

Senate Inquiry into the Jobs and Skills Australia Bill

19 August 2022

The Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee on the Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022.

ATN is the peak body representing Australia's six most innovative and enterprising universities: Curtin University, Deakin University, RMIT University, The University of Newcastle, University of South Australia, and University of Technology Sydney.

ATN has consistently supported an integrated and cohesive approach to tertiary education within a framework that recognises the distinctive contributions of higher education and vocational education and training. Fostering accessible and flexible pathways between and within school, tertiary education is also crucial for lifelong learning and developing Australia's modern workforce.

As a significant contributor to addressing Australia's skills and productivity challenges, ATN supports a system that provides the Government, tertiary education and industry with policy advice and data that is reflective of the role of higher education plays in underpinning a highly skilled workforce.

For many career starters, career improvers and career changers, access to innovations in teaching and learning such as work-integrated learning, work-based learning and micro-credentials will be through higher education. This is particularly true for our increasingly important service and knowledge-based industries and emergent professions.

The model for Jobs and Skills Australia as presented is informed primarily by a vocational education and training perspective and further consideration needs to be given to how higher education and other sectors can be most effectively integrated.

Universities already have comprehensive industry advisory input into both curriculum and labour market trends that informs planning and therefore workforce development outcomes, but would also benefit from Jobs and Skills Australia providing advice and data at a national level.

Principal recommendation

ATN recommends that the scope of Jobs and Skills Australia should explicitly include higher education to properly reflect the current and future nature of the workforce and need for education, training and skills.

As the responsibility for tertiary education is shared across multiple departments and ministers, Jobs and Skills Australia should play a pivotal advisory role and provide the Government with a holistic and connected overview across all of education and the workforce.

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Specific recommendations

In support of the principal recommendation, ATN recommends that:

- Jobs and Skills Australia provides advice to the Government on Australia's current, emerging and future skills and training needs and priorities across all skill levels (including higher education and pathways from school to further study and work)
- Jobs and Skills Australia works with the Department of Education to enable research and analysis on the need for higher education, to complement its similar role for vocational education and training
- Jobs and Skills Australia consults and works with higher education providers and representatives.

Supporting information

National Skills Commission employment projections show that over 90 per cent of addition jobs over the next five years will require a tertiary qualification and that almost 60 per cent of those will require a university-level education.

Occupations requiring a university-level education will grow by almost 620,000 jobs (13.5 per cent increase) compared with 460,000 jobs (6.9 per cent increase) for all other occupations requiring a tertiary qualification.

Any analysis of current, emerging and future workforce supply and demand must include a consideration of higher education.

Skill Level ¹	Employment level - November 2021 (‘000)	National Skills Commission Projections		
		Projected employment level - November 2026 (‘000)	Projected employment growth - five years to November 2026	
			(‘000)	(%)
Skill Level 1	4591.7	5210.1	618.4	13.5
Skill Level 2	1638.0	1772.1	134.1	8.2
Skill Level 3	1910.8	1984.1	73.4	3.8
Skill Level 4	3137.5	3390.2	252.7	8.1
Skill Level 5	1939.5	2037.0	97.6	5.0
Total Employment	12,951.8	14,128.0	1,176.2	9.1

<https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/topics/employment-projections>

¹Skill Level 1 is commensurate with a Bachelor degree or higher qualification

Skill Level 2 is commensurate with an Advanced Diploma or Diploma

Skill Level 3 is commensurate with a Certificate IV or III (including at least 2 years on-the-job training)

Skill Level 4 is commensurate with a Certificate II or III

Skill Level 5 is commensurate with a Certificate I or secondary education

The National Skills Commission's Skills Priority List also highlights the importance of university education to future skills demand.

Strong future demand is common in professional occupations (43 per cent of occupations) which often require a university-level education. This is reflected in the strong future demand for Skill Level 1 occupations.

Occupations in national shortage with strong future demand in the Skills Priority List include:

- Managers in areas such as corporate services, ICT project and quality assurance
- Accountants and auditors
- Surveyors, and urban and regional planners
- Engineers in disciplines such as civil, geotechnical, structural, transport, electrical, mechanical, mining and petroleum
- Agricultural consultants and scientists and veterinarians
- Health and allied occupations like sonographer, optometrist, orthoptist, pharmacist, speech pathologist and clinical psychologist
- Information technology and related occupations like multimedia specialist, developer programmer, software engineer and ICT security specialist.

Future demand

265 occupations have strong projected future demand (33% of assessed occupations), 481 have moderate future demand (60%), and 53 have soft future demand (7%).

- Strong future demand is most common in Labourers (50% of assessed occupations), Community and Personal Service Workers (44%), and Professionals (43%). Large employing occupations in these groups include Child Care Worker and Developer Programmer.
- Strong future demand is also most common in higher skilled occupations (43% of Skill Level 1 occupations and 31% of Skill Level 2 occupations).

57 occupations (7% of assessed occupations) have strong projected future demand and are currently in shortage nationally.

- This includes occupations such as ICT Project Manager and Aged or Disabled Carer.

<https://labourmarketinsights.gov.au/our-research/skills-priority-list/>

Many in-demand professions have career and study pathways spanning higher education and vocational education and training, including nursing, aged and disability care, early childhood education, technology and engineering.

For example, articulation and recognition of prior learning arrangements are in place for Diploma of Nursing graduates to upskill by enrolling in a Bachelor of Nursing. This includes:

- Preferential entry to Deakin's Bachelor of Nursing from Bendigo TAFE, Box Hill Institute, Chisholm Institute, Kangan Institute, TAFE NSW, South West TAFE and The Gordon
- Preferential entry to RMIT's Bachelor of Nursing from RMIT's Diploma of Nursing
- Advanced standing for UTS' Bachelor of Nursing for Diploma graduates.

Workforce planning must include consideration of these upskilling pathways which can provide more opportunities for people to improve their skills and knowledge, take advantage of the study they have already completed, earn while they are learning, and progressively build their career.

Conclusion

ATN recognises the importance of a tertiary system in which the higher education and vocational education and training sectors work in a connected and cohesive way that also recognises the strengths and distinctive characteristics of both.

Given that tertiary education is now administered by two departments and two Ministers, there is an opportunity for Jobs and Skills Australia to provide the Government with workforce and skills advice that covers all skill levels and jobs and all pathways from school into tertiary education.

ATN recommends that the scope of Jobs and Skills Australia should be inclusive of all needs for education, training and skills.

Further enquiries should be addressed to:

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