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

PRELIMINARIES

1. This implementation plan is made between the Commonwealth of Australia (Commonwealth) and Tasmania 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, Tasmania will acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution with the following statement: This is a joint initiative between the Australian Government and Tasmanian Government.

REPORTING AND PAYMENTS

Reporting

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

2. Tasmania 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, Tasmania 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), Tasmania 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.

IMPROVED COMPLETIONS – ESPECIALLY FOR PRIORITY GROUPS (Clause A141 to A150 of the NSA)

1) Outline actions to improve completions and which element of clause A145 will be addressed.

Improving student outcomes and increasing completions in vocational education and training (VET) will have a positive impact on the number of Tasmanians able to take up job and/or further education and training opportunities, as well as positive impacts on overall wellbeing and workforce participation and productivity. Investment to improve student outcomes including completions will also help to address national skills shortages.

Key pillars of Tasmania's Jurisdictional Action Plan (The Tasmanian Skills Plan (2024-2028)) are to Support Learners to Succeed and build a Stronger, More Connected VET System.

The initiatives outlined below align with the Tasmanian Skills Plan as well as the National Skills Agreement (NSA) commitment to implement and evaluate new, scalable initiatives designed to directly support students or otherwise enhance the voice of students in VET policy.

Pathways Partnership Program

The Tasmanian Skills Plan along with the Tasmanian Government's Youth Jobs Strategy (2024-2030) support efforts to make more seamless transitions in the VET system and focus on opportunities for collaboration that reflect Tasmanian workforce needs and learner characteristics.

$2 million will be invested over the life of the NSA to support a Pathways Partnership Program between the Department of State Growth (Skills Tasmania) and the Department for Education, Children and Young People RTO (the DECYP RTO) along with TasTAFE. Efforts to build and strengthen partnerships and make learner pathways within the school based VET system and TasTAFE as seamless as possible with the objective of improving completions and outcomes for learners and the economy.

Activities under the Program will include a data integration and pathways research project. This work will increase data alignment on student journeys and opportunities for intervention, and track pathways or patterns of behaviour to gain greater insight into how students move through different parts of the education system and labour market.

The Program will boost the quality and consistency of VET through investment in teaching and learning materials for TasTAFE and the DECYP RTO for priority sectors, targeted engagement between TasTAFE and the DECYP RTO teachers as well as collaborative validation of courses. This work is also expected to allow for streamlined Recognition of Prior Learning.

A decision making committee of executive members from the DECYP RTO, TasTAFE and State Growth will meet regularly to determine priorities and review the Program's progress.

The evidence and outcomes of the Program will help to shape Tasmania's VET policy and aim to inform effective approaches to fostering partnerships and harmonisation opportunities between schools and post-secondary training providers.

This Program aligns with research from the Shergold Report 2020[1] and the Inquiry into the Perceptions and Status of VET 2024[2]. This research includes recommendations for data

[1] *Looking to the Future: Report of the Review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training*
[2] The House of Representatives' *Shared Vision, Equal Pathways Inquiry into Perceptions and Status of VET*

integration projects to better understand student choices, better integration of VET courses with the broader school curriculum and providing targeted investment for schools to delivery VET for secondary school students conditional on partnership with TAFEs.

Improving Completions through a Mentoring Program

Extensive consultation for the Tasmanian Skills Plan, the Youth Jobs Strategy and the Modernising Apprenticeships Report[3] all identified mentoring and targeted support for learners as priorities for further work and investment in Tasmania.

The Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System (the Strategic Review) referenced research that mentoring and pastoral care are the most significant support strategies for boosting completion rates, which is supported by the Productivity Commission (2020b) and confirmed by consultations from the Strategic Review.

For employers, there is complexity and cost to engage with the apprenticeship and traineeship system. Small and medium businesses face barriers in taking on and supporting apprentices, such as a lack of resources to provide comprehensive mentoring and support. Group training is a solution to addressing these barriers. The Strategic Review identified the opportunity to leverage Group Training Organisations (GTOs) to drive learner outcomes and encourage innovation, with consultation demonstrating broad support for making greater use of high-performing GTOs.

