Paid to Learn Program's operation in 2024-25. | $0 | 30 September 2025 |
| | **Total** | **$4,900,000** | |

The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this implementation plan as follows:

**Signed** *for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia by*

**The Honourable Andrew Giles MP**
Minister for Skills and Training

23 / 1 / 2025

**Signed** *for and on behalf of the State of NSW by*

**The Honourable Steve Whan MP**
Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education

20 / 1 / 2025