

2025 **Public Safety**

Defence, Fire & Emergency Services, Police

| Workforce Insights Report



PUBLIC SKILLS
AUSTRALIA
PUBLIC SAFETY SKILLS AUSTRALIA LTD

JSC

Jobs and Skills Council
Public Safety and Government
An Australian Government Initiative

Table of Contents	
Workforce Insights Overview Executive Summary Introduction Methodology	07-10 07-09 10 10
Public Safety Cross-Sector Analysis	12-19
Public Safety Megatrend Recap	20-21
Defence	22-44
Industry-Sector Overview	24-26
2025 Workforce Insights Emerging Capabilities Professionalisation And Upskilling Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans’ Suicide	27-33 28-29 30-32 33
2024 Strategy Update	34-35
2025 Proposed Strategies	36-39
2025 Stakeholder Engagement	40
Existing Strategies	41-44

Fire and Emergency Services	47-73
Industry-Sector Overview Firefighting State/Territory Emergency Services Surf Life Saving Public Safety Training Package	47-56 50-51 52-53 54-55 56
2025 Workforce Insights Volunteer Workforce Recruitment Retention Technology	57-64 58 59-60 61-62 63
2024 Strategy Update	64
2025 Proposed Strategies	65-69
2025 Stakeholder Engagement	70
Existing Strategies	71-73
Police	75-98
Industry-Sector Overview	76-78
2025 Workforce Insights Occupational Shortages and Operational Capacity Professional Development and Upskilling	79-85 80-83 84-85

2024 Strategy Update	86
2025 Proposed Strategies	87-89
2025 Stakeholder Engagement	90
Existing Strategies	91-95
Government Initiatives	96-99

2025 Proposed Strategies Summary		100-101
Looking Ahead to 2026		102-103
Appendix A 105	Appendix B 106	Appendix C 107

About Public Skills Australia

Public Skills Australia is the Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) for the Public Safety and Government industry. The primary objective of Public Skills Australia is to support the Correctional Services, Defence, Federal, State/ Territory and Local Government, Fire and Emergency Services and Police industry-sectors, to train, develop and promote a highly skilled, effective and efficient Public Safety and Government workforce. To achieve this objective, Public Skills Australia works closely with employer and employee bodies and volunteer associations within these industry-sectors, to identify and mitigate workforce challenges and support future skilling.



Public Skills Australia is committed to:

- undertaking data analysis, research and employing strategic foresight tools to understand current workforce challenges and develop future Workforce Insights Reports (referred to as Workforce Plans in 2024)
- developing quality training products to strengthen the skills and capabilities of these industry-sectors
- monitoring and promoting the implementation of training products
- consulting with, advocating for and promoting the needs of these industry-sectors.

Copyright

Citation or use of all, or part of this report must be attributed as follows:
© Public Skills Australia, 2025 Public Safety Workforce Insights Report.

Disclaimer

Public Safety Skills Australia Limited has made every effort to ensure that the information and data contained in this report is accurate, up to date and have been sourced and referenced appropriately. Whilst care and diligence has been taken in the preparation of this Workforce Insights Report, Public Safety Skills Australia Limited does not accept responsibility for inaccuracies contained in external data sources or responsibility for any loss or damage suffered resulting from this information.

Acknowledgements

Public Skills Australia acknowledges the contributions of industry representatives, who gave their valuable time and effort to contribute to this Workforce Insights Report. We further acknowledge the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations who provide the funding for workforce planning under the Jobs and Skills Council program.

Executive Summary	Defence
As a JSC, Public Skills Australia develops annual Workforce Insights Reports relevant to each industry-sector’s evolving workforce challenges. In the development of the 2025 Workforce Insight Reports, Public Skills Australia sought to build upon the existing findings from the 2024 Workforce Plans and develop deeper insights through broader engagement with industry. The public safety workforce plays a critical role in protecting the Australian community and share the following unique workforce themes, regardless of which public safety organisation they work for: • Public safety regulatory environment • Public safety tasking • Public safety resourcing • Public safety risk environment The <i>2025 Public Safety Workforce Insights Report</i> (report) provides a combined analysis of the Defence, Fire and Emergency Services and Police industry-sectors under the umbrella of public safety. The report highlights cross-sector themes and challenges that impact all public safety industry-sectors. The second part of the report breaks down each industry-sector that makes up public safety and outlines each industry-sector’s workforce challenges and mitigating strategies that Public Skills Australia has developed through industry-specific consultation. The following provide a summary of the identified challenges and proposed strategies for Defence, Fire and Emergency Services and Police industry-sectors respectively which are detailed in the industry-specific sections of the report.	IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES 1 Emerging Capabilities The growing importance in Defence to operate within Space and cyber domains are catalysing upskilling and training requirements which may require bespoke qualifications and units of competency.
	2 Professionalisation and Upskilling Reducing reliance on contractors and consultants is increasing the needs to upskill the APS workforce and strengthening career pathways into the ADF through contemporary training for ADF Cadets.
	3 Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Training pathways for transitioning Veterans, arising from the <i>Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans’ Suicide</i>.
PROPOSED STRATEGIES 1 Development of Training Products for Emerging Skills in the Space Domain Develop training products for emerging skills in the space domain.	2 Development of Training Products for Emerging Skills in the Cyber Domain Develop training products for emerging skills in the cyber domain.
3 Contemporary Cadet Training Enhance contemporary training for ADF Cadets through adjusting of existing training products or development of new ones.	4

Fire and Emergency Services			
IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES 1 Volunteer workforce Barriers impacting on youth engagement and youth retention in volunteering, and limited leadership training opportunities for volunteers that focuses on the development of relevant skills when working with unpaid volunteers in an emergency context.		2 Technology Modern urban infrastructure, coupled with new fire and emergency response technology, requires review or development of training products.	
PROPOSED STRATEGIES 1 Volunteer Leadership Project Review of previous and current volunteer leadership programs to address capability and/or capacity gaps.		2 Understanding the Youth Volunteer Literature review on youth volunteering in partnership with volunteer organisations.	
3 Complex Infrastructure Project Engage with career firefighting organisations to determine infrastructure training gaps in the Public Safety Training Package and develop new training products or adjust existing ones.		4 Emerging Technologies Project Analysis of existing technological and infrastructure adjacent products and development of training products to support contemporary skills requirements to work with new and emerging technologies.	

Police	
IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES	
1	Occupational shortages and operational capacity Several drivers that may impact on Police occupational shortages and operational capacity that may not be fully understood due to analysis gaps.
2	Professional development and upskilling The absence of comprehensive skills mapping impacts on the ability of public safety organisations to identify and address workforce skills gaps and occupational needs.
PROPOSED STRATEGIES	
1	Report on the factors driving occupational shortages and affecting operational capacity: Develop a greater understanding of the factors influencing operational capacity in metropolitan and remote/regional/rural policing.
2	Proposal to undertake a case study analysis of skill and professional development profile mapping This proposal seeks to undertake a case study that demonstrates good practice in jurisdictional implementation of the ANZPAA Skills and Capabilities Profile, to identify key areas of skills and training gaps.

Introduction	
The 2025 Public Safety Workforce Insights Report combines the Defence, Fire and Emergency Services and Police industry-sectors and provides an analysis of the common characteristics of public safety when examined collectively, and also the unique and acute challenges being experienced by Public Safety industry-sectors individually. The Workforce Insights Report also highlights the depth and breadth of stakeholder engagement activities. Through deeper engagement and consultation with industry, Public Skills Australia has collected diverse and nuanced perspectives regarding workforce challenges within the Public Safety industry-sector. This includes the mapping of existing strategies and initiatives that are underway in the Public Safety industry-sector. The research conducted in the development of the 2025 Public Safety Workforce Insights Report provides the foundation for the proposal of practical strategies to support the Public Safety industry-sector in mitigating identified workforce challenges. The Workforce Insights Report will be used to mobilise future research and consultation efforts with key industry stakeholders, which will enable Public Skills Australia to build on a deeper analysis of current and emerging workforce challenges in the Public Safety industry-sector.	
Methodology	
Public Skills Australia’s Workforce Insights Reports are supported by a combination of qualitative and quantitative data obtained from primary and secondary sources. Insights from stakeholder consultations have been thematically analysed to identify common challenges and trends, while quantitative data from publicly available datasets were used to validate these findings and provide measurable evidence of workforce trends. This integrated approach ensures that the experiences and observations of industry stakeholders and empirical data inform the analysis and recommendations within this Workforce Insights Report. A range of consultation methods were utilised to support effective stakeholder engagement. Public Skills Australia leveraged established relationships and governance arrangements to: • invite participation in consultation, • identify additional stakeholders, • verify and validate research and data findings • seek feedback on the Workforce Insights Report. Stakeholder engagements included both in-person and online meetings and presentations in a range of formats, such as written reviews and feedback from Public Skills Australia governance group members. Specific to the Public Safety industry-sector, and in alignment with the tripartite approach to industry engagement, Public Skills Australia consulted with a range of industry representatives, including stakeholders from a wide array of employers, unions, and Government organisations associate with the Defence, Fire and Emergency Services and Police industry-sectors.¹ Additionally, datasets that are publicly accessible from Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), SafeWork Australia, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), and other supporting statistics based online sources have been used to inform the narrative of this Workforce Insights Report. Due to the complexity of large-scale workforce data, accurate data cannot be derived from a single source only. As such, multiple data sources are preferred, however, this can magnify data discrepancies. This Workforce Insights Report prioritises the data source, or combination of data sources, that provide the most accurate representation of the workforce possible.² Comprehensive literature reviews, which include government online sources and documentation, legislation and a Royal Commission Report, research articles, and further online material have also been referenced throughout this Workforce Insights Report.	

⁰¹ For further information on stakeholder engagements undertaken for the development of this report, refer to the 2025 Stakeholder Engagement sections of this report.
⁰² When using the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) it should be noted that employment within industry subsectors typically includes a range of occupations, some of which may not be covered by Public Skills Australia’s remit.

Public Safety

Cross-Sector

Analysis

Public safety organisations are responsible for protecting Australia’s sovereign interests, maintaining law and order, and preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies and natural disasters.

Public safety encompasses the Defence industry-sector, the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector, and the Police industry sector.

Figure 1.1 highlights the expanse of the public safety workforce in Australia, and the unique blend of career,³ reservist, and volunteer resources within the public safety workforces.

The public safety workforce has remained relatively stable since 2021-22, with a slight overall drop in volunteer resources. Figure 1.2 highlights the large contribution of Fire and Emergency Services volunteers to the public safety workforce.

The Defence industry-sector, the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector, and the Police industry-sector are united by themes that are unique to the public safety workforce. These themes are:

- Public safety regulatory environment
- Public safety tasking
- Public safety resourcing
- Public safety risk environment

These themes and their associated impacts within public safety are detailed in the sections that follow.

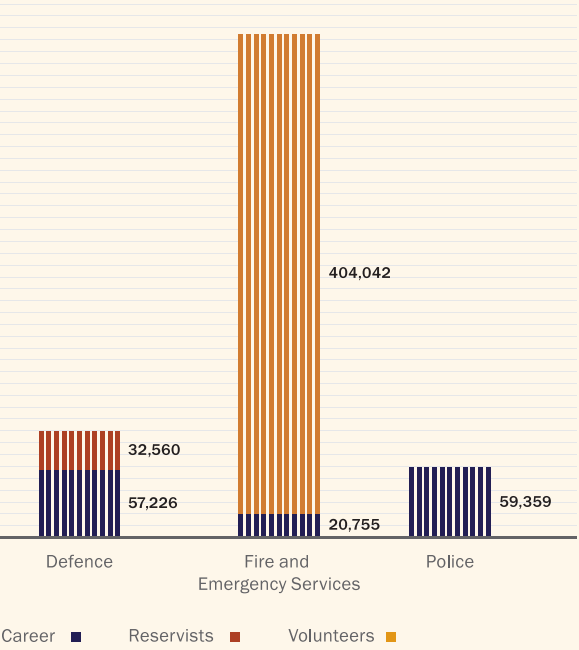


Figure 1.1: Headcount of resources in Defence,⁴ Fire and Emergency Services,⁵ and Police,⁶ as reported in 2024⁷

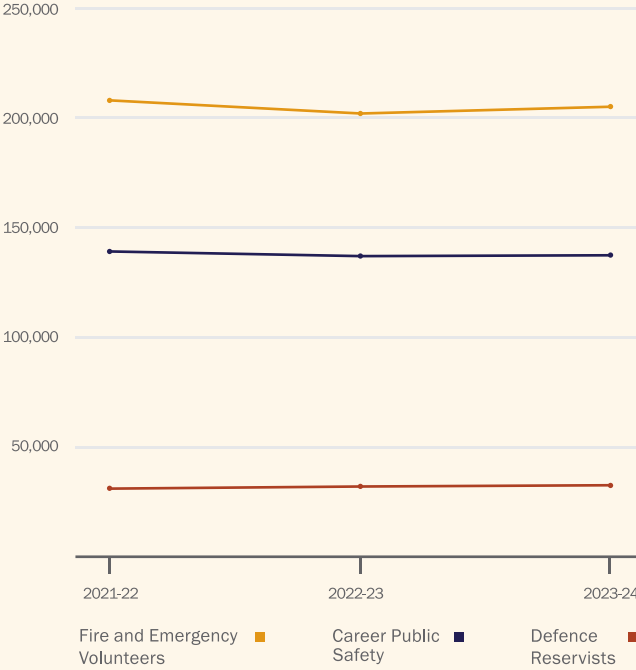


Figure 1.2: Three-year time series analysis of resources in Career Public Safety (Defence,⁸ Fire and Emergency Services,⁹ Police¹⁰), Defence Reservists,¹¹ and Fire and Emergency Services volunteers¹²

⁰³ Career refers to paid/permanent employees.
⁰⁴ Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 102.
⁰⁵ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Emergency services for fire and other events Table 9A.4 and 9A.5](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2024, accessed 27 March 2025; Surf Life Saving Australia, 2023/2024 Annual Report, Surf Life Saving, 2024, p 105.
⁰⁶ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Police Services Table 6A.2](#) [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 31 March 2025.
⁰⁷ Given the variety of industry-sectors included in Figure 1.1, several different data sources were required. Although from the same time period, the data may not be strictly comparable.
⁰⁸ 2021-22: Department of Defence, Annual Report 2022-2023. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2023, p 86; 2022-23 and 2023-24: Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 102.
⁰⁹ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Emergency services for fire and other events Table 9A.4 and 9A.5](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 27 March 2025.
¹⁰ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Police Services Table 6A.2](#), Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 31 March 2025.
¹¹ 2021-22: Department of Defence, Annual Report 2021-22. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2022, p 120; 2022-23: Department of Defence, Annual Report 2022-2023. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2023, p 95; 2023-24: Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 102.
¹² Fire and Emergency Services volunteers: Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Emergency services for fire and other events Table 9A.4 and 9A.5](#), [data set] Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 27 March 2025. Surf Life Saving volunteers: 2021-22: Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2022/2023 Annual Report, SLSA, 2023, p 97; 2022-23 and 2023-24: Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2023/2024 Annual Report, SLSA, 2024, p 105. Given the variety of industry-sectors included in Figure 1.2, several different data sources were required. Although from the same time periods, the data may not be strictly comparable.

Public Safety Regulatory Environment

GOVERNMENT AND ELECTION CYCLES

The public safety workforce is subject to the Federal and State/Territory Government regulatory landscape, as organisations in Defence, Fire and Emergency Services and Police are accountable to the Government of the day in their jurisdiction. The changes can come in different forms, including but not limited to budgetary change. These changes can be planned for (i.e. around election cycles and commitments) or require action due to Parliamentary Inquiries, Royal Commissions, Budget Estimates,¹³ legal outcomes and recommendations from Public Sector integrity bodies.¹⁴

BUDGETS

The fiscal outlook for Federal and State/Territory Governments impacts upon public safety organisations at all levels. At the Federal level, election and policy commitments can directly affect budget allocations to Defence,¹⁵ and indirectly affect the Police industry-sector and the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector through funding to States/Territories.¹⁶

At the State/Territory level, the fiscal environment of Police and Fire and Emergency Services organisations is shaped by State/Territory Government commitments and budget allocations, from the consolidated revenue of these Governments. Police and Fire Emergency Services organisations in

each State/Territory are required to report annually on how they are meeting performance targets as set out in State/Territory Government budget papers. For example, for Police these performance measures may include crime statistics, police responses to calls for assistance, and road fatalities.¹⁷

Across the public safety workforce, funding baselines for the workforce established by Government are the sole determinant of overall workforce capacity and impact on staffing and resources, such as State Government ministerial commitments to add police officers to their respective police agencies.¹⁸ Further to this, as many public safety organisations run an Enterprise Registered Training Organisation (ERTO), the training of these important workforces must occur within budgetary constraints, whilst meeting workforce growth.

OVERSIGHT AND INTEGRITY BODIES

Defence, Fire and Emergency Services and Police organisations are subject to statutory obligations that guide the duties and responsibilities of its workforces. These obligations are defined by laws and regulations at both the Federal and State/Territory Government levels. Public safety organisations are held accountable through oversight by various bodies to ensure they act within these laws and regulations and uphold ethical standards.

Occasional examinations are conducted by oversight and integrity bodies to review activities conducted by public safety organisations. These examinations can result in changing legislation and/or policies that are necessary to continue the secure activities of public safety organisations. Oversight and integrity bodies may also make recommendations that influence the skills and training requirements within public safety workforces.

INTERNATIONAL REMIT

Federal and State/Territory Governments enter into bilateral and international agreements that provide for the sharing and/or deployment of public safety resources.

The Federal Government has several key bilateral agreements that enhance security and cooperation with other nations through the utilisation of the Defence workforce,

such as the Australia-Papua New Guinea Bilateral Security Agreement¹⁹ and the Australia-Japan Reciprocal Access Agreement.²⁰

Similarly, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) has bilateral agreements in place through the Federal Government that allow for the international mobilisation of its workforce to support international stability and security.²¹

Fire and Emergency services organisations have several long-standing mutual aid partnerships with other nations. Through these partnerships, Fire and Emergency services resources may be deployed internationally to assist with major emergencies such as wildfires. Examples of this include the recent deployment of 90 Australian firefighters to Canada in 2024 to assist in the management of significant wildfires. During the recent January 2025 wildfires in California the availability of support from Fire and Emergency Services organisations in Australia was offered to the United States of America. Formal requests for international support of this nature are coordinated through the National Emergency Management Agency of Australia.²²

¹³ As relevant per jurisdiction.

¹⁴ Anti-Corruption Commissions (State/Federal), Ombudsmen etc.

¹⁵ Australian Government, Budget 2024-25: Agency Resourcing - Budget Paper No. 4, Australian Government, 2024, pp 56-62.

¹⁶ Australian Government, Budget 2024-25: Federal Financial Relations - Budget Paper No. 3, Australian Government, 2024, p 4.

¹⁷ Victoria Police, [Victoria Police Annual Report 2023-24: Our performance](#), Victoria Police, 2024, accessed 27 March 2025.

¹⁸ Government of Western Australia, [WA Government and Police Force launch international recruitment campaign](#), Government of Western Australia website, 2022, accessed 5 March 2025; NSW Government, [More police set to start work as recruitment initiatives take effect](#), NSW Government website, 2025, accessed 5 March 2025.

¹⁹ Australian Government, [Australia-Papua New Guinea Bilateral Security Agreement](#) | Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2023, accessed 27 March 2025.

²⁰ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, [Australia-Japan Reciprocal Access Agreement](#) | Business & Industry | Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2023, accessed 27 March 2025.

²¹ Australian Federal Police (AFP), [Our global work](#) | Australian Federal Police, AFP, 2025, accessed 27 March 2025.

²² National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), [Homepage](#) | NEMA, NEMA, n.d., accessed 30 March 2025.

Public Safety Tasking

A unique characteristic of the public safety workforce is the coordination and cooperation that connects multiple organisations across the Defence industry-sector, the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector, and the Police industry-sector when responding to emergencies to protect the community. This can include the tasking of volunteer and reservist workforces. At a State/Territory Government level, individualised emergency management plans have been developed that outline the coordinated roles and responsibilities of public safety organisations within all types of emergencies and across these workforces.

The COVID-19 pandemic provides an example of the unique nature of such taskings and coordination. During the pandemic the Federal Government, through the National Cabinet, committed the Australian Defence Force and the AFP, whilst the State/Territory Governments committed their respective Police agencies, to Australia's whole-of-government pandemic response, on top of their existing roles. For Defence, this included supporting with mandatory quarantine programs, emergency response planning, operating border checkpoints, frontline COVID swab testing, and logistical support.²³ For State/Territory Police organisations, this included enforcing social distancing requirements, operating border checkpoints, and supporting with mandatory quarantine programs.²⁴ For Fire and Emergency Services agencies, specifically in South Australia, this meant assisting the Department of Health undertake its incident and emergency management responsibilities in alignment with the Australasian Interservice Incident Management System (AIIMS) guidelines.²⁵

The nature of the public safety tasking environment requires that public safety organisations be prepared to 'scale up' workforce resources in the activation of emergency management plans. Agencies within the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector can be called upon to mobilise their respective workforces to assist in responding to large-scale emergencies both internationally and domestically through the National Resource Sharing Centre.²⁶

The Defence Assistance to the Civil Community initiative allows for the Defence industry-sector to provide support to State/Territory Governments, as well as non-Defence organisations, during emergencies and non-emergency situations.²⁷

This occurred in January 2024 when Tropical Cyclones Kirrily and Jasper caused significant flooding in North Queensland where 270 ADF employees were deployed to evacuate community members, deliver food supplies, and move emergency employees.

The public safety workforce is required to remain agile and responsive to urgent taskings to ensure the safety of the Australian community. During emergencies and unplanned incidents, this workforce can experience a sudden and significant mobilisation, although the same workforce must continue its normal service delivery. In these scenarios, public safety can experience acute workforce shortages through diminished operational capacity and redeployment which may not be able to be backfilled in the short-term.

