



PUBLIC SKILLS
AUSTRALIA

**Jobs and
Skills
Councils**

An Australian Government Initiative



Fire and Emergency Services

Workforce Plan 2024

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ABOUT PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA

Public Skills Australia is the Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) for the Public Safety and Government industry, which includes Correctional Services, Defence, Federal, State/Territory and Local Government, Fire and Emergency Services and Police.

As the JSC for Public Safety and Government, we promote the importance of a well-trained, effective and efficient Public Safety and Government workforce. We work closely with industry employers and employee organisations, to identify and mitigate workforce challenges and support future skilling.

Public Skills Australia is committed to:

- conducting consultation with our key industry-sectors and their representatives,
- undertaking data analysis, research and employing strategic foresight tools to understand current workforce challenges and develop future workforce plans,
- developing quality training products to strengthen the Public Safety and Government training packages,
- advocating for the needs of our industry-

sectors.

This Workforce Plan explores the workforce challenges and requirements of the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector. Organisations within this industry-sector play a vital role in undertaking prevention, preparation, response and recovery activities in instances of fires, natural disasters and other emergencies, as well as ensuring public safety on our beaches and coastal areas. The Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector is made up of a dedicated workforce of career and volunteer staff; this Workforce Plan identifies key findings to support them.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public Skills Australia successfully delivered an Initial Workforce Plan for Public Safety and Government industry-sectors. JSCs are required to build upon the Initial Workforce Plan and deliver an updated and more comprehensive Workforce Plan in 2024.

Workforce Plan 2024: Fire and Emergency Services provides a high-level snapshot of the Fire and Emergency industry-sector, its workforce, and identified workforce challenges. The plan highlights industry insights gathered from consultation. Through research and consultation, nine megatrends were consistently identified as impacting the Public Safety and Government workforce.



Expansion of core duties



Recruitment and retention



Technological development



Public trust and perceptions



Demographic shifts



Competition for labour



Diversity and inclusion



Career pathways



Climate change

Public Skills Australia further identified a workforce challenge specific to the Fire and Emergency industry-sector:

Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers:

Changing patterns of volunteerism are impacting the number of volunteers entering the Fire and Emergency Services workforce.

Changing Demand:

Demand is both increasing in scope and volume.

Training Volunteers:

The amount of training required to enter the Fire and Emergency Services workforce is impacting capacity of volunteer-based organisations and is noted to be influencing volunteer engagement in the workforce.

In the development of future Workforce Plans, Public Skills Australia will seek to conduct further research and analysis to develop strategies that may address the identified challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This Workforce Plan is supported by a mix of Federal Government data, industry-sector data and insights from industry-sector consultation. Federal Government data are mostly derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA). Industry-sector data are largely obtained from publicly accessible sources, such as annual reports. Industry-sector consultation was undertaken directly with employee, employer and government representatives. 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. Where possible, this Workforce Plan prioritises the data source, or combination of data sources, that provide the most accurate representation of the workforce possible.

Federal Government Data

Federal Government datasets, such as those from the ABS and JSA, are helpful for understanding high-level and overarching aspects of the entire Public Safety and Government workforces. ABS data used throughout this Workforce Plan includes National Census data, occupation classification information and other labour force and general population survey insights. Importantly, JSA provides an Employment and Education & Training Data Placemat directly to JSCs to inform their workforce planning. Informative and relevant data provided by JSA have been summarised in the Public Safety and Government Industry Snapshot and are supported by the industry-sector specific data detailed in this Workforce Plan. It requires noting that all employment data presented in the Public Safety and Government Industry Snapshot do not include volunteers.

Industry Consultation

Consultation was undertaken with employee, employer and government representatives. Public Skills Australia leveraged established relationships and governance arrangements to:

- invite participation in direct consultation,
- identify additional stakeholders,
- verify and validate research and data findings, and
- seek feedback on the Workforce Plan.



A range of consultation methods were utilised to support effective engagement. This included in-person stakeholder meetings, online presentations and written review and feedback from Public Skills Australia governance group members. Consultation plans were designed around previously identified and emergent workforce challenges, as well as possible strategies to support the workforce. Insights generated from consultations were deductively mapped to the identified challenges and validated by multiple Public Skills Australia researchers and are presented in the Industry Insights breakout boxes across this Workforce Plan. Insights were further reviewed and validated by members of the Public Skills Australia's subcommittees, Industry Advisory Group and Public Skills Australia Board. Further information on this engagement is contained in the Consultation Plan section of this Workforce Plan.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND GOVERNMENT INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

Public Safety and Government is the fifth largest employing industry in Australia (Figure 1). As of November 2023, there were just under 823,000 individuals employed in the industry.¹ This number has grown steadily year-on-year since 1985 (Figure 2). New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland are the largest employing states for occupations within the industry (Figure 3), with 31.1 per cent, 26.1 per cent and 22.1 per cent of the total employment percentage, respectively. The top 10 employing occupations are presented in Table 1.