$5.9 million will be invested over the life of the NSA to Improving Completions through a Mentoring Program. The objective of the Mentoring Program is to improve capacity and capability of the GTO sector to deliver services to businesses that improve completions (particularly for priority cohorts and industries).

The Mentoring Program will include two key initiatives.

1. A new contestable grant program for GTOs or those aspiring to be GTOs.

   An open grant program approach will allow for innovative and tailored programs relevant to the sector and cohort. Examples of activities that may be funded include (but are not limited to): programs that deliver wrap-around support for apprentices and trainees (excluding traditional GTO employment services), trialling new strategies or initiatives that make GTOs more accessible especially for small and medium employers, and expansion/uplift in GTO services including capacity to deliver targeted support programs for priority groups and to upskill mentors.

   Grant applications will be funded in accordance with the grant program guidelines and State Growth's grant management framework. Applications will initially be assessed against the eligibility criteria. Applications will then be competitively assessed against the assessment criteria with a specific focus on the ability to achieve the objective/aim of the program and the quality of the project proposal. As the program has limited funding, it is possible not all eligible applications will receive a grant.

   The number of learners that would benefit will be dependent on each organisations' project. Funding for projects that support individual learners will be capped at an annual rate per learner, with a higher payment provided for initiatives that support priority

[3] DPCTas 2024, Modernising Apprenticeships – Employer and Apprentice/Trainee Inputs

groups. The distribution of the program budget will be determined through the funding allocation process.

Ineligible activities will include where the activity is already funded, or could be more appropriately funded, through another mechanism or under other Tasmanian Government or Australian Government programs. Details will be provided in the grant program guidelines (Milestone 2).

2. A short course mentoring program.

   State Growth will work with GTOs to identify a training offering that upskills mentors through nationally recognised training to raise quality and consistency of mentoring through government-funded GTO services.

   Short courses of this nature of training exist in other jurisdictions, such as micro-credentials and workshops on apprentice supervisor training to support employers to provide high quality apprenticeship and traineeship experiences.

   The short courses in Tasmania would be focused on upskilling mentors, acknowledging the identified need for assistance to be an effective mentor for learners which requires a specific set of skills. Subsidies for the training will be available through Skills Tasmania's regular annual funding rounds.

2) Outline how this proposal addresses clause A146, including links to recommendations of the National VET Completions Taskforce.

A key theme of the National VET Completions Taskforce (Completions Report) is VET system and delivery, which aligns with the objective and activities of the Pathways Partnership Program.

Ensuring VET products are fit for purpose, adaptive, and align with the needs and expectations of all stakeholders will assist in achieving positive outcomes. The Completions Report highlights the importance of pathways between school and VET, recommending that schools should prioritise the completion of VET for school students by fostering strong partnerships with local industry and other training and education providers and facilitating interesting and relevant opportunities for their students.

The Completions Report recommends that improvements to tailored supports will contribute to higher completion rates. The Mentoring Program is supported by findings from the National VET Completions Taskforce (Completions Report, p.20):

> *The engagement also identified this [the management style and the ability of employers to appropriately support apprentices and trainees] as a concern among learners and employers, with GTOs in some instances bridging gaps by providing additional mentoring, support and pastoral care for employers and learners engaged through group training models. Programs that encompass a training element for employers, and particularly programs that focus on cohorts with additional barriers, have been found to help learners make a successful transition to the workplace, and provide employers with the confidence and skills to provide a positive and supportive work environment.*

The Mentoring Program aims to improve completions and support learners particularly for priority groups including for Aboriginal learners, women in non-traditional fields, people with disability, migrants, and people who are isolated due to living in remote locations.

Tasmania's completions initiatives align strongly with recommendations in the Completions Report including:

Recommendation 3: Employer capability. Increase industry and employer capability to support learners (before and during training) (including training plans).

Recommendation 5: Evidence-based course design. Evidence-based approach to course design that draws on data of student experiences, patterns of behaviour and industry expectations.