Public Safety Resourcing

The nature of resourcing for the public safety workforce is unique, with the employment of career resources, volunteer resources, and reservist resources. In the Defence industry-sector, the Australia Defence Force is supplemented by the Australian Defence Force Reserves workforce of 32,560 people.²⁸ The Australian Defence Force Reserves can be called upon for operational support to missions and community engagement and bring valuable skills from other sectors, to enhance the overall capability of the Defence industry-sector.²⁹

In the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector there are approximately 400,000 volunteers across Australia.³⁰ These resources are spread across firefighting organisations, emergency services, and surf lifesaving organisations in each State/Territory. Volunteer resources make up for 90 to 98 per cent of overall workforce strength in these industry-sectors.³¹ The nature of volunteering requires community members to give up their time, outside of their

primary employment. Organisations need to ensure the consistency of training, whilst balancing the time it takes to complete training and ensure skills maintenance for this workforce.

The AFP bolsters workforce resources through the AFP Reserve, providing additional capacity by targeting skilled and qualified people who have previously had careers in policing, protective services, or specialist/support roles within policing. The AFP Reserve is called upon when a need is identified to free up the AFP workforce to focus on high priority or complex matters.

AFP Reserve resources can be tasked to investigative support, support at Police Station receptions, and training delivery and development. Similar to the reservist model adopted by the ADF, AFP Reserve resources are provided remuneration for any duties performed when they are called upon.³²

²³ Department of Defence, 'Operation COVID-19 Assist', Defence website, n.d., accessed 7 March 2025.

²⁴ Parliament of Australia, [Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement: COVID-19, criminal activity and law enforcement](#), Chapter 5, Parliament of Australia, 2021, accessed 7 March 2025.

²⁵ AP Jackson, [The South Australian Department of Health and Wellbeing approach to emergency management during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), Australian Journal of Emergency Management, 2024, accessed 7 March 2025.

²⁶ Australian and New Zealand Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC), [National Resource Sharing Centre](#), AFAC website, n.d., accessed 27 March 2025. The National Resource Sharing Centre is co-funded by all State and Territory Governments and the Federal Government (through the National Emergency Management Agency).

²⁷ Department of Defence, [Defence Assistance to the Civil Community Initiative](#), Department of Defence, 2021, accessed 20 January 2025.

²⁸ Department of Defence, [2023-24 Defence Annual Report](#), Department of Defence, 2024, accessed 27 March 2025.

²⁹ Department of Defence, [Strategic Review of the Australian Defence Force Reserves](#), Department of Defence, 2024, accessed 27 March 2025.

³⁰ Volunteering Australia, [Volunteering and Australia's crisis resilience](#), Volunteering Australia, 2025, accessed 28 April 2025.

³¹ Commonwealth of Australia, [Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report](#), 2020, Commonwealth of Australia, accessed 27 March 2025.

³² Australian Federal Police (AFP), [AFP Reserve](#), Australian Federal Police, AFP, n.d., accessed 20 March 2025.

Public Safety Risk Environment

The work of public safety is demanding and, at times, hazardous. Defence, Fire and Emergency Services and Police resources are trained to operate within high-stress and challenging environments. The requirement of public safety resources to perform duty in these environments and the resultant prevalence of workforce injury is a significant factor in the sustainability of this workforce.

In 2021-22, Safe Work Australia recorded that serious injury claims for the Defence, Fire and Emergency Services, and Police industry-sectors accounted for 42.9 per cent of all Public Administration and Safety industry³³ serious injury claims, the highest it has been since 2008-09.³⁴ The Police industry-sector have preliminarily recorded 3,836 serious claims for financial year 2022-23, followed by Fire and Emergency Services with 1,689 and the Defence sector with 40.³⁵

There have been yearly increases in the total serious claims made by the public safety workforce since 2008-09 despite fluctuations in total serious claims for the entire Public Administration and Safety industry (Figure 1.3).

The mechanism of serious worker injury also provides insight into the demands of public safety work. For the preliminary claims in the reporting period 2022-23, the most common mechanism of serious injury for all industries was body stressing, accounting for 32.7 per cent of all serious injury claims, followed by falls, trips and slips of a person (21.8 per cent), being hit by moving objects (15.8 per cent),

and mental stress (10.0 per cent).³⁶ These proportions are different for the Public Administration and Safety industry, and different again for the public safety workforce (Figure 1.4).³⁷ Notably, mental stress is the most common mechanism of serious injury, accounting for 38.4 per cent of all serious injury preliminary claims within public safety in the 2022-23 reporting period.³⁸

The analysis of worker injury data highlights that the demanding nature of public safety work can have downstream impacts on the mental health of this workforce. These pressures are compounded by exposure to vicarious trauma, challenges in attracting and retaining workers in the Defence and Police industry-sectors, and declining volunteer participation in Fire and Emergency Services.

This Workforce Insights Report will explore the research and industry insights for each of the Public Safety industry-sectors (Defence, Fire and Emergency Services, and Police) and will highlight proposed strategic interventions to mitigate identified workforce challenges.

The mental stress mechanism of serious injury³⁹ includes exposure to a traumatic event, exposure to violence, suicide or attempted suicide, and work-related pressures.⁴⁰ Although mental stress serious injury claims are not unique to the public safety workforce, the proportion of mental stress serious injury claims is nearly four times that of the national proportion (10.0 versus 38.4 per cent).

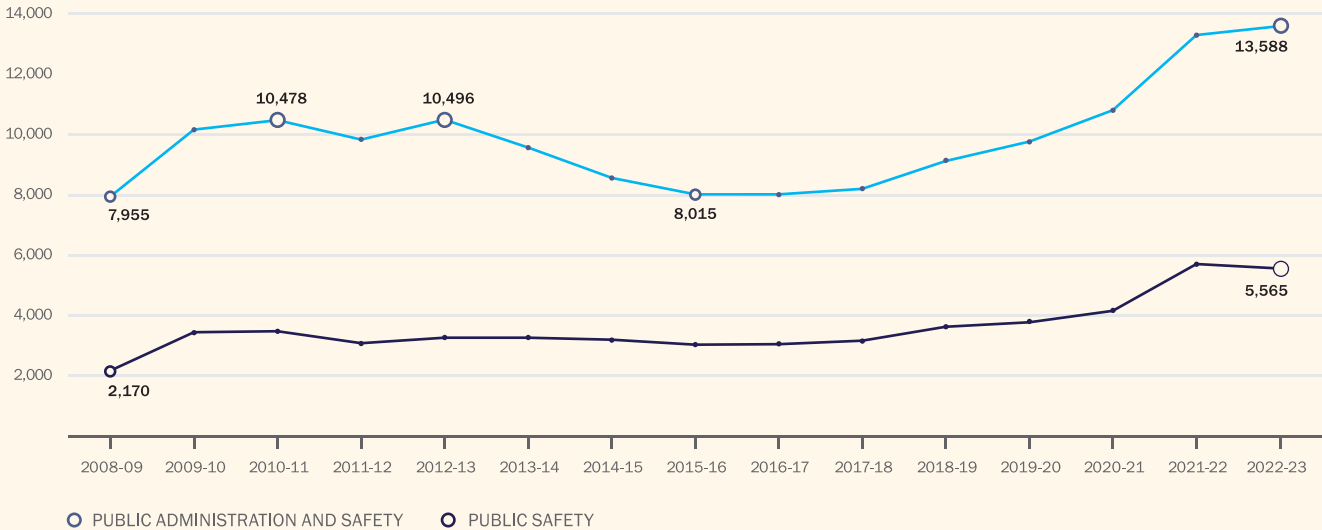


Figure 1.3: Total yearly serious claims for the Public Administration and Safety industry and the number of these claims that are accounted for by the three public safety industry-sectors. 2022-23P details preliminary claims only.

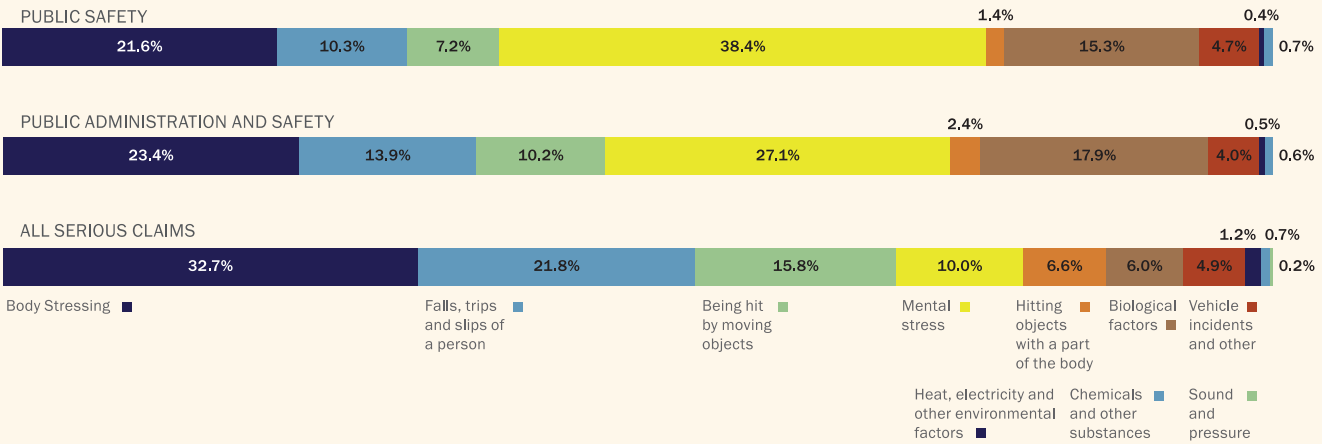


Figure 1.4: Mechanism of injury proportions for all serious injury claims in the 2022-23p reporting period

³³ Reference to the Public Administration and Safety industry is based on the ANZSIC classification system. Public Safety (Defence, Fire and Emergency Services, Police) is a subset of this industry classification.

³⁴ Safe Work Australia (SWA), Serious claims (count) by select ANZSIC industry classes and financial year, 2008-09 to 2022-23 [unpublished dataset], 2024.

³⁵ SWA, Serious claims (count) by select ANZSIC industry classes and financial year, 2008-09 to 2022-23 [unpublished dataset], 2024. 2022-23 data are 'preliminary' due to comprising open claims.

³⁶ SWA, Serious claims (count) by select ANZSIC industry classes and financial year, 2008-09 to 2022-23 [unpublished dataset], 2024.

³⁷ SWA, Serious claims (count) by select ANZSIC industry classes and financial year, 2008-09 to 2022-23 [unpublished dataset], 2024.

³⁸ SWA, 'Table 4.1. Claims (count) by Mechanism (TOOCS Major group), 10 years to 2022-23', [National Dataset for Compensation Based Statistics detailed data file](#), accessed 23 December 2024; Safe Work Australia (SWA), Serious claims (count) by select ANZSIC industry classes and financial year, 2008-09 to 2022-23 [unpublished dataset], 2024.

³⁹ Mental stress data category as defined is being used for this report.

⁴⁰ SWA, [Type of occurrence classification system \(TOOCS\) 3rd Edition](#), SWA, n.d., accessed 20 March 2025.

⁴¹ Safe Work Australia (SWA), Serious claims (count) by select ANZSIC industry classes and financial year, 2008-09 to 2022-23 [unpublished dataset], 2024. 2022-23 data are 'preliminary' due to comprising open claims.

⁴² SWA, 'Table 4.1. Claims (count) by Mechanism (TOOCS Major group), 10 years to 2022-23', [National Dataset for Compensation Based Statistics detailed data file](#), accessed 23 December 2024; SWA, Serious claims (count) by select ANZSIC industry classes and financial year, 2008-09 to 2022-23 [unpublished dataset], 2024.

2024 Public Safety

Megatrend Recap

Public Skills Australia’s 2024 Workforce Plans identified nine megatrends impacting across the Public Safety and Government industry-sectors. Through consultation with public safety stakeholders, a range of workforce insights were gathered in relation to each of the megatrends. A brief overview of the key findings from 2024 are detailed below.



CAREER PATHWAYS

Clearly defined career pathways support employee value propositions, although lateral/cross-jurisdictional transfers have their own limitations for employees and volunteers in Public Safety.



COMPETITION FOR LABOUR

Public Safety industry-sectors compete with each other, other Australian employers, as well as the employee / volunteer’s other commitments for labour. Skills acquired are highly sought after.



DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

The Public Safety workforce is ageing, leading to higher employee and volunteer attrition rates. The ageing population in Australia means increased community assistance needs.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Increased recruitment and participation of women and First Nations people in Public Safety, although First Nations representation remains a challenge.



PUBLIC TRUST AND PERCEPTION

Commonly impacted by public trust and perceptions, which varies in degree across Public Safety. There is also public expectation that senior officials provide consistent information during emergencies.



RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

There are elevated recruitment and retention challenges in Public Safety, with recruitment targets not always aligned to organisational or community needs.



CLIMATE CHANGE

Resources, capability and capacity are impacted by increased frequency and severity of natural disasters. Enhanced interagency cooperation



TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Workforces may require emerging technology upskilling and training, as they are impacted by technological development across roles. Technological developments could enhance capability.



EXPANSION OF CORE DUTIES

Increased community and organisational expectations to respond to an expanded scope of work. Challenges for resource allocation, wellbeing and training with increased frequency / intensity of natural disasters.

Defence

Workforce Insights Report

AIR FORCE

ARMY

NAVY

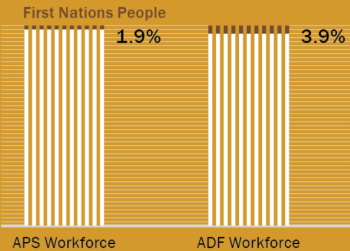


Industry-Sector

Overview

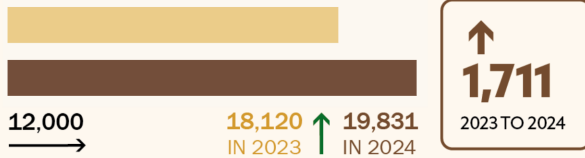
The Defence workforce encompasses uniformed military-based members within the Australian Defence Force (ADF), and Australian Public Service (APS) employees within the Department of Defence, alongside ADF members. The key role of Defence is to support and defend Australia and its national interests, as well as the community, in line with Government directives. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 (below) provide an overview of key Defence data.

FIRST NATIONS PROPORTION IN THE APS AND ADF

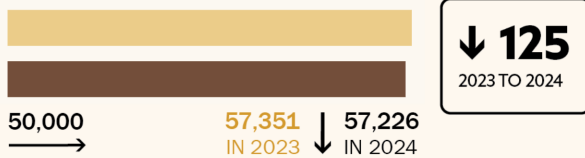


TOTAL APS AND ADF HEADCOUNTS 2023 TO 2024

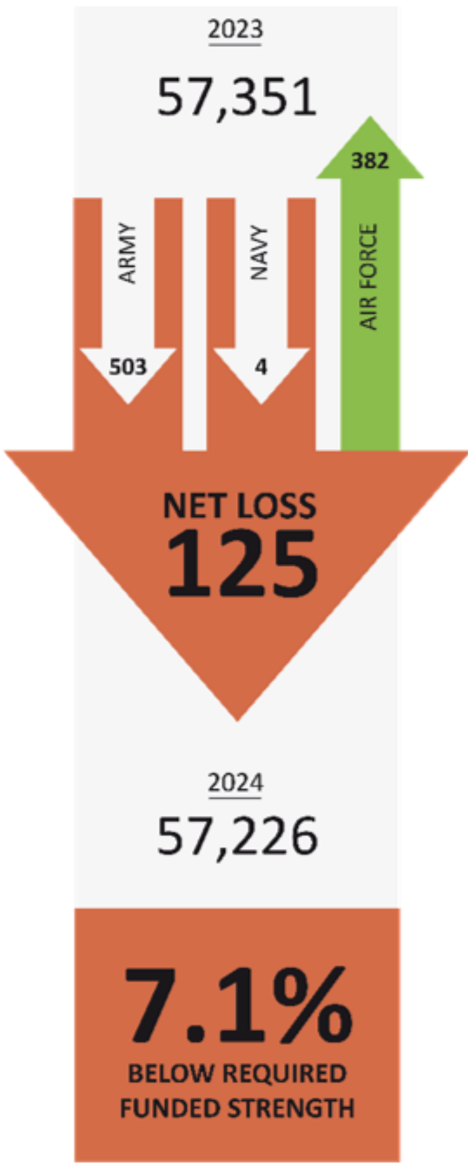
AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE (APS) HEADCOUNT



AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE (ADF) HEADCOUNT

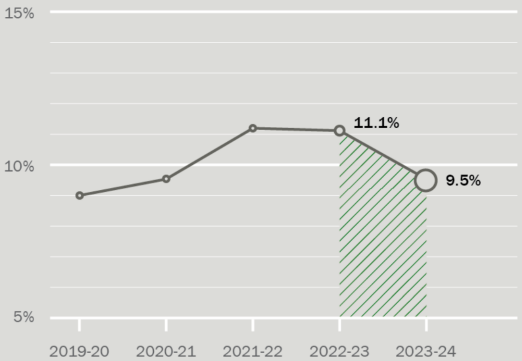


ADF HEADCOUNT BY SERVICE BRANCH 2023 TO 2024



From 2023 to 2024, the ADF experienced a net loss of 125 employees due to a decrease of 503 Army and four Navy employees, and an increase of 382 Air Force members (Figure 2.1).⁴³ Due to this, the ADF is approximately 4,425 employees below its required funded strength.⁴⁴ However, although the ADF has experienced a net decrease in employees, the separation rate has improved from 11.1 per cent in 2023 to 9.5 per cent in 2024 (Figure 2.1).⁴⁵ Specific to Defence’s APS workforce, there was an increase of 1,711 APS employees from 2023 to 2024 (Figure 2.1).⁴⁶

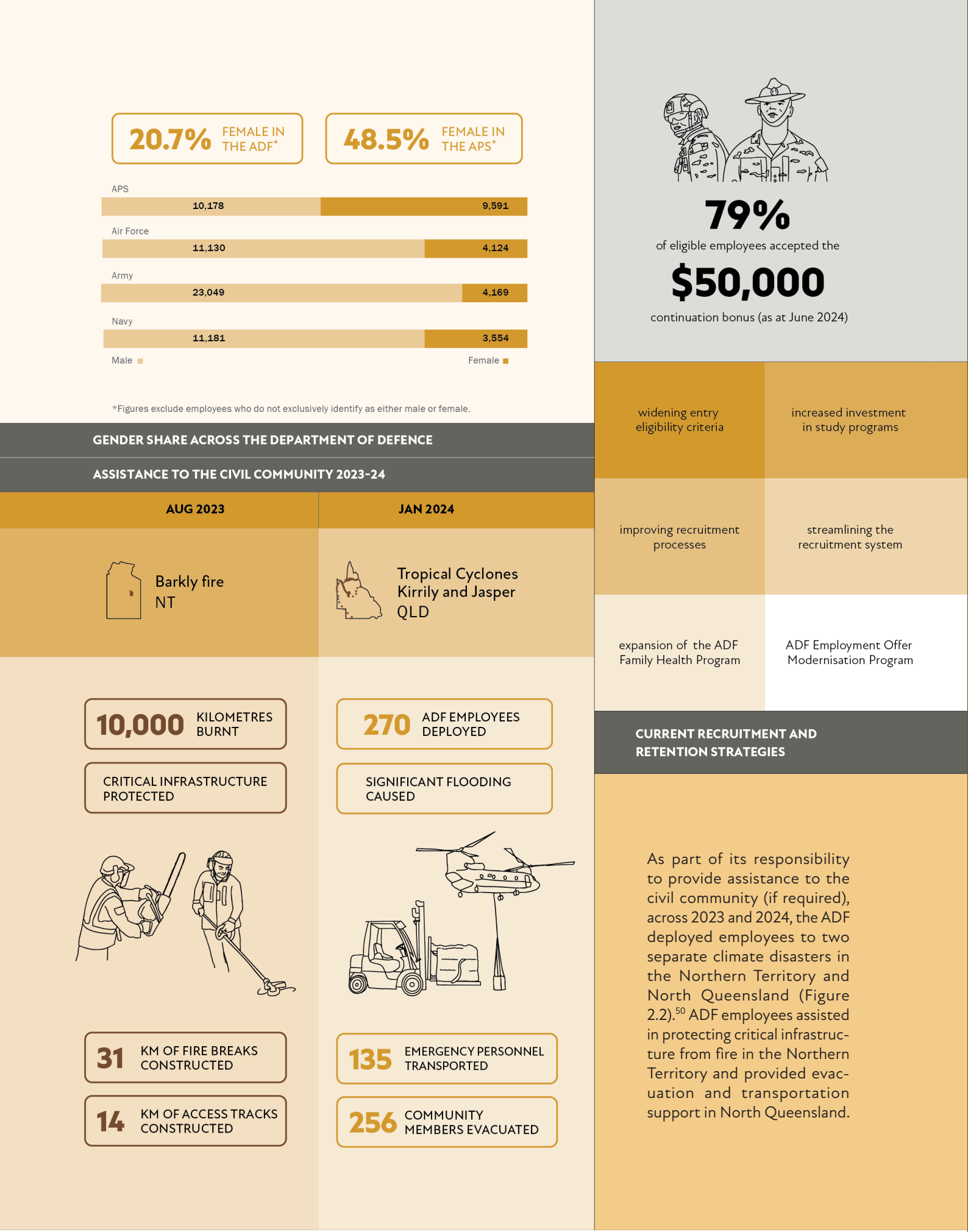
In 2024, Defence published two documents detailing their intended strategic direction, including the *National Defence Strategy 2024* and the *Defence Workforce Plan 2024*.⁴⁷ Regarding its workforce, these documents specify several recruitment and retention strategies to minimise Defence’s current strength deficit (Figure 2.2).⁴⁸ For example as one of its retention strategies, Defence has offered members a \$50,000 continuation bonus, of which 79 per cent of eligible employees had accepted as of June 2024 (Figure 2.2).⁴⁹



ADF SEPARATION RATE

Figure 2.1: Dashboard overview of key Defence data. Please note – source list for data appears in Appendix A.

⁴³ Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 102.
⁴⁴ Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 37.
⁴⁵ Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 37.
⁴⁶ Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 102.
⁴⁷ Department of Defence, National Defence Strategy. Department of Defence, Australian Government Defence, 2024; Department of Defence, Defence Workforce Plan 2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024.
⁴⁸ Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 98.
⁴⁹ Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 8.



