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

PRELIMINARIES

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

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, South Australia will acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution with the following statement: The Enhanced Vocational Education and Training (VET) Data and Evidence policy initiative is a joint initiative between the Australian Government and South Australian Government.

REPORTING AND PAYMENTS

Reporting

1. 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.

2. South Australia will provide to the Commonwealth a traffic light status and activity summary on all policy initiatives.

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

Payments

1. The Commonwealth will make payment subject to performance reporting demonstrating the relevant milestone has been met.

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

3. Where a payment is due at a reporting period (31 March and/or 30 September), South Australia 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.

4. Under A92 of the NSA, if a State is unable to expend any Commonwealth funding provided for policy initiative milestone payments, the Commonwealth may reduce a future payment by an amount equivalent to the unspent funds.

ENHANCED VET DATA AND EVIDENCE (Clause A130 to A140 of the NSA)

The Enhanced VET Data and Evidence Policy initiative includes several key measures, the below relates to the VET Data Streamlining (VDS) program only.

VET Data Streamlining: South Australia opts-in to the VDS program and commits to:

- Completing transition to the National VET Data System by 31 December 2028;
- Transitioning State Training Authority (STA) systems to the VET Information Standard by 31 December 2028; and
- Supporting TAFE with their transition to the National VET Data System and the VET Information Standard if and as needed.

1. Specify activities that support the VDS program

South Australia will support the VDS Program by:

- Providing subject matter expertise (SME) to inform analysis, design and development of the National VET Data Systems until go live.

- Ensuring South Australia's technology infrastructure aligns with VDS Program goals, enabling integration between National VET Data System and the Skills SA data hub.

- Develop any state specific rules in regard to reference data, metadata requirements, information and cyber security policies to support business processes required for VDS program implementation.

- Ensure technical resources are available at the required times to support testing of the National VET Data System.

- Collaborating with the Department for Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) to develop a transition approach and ongoing support model.

- South Australia will aim to complete the transition of the VET Information Standard and National VET Data System by 31 December 2028. The following timeframe, subject to the endorsed Transportational Model.

Detailed planning and design complete	Quarter 2, 2026
State Training Authority (STA) ready to onboard to VET Information Standard (IS)	Quarter 3, 2027
Build and STA/Student Training Activity Reporting System (STARS) integration complete	Quarter 3, 2027
Commence transition with STA funded providers	Quarter 1,2028
South Australia Go-Live	Quarter 3, 2028 (no later than 31 December 2028)

2. Specify activities that support the VET Information Standard.

South Australia will support the NCVER to develop and implement the new VET Information Standard by undertaking the following:

- Assist NCVER as the national data custodian in the development of the VET Information Standard.
- Skills SA subject matter experts will:
  - participate in all phases of the design lifecycle, including analysis, input and design review
  - co-design state specific data elements and associated rules
  - actively participate in governance forums and decisions, and where required and reasonable, share information with other departments to support transition to the VET Information Standard.
- South Australia will transition State Training Authority systems to the VET Information Standard by 31 December 2028.

3. Specify the state's reporting pathway for the purpose of collecting VET Activity Data (clause A138b refers).

South Australian proposes to collect all VET Activity Data by the direct reporting pathway, where funded providers submit VET Activity Data in VET Information Standard compliant format to the National VET Data System via a Student Management System or the National VET Data System user interface.

Non-funded VET activity data will be reported to the NCVER via the National VET Data System.

4. Specify the state's collection and submission processes:

States will support the collection of metadata related to VET Activity Data submitted by providers to the National VET Data System to enable states to monitor compliance with state specific contracts and regulators to monitor compliance with the Data Provisioning Requirements (DPR's)

South Australia will support providers delivering training and services in our state to meet their reporting obligations through the following key actions:

- **Adoption of Direct Submission Pathway**
  All training providers will be required to submit VET Activity Data directly to the National VET Data System, through their Student Management Systems (SMS), or the Direct Entry Portal if required.

- **Technical Support and Training**
  South Australia will work in collaboration with DEWR, the NCVER and vendors to provide technical support to providers during the transition to the VET Information Standard. This may include supporting providers as they transition from the state-based system Student Training Enrolment Logistics Application (STELA) to a new platform STARS.