Figure 1: Total individuals employed in each industry²

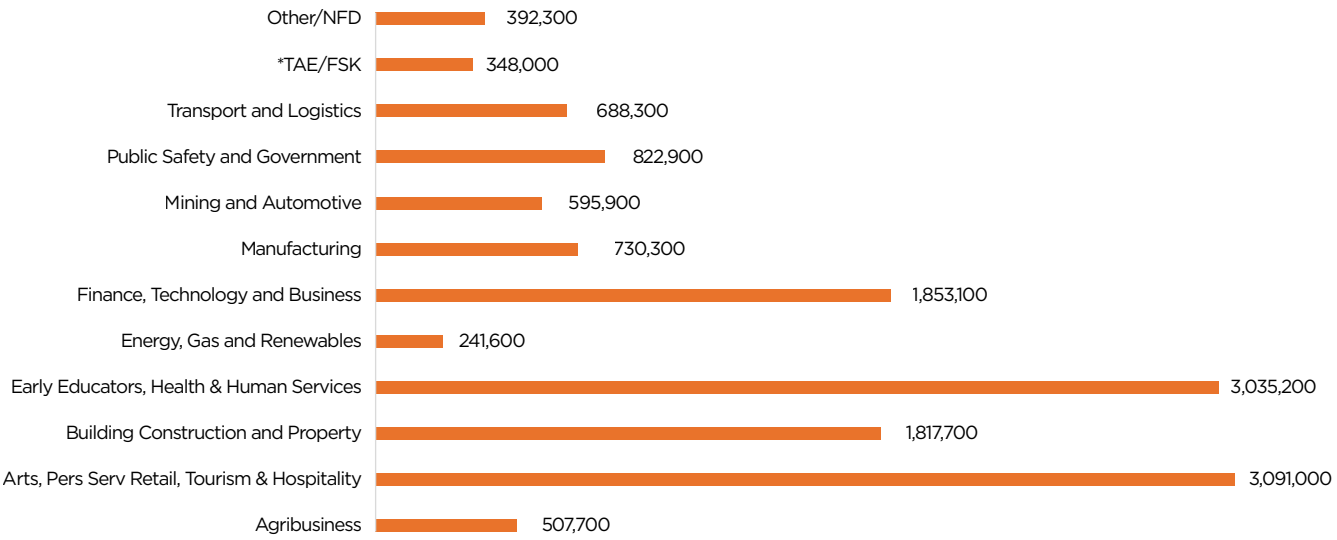
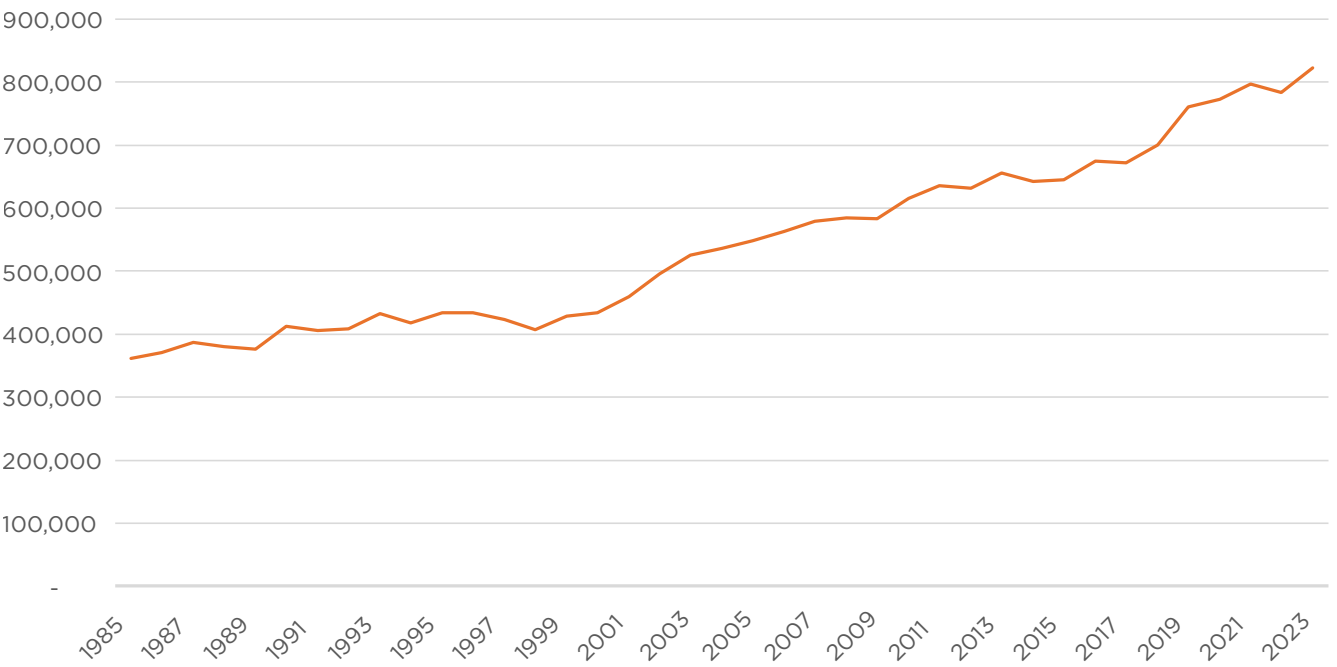


Figure 2: Total number of individuals employed in the Public Safety and Government industry from 1985 to 2023³



¹Employment data presented in this snapshot does not include volunteers.
²Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, November 2023 [data set], ABS website, 2023, accessed 1 May 2024.
³ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, November 2023 [data set], ABS website, 2023, accessed 1 May 2024.