Emerging Capabilities

Approaches to meet Defence’s workforce and skills needs are continually evolving depending on Australia’s current security risks and national protection requirements, as evidenced in the *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review 2023 (the Review)*.⁵¹ In response to the Review, the *National Defence Strategy 2024* identified technological advancement and disruption as a prominent modern challenge for Australia’s Defence workforce.⁵² To combat this, the *Defence Annual Report 2023-24*, identified space and cyber capabilities as growing divisions of the Defence workforce.⁵³

The space and cyber domains are characterised as two separate capabilities, and for the purpose of this *Workforce Insights Report*, the below descriptors contextualise their differences.

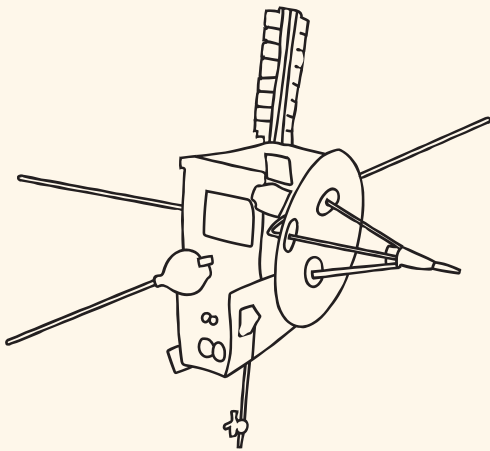
Across Defence, the Joint Capabilities Group, established in 2024, aims to deliver space and cyber capabilities through its seven functional commands.⁵⁴

Stakeholders explained that upskilling in the space domain is largely required for telecommunications, electronics and network technician occupations. Specific to the cyber domain, stakeholders described that upskilling will likely involve skills to undertake risk assessments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems and may require obtaining a nationally accredited qualification.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

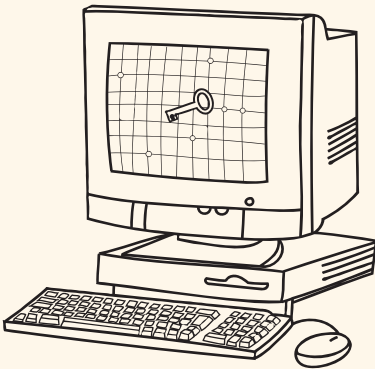
Stakeholders noted that capabilities within both the space and cyber domains were intended to be military-only, however, upskilling in the cyber domain will likely occur across the integrated workforce and all Government agencies for all Government ICT systems.

Skills needs identified by stakeholders through consultation are aligned with the *Defence Workforce Plan 2024*, aimed at rapidly improving Defence’s cyber and space capabilities, crucial for Australia’s situational awareness and protection of warfighting networks and systems.⁵⁶ Skills for both the space and cyber domains are in high demand across the Australian labour market, requiring collaboration between Defence and the private sector to build and share capability.⁵⁷ To ensure these emerging capabilities are supported by high quality skills and training, Public Skills Australia will work closely with Defence to review, develop and maintain the necessary training products.



SPACE DOMAIN⁵⁵

Space capabilities are crucial for ADF operations, supporting communication, targeting, situational awareness, and navigation. The *National Defence Strategy* prioritises investment in space capabilities that improve intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and communication resilience while countering emerging space threats.



CYBER DOMAIN⁵⁸

Cyber capabilities are crucial for ADF operations, enhancing situational awareness, decision-making, and resilience. The *Defence Strategic Review* and the *National Defence Strategy* emphasise the need for improved cyber capabilities to protect ADF networks and counter growing cyber threats.

⁵¹ Department of Defence, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review 2023*. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2023.
⁵² Department of Defence, *National Defence Strategy*. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024.
⁵³ Department of Defence, *Annual Report 2023-2024*. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024.
⁵⁴ Department of Defence, *Joint Capabilities Group*, Department of Defence website, n.d., accessed 27 February 2025.
⁵⁵ Department of Defence, *Annual Report 2023-2024*. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024.

⁵⁶ Department of Defence, *Defence Workforce Plan 2024*. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024.
⁵⁷ Department of Defence, *Defence Workforce Plan 2024*. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024.
⁵⁸ Department of Defence, *Annual Report 2023-2024*. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024.

Professionalisation and Upskilling

APS WORKFORCE WITHIN DEFENCE

The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) *State of the Service Report 2022-23* noted that the Australian Public Service (APS) was reducing its reliance on external workforces, such as contractors and consultants, to rebalance its workforce.⁵⁹ Guidance on how government agencies reduce reliance on external workforces is provided in the *APS Strategic Commissioning Framework*.⁶⁰ This framework describes that the core work of the APS must be done by APS employees and that agencies must prioritise directly employing and strengthening the capability of its workforces.⁶¹

Specific to Defence, Strategic Task Five of the *Defence Workforce Plan* outlines six actions that will enable the development and transformation of its workforce.⁶² Specifically, Action 5.6 describes that Defence will continue to implement the *APS Strategic Commissioning Framework* to ensure the skills and composition of the APS workforce are strengthened. This will require a targeted capability uplift related to contracting, procurement and project management, as these skills have been traditionally outsourced.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Stakeholders advised that there are skills gaps related to contracting, procurement and project management roles due to their reliance on outsourcing.

Public Skills Australia, as the Jobs and Skills Council for the Federal and State/Territory Government public sector workforces, is proposing to undertake a review of qualification streams within the PSP Public Sector Training Package to ensure that they remain valid, current, and supportive of national public sector skills and competency needs. This includes a review of the *Certificate IV in Procurement and Contracting*, which will support the skilling of the APS workforce within Defence to meet the strategic objectives of the *Defence Workforce Plan*.

APS has been reducing its reliance on external workforces to
rebalance its workforce

the *APS Strategic Commissioning Framework* will ensure the skills and composition of the APS workforce are
strengthened

CONTEMPORARY CADET TRAINING

In the *2023-24 Defence Annual Report*, Defence presented several career pathways currently being utilised by young people to engage with learning or career opportunities.⁶³ These career pathways range from youth programs that provide engagement and exposure opportunities for individuals under the age of 18, to gap year and cadetship programs that lead to Defence employment opportunities for young adults. Examples of the career pathways presented include, but are not limited to:

- Defence Work Experience Program (for both ADF and APS)
- Defence Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths (STEM) Cadetship
- ADF Gap Year
- ADF Cadets

Of these pathways, ADF Cadets is the single largest program based on total participation, with more than 30,000 cadets enrolled in ADF Cadets programs across Australia.⁶⁴

ADF Cadets programs offer military-like experiences for 13 to 18-year-olds Australia-wide through three separate service branch cadet programs.⁶⁵ Each of the ADF Cadets programs is aimed at giving young people inclusive and fulfilling development opportunities that create inter-generational connections with the ADF and promote an interest in Defence careers.⁶⁶

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Stakeholders have noted a desire to move towards nationally accredited training for Army Cadets, to be delivered at a school level, which is anticipated to be followed by Navy Cadets and then Air Force Cadets.

ADF Cadets is the single
largest program
based on total participation

30,000 cadets
enrolled in ADF Cadets programs across Australia

ADF Cadets programs are aimed at giving young people inclusive and fulfilling
development opportunities

⁵⁹ Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), *State of the Service Report 2022-23*. APSC, Australian Government, 2023.

⁶⁰ APSC, *APS Strategic Commissioning Framework: Strengthening APS capability through reduced reliance on contractors and consultants*. APSC, Australian Government, 2024.

⁶¹ APSC, *APS Strategic Commissioning Framework: Strengthening APS capability through reduced reliance on contractors and consultants*. APSC, Australian Government, 2024.

⁶² Department of Defence, *Defence Workforce Plan 2024*. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024.

⁶³ Department of Defence, *Annual Report 2023-2024*. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 120.

⁶⁴ Department of Defence, *Annual Report 2023-2024*. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 120.

⁶⁵ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Force cadet programs*, Department of Defence website, n.d., accessed 17 March 2025.

⁶⁶ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Force cadet programs*, Department of Defence website, n.d., accessed 17 March 2025.

Currently, all cadet programs across Australia, both community and school-based, are delivered using non-accredited training. Young people can engage with the ADF Cadets programs through community-based units, or at school-based units from year 10 onwards.

School-based programs are functionally the same as community-based units, however, individual schools offer the cadet program as part of their own co-curricular activities.⁶⁷

There are currently two qualifications within the DEF Defence Training Package that are relevant to training for young people:

- DEF10117 Certificate I in Defence Skills
- DEF21115 Certificate II in Military Skills

Both qualifications provide a relevant introductory pathway for individuals before they reach Year 11 or 12. However, for qualifications to be delivered as part of the VET in Schools program at the Year 11 and 12 level in Victoria, qualifications must be at the Certificates II or III levels.⁶⁸ This lends itself to focusing on the Certificate II as a national standard for VET in Schools. Given the *Certificate II in Military Skills* was last updated in 2015, this qualification requires review to

ensure it remains contemporary before it can be considered for the VET in Schools program.

The number of those currently enrolled in ADF Cadet programs, represents a key pathway into military service and other Defence employment areas. By formally recognising the skills acquired through ADF Cadet participation, such as through an updated Certificate II, Defence can help produce graduates who are better prepared for tertiary education, Defence careers, and roles in critical national industries.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Stakeholders have expressed interest in reviewing the *Certificate II in Military Skills* to be adapted into a qualification for use with the ADF Cadets and VET in Schools programs. Stakeholders described that some units within the Certificate II are not fit-for-purpose as they pertain to the use and maintenance of weaponry.

Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans' Suicide

In September 2024, the final report of the *Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans' Suicide* (the Report) was submitted to the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.⁶⁹ The Report is extensive and includes 122 recommendations to Government that aim to underpin meaningful reform.

Of the 122 recommendations, Recommendation 83 focuses on the expansion of education and training policies to include the delivery and accreditation of civilian qualifications for Defence employees to ensure lifelong wellbeing. Recommendation 83 has three focus areas, including:

- A. Issuing civilian accreditation for Defence employees upon completion of training rather than at the point of transition from service
- B. The removal of limitations on the number of civilian qualifications employees can be awarded
- C. Filling the gap between Defence and civilian qualifications through improved pathways. This ensures that Defence qualifications (where an equivalent civilian qualification exists) are directly transferrable to civilian occupations.

The report emphasises the importance of employment after exiting the Defence workforce and the positive effect it has on employees transitioning to civilian life. Although some support programs are already in place for transitioning

employees, the Royal Commission found that current supports are not accessible or targeted enough, especially for ex-serving employees who are more vulnerable.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Consultation with industry suggests that Public Skills Australia could assist Defence with focus area 'C' through the investigation and potential development of training products that provide pathways for members to complete full civilian qualifications. This will help ensure transitioning employees do not encounter barriers when entering the workforce with a civilian qualification.

Young people can engage with the ADF Cadets program through

community-based [or] school-based units

formally recognising ADF Cadet participation, can help produce graduates who are

better prepared

the report includes 122 recommendations that aim to underpin

meaningful reform

the report emphasises the importance of

employment after exit

accreditation of civilian qualifications ensure[s]

lifelong wellbeing

32 ⁶⁷ Navy Cadets, [What is a school-based unit?](#), Navy Cadets website, n.d., accessed 18 March 2025.
⁶⁸ Victorian Department of Education, [Vocational Education and Training Delivered to School Students](#), Victorian Department of Education website, 2024, accessed 18 March 2025.

⁶⁹ Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, Final Report, Volume 1: Executive summary, recommendations and the fundamentals. Attorney-General's Department, Australian Government, 2024.

2024 Strategy Update

Public Skills Australia identified two workforce strategies for the Defence industry-sector in the *2024 Defence Workforce Plan*. An update on the progress of the 2024 strategies is provided in this section.

Defence Evolving Skills Requirements – VET System Pathways Framework ⁷⁰

- ONGOING

Project Summary:

Public Skills Australia's *2024 Defence Workforce Plan* detailed significant investments into the development of a skilled national workforce to meet the requirements of the AUKUS submarine program. It further included a strategy to analyse the current and future job roles and related skills required of the AUKUS workforce, with the goal of delivering an analysis of the related insights that will aid in promoting coherence and collaboration between stakeholders responsible for the AUKUS program.

Strategic Considerations

Public Skills Australia has proposed to undertake work to understand the role of the ADF Defence APS workforces and the related skilling requirements to enable the operationalisation of AUKUS commitments. It will not be focussed on advanced manufacturing, shipbuilding and SSN sustainment (and the associated workforce/skilling requirements to build and field SSNs) that are the purview of other JSCs and government initiatives. It is anticipated that this project will focus on occupations within Defence Job Categories that are skilled through the DEF Defence and PSP Public Sector Training Packages, including:

- Infrastructure
 - Intelligence
 - Logistics
 - Project and program management
- Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
 - Security
- Strategic and international policy and capability analysts
 - Trades and labour.

Next Steps

PHASE 1
Public Skills Australia will work closely with Defence to identify the key stakeholders that will facilitate the development of effective skilling and staffing processes. This phase is intended to develop important buy-in from key stakeholders that will be central to the project.

PHASE 2
Look to enable deeper collaboration between Defence and Public Skills Australia to understand more accurately the role that VET can play in the wider AUKUS project. It is anticipated this work will lead to the development of a framework that outlines how workforce planning, skills identification, training, credentialling and delivery of VET qualifications work together to deliver the skills needs for Defence.

Key Stakeholders

- Australian Defence College
- Military Workforce Design
- DEWR Defence Skills Taskforce
- Relevant Government Departments
- STTA/SRO
- State/Territory Skills Commissions/Councils
- Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance (MISA)
- Defence Industry

Stakeholder Insights

The role of Public Skills Australia in this space will be in supporting Defence to translate workforce planning (done by Defence itself) to enable skilling requirements. Stakeholders have expressed that, although AUKUS is a significant project, it is one component of a much larger Defence strategy to innovate, enhance and strengthen its workforce and capabilities.

Review and Update Training Products Identified as a Priority Through the ADF

- OPERATIONAL

Project Summary:

Public Skills Australia's *2024 Defence Workforce Plan* detailed the continuation of upskilling and training reviews as a key focus for the Defence workforce. In partnering with key industry-sector stakeholders, a review and update of Defence training products was set to be undertaken on a priority-basis by the sector through the ADF.

In 2024, a review of the Defence Public Affairs Qualifications and the development of new training products to support skilling requirements with Defence's explosive ordnance capability was undertaken. Both projects presented below have been submitted to the Training Package Assurance Body and are awaiting acceptance.

Defence Public Affairs Qualifications Review

This project has seen the review of the Defence Public Affairs qualifications stream to equip employees with the skills necessary for effective engagement with the media, stakeholders and the public. This was achieved through the review of three qualifications comprising 17 units of competency, their elective streams and packaging rules. The following qualifications were included in the review:

- DEF30417 Certificate III in Defence Public Affairs
- DEF40117 Certificate IV in Defence Public Affairs
- DEF50517 Diploma of Defence Public Affairs

The review and update of these qualifications clearly defined the job role pathway of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) operational and Australian Public Service (APS) employees working within communication roles.

DEF Defence Explosive Ordnance Training Product Development

Public Skills Australia, in collaboration with the Australian Defence College, identified the need to address a competency and skill gap in relation to the ability to safely test explosive ordnance equipment and associated evaluation processes. This project has seen the development of a unit of competency to enhance explosive ordnance capacity and employee safety.

Current Status

Release 6.0 of the DEF Defence Training Package has now been approved by all skills ministers and is now operational.

Key Stakeholders

- Defence Education, Learning and Training Authority (DELTA), Australian Defence College
- STTA/SRO

34 ⁷⁰ Please note, in the 2024 Defence Workforce Plan, this project was originally titled 'Undertake an analysis of current and future job roles and related skills required for the AUKUS workforce'. The current title reflects an update to the project recently submitted to DEWR.

2025 Proposed Strategies

Public Skills Australia proposes the following strategies to alleviate the identified workforce challenges.

- **Development of Training Products for Emerging Skills in the Space Domain**
- **Development of Training Products for Emerging Skills in the Cyber Domain**
- **Contemporary Cadet Training**
- **Proposal to investigate the Development of Pathways for Transitioning Veterans**

1

Development of Training Products for Emerging Skills in the Space Domain

Anticipated Timing:
6 months approximately.

Challenge: Skills gap

Strategy: Develop nationally accredited training products that meet the emerging skills needs of Defence in the space domain. This may include skills related to satellite imagery, intelligence, reconnaissance and communications or any other skilling areas identified by key stakeholders.

Proposed Project Outline

JSC Function:

- Training Product Development

Actions:

PHASE 1
Undertake engagement with key Defence stakeholders to develop a list of priority skilling needs.

PHASE 2
Review existing training products, identify gaps and where required draft training products to address priority skilling needs. This project will support Qualification Reform by ensuring that duplication of existing training products does not occur.

Key Stakeholders

- Defence Education, Learning and Training Authority (DELTA), Australian Defence College
- Defence Joint Capability Group

Impact: Delivery of nationally accredited training that meets the emerging skills needs within the space domain.

2

Development of Training Products for Emerging Skills in the Cyber Domain

Anticipated Timing:
12 months approximately.

Challenge: Skills gap

Strategy: Develop nationally accredited training products that meet the emerging skills needs of Defence in the cyber domain. This will support personnel to undertake risk assessments of ICT systems to support the Defence cyber domain.

Proposed Project Outline

JSC Function:

- Training Product Development

Actions:

PHASE 1
Undertake engagement with key Defence stakeholders and Future Skills Organisation to determine the scope of priority skilling needs.

PHASE 2
Review existing training products, identify gaps and where relevant develop training products for Defence ICT risk assessments in the cyber domain. This project will support Qualification Reform by ensuring that duplication of existing training products does not occur.

Key Stakeholders

- Defence Education, Learning and Training Authority (DELTA), Australian Defence College
- Defence Joint Capability Group
- Future Skills Organisation

Impact: Delivery of nationally accredited training to support Defence capability in ICT risk assessments in the cyber domain.

3

Contemporary
Cadet Training

Challenge: Nationally accredited training for Cadets

Strategy: Review and re-develop the DEF21115 *Certificate II in Military Skills* to support the uptake of Defence Cadet training in schools.

Proposed Project Outline

JSC Function:

- Training Product Development
- Implementation, Promotion and Monitoring

Actions:

PHASE 1

Review *Certificate II in Military Skills* to identify which units of competency remain contemporary, where gaps may exist and where new units are required to be developed. This review will be supported by engagement with key Defence stakeholders.

PHASE 2

Develop new units of competency to be housed in a contemporary version of the qualification. This project will support Qualification Reform by ensuring that duplication of existing training products does not occur.

PHASE 3

Develop and promote implementation models for delivery of this qualification to Cadet programs in secondary schools.

Key Stakeholders

- Defence Education, Learning and Training Authority (DELTA), Australian Defence College
- Army Cadets
- Navy Cadets
- Air Force Cadets

Anticipated Timing:
12 months approximately.

Impact: Promotion of Defence careers at a high-school level, through a cadet program in which students can obtain the equivalent of the DEF21115 *Certificate II in Military Skills*. This may increase a pathway that bolsters the recruitment pool for Defence.

4

Proposal to
Investigate the
Development
of Pathways
for
Transitioning
Veterans

- PROPOSED

Public Skills Australia’s Workforce Planning Subcommittee recommended work to support Defence to address Recommendation 83 of the *Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans’ Suicide*. This was also supported by the Public Skills Australia Industry Advisory Group and may include scoping how Defence veterans can transition into civilian workforces through mechanisms including, but not limited to, pathway development.

Challenge: Pathways to transitioning veterans into civilian workforces.

Strategy: Capitalising on the breadth of expertise and skills within Defence workforce that can be transitioned into the broader labour market.

Proposed Project Outline

Actions:

Develop a proposal to scope how Defence can respond to the three focus areas of the Royal Commission Recommendation 83:

- Issuing civilian accreditation for Defence employees upon completion of training rather than at the point of transition from service
- The removal of limitations on the number of civilian qualifications employees can be awarded
- Filling the gap between Defence and civilian qualifications through improved pathways. This ensures that Defence qualifications (where an equivalent civilian qualification exists) are directly transferrable to civilian occupations.

Outcome:

This proposal will present options for Defence to consider in responding to Recommendation 83 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Key Stakeholders

- Defence Education, Learning and Training Authority (DELTA), Australian Defence College

Potential Focus Areas:

- Career Pathways
- Workforce Mobility
- Skills Transferability

2025 Stakeholder Engagement

In the development of the 2025 Workforce Insights Reports, Public Skills Australia undertook extensive industry-sector consultation. The list of stakeholders engaged is found below. The approach adopted by Public Skills Australia towards the engagement of stakeholders, gathering and analysing their insights, and generating themes and challenges across the industry-sector, is summarised in the Methodology section of this report.

ADF Transfers and Modernisation, Military Personnel System

APS Job Families, Defence Workforce Plan, Office of Defence Workforce Strategy

APS Professionalisation, People Policy and Development

Education and Training Governance, Defence Education, Learning and Training Authority, Australian Defence College

Learning Strategies and Communication, Defence Learning, Defence People Group.

National Skills Framework, Defence Education, Learning and Training Authority, Australian Defence College

Navy Training Operations, Navy Training Force Headquarters

State/Territory Training Authorities and Senior Responsible officers⁷¹

Existing Strategies

- Existing Strategies in the Defence Industry-sector
- Government Initiatives

Existing Strategies

Australian Government 2024 Defence Workforce Plan		HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK
Department of Defence	2024 - 2034	Public Skills Australia will use the 2024 Defence Workforce Plan provides valuable workforce data in future research efforts.
The 2024 Defence Workforce Plan outlines Australia's strategy to expand and enhance the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Australian Public Service (APS) workforce, aiming to grow the permanent ADF workforce to 69,000 by the early 2030s and the combined ADF and APS workforce to around 100,000 by 2040. Key initiatives include extending the Continuation Bonus, increasing Operational Reserves, improving mental health support, and aligning workforce growth with capability needs across various domains. The plan also emphasizes cultural improvements and significant financial investments, with \$5.7 billion allocated over the next four years and \$50.3 billion over the next decade.		
Australian Government Defence Industry Development Strategy		HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK
Department of Defence	2024 - ongoing	Public Skills Australia will continue to build on relationships with the Department of Defence to identify and understand current and future workforce strategies.
The Defence Industry Development Strategy outlines Australia's plan to build a sovereign defence industrial base to enhance national security and military preparedness. It emphasises the need for a robust industrial structure, identifies seven Sovereign Defence Industrial Priorities (SDIPs), and details initiatives for industry growth, workforce development, innovation, and exports. The strategy also highlights the importance of security measures to protect sensitive technologies and information.		

