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

PRELIMINARIES

1. This implementation plan is made between the Commonwealth of Australia (Commonwealth) and Victoria 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, Victoria will acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution with the following statement: Measures to Strengthen the VET Workforce is a joint initiative between the Commonwealth and Victorian 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. Victoria 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. After the initial payment, second and subsequent milestone payments will be assessed and processed in the following reporting period.
2. As part of the performance reporting, Victoria 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), Victoria 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)

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

Victoria's commitment to a high-quality VET workforce will be maintained and expanded through a range of new and existing initiatives under the NSA. In line with the VET Workforce Blueprint goals and action areas, these new and expanded initiatives will help support, grow and retain a high-quality VET workforce.

Through the NSA, Victoria will:

1. Establish a **VET Workforce scholarship program** for up to 100 TAFE teachers per year across all of Victoria to undertake the Diploma of Vocational Education and Training or the Graduate Certificate in Adult Vocational Education and Training for free, at a cost of $4.8m over the life of the NSA. TAFE teachers taking up this opportunity will be provided with time release to undertake this study and build their teaching skills. This program will support TAFE teachers to improve the quality of their teaching and provide an important opportunity for continued professional development, thereby improving job satisfaction and promoting teacher retention. This initiative aligns with Blueprint Opportunity 4: *Supporting professional learning, career progression and industry currency.*

2. Expand **VET workforce supports under the Wurreker Strategy** at a cost of $5.849m over the life of the NSA. Additional Commonwealth funding will leverage current implementation arrangements and ensure the program can expand in line with the projected increase in First Nations students. This funding will enable:

    a. growing the First Nations workforce through new employment opportunities for Koorie Student Support Officers (KSSOs) and Koorie Liaison Officers (KLOs), and

    3. Wurreker implementation payment, which TAFEs can used to fund specific programs for First Nations students, based on the needs of those students.

    The focus on Koorie culture through this workforce initiative will improve the cultural competency of VET practitioners across the mainstream VET sector, benefitting learners and trainers from all backgrounds. It will also improve cultural safety for First Nations teachers and students by having more dedicated support and liaison officers on site. Supporting students with the Wurreker implementation payment will assist VET practitioners with delivery by providing appropriate supports, which will result in improved outcomes for students. It aligns to Blueprint Opportunities 2 and 6*: Attracting people into the VET workforce (particularly Action 6: Develop localised and bespoke First Nations strategies to build the First Nations VET workforce); Developing and resourcing staff to support learners with diverse and complex needs.*

    First Nation Partners, as part of the co-design process on the Closing the Gap BIP, were supportive of the Wurreker program being included in the VET Workforce BIP. Wurreker has been cited in Victoria's Jurisdictional Action Plan as a key initiative Victoria uses to address the Closing the Gap national priority as listed in the NSA.

4. Roll out a **VET practitioner data-enabled identification and intervention package to support at-risk learners (CRM)** at two TAFEs. Funding of $1.491m will go to change management, including staff training and resources, risk management, privacy and data management, and system support requirements for the roll out of the new data-driven 'early warning' software system, consistent with the CRM details in the Improved Completions Bilateral Implementation Plan. Initially rolled out to two TAFEs, the CRM and associated training supports could be expanded to other funded training organisations. The CRM will support a consolidated view of the student's performance and engagement, and will identify students with specific needs and support requirements. This will enable VET practitioners to better understand how they can

engage and support these students, working in concert with support services, such as student counsellors.

This initiative aligns with Blueprint Opportunities 4 and 6: *Supporting professional learning, career progression and industry currency; Developing and resourcing staff to support learners with diverse and complex needs.*

Engagement arrangements, including relevant partnerships with First Nations peoples

Victoria's Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) and the Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) have used targeted channels to promote the release of the VET Workforce Blueprint—complimenting promotional activities by the Commonwealth Government.

Implementation planning for TAFE-specific initiatives will allow for TAFE flexibility in the overall delivery of the program, with early engagement and oversight.

Partnering relationships for First Nations peoples are embedded in Victoria's existing policy and governance arrangements, including a formal partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) for the Wurreker strategy. Consultation includes regular meetings and ongoing committees facilitating direct and genuine community consultation including with stakeholders from the VET Workforce.

Commonwealth Investment	State Investment	Planned Start Date	Planned End Date
$12,140,000	$12,433,500	1 July 2024	31 December 2028

Measures to strengthen the VET workforce — approach to matched funding arrangements (clause A126 and A91 refer) — to be reconciled over the life of the NSA.