Recommendation 6: School and VET alignment. Improve alignment between school curriculum and vocational pathways.

Recommendation 11: Measuring outcomes. Improve approaches to capturing and measuring completion rates and understanding of learner outcomes, including career trajectory and wages.

Recommendation 13: Wrap around support. Improve identification and implementation of wrap-around student supports.

Recommendation 17: VET workforce. Upskill the VET workforce, course counsellors and employers to better support learners with additional and complex needs.

Subject to budget availability, the initiatives are scalable with the potential for additional services to be added or removed depending on evaluations of program efficiency and effectiveness.

Commonwealth Investment ($)	State Investment ($)	Planned Start Date	Planned End Date
$7.9 million	$7.9 million	1 July 2025	31 December 2028

Performance Indicators

Tasmania will utilise its existing reporting framework and evaluation processes to monitor the performance of Tasmania's system of training and workforce development including the new initiatives under the NSA.

Progress reporting will be provided in accordance with the milestones and payments section of this implementation plan. Reporting will include quantitative and qualitative measures as appropriate and as available at reporting dates.

Several indicators will be limited in reflecting the impact of the initiatives due to the length of qualifications and available completions data.

Indicators will broadly include:

- Expressions of interest/number of applications
- Funded projects
- Number of participants supported through grant program funding
- Completion rates including for priority cohorts

- Transition rate from VET in schools to post-secondary education or employment
- Student outcomes:
    - Achieved the main reason for doing the training
    - Satisfied with support services
    - Satisfied with the training overall
- Case studies
- Feedback from participants/stakeholders

New performance indicators may be added as initiatives are rolled out over the life of the NSA.

Evaluation arrangements

The Department of State Growth (Skills Tasmania) will adhere to best practice evaluation requirements as established by the Tasmanian Government's Department of Treasury and Finance.

Key legislation includes:

- The *Financial Management Act 2016*
- The *Training and Workforce Development Act 2013*
- The *TasTAFE (Skills and Training Business) Act 2021*
- Other requirements under the Tasmanian Treasurer's Instructions

Skills Tasmania operates under a grant management framework that covers the full end to end process of offering and administering grants. The grant management framework aims to facilitate compliant, efficient, consistent, timely and valuable grant programs that benefit recipients and the broader Tasmanian community and economy.

The Pathways Partnership Program and Mentoring Program will be evaluated in 2028 after the conclusion of funded projects or activities. The evaluation will examine the extent to which the programs addressed the policy intention and achieved successful outcomes in Tasmania. Evaluation of the programs aims to build a robust evidence base, inform Tasmania's tertiary harmonisation opportunities and support systemic reform to the VET system in Tasmania.

TASMANIA'S APPROACH TO MATCHED FUNDING

Tasmania has made proactive investments to reduce barriers to participation in training and support completions. The Tasmanian Skills Plan sets out the strategic direction for Tasmania's training and workforce development system and informs Tasmanian Government funding priorities over the next five years (2024 – 2028). It outlines how we will grow Tasmania's future workforce through investment in VET and complementary activities to meet skills and workforce needs, while supporting the learner at the centre of our skills and training system.

Tasmania will meet its matched funding obligations for the improved completions policy initiative through an uplift in funding to TasTAFE through the 2025-26 Deed of Purchasing Arrangement.

Improved completions - approach to matched funding arrangements (clause A144 refers) – to be reconciled over the life of the NSA.

Details of matched funding	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
Tasmanian contribution	$7,900,000	-	-	-	$7,900,000
Cwth contribution	$3,940,000	$2,730,000	$1,230,000	-	$7,900,000
Total	$11,840,000	$2,730,000	$1,230,000	-	$15,800,00

The Tasmanian Government will provide details of their matched funding contributions at the end of each financial year, commencing 1 July 2025 until 31 December 2028. Final payments under this implementation plan may be reduced where the total contribution by the Tasmanian Government over the life of the project does not align with the Commonwealth contribution.