Australian Government Integrated Investment Program		HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK
Department of Defence	2024 - ongoing	Public Skills Australia will support training product development in relation to key identified investment areas, including AUKUS, space and cyber capabilities.
The Integrated Investment Program outlines the Defence capability investment priorities, including, but not limited to: Undersea Warfare, Maritime capabilities, Space and Cyber, Targeting and Long-Range Strike, and Missile Defence. The Integrated Investment Program includes developing a skilled workforce in identified investment areas.		
Australian Government National Defence Strategy		HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK
Department of Defence	2024 - ongoing	Public Skills Australia will support training product development in relation to key identified investment areas, including AUKUS, space and cyber capabilities.
The National Defence Strategy outlines the Government's approach to Australia's National Defence risks. Six priorities are highlighted in the strategy including: - Acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines through AUKUS - Developing long-range capabilities - Improvements to bases - Improving the growth and retention of the workforce - Lifting Australia's capacity to rapidly translate disruptive new technologies into ADF capability - Prioritising international partnerships		

Australian Government National Defence: Defence Strategic Review		HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK
Department of Defence	2023 - ongoing	Public Skills Australia will support workforce planning and strategy development conducted by Defence to provide innovative solutions to its recruitment challenges, especially by utilising Reserves as a recruitment pool.
Australian Government Response to the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide		HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK
Australian Government	2024 - ongoing	Public Skills Australia will utilise the Royal Commission report and its findings to support Defence in their reform efforts through training product development.
Portfolio Budget Statements 2024-25		HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK
Department of Defence	2024 - 2025	Public Skills Australia will continue to look to innovative solutions informed by this document to support the development of workforce strategies utilised by Defence.

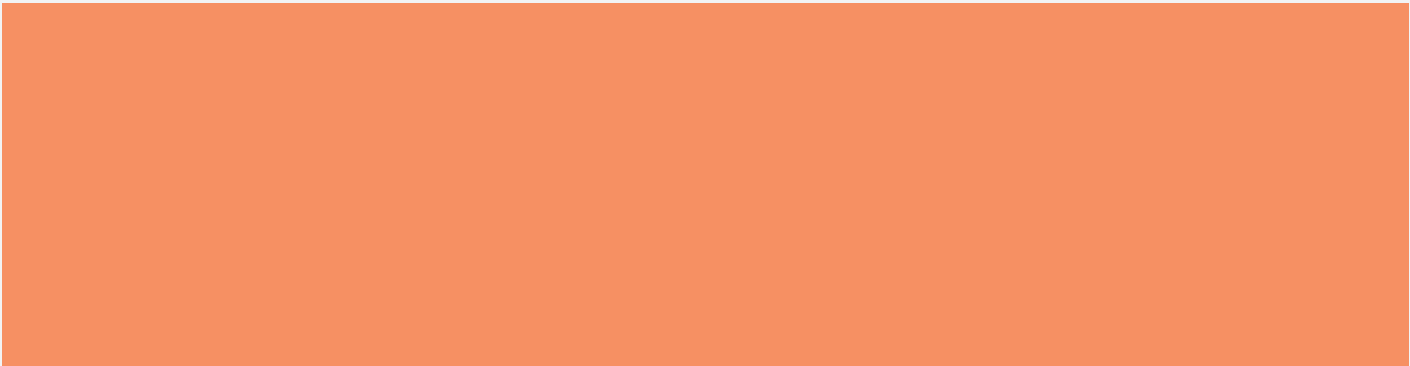
Fire and Emergency Services Workforce Insights Report

FIREFIGHTING

STATE/TERRITORY EMERGENCY SERVICES

SURF LIFE SAVING

VOLUNTEERS



Industry Sector

Overview

The Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector creates safer and more resilient communities. It achieves this by minimising the impact of emergencies by providing responses as well as supporting communities in understanding risk, developing plans and delivering warnings. The *National Statement of Capability for Fire and Emergency Services* outlines the scope of work undertaken by organisations within the industry-sector under the PPRR framework (Figure 3.1).⁷²

The roles and functions of Fire and Emergency Services are legislated by Federal and State/Territory Governments, and for many organisations this includes both career and volunteer workforces. Specifically, volunteer interests are represented by organisations such as Surf Life Saving Australia, the National State Emergency Service Volunteers Association (NSESVA), the Council of Australian Volunteer Fire Associations (CAVFA) and the Australian Council of State/Territory Emergency Services (ACSES).

Supporting both the career and volunteer Fire and Emergency Services workforce is the industry-led and supported organisation Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC). As a national body, they provide both jurisdictional and international oversight on improved collaboration, emerging trends and research areas, and collective doctrine. The importance of which increases capacities for resource sharing across the agencies supports deployment of volunteers and employees both interstate and internationally in both technical and incident management roles.⁷³

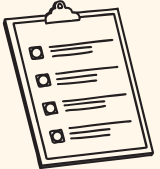
This Workforce Insights Report covers Firefighters (OSCA 451232), Emergency Service Workers (OSCA 451231) and surf lifesaving Lifeguards (OSCA 462331), as the primary users of the PUA Public Safety Training Package (PUA Training Package).⁷⁴ The PUA Training Package supports the delivery and maintenance of contemporary knowledge and skills across the industry-sector.

Data output on this workforce remains a challenge due to jurisdiction variations in reporting and collection methodologies. Primary resources for workforce data are collected via Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data, Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) Nowcast of Employment by Region and Occupation (NERO),⁷⁵ Productivity Commission Report on Government Services (ROGS) and industry-sector annual reports.



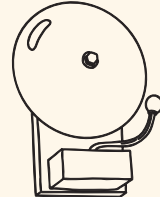
PREVENTION

- Structural compliance
- Community engagement programs
- Land use planning
- Fuel reduction



PREPAREDNESS

- Community empowerment
- Development and exercising of preparedness plans
- Disaster risk management
- Agency resourcing and training



RESPONSE

- Fire and emergency response
- Natural disaster response
- Coastal safety and first aid
- Fire investigations
- Vehicle crashes and road safety
- Search and rescue



RECOVERY

- Community engagement
- Support to other agencies
- Post-incident assistance and advice to persons impacted by fire and other emergencies

Figure 3.1: Overview of responsibilities aligned to the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery

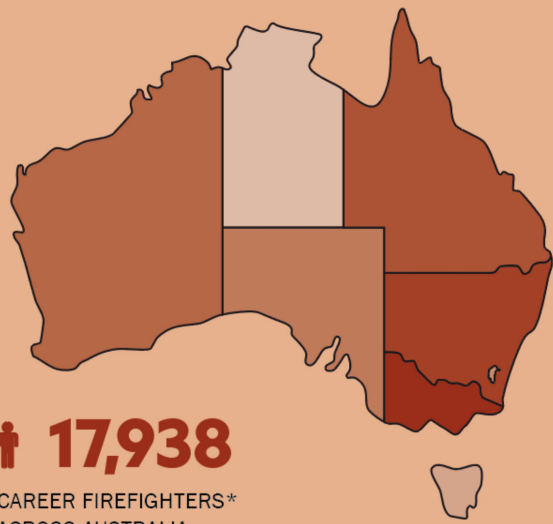
Firefighting

State/Territory Fire organisations have a legislated responsibility to both manage and respond to emergencies. The staffing structure of each agency may vary, with some fire agencies engaging only career firefighters, while others have a mix of career, auxiliary, and volunteer firefighters.

DUTIES AND ROLE SCOPE

Fire organisations sustain Australia’s dedicated fire and emergency management capability. They provide a range of specialist services to support community safety across a range of hazards including bushfires, grassfires, structural fires and search and rescue on land and water. Roles requiring specialist expertise in fire agencies includes:

- Aviation fire relief and initial recovery after major disasters
- Bushfire, grassfires burning in remote conditions and along urban-rural interface
- Fire investigation
- Incident management
- Technical and high angle rescue
- Fires due to new and emerging technologies such as electric vehicles and other alternate renewable energy technologies
- Prescribed burning to mitigate the loss of life, property and the environment and hazard reduction
- Response to structure fires, including complex structures such as tunnels, high rise buildings, major transport infrastructure, major hazard facilities and energy infrastructure
- Road crash rescue
- Urban search and rescue after building collapse, landslides, earthquakes or other disasters
- High rise incidents
- Marine response and swift water rescue
- Medical first response
- Support for the development of standards, legislation and regulatory arrangement for effective risk management
- Community education, warnings and building community resilience.



17,938

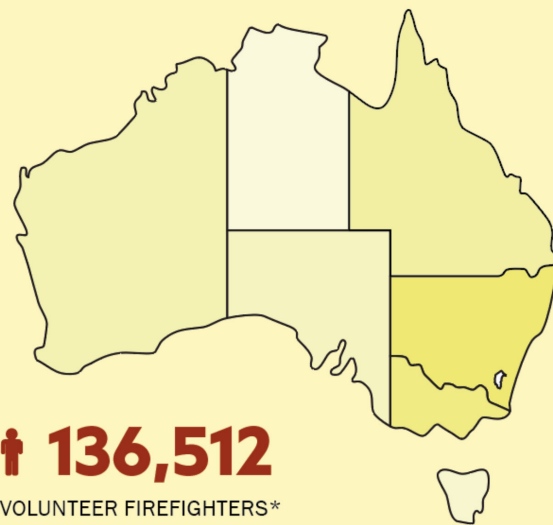
CAREER FIREFIGHTERS* ACROSS AUSTRALIA

5,998

CAREER SUPPORT EMPLOYEES* ACROSS AUSTRALIA

ACT	431	QLD	2,934	VIC	6,184
	141		926		2,211
NSW	5,702	SA	942	WA	1,159
	1,786		101		614
NT	239	TAS	347		
	25		194		

CAREER FIREFIGHTERS* AND SUPPORT WORKERS* AND VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS* AND SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS* 2023-2024



136,512

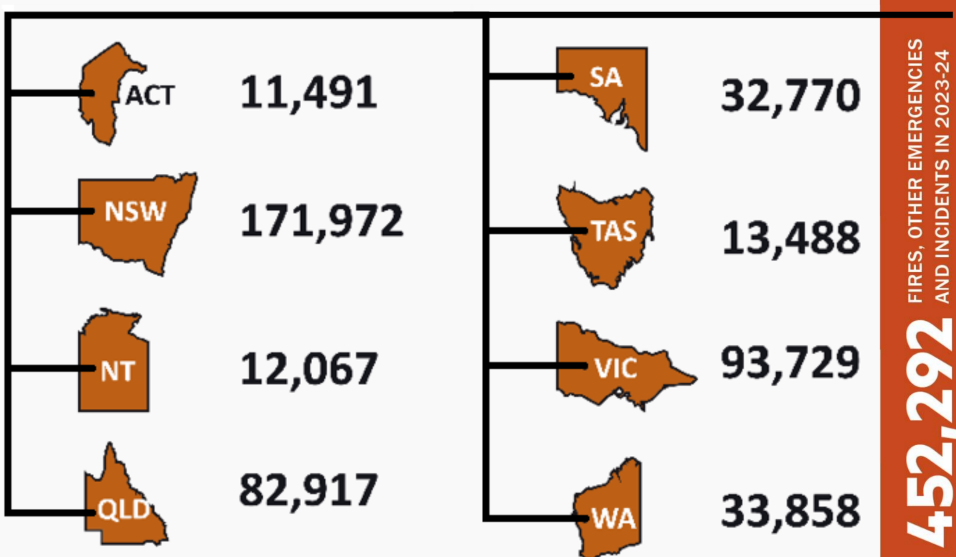
VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS* ACROSS AUSTRALIA

52,529

SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS* ACROSS AUSTRALIA

ACT	1,024	QLD	10,971	VIC	28,906
	-		16,411		23,043
NSW	67,569	SA	11,144	WA	12,486
	8,035		1,977		2,197
NT	275	TAS	3,777		
	-		866		

Figure 3.2: Dashboard overview of key Firefighting data. Please note – source list for data appears in Appendix B. *Full-time equivalent



452,292

FIRES, OTHER EMERGENCIES AND INCIDENTS IN 2023-24

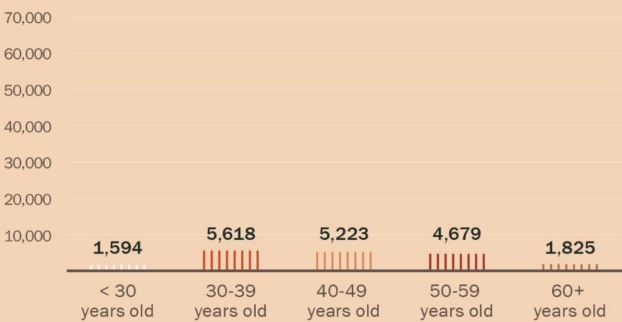
DEMAND

Productivity Commission data indicates that Fire organisations responded to a total of 452,292 fires, other emergencies and incidents across Australia in 2023-24 (Figure 3.3), which reflects a national increase of 10 per cent in the last 12 months.⁷⁶

ALL CHARTS BELOW: FIREFIGHTING ORGANISATION DEMOGRAPHIC (HEADCOUNT)

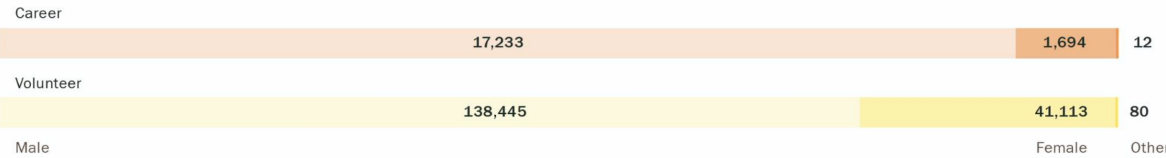
WORKFORCE - CAREER

Nationwide, there is a full-time equivalent (FTE) of 17,938 career firefighters with an additional 5,998 career support employees, of which female and gender diverse employees represent 9.8 per cent (Figure 3.3).⁷⁷ The highest proportion of career firefighters are in the 30–39-year-old age bracket, followed closely by the 40–49-year-old age bracket.⁷⁸



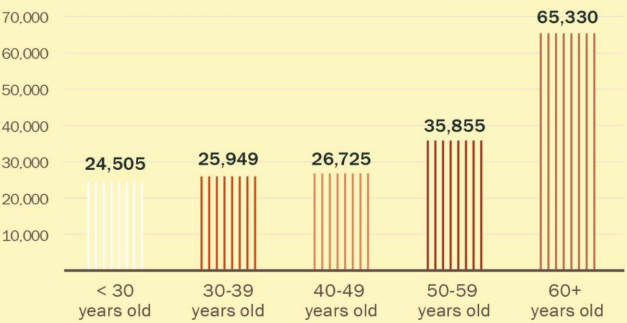
CAREER FIREFIGHTER AND SUPPORT EMPLOYEE AGE RANGE 2025

9% OF CAREER EMPLOYEES ARE WOMEN OR GENDER DIVERSE



23% OF VOLUNTEERS ARE WOMEN OR GENDER DIVERSE

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER AND SUPPORT EMPLOYEE AGE RANGE 2025



WORKFORCE - VOLUNTEER

Nationwide, there is an FTE of 136,512 volunteer firefighters with an additional 52,529 support volunteers, of which female and gender diverse employees represent 22.9 per cent of all volunteers combined (Figure 3.3).⁷⁹ The highest proportion of volunteers within firefighting organisations are in the 60+ year-old age bracket.⁸⁰

Figure 3.3: Dashboard overview of key Firefighting data. Please note – source list for data appears in Appendix B. *Full-time equivalent

⁷⁶ Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.6](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.
⁷⁷ Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.
⁷⁸ Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.
⁷⁹ Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.
⁸⁰ Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

State/Territory
Emergency Services

State/Territory Emergency Services are volunteer-based organisations, providing emergency assistance to minimise the impact of emergencies and strengthen the community’s capacity to plan, respond and recover, when emergencies occur. Their scope varies across the country but largely focuses on some of Australia’s most costly natural disasters, including floods, storms, tsunami, earthquakes and landslides.

State/Territory Emergency Services organisations play a pivotal role in Australia’s Emergency Management Framework. Operating at the State/Territory level, most organisations within Emergency Services are referred to as the State Emergency Service (SES). These organisations are primarily comprised of dedicated volunteers that are supported by a smaller contingent of paid employees. The workforce is organised into ‘units’ that are responsible for a specific geographic area. SES response efforts are coordinated with other emergency response and emergency management organisations through ongoing planning and preparedness projects.

DUTIES AND ROLE SCOPE

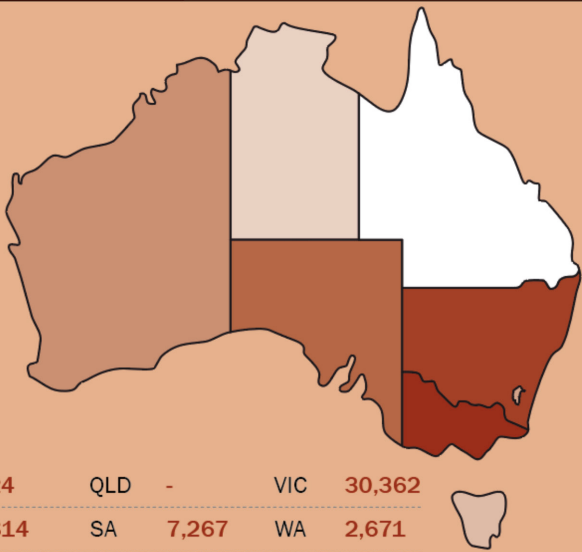
The role of the SES is to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergency incidents and natural disasters. The response duties of the SES are designated in each State/Territory Emergency Management Framework and relevant State/Territory legislation. SES organisations may have a role in a range of emergency management activities across the PPRR cycle including:

- Flood and swift water rescue
- Storm response
- Tsunami, earthquake and landslide response
- Search and rescue
- Incident management
- Interagency support
- Hazard planning
- Road Air Industrial (RAIR) vehicle extrication
- Community warnings and education
- Operational support for fire response

DEMAND

Productivity Commission data indicates a total of 73,025 incidents were responded to by SES across Australia in 2023-24 (Figure 3.4).⁸¹ This reflects a 36 per cent decrease in Emergency Service incident callouts the last 12 months, indicating there is lower natural disasters than usually recorded.

73,025 EMERGENCY INCIDENTS^
AUSTRALIA-WIDE IN 2023-24

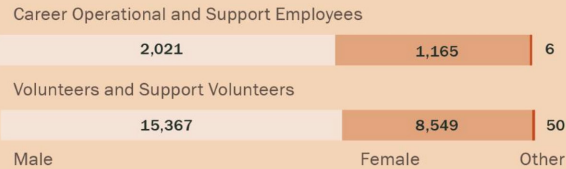


ACT	1,524	QLD	-	VIC	30,362
NSW	29,814	SA	7,267	WA	2,671
NT	189	TAS	1,198		

QLD - NOT REPORTED

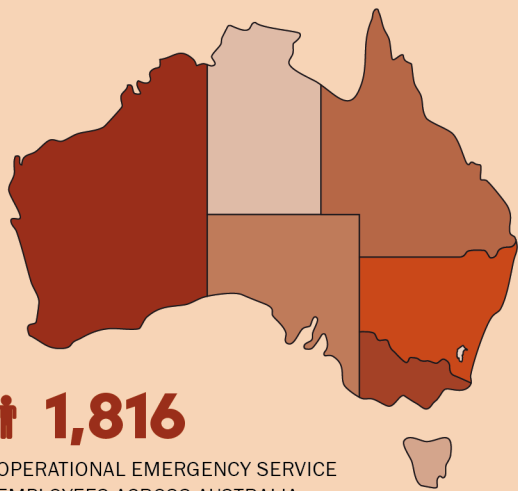
GENDER SHARE IN EMERGENCY SERVICES 2025

36.7% OF CAREER EMPLOYEES ARE WOMEN OR GENDER DIVERSE



35.9% OF VOLUNTEERS ARE WOMEN OR GENDER DIVERSE

Figure 3.4: Dashboard overview of key Emergency Services data. Please note – source list for data appears in Appendix B. All workforce data are reported as full-time equivalent and individual data points may not equal the total sum due to rounding and/or unpublished data. ^Australia-wide incidents may be underreported due to omission of Queensland data



1,816 OPERATIONAL EMERGENCY SERVICE
EMPLOYEES ACROSS AUSTRALIA

1,266 EMERGENCY SERVICE SUPPORT
EMPLOYEES ACROSS AUSTRALIA

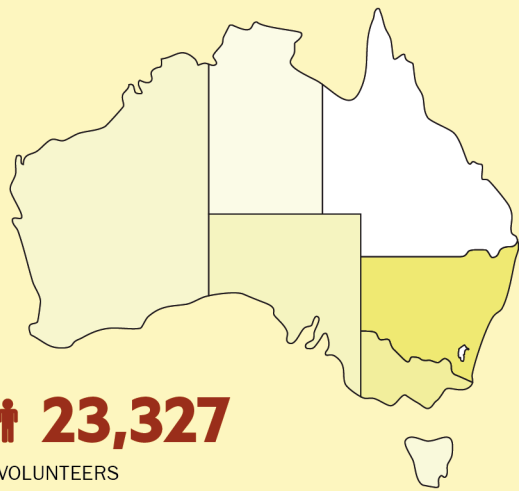
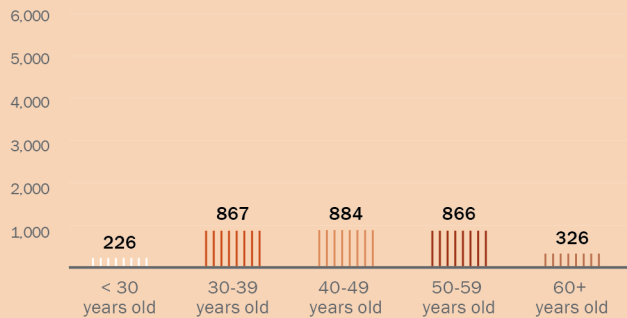
ACT	10	QLD	100	VIC	123
	-		75		155
NSW	321	SA	76	WA	1,159
	370		7		614
NT	18	TAS	10		
	5		40		

OPERATIONAL AND SUPPORT EMERGENCY SERVICE
EMPLOYEES 2023-2024

WORKFORCE - CAREER

Nationwide, the full time equivalent (FTE) of career operational emergency service employees was 1,816 with an additional 1,266 career emergency service support employees (FTE) in 2023-24, of which female and gender diverse employees represent 36.7 per cent (Figure 3.5).⁸² The highest proportion of career emergency service employees are in the 40–49-year-old age bracket.⁸³

OPERATIONAL AND SUPPORT EMERGENCY
SERVICE EMPLOYEE AGE RANGE 2025



23,327 VOLUNTEERS

1,030 SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS

ACT	356	QLD	N/A	VIC	3,486
	-		N/A		930
NSW	10,645	SA	1,605	WA	1,273
	-		-		100
NT	255	TAS	712		
	-		-		

EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORT
VOLUNTEERS 2023-2024

WORKFORCE - VOLUNTEER

Nationwide, the FTE of emergency service volunteers was 23,327 with an additional 1,030 emergency service support volunteers, of which female and gender diverse employees represent 35.8 per cent of all volunteers combined (Figure 3.5).⁸⁴ The highest proportion of volunteers within Emergency Services organisations are in the 60+ year-old age bracket.⁸⁵

EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEER AND SUPPORT
VOLUNTEER AGE RANGE 2025

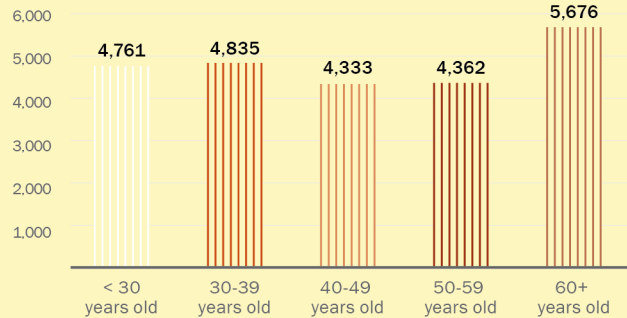


Figure 3.5: Dashboard overview of key Emergency Services data. Please note – source list for data appears in Appendix B. All workforce data are reported as full-time equivalent and individual data points may not equal the total sum due to rounding and/or unpublished data.