Matched funding	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
Commonwealth contribution	–	3,912,000	3,371,000	2,871,000	1,986,000	12,140,000
Victorian contribution	5,470,000	2,336,000	1,851,000	1,851,000	925,500	12,433,500
Total	5,470,000	6,248,000	5,222,000	4,722,000	2,911,500	24,573,500

The Victorian Government will provide details of its 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 Victorian Government over the life of the project does not align with the Commonwealth contribution.

Performance Indicators

Victoria will leverage its existing robust monitoring and evaluation regime to monitor the effectiveness of training delivery as a whole, including VET Workforce interventions.

New Scholarship Program for VET Teachers (enhancing workforce capability, retaining workforce supporting career development, and supporting succession planning)

- Measures
  - Number of scholarship enrolments in Diploma of VET or the Graduate Certificate in Adult VET
  - Source, frequency, availability: State administrative data (non-public), data finalised late January for the year before
  - Target: 100 enrolments per annum.

VET workforce supports under the Wurreker Strategy

- Measures

- Periodic TAFE reports quantifying the use of VET workforce supports under the Wurreker Strategy and their outcomes
- Baseline timeframe: 2024
- Number of new employment opportunities provided for Koorie Student Support Officers (KSSOs) and Koorie Liaison Officers (KLOs)
- Koorie student enrolments at RTOs which have accessed funding under this initiative.

VET practitioner data-enabled identification and intervention package to support at-risk learners (CRM)

This program will be rolled out to two TAFEs with an interim evaluation of the rollout to be provided to the Commonwealth prior to December 2028. This will be included in Victoria's reporting to the Commonwealth under this policy initiative and will set out:

- Outcomes of change management process to implement CRM tool at two TAFEs
- Uptake and effectiveness of staff training and resources to enable rollout of CRM.

Evaluation arrangements

Victoria has robust evaluation arrangements in place with Victoria's TAFEs and other contracted training providers to monitor the VET Workforce. This includes data collection at TAFE institutes through the Victorian Public Sector Commission, contract compliance and audit activity by DJSIR of RTOs, and sector engagement and consultation by the VSA.

Victoria will undertake evaluation of workforce initiatives over the remainder of the NSA. This will be done through both quantitative and qualitative measures to assess their effectiveness of interventions to attract, retain and improve the quality of the VET workforce. The evaluation findings will guide future decisions on scaling and refining these initiatives, ensuring a robust and evidence-based framework for improving and supporting the VET Workforce. Details of evaluation arrangements will be updated through the life of the Agreement as specified in the Milestones.

Performance reporting will be provided by 30 September each year until the cessation of this implementation plan or the final payment is processed through an NSA-specific *Victorian VET Workforce Report* consistent with the template provided by the Commonwealth.

VICTORIA'S APPROACH TO MATCHED FUNDING

Victoria is a national leader in supporting the VET workforce, particularly the TAFE teaching workforce, in line with the national commitment in the VET Workforce Blueprint that TAFE is at the heart of the system. In addition, Victoria's considerable funding for the TAFE workforce aligns with the Commonwealth Government's commitment to provide a legislative guarantee for 70% of government funding to be directed to TAFE and public training providers.

Victoria has made considerable proactive investments in supporting measures to improve the VET Workforce. In 2021, Victoria established the Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery (OTCD) to lead Victoria's TAFE Network. The OTCD drives innovation in how TAFEs provide their training, including connections and knowledge sharing across the TAFE Workforce, and coordinates Network delivery to the Victorian Skills Plan.

Victoria will meet its matched funding obligations through investment in:

- Victorian VET Workforce Strategy development
- A pilot which utilises Artificial Intelligence (AI) to augment recognition of prior learning (RPL) processed at TAFEs
- The Wurreker Program, which employs Koorie Liaison Officers (KLOs) and Koorie Student Support Officers (KSSOs) at RTOs.

Details of funding $m	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
Victorian VET Workforce Strategy development	1,199,000	255,000	175,000	175,000	87,500	1,891,500
Pilot the use of AI to support the RPL	2,595,000	405,000	-	-	-	3,000,000
Wurreker: KLO and KSSO funding	1,676,000	1,676,000	1,676,000	1,676,000	838,000	7,542,000
Total Victorian Contribution	**5,470,000**	**2,336,000**	**1,851,000**	**1,851,000**	**925,500**	**12,433,500**

The **Victorian VET Workforce Strategy** is a proactive initiative that aligns with and goes beyond the VET Workforce Blueprint. Following the first Victorian Skills Plan, work has begun on the VET Workforce Strategy, a 10-year plan to understand and support the VET teaching and learning workforce.