TasTAFE – Improving Completions priority initiative

The Improved Completions priority initiative funding for TasTAFE, Tasmania's sole VET public provider, will be paid in milestone payments over 2025-26 and will be considered as Tasmania's co-contribution to the improved completions bilateral implementation plan.

$7.9 million is allocated through the 2025-26 Deed of Purchasing Arrangement with the expectation that TasTAFE will deliver a new Improved Completions Framework by 30 June 2026.

The Improved Completions Framework will include:

- A future Training Service Delivery Plan aligned with industry and government training priorities.
- Initiatives to increase participation in VET, including a targeted industry engagement strategy.
- A range of Improved Completions Initiatives including undertaking further work to understand qualifications with low completion rates, more flexible training delivery to meet learner and employer needs, focus on recognition of prior learning (including for school aged graduates with a view to streamlining pathways for learners, pathways to promote VET training to learners including VET in schools).

The Completions Framework, including delivery of identified initiatives to improve completions, will be implemented through the annual delivery of the Deed of Purchasing Arrangement, with improved completions indicators established to monitor outcomes.

The Tasmanian Government monitors the performance of Deed initiatives through regular meetings and reporting.

Tasmania will inform the Commonwealth on the progress of the framework as it develops. Activities will align with the Improved Completions initiative and overall NSA requirements.

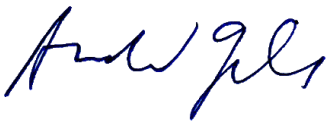
MILESTONES AND PAYMENTS – IMPROVED COMPLETIONS

Milestone	Evidence	Payment Value Up To (Commonwealth funded)	Commonwealth reporting period
Milestone 1: Initial payment on agreement of bilateral implementation plan.	Bilateral implementation plan agreed with the Commonwealth.	$790,000	n/a
Milestone 2: Commonwealth acceptance that Tasmania has initiated and developed plans for the Pathways Partnership Program and Mentoring Program.	Report signed by the relevant Tasmanian Senior Skills Official that provides an update on progress to 31 March 2026 and includes: - Pathways Partnership Program implementation documentation - The grant program guidelines for the Mentoring Program per the Skills Tasmania grant management framework, and - Summary of actions undertaken aligned with commitments in the TasTAFE Deed to support delivery of TasTAFE's new Improved Completions Framework.	$3,150,000	31 March 2026
Milestone 3: Commonwealth acceptance that Tasmania continues to implement improved completions initiatives to be demonstrated by the establishment and operation of the Pathways Partnership Program and Mentoring Program.	Report signed by the relevant Tasmanian Senior Skills Official that provides an update on progress from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027 and includes: - Details of activities to date and planned projects for Pathways Partnership Program including outcomes of completed activities - Details of funded grant projects - Short course mentoring program progress report - Performance indicators (as relevant), and - Update on TasTAFE's Improved Completions Framework implementation.	$2,730,000	31 March 2027

Milestone 4: Commonwealth acceptance that Tasmania continues to implement improved completions initiatives to be demonstrated by the establishment and operation of the Pathways Partnership Program and Mentoring Program.	Report signed by the relevant Tasmanian Senior Skills Official that provides an update on progress from 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2028 and includes: - Details of activities to date and planned projects for Pathways Partnership Program including outcomes of completed activities - Details of funded grant projects including summaries of project completion reports or outcomes as available - Short course mentoring program progress report, and - Performance indicators (as relevant).	$1,230,000	31 March 2028
Milestone 5: Commonwealth acceptance that Tasmania has implemented initiatives under the improved completions initiatives.	Report signed by the relevant Tasmanian Senior Skills Official that provides an update on progress from 1 April 2028 to 31 December 2028 and includes: - Details of available performance indicators - Report on the final evaluation of the Pathways Partnership Program, and - Report on the final evaluation of the Mentoring Program.	$0	31 December 2028
	Total	**$7,900,000**	

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

10 /10/ 2025

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



The Honourable Felix Ellis MP
Minister for Skills and Jobs

23/ 9 / 2025