⁸² Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.5](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.
⁸³ Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.5](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.
⁸⁴ Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.5](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.
⁸⁵ Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.5](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

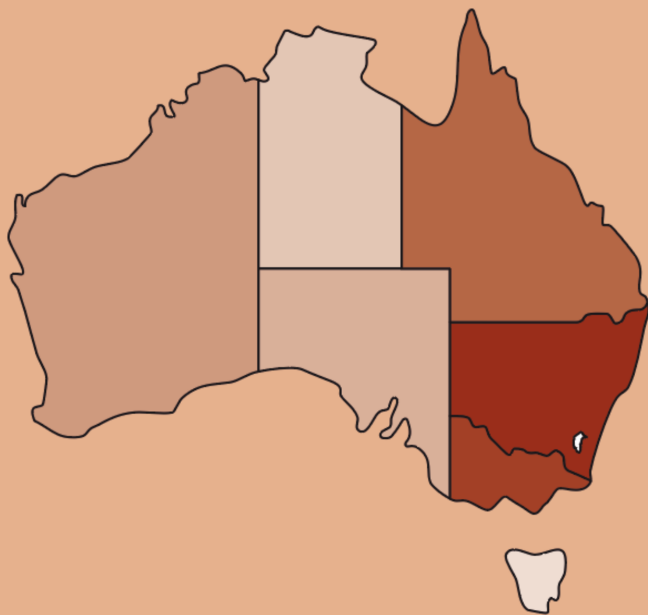
Surf Life Saving

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) is the peak authority for coastal water safety, drowning prevention and rescue operations nationally.⁸⁶ With 198,916 volunteer members and 315 affiliated clubs nationwide, SLSA is the largest volunteer organisation in Australia and the largest volunteer lifesaving organisation in the world (Figure 3.7).⁸⁷ SLSA maintains a significant presence by actively patrolling beaches and responding to

water-related emergencies. The organisation’s primary focus is on drowning prevention through beach patrols, education programs and public awareness initiatives.

SLSA’s commitment extends beyond immediate rescue efforts to include comprehensive training for members, ranging from basic surf awareness to advanced lifesaving skills.

ACT	N/A	QLD	787,366	VIC	455,937
NSW	1,114,642	SA	11,923	WA	104,461
NT	6,393	TAS	1,291		



PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS AUSTRALIA-WIDE IN 2023-2024

DUTIES AND ROLE SCOPE

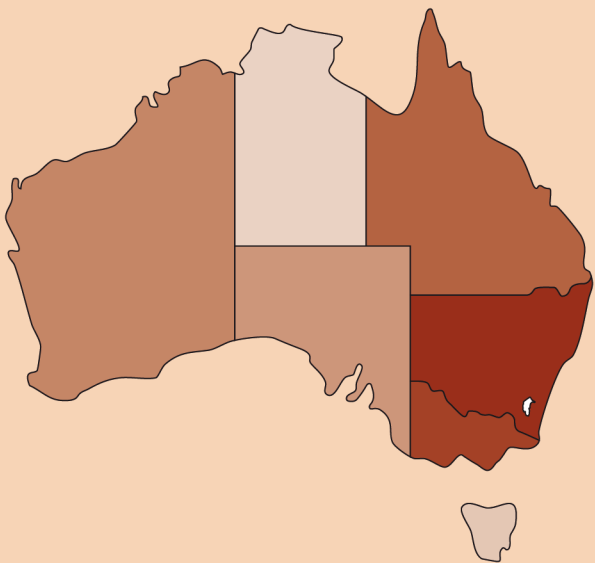
SLSA provides many services, including 24/7 emergency response groups; helicopter, jet boat and other watercraft rescue; surveillance systems; radio control and coordination centres; and volunteer lifesaving. SLSA also operates the Australian Lifeguard Service, the largest career lifeguard service in Australia, and provides services to local governments and coastal land managers.

A primary function of SLSA beyond rescue is preventative action through the development of

water safety for all age demographics through programs such as Little Nippers, and Silver Salties which promotes community engagement and water safety for senior community members.

DEMAND

Surf Life Saving Australia reported 8,857 rescues, 49,331 first-aid treatments and approximately 2.5 million preventative actions accumulating to over 1.4 million volunteer patrol hours across Australia in 2023-2024 (Figure 3.7).⁸⁸



198,916

TOTAL SURF LIFE SAVING MEMBERS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

45,236

PATROLLING SURF LIFE SAVERS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

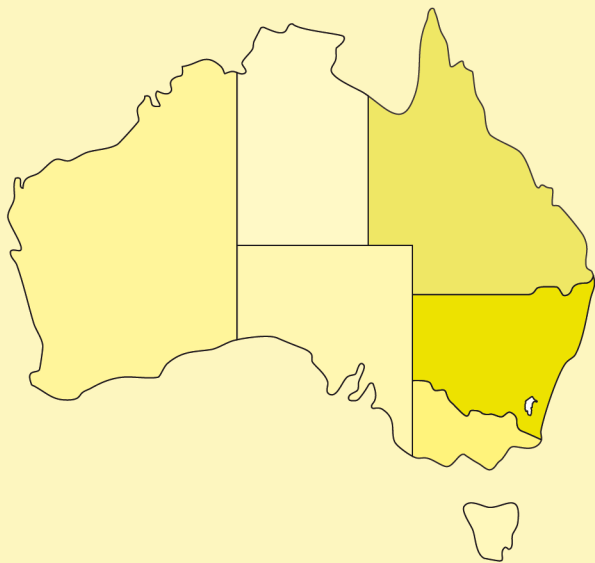
ACT	N/A	QLD	36,911	VIC	44,672
	N/A		9,072		6,630
NSW	79,137	SA	9,748	WA	24,274
	20,878		2,641		5,128
NT	1,018	TAS	3,156		
	95		792		

TOTAL AND PATROLLING SURF LIFE SAVERS AUSTRALIA-WIDE 2025



Surf Life Saving Australia is the

largest
volunteer lifesaving agency in the
world



315

SURF LIFE SAVING CLUBS

ACT	N/A	QLD	58	VIC	57
NSW	129	SA	22	WA	31
NT	3	TAS	15		

SURF LIFE SAVING CLUBS AUSTRALIA-WIDE 2025

2.5 mil PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS 2023-24

8,857 RESCUES 2023-24

49,331 FIRST AID TREATMENTS PROVIDED 2023-24

1.4 mil VOLUNTEER HOURS 2023-24

Figure 3.6: Dashboard overview of key Surf Life Saving data. Please note – source list for data appears in Appendix B. *Full-time equivalent

Figure 3.7: Dashboard overview of key Surf Life Saving data. Please note – source list for data appears in Appendix B. *Full-time equivalent

⁸⁶ Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2023/2024 Annual Report, SLSA, 2024.

⁸⁷ SLSA, 2023/2024 Annual Report, SLSA, 2024.

⁸⁸ SLSA, 2023/2024 Annual Report, SLSA, 2024.

Public Safety Training Package

The PUA Public Safety Training Package supports training for several emergency organisations.⁸⁹ Similarly to all training packages, there are ongoing discrepancies that lead to differences in the data reported. As an example, many volunteers complete single units of competency rather than full qualifications, impacting how the data is accurately represented.

In 2023, there were a total of 17,815 enrolments and 7,015 completions across the entire PUA Public Safety Training Package, with an increase of 6,150 enrolments from 2022 to 2023 (Figure 3.8).⁹⁰ Stakeholder consultation revealed that the large increase in enrolments and completions in 2023 was largely due to a lag effect from COVID-19, as public safety employees and volunteers were unable to complete training due to increases in work demands and reduced access to training opportunities in 2020 and 2021.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC

The most recent learning data demonstrates that male learners made up the greatest proportion of enrolments and completions in 2023 (Figures 3.9 and 3.10). Female and gender diverse learner enrolments and completions increased in 2023, however, further insights into the drivers for comparatively low engagement for these cohorts are required.

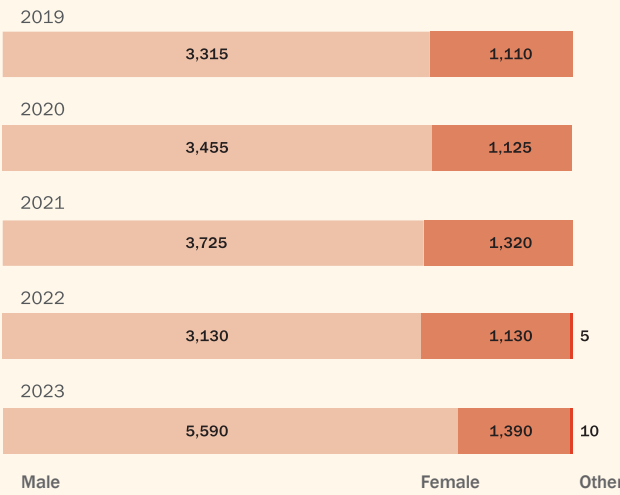


Figure 3.9: Total PUA Public Safety Training Package enrolments by gender (excluding 115 unknown participants)⁹²

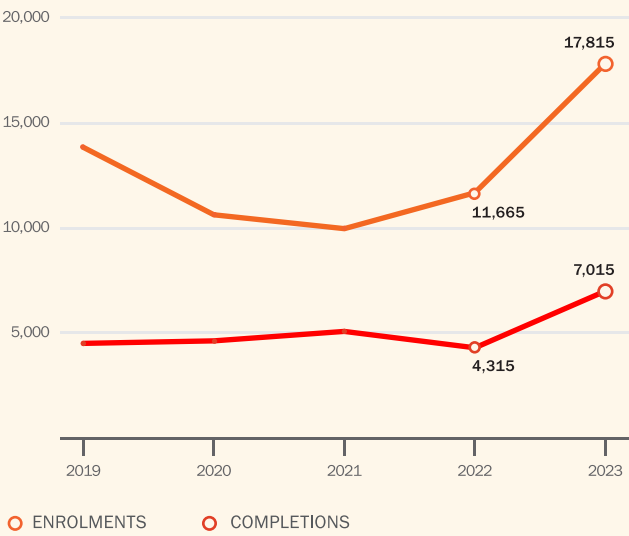


Figure 3.8: Total yearly program enrolments and completions within the PUA Public Safety Training Package from 2019 to 2023⁹¹

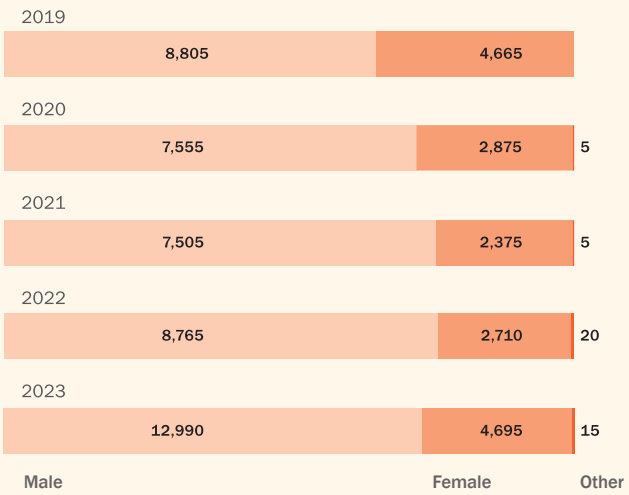


Figure 3.10: Total PUA Public Safety Training Package completions by gender (excluding 25 unknown participants)⁹³

2025 Workforce

Insights

In the development of the 2025 Public Safety Workforce Insights Report, Public Skills Australia undertook extensive research and industry consultation to generate insights on the workforce challenges currently impacting the Public Safety industry-sector.

The following insights highlight the current and most significant challenges within the Public Safety workforce in 2025.

- Volunteer Workforce
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Technology

⁸⁹ This includes, but is not limited to fire, SES, biosecurity, land managers (for prescribed burning and planning) and Australian workplaces where emergency response training is conducted.

⁹⁰ National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), [Total VET students and courses 2023: DataBuilder](#), [data set], NCVER, 2023, accessed 17 February 2025.

⁹¹ NCVER, [Total VET students and courses 2023: DataBuilder](#), [data set], NCVER, 2023, accessed 17 February 2025.

⁹² NCVER, [Total VET students and courses 2023: DataBuilder](#), [data set], NCVER, 2023, accessed 17 February 2025.

⁹³ NCVER, [Total VET students and courses 2023: DataBuilder](#), [data set], NCVER, 2023, accessed 17 February 2025.

Volunteer Workforce

The 2020 Royal Commission into Natural Disaster Arrangements acknowledged the role of volunteers in natural disasters as well as the disparity between career versus volunteer membership numbers.⁹⁴ Fire and Emergency Services volunteer membership makes up to 90 to 98 per cent of membership (depending on the organisation).⁹⁵

It would be unsustainable for Fire and Emergency Services organisations to pay volunteers for their contributed hours. For example, Surf Life Saving Australia reported 1.46 million hours of volunteer patrol work in 2024.⁹⁶ If those volunteer hours were paid, it could cost upwards of \$70 million.⁹⁷ However, stakeholder consultation indicated that volunteers are not driven by financial compensation, but rather active engagement in their organisations and making contributions to their communities.

There are approximately 400,000 volunteers within the Fire and Emergency Services workforce across Australia.⁹⁸ Whilst there has been a 10 per cent decrease in the volunteer workforce since 2018, Australia has seen increasing intensity, duration and variation of climate disasters, which have been identified as a contributing factor to volunteer retention. This Report notes that there are data limitations affecting the ability to differentiate between volunteer recruitment and retention numbers, making it difficult to

grasp an accurate and detailed picture of the volunteer workforce. As such, stakeholders consulted noted that it is often common for the volunteer workforce to be viewed, mapped and planned in a similar manner as the career workforce, noting that the wider-industry sector still debates this analysis.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Representatives noted that planning for a volunteer workforce the same way as career workforces does not account for the core differences between the two workforces.

Recruitment

Unlike paid employment recruitment, volunteer recruitment relies on organisational values and responsibilities to motivate a person to participate in potentially dangerous work. Career Fire organisations are not experiencing recruitment challenges,⁹⁹ and largely stakeholders agree that volunteer retention is a more pressing challenge than retention.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Industry representatives identified that whilst volunteer recruitment can be a fluctuating issue amongst organisations, funding can be secured to enhance recruitment when necessary

Stakeholders observed that volunteer organisations typically had several engagement plans to attract new recruits, but few retention strategies are in place, as it easier to recruit new volunteers than to keep the ones they already have.

DEMOGRAPHIC RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES:

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The most recent data from the Productivity Commission demonstrates that volunteers under 30 made up the lowest proportion Fire and Emergency Service volunteers in 2024 at 14.4 per cent (Figure 3.11 below, excluding SLSA).¹⁰⁰ When compared to other cohorts, the under 30 membership, the 30–39 year-old membership (at 15.2 per cent) and 40–49 year old membership (at 15.3 per cent) are close in number.¹⁰¹ That data alone does not reflect youth disengagement from volunteerism, but perhaps the larger cohort of older membership overrepresents operational capability. Further engagement across industry-sector organisations is required to understand youth drivers for recruitment into a volunteer organisation.

≈ 400,000

volunteers within Fire and Emergency Services as of 2024.

volunteer membership makes up to

90–98%

of membership as of 2020.

climate disasters

have been identified as a contributing factor to volunteer burnout

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE BROKEN DOWN BY AGE

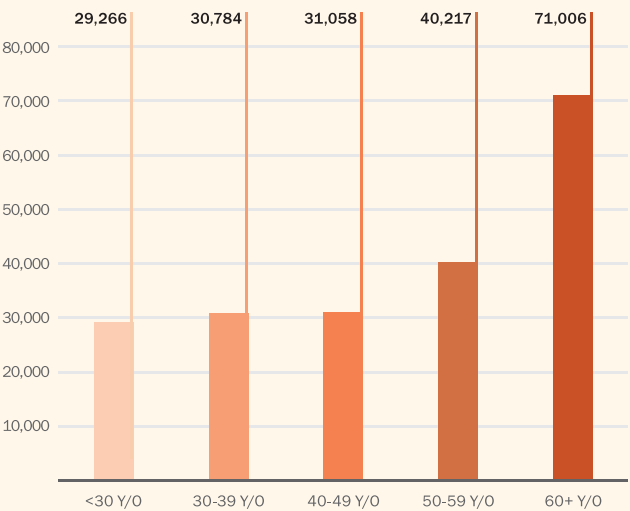


Figure 3.11: Australian 2023/24 Fire and Emergency Service volunteer workforce broken down by age (excluding SLSA)¹⁰²

≈ 15%

the 30–39 year-old membership and 40–49 year old membership are close in number

⁹⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, [Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangement Report](#), Commonwealth of Australia, 2020, accessed 7 February 2025.

⁹⁵ Commonwealth of Australia, [Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangement Report](#), Commonwealth of Australia, 2020, accessed 7 February 2025.

⁹⁶ Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2023/2024 Annual Report, SLSA, 2024.

⁹⁷ The Centre for Volunteering, [Cost of Volunteering calculator](#), The Centre for Volunteering, n.d., accessed 23 January 2025.

⁹⁸ Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025; SLSA, 2023/2024 Annual Report, SLSA, 2024.

⁹⁹ Public Skills Australia, Fire and Emergency Services Workforce Plan, Public Skills Australia, 2024.

¹⁰⁰ Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4 and Table 9A.5](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

¹⁰¹ Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4 and Table 9A.5](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

¹⁰² Productivity Commission, [Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4 and Table 9A.5](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

DEMOGRAPHIC RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES: FEMALE AND GENDER DIVERSE PARTICIPATION

Female and gender diverse volunteers account for 32 per cent of the volunteer Fire and Emergency Services workforce (Figure 3.12). Surf Life Saving volunteer organisations come closest to gender parity with 47 per cent of volunteers being female or gender diverse.¹⁰³ For Fire volunteers this proportion is 22 per cent, and for emergency services this proportion is 36 per cent.¹⁰⁴

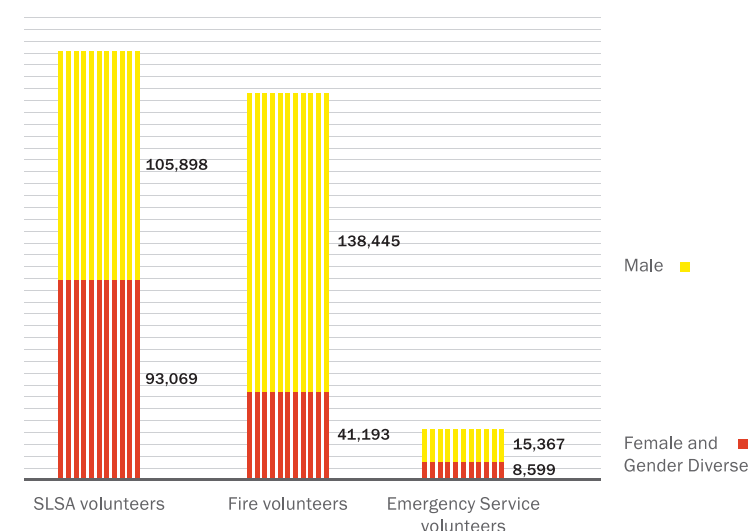


Figure 3.12: Australian 2023/24 Fire and Emergency Service volunteer workforce broken down by gender¹⁰⁵

Surf Life Saving volunteer organisations come closest to

gender parity

32%

of the Fire volunteer workforce are female or gender diverse

Retention

The retention of the volunteer workforce remains the industry-sector's largest challenge. As identified in the *2024 Fire and Emergency Services Workforce Plan* the compounding effects of climate change and role expectation is contributing to the increase in volunteer attrition. These climate change impacts are likely to continue, therefore organisations will need to focus on workforce retention strategies. Further, it was noted by stakeholders that organisational culture also has an impact on workforce retention.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Stakeholder representatives stated that whilst community volunteering can foster strong connections, it may also lead to challenges such as community tensions, perceptions of nepotism, or a reputation shaped by local perceptions of its members.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Organisational leadership and interpersonal skills play a crucial role in team engagement, morale and overall workplace culture. Stakeholders recognised both the value of and the gap in training people skills for leadership. Noting the

training impost on volunteers,¹⁰⁶ any volunteer leadership training course needs to be contextually relevant to the sector to ensure volunteer buy-in.