- **Monthly Data Submission Requirements**
  Funded providers in South Australia will be required to submit VET Activity Data to the National VET Data System **at least monthly at a minimum,** in line with current contractual obligations. This aligns with South Australia's existing claims and payment processes, with submissions required no less frequently than quarterly or as otherwise agreed under the Data Provision Requirements (DPRs).

- **Change Management and Education**
  South Australia will work in collaboration with DEWR and the NCVER to support change management activities. This includes educating training providers on how to interact with the National VET Data System and informing them of any regulatory or policy changes related to data provision.

5. Specify activities to support inclusive and robust governance.

The South Australian VDS Program will be delivered using contemporary, fit-for-purpose program and project management practices, aligned to the Department of State Development governance requirements. These governance arrangements apply to South Australia's integration, data, operational readiness and transition activities, and interface with national governance forums to manage inter-jurisdictional dependencies and risks.

The VDS South Australian Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) will represent South Australia within national program governance arrangements, including participation in Senior Skills Officials Network (SSON).

The VDS initiative in South Australia is governed as a defined program within the broader Skills SA Digital Transformation Program, with a dedicated delivery project structure responsible for execution. Program governance focuses on outcomes, benefits, funding and interdependencies, while project governance manages delivery, scope, schedule and quality.

This approach will be applied within the broader Skills SA program governance framework, ensuring alignment with established project controls, reporting, risk management and assurance processes.

South Australia commits to participating in the VDS program delivery governance processes endorsed by SSON as part of the VDS program reset on 24 April 2024. South Australia agrees to implement changes to governance as agreed by SSON over the life of the program.

6. Project management: Specify approach to project management and reporting.

A Digital Transformation Program Board will be established to:

- Provide oversight of program delivery, including performance, risks, issues and key decisions
- Provide strategic advice and recommendations to guide solution design and implementation
- Ensure alignment between business priorities and delivery outcomes

The Digital Transformation Program Board will comprise senior representatives with delegated authority to provide direction and make decisions.

The Program Manager will be responsible for consolidating project status, risks and progress, and providing regular updates and reporting to the Skills SA Digital Transformation Program Board. VDS will be delivered using an Agile methodology, enabling iterative design, development and testing to support progressive delivery and early validation of outcomes.

This approach will be applied within the broader Skills SA program governance framework, ensuring alignment with established project controls, reporting, risk management and assurance processes.

Where appropriate, Agile delivery will be complemented by structured planning and stage-gated governance to support key milestones, approvals and funding requirements.

Reporting under the South Australian VDS Program provides a key mechanism for governance oversight, delivery assurance and accountability, it also supports informed decision-making, risk management, change control and assurance of progress against agreed milestones and funding outcomes.

Reports will be reviewed and endorsed through established South Australian governance arrangements prior to submission. Where reporting identifies potential risks to milestone achievement, funding outcomes, data integrity or delivery timelines, these matters will be escalated through established governance, risk management and change control processes to enable timely resolution and, where necessary, engagement with national governance forums.

South Australia commits to the following:

- Participating in the Commonwealth VDS program delivery program and project management forums and working groups.
- Collaborating on VDS Program wide risk management activities with all partners including risk identification, mitigation, and treatments.
- Providing regular industry standard status reporting to the Commonwealth VDS Program Management Office in line with the agreed format and frequency, as agreed by the VDS Steering Group.

Gate Reviews

South Australia commits to actively participate in the VDS Program Gate Reviews endorsed by SSON on 24 April 2024 as part of the VDS governance reset. These are:

- Gate 1 -Governance Review.
- Gate 2 – Go-Live Review.
- Gate 3 – Mid-point Review.
- Gate 4 – Delivery and Operational Transfer.
- Gate 5 – Program Closure.

Enhanced VET Data and Evidence – evaluation arrangements

South Australia will support the development of a VDS Evaluation framework, for consideration by SSON which will provide a consistent methodology for all jurisdictions to use to evaluate the success of the VDS program. The evaluation arrangements will be robust and appropriate to the design and scale of the VDS program.

South Australia commits to using the evaluation framework to outline how the success of the VDS program as it pertains to their jurisdiction will be measured, effectiveness will be evaluated, and how funding will be disseminated and actioned.