Considerable research and stakeholder engagement programs of work has been undertaken for the development of the Strategy, to be released in the second half of 2025. The preliminary work has included:

- Development of a research program through the VSA to identify issues and challenges within the sector
- Strategy and solution development, using Human Centred Design

The research component has utilised Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) methodology to develop workforce profiles that do not exist in any other jurisdiction. Development of these profiles included substantial quantitative and qualitative research, including analysis of demographic information, such as gender, qualifications, locations, etc., as well as substantial field work and sector consultation to ensure profiles are accurate. It has also drawn on modelling and employment forecasts produced by the VSA.

This research has also informed the development of workforce 'Personas' to better understand teachers, trainers and middle management (program leads and education managers). These products are important in testing possible solutions to ensure that the actions in the Strategy have impact and relevance for the VET Workforce.

The strategy and solution development component of the Victorian VET Workforce Strategy involves developing 'prototypes' to test potential solution to problems identified in the research within the sector. Examples of these tests include:

- Developing and rolling out online induction content on LMS to better support new teachers and improve the transition into teaching
- A program to support VET teachers to build digital skills
- A program to support VET teachers to build leadership skills
- The rollout of professional learning in network and community RTOs
- A professional learning program to support VET teachers, education managers and learning designers to design and deliver engaging learning for all students, but with a focus on neurodivergent students, in partnership with Swinburne University and ACE Victoria.

Through these prototypes, VSA has provided funding to RTOs for services and professional learning. The next phase will assess the evidence of what works and consider ways to scale solutions.

Outcomes of all the research are currently being validated with the sector and VSA's methodology is being shared with JSA and the Future Skills Organisation, and will be widely available following the release of the Strategy.

The **AI for Recognition of Prior Learning pilot** will reduce the administrative compliance burden placed on VET staff in assessing student RPL by utilising Artificial Intelligence for the assessment of students prior learning evidence.

- Currently, RPL is a costly and time-consuming process for VET staff, resulting in less than 2% of VET units completed through RPL.
- The initiative being piloted through one TAFE in Victoria seeks to improve RPL by automating aspects of the RPL process increasing accessibility, participation and speed outcomes and reducing costs - without compromising robust assessment standards.
- This is an innovative solution, delivering additionality, facilitating VET staff to undertake more fulfilling and value-added work, increasing job satisfaction and retention.

By reducing low value yet time consuming and administrative tasks, staff will be freed up to focus on more meaningful work—thus increase job satisfaction and retention.

This initiative takes forward the following *VET Workforce Blueprint* Opportunities and Actions:

- **Opportunity 7: Reducing administrative and compliance burden**. TAFE institutes across Victoria have applied different methodologies and approaches to RPL, leading to inefficiency and higher cost. The TAFE network and employers will benefit from a robust, replicable process that is both quick and evidence-based.

  The project will leverage work by JSA and the VSA in codifying common skills and providing a framework for how RPL can be most effectively assessed. A core deliverable is the development of tools, quality assurance mechanisms and training programs for RPL assessors.

The **Wurreker program** directly hires Koorie Liaison Officers (KLOs) and Koorie Student Support Office (KSSOs) and provides funding for programs for Koorie students.

KLOs are employed by Victoria's TAFEs and dual sector institutes to provide advice and support to learners during their TAFE journey and promote opportunities in the community. KSSOs are trained to understand the support offered by their TAFE and support systems provided by the Department of DJSIR.

Both roles contribute strategically to Aboriginal inclusion, cultural safety and perspectives in the curriculum to ensure providers deliver culturally inclusive training. They also provide support and advice to the TAFE workforce. Through this implementation plan Victoria will utilise additional Commonwealth funding to expand the existing program as described in the preceding sections.

- Total funding for this program is $5.19m per annum, of which **$4.191m goes to the employment KSSOs and KLOs.** It is difficult to determine precisely how much of this funding is dedicated to supporting workforce compared to supporting students directly. However, a fair estimate is that between KLOs and KSSOs, 40% of their time should be recognised as dedicated to supporting the VET Workforce.
- Over the life of the NSA, Victoria will invest $18.859m in employing KSSOs and KLOs, but is only seeking recognition of matched funding of $7.542m.

This is a proactive initiative of Victoria that delivers additionality; it strengthens the Koorie workforce, strengthens non-Koorie teachers' capability and understanding of Koorie students and improves cultural safety of all TAFEs.