Currently, the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) are contracted by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to coordinate the delivery of a nationwide Volunteer Leadership training course that focuses on the development of people skills in operational contexts.¹⁰⁷ Anecdotal feedback from stakeholders indicates that the course is highly valued as it offers face-to-face skills tailored to an emergency environment, while also providing local volunteer networking opportunities as the course is delivered in each jurisdiction. Stakeholders also noted that there are challenges within this course, including but not limited to the course not being accredited as it is operated by AIDR and the Red Cross. Acknowledging the value and gap in this space, Public Skills Australia is proposing to assess leadership training that currently exists in VET Training Packages, and if required, develop training products to support volunteer leadership training.

retention of the volunteer workforce remains the industry-sector's

largest challenge

organisational leadership

plays a crucial role in overall workplace culture

¹⁰³ Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events - Table 9A.4 and Table 9A.5*, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

¹⁰⁴ Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events - Table 9A.4 and Table 9A.5*, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

¹⁰⁵ Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events - Table 9A.4 and Table 9A.5*, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025. Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2023/2024 Annual Report, SLSA, 2024.

¹⁰⁶ Public Skills Australia, *Fire and Emergency Services Workforce Plan*, Public Skills Australia, 2024.

¹⁰⁷ Australian Institute of Disaster Relief, *Volunteer Leadership Program*, Australian Institute of Disaster Relief, 2025, accessed 28 April 2025.

The expectations for volunteering in Fire and Emergency Services organisations may not have adapted to align with the realities of a younger generations, who may be juggling multiple jobs and/or pursuing an education.¹⁰⁸ A perceived decline in youth volunteering could indicate that over generations, how a young volunteer manages their personal time has changed, or that the organisation (or experience) no longer aligns with the expectations of a younger demographic.

LATERAL TRANSFER RECRUITMENT

During consultation, stakeholders acknowledged that an ongoing challenge impacting retention data is lateral transfers that enable a volunteer to move from one location to another in the same organisation. This challenge is often complicated by administrative, legal or system gaps. For volunteer organisations like SLSA, who is the peak body of a non-legislated emergency service organisation, there is the flexibility to assist the States/Territories with the design of processes that enable the lateral transfer. Whereas for organisations that are defined by legislation, there are often more regulatory requirements impacting administrative processes.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Industry representatives acknowledged that traditional volunteering no longer suits young people, and this is changing the way young people volunteer. Young people are instead finding informal and sporadic ways of volunteering.

Representatives noted internal organisational survey results indicated that their young volunteers do not feel supported, engaged with on decision making or respected in their brigade/unit.

With many volunteers nearing retirement and youth volunteer retention challenges, the industry-sector faces imminent skill and experience gaps.

**traditional
volunteering**

no longer suits young people

**younger
generations**

may be juggling multiple jobs
and/or pursuing an education

an ongoing challenge
impacting retention is

**lateral
transfers**

Technology

In a career with increased exposure to carcinogens, potentially traumatic incidents and natural disasters, all avenues to decrease risk must be explored. Balancing what is essential and optional when it comes to worker and community safety is an ongoing challenge, especially within financial constraints where equipment needs upkeep or replacement to remain functional.¹⁰⁹

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

Technological advancements within Fire and Emergency Services have enhanced the safety and capability of emergency service employees and help to ensure community safety. Examples of this include the use of drones in water rescue,¹¹⁰ or use of satellites as an early warning system for fire hotspots.¹¹¹ However, the use of technology always comes with a financial impost that must be balanced against the need, perceived value, staffing and upskilling to design, implement, utilise and maintain the technology. New technologies that require human design or maintenance raises an additional challenge of accessing employees with those skills in a highly competitive digital job market.

Increasingly, over the last 30 years in Australia the advancement of technologies has come with potential adverse risks due to the complexity and requirement for formal instruction or safety information. For the most part, Fire and Emergency Services organisations provide training qualifications for their employees to fulfil a training need and mitigate a challenge. As technology and the adverse consequences expand, community expectation

also increases for effective training to combat those dangers (for example lithium battery combustion).

COMPLEX URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Additionally, complex urban infrastructure presents diverse challenges for firefighters as the technology and policy implications for navigating these incidents is limited by a gap in accredited training. With national governments backing multi-dwelling apartment complexes as a way to combat the national housing shortage,¹¹² first responder training should be considered a priority to meet the public safety need in this space.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Industry representatives identified that the increasingly complex urban infrastructure environments (such as high-rise buildings) present challenges to the safety of both the firefighter and the community.

technological advancements have

**enhanced
safety &
capability**

**financial
impost**

must be balanced
against the
[technological] need

**complex
infrastructure**

presents challenges to the safety
of both the firefighter and the
community.

¹⁰⁹ B Priess and C Jaeger, 'Mechanical problems plague Victoria's ageing fire truck fleet', The Age, 14 January 2025, accessed 19 February 2025.

¹¹⁰ Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 'Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Drone program', SLSA, 2018, accessed 19 February 2025.

¹¹¹ Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), 'Bushfire tracking with Sentinel Hotspots', CSIRO website, 2021, accessed 19 February 2025.

¹¹² Department of Planning and Environment, 'Explanation of Intended Effect: Changes to create Low-and Mid-Rise Housing', Department of Planning and Environment, 2023, accessed 20 February 2025.

2024 Strategy Update

Public Skills Australia identified two workforce strategies for the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector in the *2024 Fire and Emergency Services Workforce Plan*. An update on the progress of the 2024 strategies is provided below.

Emergency Tree Operations

- ONGOING

Project Overview:
Support Fire and Emergency Services capability by researching or developing relevant training products.

Project Update
Interviews were conducted with working group members, and surveys were distributed to a broader group of stakeholders. The first phase of consultation identified two key findings.

Current actions include validating these findings and developing a draft report outlining the findings and corresponding recommendations.

The anticipated timing is 3 months.

- Key Stakeholders**
- ACSES
 - NSESVA
 - RTO's
 - SES
 - UFUA

Firefighting Appliance Pump Technician Training Products

- OPERATIONAL

Project Overview:
Support Fire and Emergency Services capability by researching or developing relevant training products.

Project Update
Extensive engagement was undertaken with stakeholders across the Fire and Emergency Services sector, including manufacturers, distributors, and industry supporters. Draft training products were developed and submitted to the relevant Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) for review.

Formal endorsement of this project has been granted by all Skills Ministers. This project has now been completed as of May 2025.

- Key Stakeholders**
- AFAC
 - Darley
 - Fire Protection Association of Australia (FPAA) & AUSMASA.
 - Fire agencies across Australia
 - STTA / SRO
 - Tafe NSW
 - UFUA

2025 Proposed Strategies

Public Skills Australia proposes the following strategies below to alleviate the identified workforce challenges.

- Volunteer Leadership Project
- Understanding the Youth Volunteer
- Complex Infrastructure Project
- Emerging Technologies Project

1

Volunteer Leadership Project

Challenge: Leadership Training in a Volunteer Context

Strategy: Enable volunteer leadership training that is fit for purpose in volunteer organisations, with a particular focus on non-operational leadership and human resource management.

Proposed Project Outline

JSC Function:

- Implementation, Promotion and Monitoring
- Training Product Development

Actions:

PHASE 1

Assess leadership training that currently exists in VET Training Packages and identify which of these are being used for volunteer leadership training in Fire and Emergency Services.

PHASE 2

Assess whether the relevant VET Training Packages are fit for purpose to deliver the outcome sought in volunteer leadership training (This is likely to include high-level consultation through mechanisms such as, but not limited to, round table discussions, focus groups, presentations to Chief Officers). Where relevant training package gaps are identified, develop training products to support volunteer leadership training. This project will support Qualification Reform by ensuring that duplication of existing training products does not occur.

PHASE 3

Promote the uptake and implementation of nationally accredited volunteer leadership training. Identify good practice through case studies and develop and promote implementation models for delivery of nationally accredited volunteer leadership training.

Key Stakeholders

- AFAC
- ACSES
- AIDR
- CAVFA
- DEWR
- ERTOA
- Human Ability
- NSESVA
- SLSA
- State/Territory volunteer peak bodies
- STTAs/SROs

Anticipated Timing:
12 months.

Impact: Prepare volunteers to undertake leadership roles within volunteer Fire and Emergency Services organisations. This will promote transferrable leadership skills that will benefit an individual's volunteer and career roles.

2

Understanding the Youth Volunteer

Challenge: Retaining youth volunteers

Strategy: Understanding the specific drivers for volunteer youth attraction, recruitment and retention in Fire and Emergency Services.

Proposed Project Outline

JSC Function:

- Workforce Planning

Actions:

PHASE 1

Undertake a literature review on youth volunteering in fire and emergency services context.

PHASE 2

Engage with the volunteer organisations to collect data on the drivers of youth attraction, recruitment and retention, which may include through survey collection, structured interviews and workshops.

Key Stakeholders

- AFAC
- ACSES
- CAVFA
- NSESVA
- State/Territory volunteer Peak body

Anticipated Timing:
6-12 months.

Impact: Delivery of an Insights Report that that will support Fire and Emergency services organisations to retain and engage with youth volunteers.

3

Complex Infrastructure Project

Challenge: Skills gap
Strategy: Support fire capability when engaging with fires in complex infrastructures.

Proposed Project Outline

- JSC Function:
- Workforce Planning
 - Training Product Development
 - Implementation, Promotion and Monitoring

Actions:

PHASE 1
Conduct research and undertake international benchmarking on emerging complex urban infrastructure that may impact training for firefighters (including but not limited to tunnel fires, high-rise and multi-purpose dwellings).

PHASE 2
Where the evidence base from Phase 1 has identified training impacts (and in consultation with stakeholders), identify and map additional skills required to current training packages to identify where further qualifications or units of competency should be developed. This will include engaging with training providers currently delivering training to respond to fires in complex infrastructure settings. This project will support Qualification Reform by ensuring that duplication of existing training products does not occur.

PHASE 3
If supported by research, develop qualifications or units of competency that allows fire services to respond to fires in complex infrastructure.

Key Stakeholders

- AFAC
- Building and Construction regulators.
- BuildSkills Australia
- DEWR
- ERTOA
- Other JSCs
- Safe Work Regulators
- State/Territory fire agencies
- STTAs/SROs
- UFUA

Impact: Upskilling of firefighters to respond effectively to fires in complex infrastructure, positively impacting safety of the community and firefighters.

Anticipated Timing: 12-18 months.

4

Emerging Technologies Project

Challenge: Skills gap
Strategy: Support Fire and Emergency Services to respond effectively and efficiently to the impacts of emerging technologies. This project will commence with a focus on the emergence of renewable technology sources including lithium-ion battery fires. Depending on industry need, further technologies may be identified that could lead to future projects.

Proposed Project Outline

- JSC Function:
- Implementation, Promotion and Monitoring
 - Training Product Development
 - Industry Stewardship

Actions:

PHASE 1
A strategic foresight approach will be applied to identify emerging technologies that is likely to impact Fire and Emergency Services. This will result in a research report that may also seek to prioritise which technologies should be planned for first from a training perspective, commencing with lithium-ion battery fires.

PHASE 2
Identify and map additional skills (where known and commencing with training to respond to lithium-ion battery fires) required to current training packages to identify where further qualifications or units of competency should be developed. This will include engaging with training providers currently delivering training to respond to fires in complex infrastructure settings. This project will support Qualification Reform by ensuring that duplication of existing training products does not occur.

PHASE 3
If supported by research and prioritised, develop qualifications or units of competency that allows fire services to respond to fires from emerging technologies.

Key Stakeholders

- ACSES
- AFAC
- DEWR
- ERTOA
- Other JSCs
- State/Territory fire agencies
- STTAs/SROs
- UFUA

Impact: Upskilling of firefighters and emergency personnel to respond effectively to fires resulting from emerging technologies, positively impacting safety of the community and firefighters.

Anticipated Timing: 12-18 months.

2025 Stakeholder Engagement

In the development of the 2025 Workforce Insights Reports, Public Skills Australia undertook extensive industry-sector consultation. The list of stakeholders engaged is found below. The approach adopted by Public Skills Australia towards the engagement of stakeholders, gathering and analysing their insights, and generating themes and challenges across the industry-sector, is summarised in the Methodology section of this report.

Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities' Council	The Centre for Volunteering
Australian Council for State Emergency Services	United Firefighters Union of Australia
Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience	Volunteering Australia
National State Emergency Service Volunteers Association Limited	Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria
State and Territory Training Authorities and Senior Responsible Officers ¹¹³	Volunteering Tasmania

Existing Strategies

- Existing Strategies in the Fire and Emergency Services Industry-sector
- Government Initiatives

70 ¹¹³ Public Skills Australia engaged with State/Territory Training Authority representatives from Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and Tasmania, via online drop-in sessions. In-person engagement was undertaken with State/Territory Training Authority representatives from Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Existing Strategies

AFAC Strategic Directions for Fire and Emergency Services

AFAC **2022 - 2026**

The Strategic Directions provide the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector with a shared vision and a joint commitment to enhanced community resilience. It informs, clarifies intent and identifies the actions required across AFAC agencies, engaging high-level officials and Government Ministers. The six key areas of focus for the sector point to the collective priorities identified by organisations across the country, which are supporting resilient communities through risk reduction, providing a trusted response, using credible and timely information and data, fostering a safe, capable and diverse workforce informed by knowledge innovation and research, and effective and transparent governance.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will use the Strategic Directions to strengthen future consultation and inform training product development in this space.

AFAC Strategic Plan 2023-2027

AFAC **2023 - 2027**

The AFAC Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027 highlights the need for a national capability to address two challenges: the changing climate and the evolving community expectations of Emergency Services capacity in response to crises. The report identifies specific workforce challenges, including an aging workforce, a need to improve diversity, and an increased demand for workplace flexibility. These challenges are addressed within the context of the increasing frequency, scale and severity of disasters that require an emergency response.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

The Strategic Plan will assist Public Skills Australia in understanding current workforce challenges in the context of national capability, and development of mitigating strategies.

Champions of Change Coalition - Fire and Emergency

Champions of Change Coalition - Fire and Emergency Group **2017 - ongoing**

The Champions of Change Coalition is an internationally recognised strategy to improve gender equality and the representation of women in the workforce and develop respectful and inclusive workplaces. The 2022 progress report identifies two priority areas to improve gender equality outcomes in this industry-sector:

- growing the talent pool, through recruitment, retention and promotion of women
- building better buy-in for gender equality by fostering respect, addressing sexual harassment, and developing workplace responses to domestic and family violence.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will use this strategy to consult closely with Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector to consider how workforce planning and training product development may support the continued focus on improving diverse and inclusive practices.

National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-2033

Volunteering Australia **2023 - 2033**

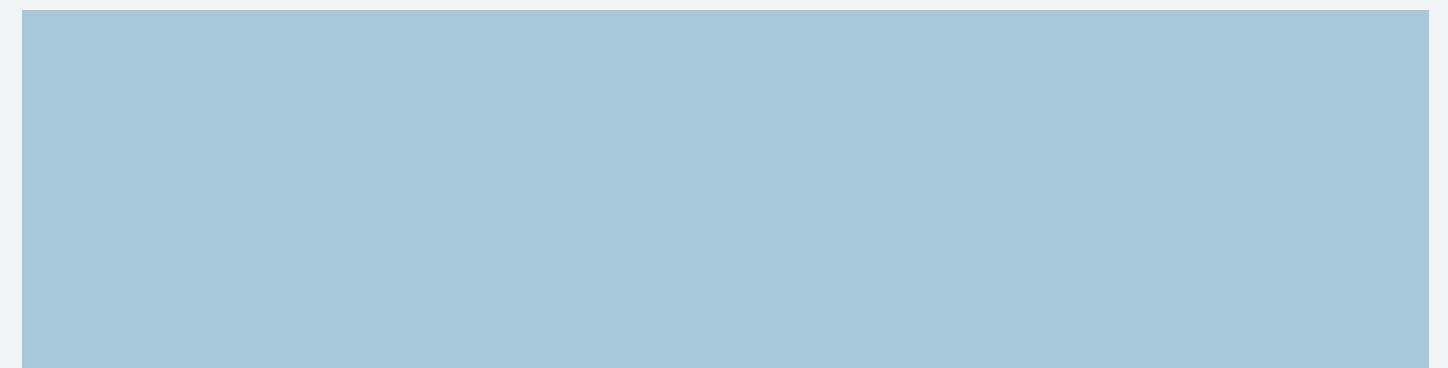
The National Strategy for Volunteering is a 10-year plan, setting a strategic framework for more sustainable volunteering. The plan includes a range of strategic objectives, focus areas and aims that seek to provide a stronger rationale for the value of volunteering.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will use the objectives and focus areas of this Strategy to inform work regarding the Workforce Planning components of volunteers. It will continue to seek ways to support the aims of the Strategy through the four key functions of JSCs where relevant.

Police

Workforce Insights Report



Industry-Sector

Overview

The Police workforce is comprised of State/Territory Police organisations, as well as the Australian Federal Police. Each jurisdiction also has an employee union/association. The 2023-24 full-time equivalent (FTE) of sworn Police Officers in each State/Territory, including the AFP, is detailed in Figure 4.1. Nationally, sworn Police Officer FTE steadily increased since 2015-16 up to 2020-21, but has since declined (Figure 4.1).¹¹⁴

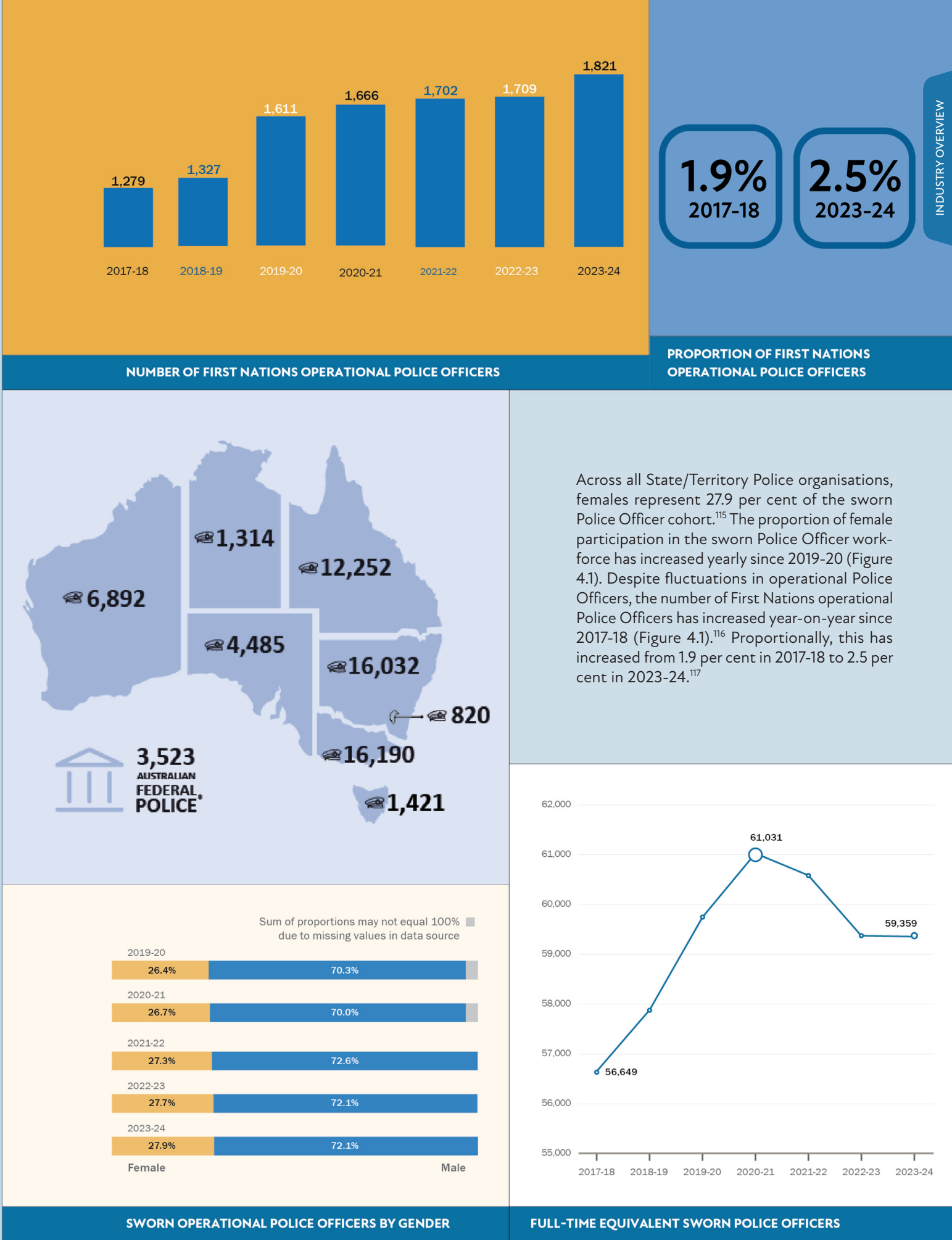


Figure 4.1: Dashboard overview of key Police data. Please note – source list for data appears in Appendix C. *Headcount

76 ¹¹⁴ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Police Services](#), Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 28 February 2025. This value is not inclusive of Australian Federal Police.

¹¹⁵ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Police Services](#), Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 27 March 2025. This value is not inclusive of Australian Federal Police.
¹¹⁶ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Police Services Table 6A.2](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 1 April 2025.
¹¹⁷ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Police Services Table 6A.2](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 1 April 2025.