Funding arrangements

Details of funding ($ millions)	**2024-25**	**2025-26**	**2026-27**	**2027-28**	**2028-29**	**Total**
Commonwealth contribution	Nil	1.6	2.4	2.4	1.6	8.0

MILESTONES FOR ENHANCED VET DATA AND EVIDENCE

Milestone	Evidence	Payment Value (Commonwealth funded)[1]	Commonwealth reporting period
Milestone 1: Initial payment on agreement of bilateral implementation plan.	1: Bilateral implementation plan agreed with the Commonwealth	$800,000	N/A
Milestone 2: Completion and acceptance of detailed State-specific program management planning artefacts.	2. Commonwealth acceptance of SA specific program management planning artefacts, including: • VDS roadmap • Project management plan • Detailed project schedule • Resource/procurement plan • Risk management plan and key risks • Payment schedule • Agreed delivery payment milestones • State specific reconciliation report template	$800,000	30 June 2026
Milestone 3: Design and Architecture – Completion of high-level and detailed solution architecture, including integration patterns, VET Information Standard (IS) data model, and transformation approach, sufficient to support build commencement.	3. Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the South Australian Senior Official with responsibility for skills, confirming that: • High-level and detailed solution design documentation has been developed and approved by the relevant SA governance forum • Integration architecture, data model and transformation approach approved • VET IS – alignment data model has been approved for implementation	$1,200,000	30 September 2026

Milestone 4: Completion of Core Integration and Data Platform Established – Core State Training Activity Reporting System (STARS) and Enterprise Data Platform (EDP) capability established, initial system integrations implemented, foundational data processing in place to support testing and downstream delivery.	4. Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the South Australian Senior Official with responsibility for skills, confirming that: • STARS integration initially implemented and operational in non-production environments • EDP ingestion and initial processing capability for STARS data established • Initial transformation logic implemented • Development progress demonstrated against plan	$1,200,000	31 March 2027
Milestone 5: Completion of Build and ready for Testing and Transition – Core build completed, including STARS integration, VET IS data model implementation, data migration, and VET IS to The Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) transformation, with the solution technically complete and ready to support formal system testing, pilot onboarding, and dual-run operations.	5. Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the South Australian Senior Official with responsibility for skills, confirming that: • STARS integration completed • VET IS data model implemented • Activity data transformation implemented and validated for build completion, ready for formal system testing and dual-run validation • The solution is technically complete and ready to support formal system testing, pilot provider onboarding and dual-run operations	$1,200,000	30 September 2027
Milestone 6: Pilot Go-Live and Dual-Run Operations Established – Completion of pilot go-live, system integration and dual-run operations validated, end-to-end data flows confirmed under production-like conditions.	6. Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the South Australian Senior Official with responsibility for skills, confirming that: • Initial cohort of RTOs has been successfully onboarded and is submitting activity data via STARS • End-to-end data flows from STARS → EDP → downstream systems (including Student Training Enrolment Logistics Application	$1,200,000	March 2028

	(STELA) where applicable) validated in production • Dual-run operations (STARS and STELA) functioning successfully • Interim reporting and payment processing operating associated with pilot activity is operating without disruption		
Milestone 7: Scaled Provider Transition and STARS Adoption – stable dual-run operations at scale, User Acceptance Testing (UAT) completed, EDP confirmed as primary processing layer, readiness for STELA decommissioning achieved.	7. Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the South Australian Senior Official with responsibility for skills, confirming that: • RTOs that elected to transition have transitioned to STARS submission pathways • Dual-run operations stable at scale • UAT completed, with outcomes suitable for operational use • EDP confirmed as primary processing layer for activity data outputs • Operational readiness achieved to support STELA decommissioning, subject to final governance approval	$800,000	30 September 2028
Milestone 8: STELA Decommissioning and completion of Project Closure report	8. Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the South Australian Senior Official with responsibility for skills, confirming that: • Project closure report, endorsed through SA project governance • Confirming that all agreed project deliverables have been completed or transitioned	$800,000	31 December 2028

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
30/ 6/ 2026

Signed *for and on behalf of South Australia by*

Hon Lucy Hood MP
Minister for Education, Training and Skills
25/ 6 / 2026