Under the Wurreker program, TAFEs are required to report to DJSIR on their plans and deliverables under cultural inclusivity. This includes the roles of KLOs and KSSOs in supporting the VET

workforce, including actions to support upskilling of staff and overall cultural inclusivity of the organisation.

The VET Workforce Blueprint states (p.42) under *Action 6 - Develop localised and bespoke First Nations strategies to build the First Nations VET workforce*:

> *"Strategies developed to build the First Nations VET workforce could include…looking at how to better incorporate First Nations skills, knowledge and community connections into the delivery of training."*

Victoria is already undertaking this exact strategy through the services of the KSSOs and KLOs. By way of example, one TAFE reported to DJSIR that their KLO provided training, guidance and assisted in engaging with a community elder to deliver consultations to the community services and nursing teaching employees on how to teach the Indigenous Health component in their course in a culturally sensitive way.

Furthermore, KSSOs and KLOs deliver on VET Workforce Blueprint *Opportunity 6 - Developing and resourcing staff to support learners with diverse and complex needs,* as stated in the Blueprint (p.62)*:*

> *"An example of best practice provided by stakeholders in relation to First Nations learners was that they thrive when taught by First Nations peoples, offered specialised support designed by First Nations peoples, training is delivered in a culturally safe and appropriate way."*

KLOs also help TAFEs in the development of Reconciliation Action Plans, outlining the institution's commitment to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, detailing specific actions they will take to improve relationships, respect, and opportunities for Indigenous staff and students within the learning environment and wider community; including initiatives like cultural awareness training, partnerships with local communities, and targeted support programs for Indigenous learners.

MILESTONES AND PAYMENTS – MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE VET WORKFORCE

Milestone	Evidence	Commonwealth payments (up to)	Commonwealth reporting period
Milestone 1 (July 2025) Initial payment on agreement of bilateral implementation plan.	Bilateral implementation plan agreed with Commonwealth	$1,214,000	N/A
Milestone 2 Commonwealth acceptance that Victoria has operated measures to support the VET workforce to 31 March 2026, including: • VET Workforce Scholarship Program • VET Workforce Supports under the Wurreker Strategy, and • VET practitioner data-enabled identification and intervention package to support at-risk learners.	Report signed by relevant Victorian senior official that outlines progress implementing measures to support the VET workforce to 31 March 2026, consistent with template provided by the Commonwealth and includes: • final guidelines for the VET Workforce Scholarship Program (which has been approved by the Commonwealth) • performance indicators for all existing measures • timelines and sequencing of future initiatives • any completed evaluations, and • evaluation schedule over the remainder of the NSA.	$2,698,000	31 March 2026
Milestone 3 Commonwealth acceptance that Victoria has operated measures to support the VET workforce to 31 March 2027, including: • VET Workforce Scholarship Program • VET Workforce Supports under the Wurreker Strategy, and • VET practitioner data-enabled identification and intervention package to support at-risk learners.	Report signed by relevant Victorian senior official that outlines progress implementing measures to support the VET workforce to 31 March 2027, consistent with template provided by the Commonwealth and includes: • performance indicators for all existing measures • timelines and sequencing of future initiatives • any completed evaluations, and • evaluation schedule over the remainder of the NSA.	$3,371,000	31 March 2027

Milestone	Evidence	Commonwealth payments (up to)	Commonwealth reporting period
Milestone 4 Commonwealth acceptance that Victoria has operated measures to support the VET workforce to 31 March 2028, including: • VET Workforce Scholarship Program • VET Workforce Supports under the Wurreker Strategy, and • VET practitioner data-enabled identification and intervention package to support at-risk learners.	Report signed by relevant Victorian senior official that outlines progress implementing measures to support the VET workforce to 31 March 2028, consistent with template provided by the Commonwealth and includes: • performance indicators for all existing measures • timelines and sequencing of future initiatives • any completed evaluations, and • evaluation schedule over the remainder of the NSA.	$2,871,000	31 March 2028
Milestone 5 Commonwealth acceptance that Victoria has operated measures to support the VET workforce to 30 September 2028, including: • VET Workforce Scholarship Program • VET Workforce Supports under the Wurreker Strategy, and • VET practitioner data-enabled identification and intervention package to support at-risk learners.	Report signed by relevant Victorian senior official that outlines progress implementing measures to support the VET workforce to 30 September 2028, consistent with template provided by the Commonwealth and includes: • performance indicators for all existing measures • timelines and sequencing of future initiatives • any completed evaluations, and • details of final evaluation outcomes.	$1,986,000	30 September 2028
	Total	**$12,140,000**	

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

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

The Honourable Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Skills and TAFE

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