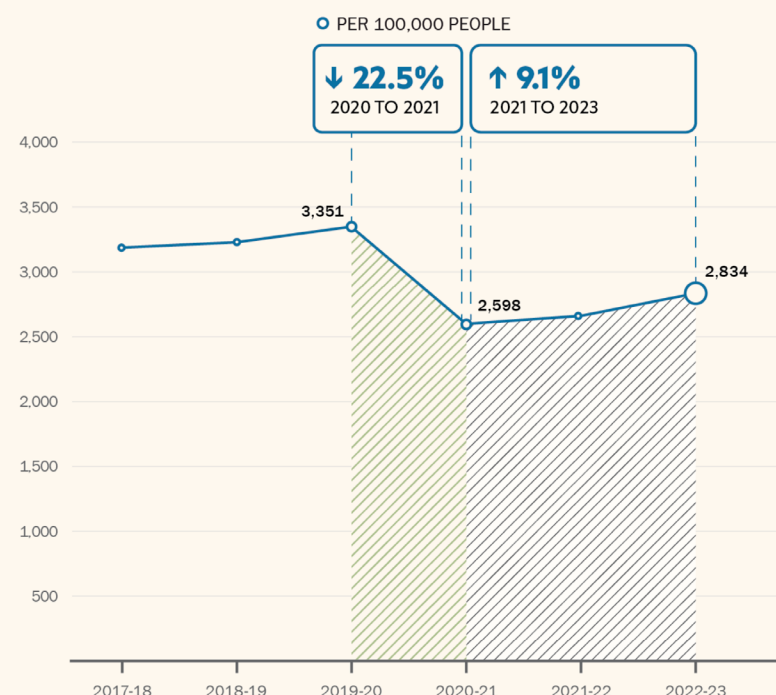


Policing is a dynamic profession, and as such, the workforce is constantly adapting to suit changing demands from the communities they serve. Changes to both population and police numbers directly impact the police-to-population ratio. Figure 4.2 presents the ratio of Police Officers respective to the relevant State/Territory population.¹¹⁸

Although the ratio doesn't provide regional context within each jurisdiction, it provides a general indication of the state or territory-wide demand for operational capacity. Since 2020-21, the ratio has increased for five of eight of the States/Territories and points towards a potential increase in demand for police services in these jurisdictions.¹¹⁹

To understand the demand placed on our police organisations more deeply, the rate of victims of recorded crimes provides valuable context. Between 2020-21 and 2022-23, there was a 9.1 per cent increase in the rate of victims of recorded crimes after a 22.5 percent decrease (largely due to reductions in property offences during the COVID period) (Figure 4.2).¹²⁰

RATE OF VICTIMS OF REPORTED CRIMES (PER 100,000 PEOPLE)



2025 Workforce Insights

In the development of the 2025 Police Workforce Insights Report, Public Skills Australia undertook extensive research and industry consultation to generate insights on the workforce challenges currently impacting the Police industry-sector.

The following insights highlight the current and most significant challenges within the Police workforce in 2025.

- **Occupational Shortages and Operational Capacity**
- **Professional Development and Upskilling**

Figure 4.2: Dashboard overview of key Police data. Please note – source list for data appears in Appendix C

¹¹⁸ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Police Services Table 6A.2](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 1 April 2025.

¹¹⁹ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Police Services Table 6A.2](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 3 April 2025.

¹²⁰ Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services – Police Services Table 6A.19, Table 6A.20 and Table 6A.21](#), [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 1 April 2025.

Occupational Shortages and Operational Capacity

National labour market analysis tools demonstrate labour and skills shortages at an industry-wide level. However, in an operational occupation like policing, the capacity of this workforce to deliver critical public safety services is determined by a range of other important factors. This section reflects upon the Jobs and Skills Australia Occupation Shortage List (OSL) and offers deeper analysis of operational capacity challenges faced by the Police industry-sector.

THE OCCUPATION SHORTAGE LIST

The JSA OSL provides an annual assessment of occupations experiencing shortages in the Australian labour market. The OSL does this by identifying occupations in shortage at the national and State/Territory levels, covering both regional and metropolitan areas.

OSL ratings are determined through a mixed-methods approach, utilising three separate stages. Broadly, these stages include:

- 1. a machine learning initial rating that receives inputs from a wide range of employment and vacancy data,
- 2. a validation stage that checks the ratings against additional qualitative and quantitative data, and

- 3. a final external input stage that incorporates feedback from the federal government, State and Territory governments, and Jobs and Skills Councils.¹²¹

According to the OSL, there are no occupational shortages for Police Officers in the metropolitan and remote/regional/rural settings (Figure 4.3).¹²² The methodology applied to the OSL has limitations in the police context due to reliance on JSA’s Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) as one of its key inputs. (footnote/ref 123 goes here) This does not account for police recruitment processes, and is not necessarily reflective of actual occupational shortages in the Police industry-sector.¹²³

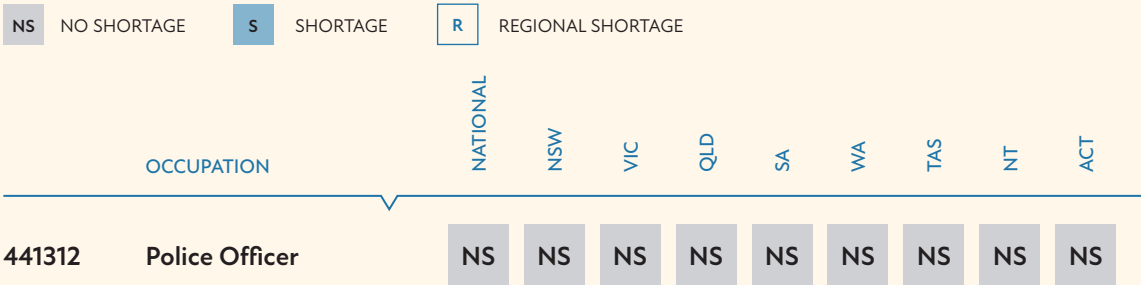
INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Police organisations and unions highlighted that they are experiencing shortages of Police Officers across all States/Territories. Additionally, stakeholders observed that national labour market datasets fail to capture the complexities of Police occupational shortages, overlooking factors such as government commitments, retention challenges, the impact of career progression, and the evolving demands of policing.

REGIONAL SHORTAGES

In most states/territories, Police Officers are deployed to priority locations upon the completion of recruit training. The identification of priority locations is based on an organisational assessment of which areas require an immediate increase in Police service delivery. Police union representatives have emphasised that current policy-based processes for Police deployment to regional, rural and remote locations are insufficient to mitigate shortages in these locations. Additionally, labour shortages in these isolated locations may reduce the ability for Police to respond safely to incidents.

Figure 4.3: JSA OSL rating of Police Officers



national labour market datasets
fail to capture complexities
of Police occupational shortages

current processes for Police deployment to regional, rural and remote locations are
insufficient to mitigate shortages

¹²¹ Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), *Occupation Shortage Analysis – Methodology Paper*, JSA, 2024, accessed 28 February 2025.
¹²² JSA, *Occupation Shortage List* | Jobs and Skills Australia, Jobs and Skills Australia, 2024, accessed 28 February 2025.
¹²³ The IVI is one of multiple inputs into the OSL and should not be interpreted as the sole determinant of occupational shortages.

Some police organisations have developed regional recruitment initiatives, including offering incentives for relocating to regional areas. For example, in July 2023, the New South Wales Police Force (NSWPF) implemented an incentive scheme to encourage Police Officers to work in regional stations. Under this scheme, Police Officers are also provided with housing.¹²⁴ Following this, in 2024 NSWPF launched the ‘Be a Cop in Your Hometown’ initiative, which has enabled recruits from regional, rural or remote areas to serve in or near their hometowns after graduating from the Academy. As of the end of February 2025, 47 officers applied to return to regional locations under the program.¹²⁵

RECRUITMENT PIPELINE

The Police recruitment process can often range from six to twelve months due to extensive background checks, medical and psychological assessments, aptitude testing, and interviews.^{126 127} This prolonged timeline can contribute to attrition during the application phase, as applicants may become discouraged, accept other job offers, or struggle with financial uncertainty while progressing through the pipeline.¹²⁸

To mitigate this, some jurisdictions are examining ways to expedite the recruitment pipeline for Police Officer applicants. Victoria Police has recently re-designed its recruitment process by developing criteria that exempt an applicant from sitting the Victoria Police entrance exam. These exemptions include current Victoria Public Service employees, paramedics and career Firefighters and former full-time Australian

Defence Force employees.¹²⁹ The Western Australia Police Force also exempts those with educational qualifications at or beyond a ‘C grade’ in Year 12 English from sitting the entrance exam,¹³⁰ only requiring examinations to be completed by approximately 20% of applicants.¹³¹

TRAINING DELIVERY

Training facility locations continue to grow across jurisdictions to support regional training delivery and recruitment. For example, in 2022, Tasmania Police established and continue to operate, an additional Academy in Launceston to encourage applicants from the northern and northwestern regions,¹³² while NSWPF opened the Dubbo Regional Education Training Centre in October 2024. Situating training facilities in regional locations removes the need for applicants to relocate and complements initiatives to address regional occupational shortages and increase operational capacity in these locations.

Several police organisations are also researching ways to modernise the classroom-based components of recruit training. Representatives have identified traditional teaching methods, such as instructor-led lectures, slide presentations, textbooks, and written assessments, as a potential factor contributing to recruit attrition, particularly among younger cohorts.

By exploring more engaging and adaptive training approaches (i.e., experiential learning), Police organisations aim to improve recruit engagement, enhance training

effectiveness, and accelerate their transition into operational roles, ultimately strengthening overall operational capacity. Representatives from Police organisations have flagged interest in considering the adoption of technological learning methods to better suit the needs of future generations of recruits by adapting already existing methods of training delivery.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

The rapid advancement of technology presents both challenges and opportunities for law enforcement. Stakeholders highlighted that there is an ongoing shift in the skills required to combat crime as essential policing skills now combine police expertise with technological proficiency.

MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS

Policing is a physically and mentally demanding occupation, with mental health impacts contributing to reduced operational capacity of Police officers.¹³³ To understand how mental health impacts the operational capacity of Police organisations across Australia, Safe Work Australia data on worker’s compensation claims is used.

Workers compensation claim data indicates that mental stress is the leading cause of Police workplace injuries in 2022-23.¹³⁴ Over the 15-year period from 2008 to 2023, there has been a consistent increase in total claims and the proportion of claims due to mental stress in the Police industry-sector.¹³⁵ In the most recent 2022-2023 reporting period, mental stress accounted for more than half (51 per cent) of all Police industry-sector worker’s compensation claims. Over the past 15 years, mental stress claims have more than doubled (Figure 4.5).

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Police industry stakeholders identified that workplace mental injury is a significant factor that impacts and diminishes operational capacity. Police union stakeholders observed that mental health injuries among Police Officers often lead to prolonged workplace absences and that ‘return to work’ programs need a greater focus on re-integrating the employee back into the workforce.

Figure 4.4: Total yearly WorkCover claims for Police Services (2008 to 2023)

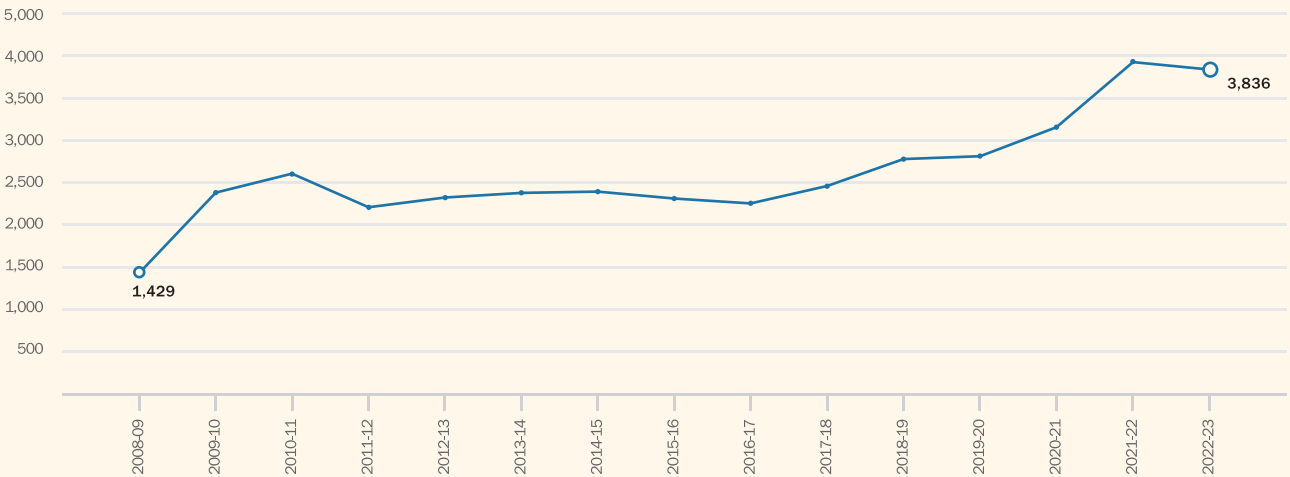
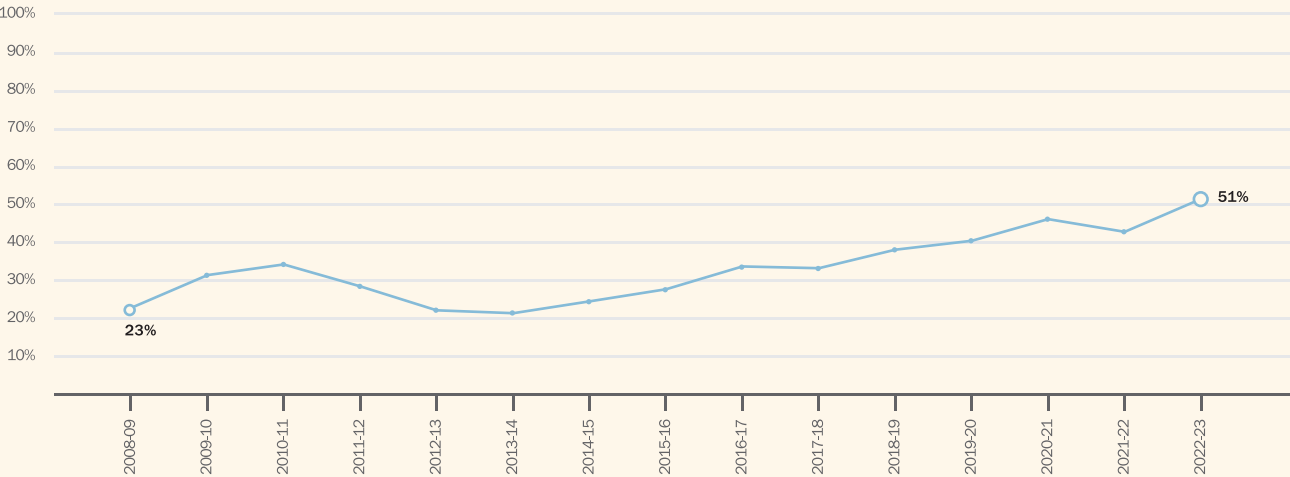


Figure 4.5: Proportion of yearly claims related to mental stress for Police Services (2008 to 2023)



¹²⁴ New South Wales Police Force, [Regional Incentives | NSW Police Recruitment](#), New South Wales Police Force, n.d., accessed 3 March 2025.

¹²⁵ New South Wales Government, [More police set to start work as recruitment initiatives take effect](#), New South Wales Government, 2025, accessed 3 March 2025.

¹²⁶ Queensland Police Service Recruiting, [Recruitment Process](#), Queensland Government, 2024, accessed 3 March 2025.

¹²⁷ Western Australia Police Force, [The Recruitment Process](#), Western Australia Police Force, n.d., accessed 27 February 2025.

¹²⁸ Human Resources Director Australia, [Slow hiring process drives away Australian workers: survey](#), Human Resources Director Australia website, 2024, accessed 4 April 2025.

¹²⁹ Victoria Police, [Recruitment process for police officers](#), Victoria Police, 2025, accessed 4 March 2025.

¹³⁰ Western Australia Police Force, [The Recruitment Process](#), Western Australia Police Force, n.d., accessed April 3, 2025.

¹³¹ Anecdotal evidence from stakeholder consultation.

¹³² Mirage News, [Tasmania Police launches Launceston-based recruit course](#), Mirage News website, accessed 19 March 2025.

¹³³ Victoria Police, [Mental Health Strategy and Wellbeing Action Plan 2017-2020](#), Victoria Police, accessed 4 April 2025.

¹³⁴ Safe Work Australia (SWA), [Serious claims \(count\) by select Industry class, Mechanism major group, and Financial year, 2008-09 to 2022-23p. \[unpublished dataset\]](#), 2025.

¹³⁵ Safe Work Australia (SWA), [Serious claims \(count\) by select Industry class, Mechanism major group, and Financial year, 2008-09 to 2022-23p. \[unpublished dataset\]](#), 2025.

Professional Development and Upskilling

The POL Police Training Package establishes the entry-level and specialist training required for Police recruits in jurisdictions that are RTOs. The completion of the training ensures that nationally, Police recruits are equipped with the same skills and training to begin their career journey within policing. This training is bolstered by the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency’s (ANZPAA) Education and Training Guidelines, which support police forces without an RTO to align their training to a national guide. Operational police training is ongoing throughout the workforce lifecycle to ensure that officers stay aligned with good practice and regularly refresh their skills.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

ANZPAA stakeholders advised of a previous piece of work they undertook for all police jurisdictions, developing a Skills and Capabilities Profile. This profile was mapped from the Units of Competency from the POL Police Training Package and the ANZPAA Education and Training Guidelines, to identify the skills and capabilities that Police officers have after undertaking certain training.

APPROACHES TO SKILLS MAPPING

To strengthen skills mapping, a profile such as this could be combined with workforce demographic data to enable Police organisations to effectively map skills and capabilities across ranks and occupations within policing. This would enable the identification of occupational skill gaps, enabling them to be proactively addressed through targeted and focused workforce interventions, such as internal mobility, promotion or upskilling.¹³⁶ Another benefit may also be to identify the regions where particular skills are in oversupply or short supply and allocate training resources more efficiently.¹³⁷ Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all training approach, jurisdictions can prioritise upskilling initiatives where they are most needed, ensuring cost-effectiveness and maximising training impact.

STRATEGIC TRAINING PACKAGE REVIEW

The annual ANZPAA Business Plan identifies priority Police qualifications for review and update. These updates reflect critical skilling and capability needs for the Police industry-sector and identify those that can be met through the POL Police Training Package. The ANZPAA review of qualifications is undertaken in consultation with Police organisations and is approved by the Police Commissioners within each State/Territory. In the upcoming financial year ANZPAA is focusing on qualifications including, but not limited to, leadership and prosecutorial related competencies. Public Skills Australia will continue to work in collaboration with the Police industry-sector to progress updates to training products as reflected in the ANZPAA Business Plan.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Police stakeholders raised concerns about the lack of consistency in skills profiling across organisations. Stakeholders consistently identified that Police Officers generally regarded professional development and upskilling opportunities to be reactive, often developed and implemented by police organisations to address an emerging risk.

nationally, Police recruits are equipped with the **same skills & training** to begin their career journey within policing.

training is ongoing throughout the workforce lifecycle to ensure that officers stay aligned with **good practice**

professional development and upskilling opportunities are often developed to **address emerging risk[s]**

84 ¹³⁶ Australian Public Service Commission, [APS Workforce Planning Guide](#). Australian Public Sector Commission, Australian Government, 2023.

¹³⁷ Australian Public Service Commission, [APS Workforce Planning Guide](#). Australian Public Sector Commission, Australian Government, 2023.

2024 Strategy

Update

Public Skills Australia identified one workforce strategy for the Police industry-sector in the *2024 Police Workforce Plan*. An update on the progress of the 2024 strategy is provided below.

Police Training Package Updates

- ONGOING

Project Overview:
Annually, updates to accredited and non-accredited training to support identified capability needs are agreed to by the Commissioners of each Police organisation. Public Skills Australia works in collaboration with the Police industry-sector to ensure updates to their practices and training guidelines are reflected within the POL Police Training Package.

Project Update
Public Skills Australia has worked closely with the Police industry to update the POL Police Training Package in alignment with the priorities outlined in the ANZPAA *Business Plan 2024–25*. This included updates to both the Police Investigations and Police Intelligence qualification streams.

Upcoming actions include progressing changes to the Police Crash Investigation and Analysis qualifications. New training product projects will be commenced to address future capability needs, as identified by the forthcoming ANZPAA *Annual Plan*, with a focus on major updates to supervisory and management-level qualifications.

Key Stakeholders

- ANZPAA
- PFA
- STTA/SROs

2025 Proposed Strategies

Public Skills Australia proposes the following strategies to alleviate the identified workforce challenges.

- ➔ **Report Into the Drivers of Occupational Shortages and Impacts on Operational Capacity**
- ➔ **Case Study Analysis of Skilling and Professional Development Profile Mapping**

1

Report Into the Drivers of Occupational Shortages and Impacts on Operational Capacity

Anticipated Timing: 12-18 months.

Challenge: Occupational shortages and impacts on operational capacity.

Strategy: Develop a greater understanding of the factors influencing operational capacity in metropolitan and remote/regional/rural policing. This analysis will also seek to determine the role of VET system in addressing workforce pipeline challenges. This work may be utilised as a demonstration project for analysis across other parts of the public safety sector.

Proposed Project Outline

JSC Function:

- Workforce Planning
- Training Product Development
- Implementation, Promotion and Monitoring

Actions:

PHASE 1

Engagement with ANZPAA and State/Territory police organisations to understand data availability and data access processes

PHASE 2

Determine what role the VET system could play in addressing identified pipeline issues

Key Stakeholders

- ANZPAA
- JSA
- Police organisations

Impact: Understand how to optimise and enhance operational capacity across public safety industry-sectors.

2

Case Study Analysis of Skilling and Professional Development Profile Mapping

Anticipated Timing: 12-18 months.

- PROPOSED

Public Skills Australia’s Workforce Planning Subcommittee recommended work to support Police with skills and capabilities mapping within their jurisdiction. This was also supported by the Public Skills Australia Industry Advisory Group and may include scoping which police jurisdictions can provide a case study for how workforce demographic data can be mapped to existing skills and capabilities profiles.

Challenge: Insufficient skills mapping to identify and address skills shortages.

Strategy: Previous work in policing has seen police jurisdictions map their Workforce Demographic Data to the ANZPAA Skills and Capabilities Profile. This process provides a clear understanding of where particular skills and capabilities lie within their organisation. This proposal seeks to use these jurisdictions as a case study that demonstrates good practice in implementation of the Skills and Capabilities Profile, to identify key areas of skills and training gaps.

Proposed Project Outline

Actions:

- Identify which police jurisdictions have undertaken the mapping of workforce data to the ANZPAA Skills and Capabilities Profile.
- Approach, via ANZPAA, the relevant workforce experts within the police jurisdictions to determine their willingness to be used as a case study for the benefit of the broader police industry-sector.
- Determine police industry-sector governance requirements, to enable Public Skills Australia to work with the relevant police organisations, and report back to the relevant governance bodies should this proposal be accepted for further work.

Outcome:

Develop a proposal for ANZPAA and the PFA to consider supporting Public Skills Australia undertake this work.

Key Stakeholders

- ANZPAA
- Police organisations and Unions/Associations

Potential Focus Areas:

- Workforce Demographics and Training Uptake
- Industry tools to efficiently identify skills and occupational gaps.

2025 Stakeholder Engagement

In the development of the 2025 Workforce Insights Reports, Public Skills Australia undertook extensive industry-sector consultation. The list of stakeholders engaged is found below. The approach adopted by Public Skills Australia towards the engagement of stakeholders, gathering and analysing their insights, and generating themes and challenges across the industry-sector, is summarised in the Methodology section of this report.

ANZPAA (including the National Groups, Committees and Networks they facilitate)

Australian Federal Police/ ACT Policing

Northern Territory Police Association

Police Association of South Australia (PASA)

Police Association of Tasmania

Queensland Police Service

Senior Responsible Officers and State and Territory Training Authorities¹³⁸

South Australia Police

Tasmania Police

The Police Association of Victoria (TPAV)

The Police Federation of Australia (PFA)

Victoria Police

WA Police Union

Western Australia Police Force

Existing Strategies

- Existing Strategies in the Police Industry-sector
- Government Initiatives

90 ¹³⁸ Public Skills Australia engaged with State/Territory Training Authority representatives from Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and Tasmania, via online drop-in sessions. In-person engagement was undertaken with State/Territory Training Authority representatives from Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Existing Strategies

Australian Federal Police Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2026

Australian Federal Police **2023 - 2026**

This strategy showcases the AFP’s focus on promoting psychosocial safety in the policing workplace by ensuring that Police Officers feel safe, connected, respected, and engaged.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA’S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue to monitor this strategy, with diversity and inclusion as ongoing priorities in Public Skills Australia’s support of the Police workforce.

Australian Federal Police Strategic Workforce Plan 2022-2027

Australian Federal Police **2022-2027**

The AFP’s Strategic Workforce Plan supports the agency’s commitment to developing and maintaining a skilled and capable workforce, driving innovation, and ensuring the secure delivery of AFP objectives.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA’S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue to engage with AFP stakeholders in developing its workforce plans to identify any emergent skills or training needs resulting from it.

Australian Federal Police (including ACT Policing) Corporate Plan 2024-2025

Australian Federal Police **2024-25 to 2027-28**

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) Corporate Plan emphasises their commitment to protecting Australian livelihoods, and the Commonwealth by remaining agile, innovative, and accountable in an evolving and complex operating environment. The AFP aims to attract and develop a skilled workforce, advance capabilities through responsible exploration of new technologies like artificial intelligence and strengthen relationships with domestic and international partners to enhance effectiveness in addressing criminal threats.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA’S WORK

The AFP and ACT Policing Corporate Plan is a valuable data asset to support Public Skills Australia’s understanding of the AFP and ACT Police workforces.

Disability Inclusion Plan - 2023–2027

Tasmania Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management **2023–2027**

This plan sets out the department’s goals and objectives for building upon and strengthening itself as a disability-confident workplace, and ensuring a supportive, positive and inclusive environment for all.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA’S WORK

Increasing representation of individuals who identify with a disability is an ongoing priority in workforce planning for Police. Public Skills Australia will continue to work closely with Police organisations to support them in enhancing representation of persons with a disability within their workforce.

Keeping You Safe: Victoria Police Strategy 2023-2028

Victoria Police **2023-2028**

The strategy gives an overview of the Victoria Police demographics, along with a 5-year vision that is predominantly focused on being visible in the community and building public trust and positive community perceptions of Police. Promoting a diverse Police workforce that is inclusive of First Nations and other cultures, as well as the LGBTIQ+ community is also a priority area, alongside addressing cybercrime and streamlining internal processes for effective and efficient outcomes.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA’S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue to engage with Victoria Police stakeholders to monitor the progress of this strategy and identify any emergent skills or training needs resulting from it.

LGBTIQA+ Action Plan - 2023-2026

Tasmania Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management **2023-2026**

This Action Plan sets out expectations and goals for a three-year period to strengthen relationships with LGBTIQA+ communities and support employees, volunteers, and others who are a part of this community.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA’S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue to support the Policing sector with identified diversity and inclusion strategic goals. This may include the review of training products or workforce strategies to support the delivery of these objectives.

NSW Police Force. Our Focus Our Future: Connected Workforce Connected Communities

NSW Police **2024 - ongoing**

This plan focuses on cultivating a strong community by ensuring the values and behaviours of the workforce are aligned to that of the organisation, in turn building public trust and perceptions.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue to support the NSW Police Force by exploring the integration of new technologies and ensuring that the training package is reviewed and updated.

NSW Police Force. 'Be a cop in your Hometown' initiative

NSW Police **2024 - ongoing**

The 'Be a Cop in Your Hometown' initiative by NSW Police aims to strengthen regional policing by placing officers in their hometowns after graduation. This program enhances community engagement, workforce stability, and trust in law enforcement while promoting long-term sustainability and stronger local relationships.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will monitor the effectiveness of this initiative as it aims to address known workforce shortages in regional locations.

NT Police. Our Plan 2024-2027 (DRAFT)

NT Police **2024-2027**

This document outlines a strategic roadmap to enhance public safety and address evolving crime trends. The plan aims to create a more inclusive Police force reflective of the Northern Territory's diverse demographics.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will seek to build relationships with the NT Police to identify opportunities to support the NT Police workforce with any emerging skills and training.

Queensland Police. Strategic Plan and Strategic Workforce Plan 2024-2028

Queensland Police **2024-2028**

This Strategic Plan sets out an overview of the objectives for the Queensland Police Service for the next four years, focusing primarily on an effective workforce that efficiently delivers outcomes for the community.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue to engage with Queensland Police to identify opportunities to support the workforce.

South Australia Police. 2030 Strategy - Safer Communities

South Australia Police **2024-2030**

This strategy emphasises the importance of having a robust and aligned workforce to ensure community needs are met, being guided by five principles.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue to work with SAPOL to identify strategic opportunities.

WA Police Force. Agency Capability Review

WA Police Force **2024 - ongoing**

The WA Police Force Agency Capability Review (2023-24) calls for a clear long-term strategy to enhance operational effectiveness, workforce planning, and interagency collaboration.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue working with the WA Police Force, to capacity.

WA Police Strategic Framework

WA Police Force **2024 onwards**

This strategic framework outlines the values, functions, priorities, and operational fundamentals that are integral to how WA Police conduct themselves whilst undertaking their core duties.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue to engage with WA Police Force stakeholders.

Government Initiatives

2024 Core Skills Occupation List – Key Findings Report

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA)2024 - ongoing

The Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) provides labour market analysis that informs the identification of occupations that are considered appropriate for employer-sponsored temporary migration through the Core Skills Stream of the Skills in Demand (SID) Visa.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue to work closely with JSA to ensure the CSOL is reflective of Public Safety and Government occupations. Additionally, Public Skills Australia will continue to communicate with industry to ensure there is transparency on any relevant occupations that can be filled through skilled migration channels.

Australian Cyber Security Strategy

Department of Home Affairs2023 - 2030

The 2023 - 2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy serves as a roadmap to achieve the Australian Government's vision of becoming a world leader in cyber security by 2030.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will support the Cyber Security Strategy in its work with Public Safety and Government industries. Ensuring that Public Safety and Government industry-sectors have the requisite workforce skills and expertise to fulfil the Cyber Security Strategy is of critical importance for the safety of the Australian public and businesses.

Better Together - The Jobs and Skills Report 2024

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA)2024 - ongoing

As part of JSA's mandated obligations to provide insight on the Australian labour market and advice on workforce needs and priorities, this report details evidence aligned to five strategic pillars to enable a more prosperous economic future. Specifically, this report outlines JSA's key current and emerging datasets that provide useful insight on the intricacies of Australia's labour market. This includes, but is not limited to, insight on the current VET workforce, First Nations employment participation, regional workforce investment, emerging roles and employment projections.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue to be guided by workforce insights provided by JSA and continue to align efforts to JSA's identified jobs and skills focus areas.

Closing the Gap

Council of Australian Governments **2019 - 2029**

The Closing the Gap Report informs the development of recruitment, health and social programs specific to First Nations peoples. These programs are deployed across the Public Safety and Government industry-sectors.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia acknowledges that representation of First Nations peoples within the five Public Safety and Government industries varies greatly. Improving the quality of workforce data pertaining to First Nations people's representation is an ongoing priority in workforce planning.

Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA)

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) **2024 - ongoing**

Formally known as ANZSCO, the OSCA is a standardised framework for classifying occupations within Australia. As part of the replacement process from ANZSCO to OSCA in 2024, the ABS announced that OSCA will undergo regular updates in accordance with the OSCA Maintenance Strategy.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will continue to play an active role in providing feedback to the ABS on the relevance and accuracy of OSCA as it relates to Public Safety and Government occupations.

Occupational Shortage List (OSL)

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) **Ongoing**

The OSL (formerly the Skills Priority List) offers an annual point-in-time review of the status of Australian occupations. Specifically, the OSL reports on whether occupations (at the four-digit and six-digit ANZSCO level) are experiencing shortages nationally and for each State/Territory in regional or metropolitan areas.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

This information enables Public Skills Australia to tailor workforce development strategies and training programs to address critical gaps in the Australian labour market. The OSL provides Public Skills Australia with valuable insights into current labour market trends, helping to identify skills shortages within our industry-sectors across Australia.

The Australian Government's Strategic Priorities

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet **2022 - 2026**

The Federal Government's strategic priorities provide a four-year (2022 - 2026) policy direction for the Australian Public Service (APS) and sets targets across key areas. These key areas include the economy, public health and climate change.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will support the implementation of the Federal Government's strategic priorities, particularly those which seek to strengthen the workforces within Public Skills Australia's remit.

The Clean Energy Generation: Workforce needs for a Net Zero Economy

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) **2023 - 2025**

This series of reports considers emerging and future clean-energy workforce requirements as Australia strives to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. JSA's preliminary modelling estimates Australia's clean-energy workforce will need to grow from the current 53,000 workers to 84,000 workers by 2050.

HOW IT WILL INFORM PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S WORK

Public Skills Australia will consider the impact of Net Zero and emerging workforce requirements on the Public Safety and Government industry, as the impact of climate change and more frequent natural disasters flows into the related challenges of competition for labour, and recruitment and retention.

2025 Proposed Strategies Summary	
Defence	
1. Training product development for emerging capabilities in the space domain Public Skills Australia proposes to develop nationally accredited training products that meet the emerging skills needs of Defence in the space domain. This may include skills related to satellite imagery, intelligence, reconnaissance and communications.	2. Training product development for emerging capabilities in the cyber domain Public Skills Australia proposes to develop nationally accredited training products that meet the emerging skills needs of Defence in the cyber domain. This may include practitioner skills to undertake risk assessments in ICT systems, or any other relevant skilling areas identified by key stakeholders.
See full strategy proposal on page 35	See full strategy proposal on page 35
3. Contemporary Cadet Training Public Skills Australia proposes to Develop nationally accredited training products that meet the contemporary needs of ADF Cadets. This may include adjustment of current training products or development of new ones.	4. Development of Training Pathways for Transitioning Veterans Public Skills Australia proposes to assist Defence in the development of training pathways and/or bridging courses and adjustment of existing training products to enable a more streamlined transitioning pathways for veterans.
See full strategy proposal on page 36	See full strategy proposal on page 37

Fire and Emergency Services	
5. Volunteer Leadership Project Public Skills Australia will review the previous and current volunteer leadership programs to address the capabilities and any capacity gaps identified within this workforce.	6. Understanding the Youth Volunteer Commencement of a literature review on youth volunteering in the fire and emergency services context, in partnership with volunteer organisations to obtain relevant data
See full strategy proposal on page 64	See full strategy proposal on page 65
7. Complex Infrastructure Project Engagement to be undertaken with career fire-fighting organisations to determine infrastructure training gaps in the Public Safety Training Package, and in partnership, develop relevant training products to support skills requirements for working with and in complex infrastructure.	8. Emerging Technologies Project Analysis of existing technological and infrastructure adjacent products and development of training products to support contemporary skills requirements to work with new and emerging technologies.
See full strategy proposal on page 66	See full strategy proposal on page 67
Police	Left: See full strategy proposal on page 86
	Right: See full strategy proposal on page 87
9. Report on the factors driving occupational shortages and affecting operational capacity Public Skills Australia proposes to develop a comprehensive analysis of the inputs and drivers of Police workforce shortages and operational capacity to inform the national evidence base. This will provide greater understanding of the factors influencing diminished operational capacity in the metropolitan and remote/regional/rural policing.	10. Case Study Analysis of Skill and Professional Development Profile Mapping Public Skills Australia proposes to deliver a case study analysis where a skilling and professional development profile has been overlaid with workforce demographics to understand and identify Police skills gaps at a jurisdictional level. This work would seek to identify benefits and opportunities in adopting this approach to address gaps in skilling and professional development programs.

Looking Ahead to 2026

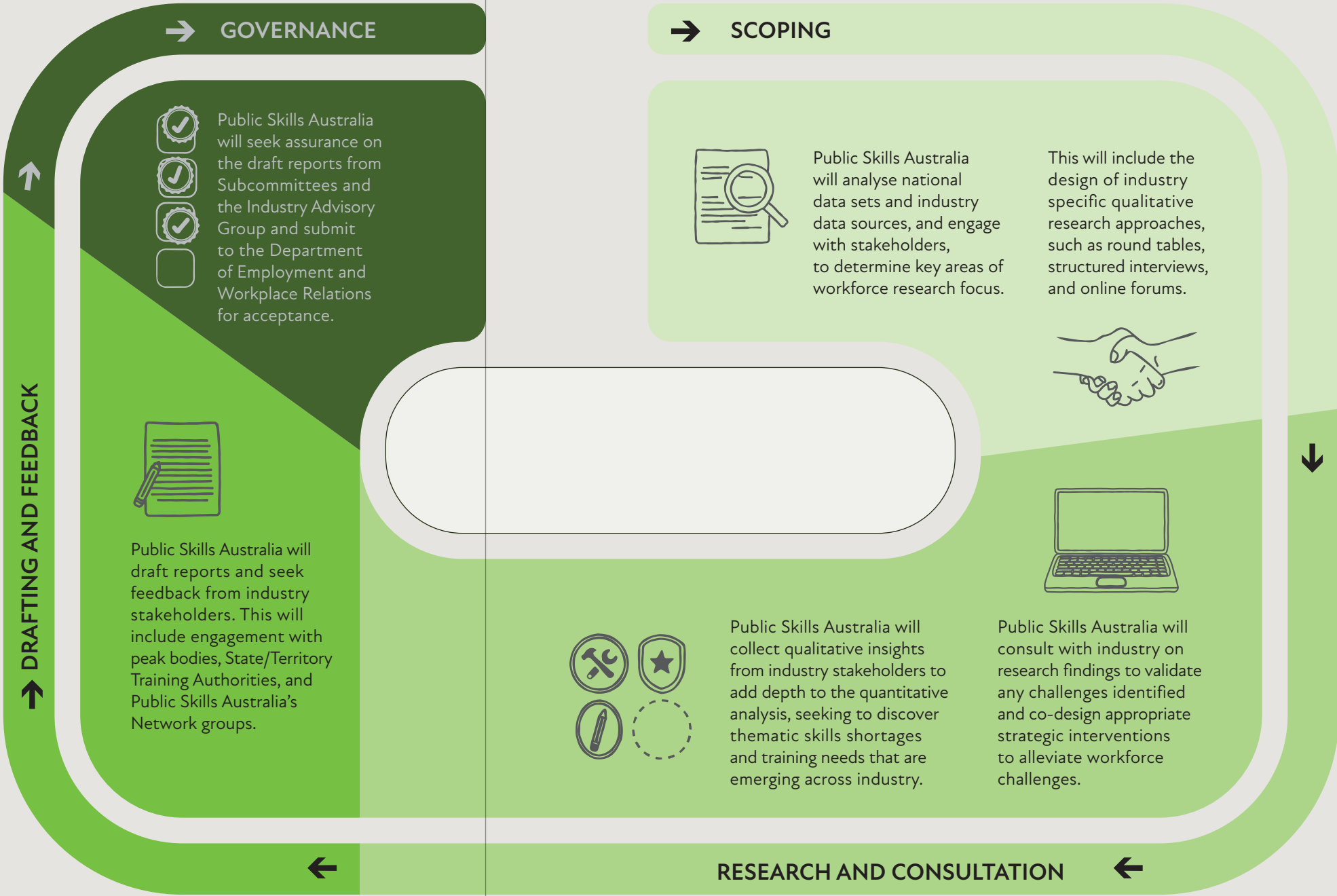
Public Skills Australia has built on its 2024 Workforce Plans in delivering this 2025 Workforce Insights Report.

Looking forward to future workforce planning activities, Public Skills Australia will continue to deepen and broaden engagement with industry employers, employee union representatives, and Government organisations.

In doing this, Public Skills Australia will sharpen its focus towards new and emerging workforce challenges that are impacting across the Public Safety and Government industry-sector, including the analysis of nuanced skills gaps and workforce shortages across regional and niche parts of industry.

By taking a deeper dive into the Public Safety and Government industry, Public Skills Australia will ensure that any identified workforce challenges and proposed strategies are robust and supportive of the contemporary needs of the workforces within Public Safety and Government.

Public Skills Australia will explore innovation in the delivery of workforce planning products in 2026 to enhance accessibility and practicality for stakeholders.



Appendix A

List of Defence Data Overview Sources

Figure 2.1

First Nations Proportion in the APS and ADF

Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024, Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 126.

Total APS and ADF Headcounts 2023 to 2024

APS Headcount: Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 102.

ADF Headcount: Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024, Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 102.

ADF Separation Rate

Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 37.

ADF Headcount by Service Branch 2023 to 2024

Headcount: Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024, Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 102.

Funded Strength: Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024, Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 37.

Figure 2.2

Gender Share Across the Department of Defence

Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, pp 105-106.

Assistance to the Civil Community 2023-24

Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 34.

Current Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Continuation Bonus: Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 8.

Recruitment Strategies: Department of Defence, Annual Report 2023-2024. Department of Defence, Australian Government, 2024, p 98.

Appendix B

List of Fire and Emergency Services Data Overview Sources

Figure 3.2 (Firefighting)

Career Firefighters and Support Workers, and Volunteer Firefighters and Support Volunteers 2023-24

Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

Figure 3.3 (Firefighting)

Fires, Other Emergencies and Incidents in 2023-24

Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.6, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

Career Firefighter and Support Employee Age Range

Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

Career Employees and Volunteer Gender Share

Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

Volunteer Firefighter and Support Employee Age Range

Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

Figure 3.4 (State and Territory Emergency Services)

Emergency Incidents Australia-wide in 2023-24

Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.7, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

Gender Share in Emergency Services

Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.5, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

Figure 3.5 (State and Territory Emergency Services)

Operational and Support Emergency Service Employees 2023-24

Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.5, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

Emergency Service Volunteers and Support Volunteers 2023-24

Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.5, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

Operational and Support Emergency Service Employees Age Range

Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.5, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

Emergency Service Volunteers and Support Volunteers Age Range

Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.5, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 7 February 2025.

Figure 3.6 (Surf Life Saving)

All data are sourced from: Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2023/2024 Annual Report, SLSA, 2024.

Figure 3.7 (Surf Life Saving)

All data are sourced from: Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2023/2024 Annual Report, SLSA, 2024.

Appendix C

List of Police Data Overview Sources

Figure 4.1

Number of First Nations Operational Police Officers

Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services – Police Services Table 6A.2, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 1 April 2025.

Proportion of First Nations Operational Police Officers

Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services – Police Services Table 6A.2, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 1 April 2025.

Operational and Non-operational Sworn Police Officers 2023-24 (FTE)

Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services – Police Services, Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 28 February 2025.

Australian Federal Police, Annual Report 2023-2024, Commonwealth of Australia, 2024, accessed 28 February 2025. This value is not inclusive of ACT Police or Protective Service Officers.

Sworn Operational Police Officers by Gender

Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services – Police Services, Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 27 March 2025. This number does not include Australian Federal Police. The sum of male and female proportions may not equal 100 per cent, due to missing values in data source.

Full-time Equivalent Sworn Police Officers

Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services – Police Services, Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 28 February 2025. Yearly FTE values do not include Australian Federal Police.

Figure 4.2

Police-to-Population Ratios

Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services – Police Services Table 6A.2, [data set], Productivity Commission 2025, accessed 1 April 2025.

Rate of Victims of Reported Crimes (per 100,000 people)

Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services – Police Services Table 6A.19, Table 6A.20 & Table 6A.21, [data set], Productivity Commission, 2025, accessed 1 April 2025.

Public Skills Australia is one of ten Jobs and Skills Councils.

Jobs and Skills Councils enable the modern and responsive skilled workforces that are required for Australia to prosper. Skilled workforces underpin our strong economy, allowing us to keep living standards high.

We lead efforts to make sure Australia has the right workers, with the right skills, that our nation needs.

2025 PUBLIC SAFETY
DEFENCE, FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES, POLICE

WORKFORCE INSIGHTS REPORT



**PUBLIC SKILLS
AUSTRALIA**
PUBLIC SAFETY SKILLS AUSTRALIA LTD

JSC

Jobs and Skills Council
Public Safety and Government
An Australian Government Initiative