Figure 3: Total number of individuals employed in Public Safety and Government industry by State/Territory in 2023⁴

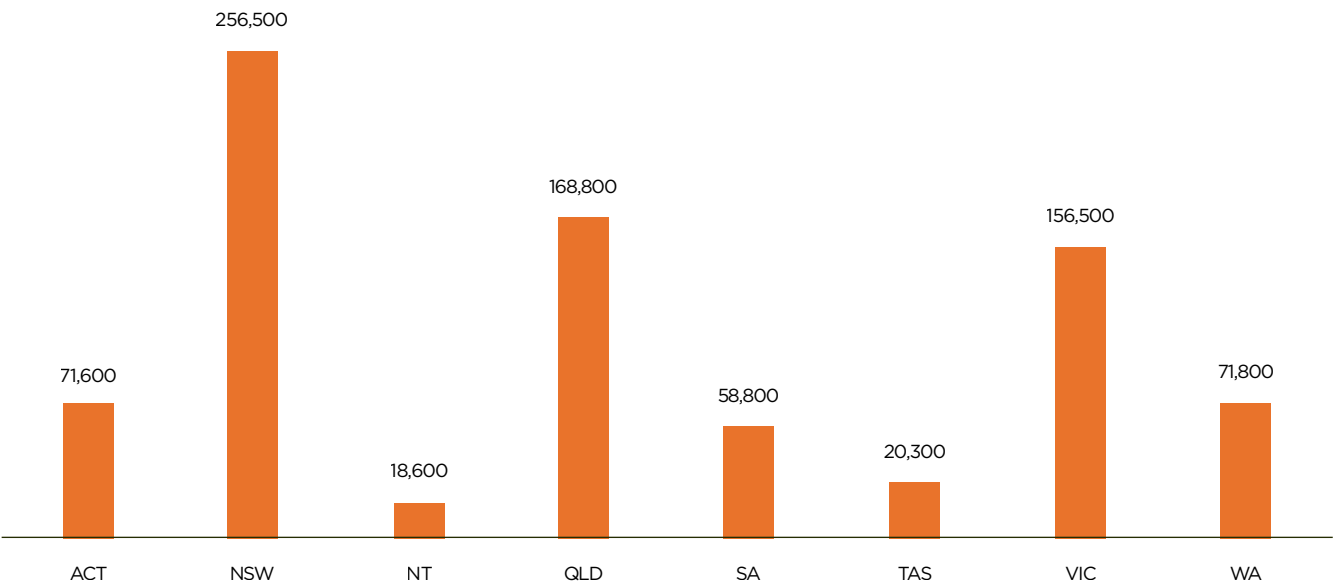


Table 1: Top 10 employing occupations in the Public Safety and Government industry⁵

ANZSCO	Occupation	%
4413	Police	8.4
5311	General Clerks	4.9
5995	Inspectors and Regulatory Officers	4.5
5111	Contract, Program and Project Administrators	4.0
1324	Policy and Planning Managers	3.2
4421	Prison Officers	2.7
4411	Defence Force Members - Other Ranks	2.3
5412	Information Officers	2.2
2249	Other Information and Organisation Professionals	2.1
8999	Other Miscellaneous Labourers	2.1

⁴ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, November 2023 [data set], ABS website, 2023, accessed 1 May 2024.
⁵Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, November 2023 [data set], ABS website, 2023, accessed 1 May 2024.



A comparison between the Public Safety and Government and national workforces on median weekly earnings, median age, proportion of workforce who are female and proportion of workforce who are First Nations people is presented in Table 2.⁶

Table 2: Demographic comparison between the Public Safety and Government industry and national workforces⁷

	National	Public Safety and Government Industry
Median weekly earnings	\$1,300	\$1,656
Median age	38	42
Proportion who are female	47.6%	52.1%
Proportion who are First Nations people	2.2%	3.4%

The Public Safety and Government industry workforce is currently projected to experience a 4.7% increase in employment across the next five years and an 8.8% increase in employment over the next ten years.⁸ These projections provide a useful insight into overall labour market trends, however any forecasting needs to take into consideration the unique drivers in the Public Safety and Government industry. These drivers may include changes in crime rates, bushfires, natural disasters and other large-scale

emergencies. Further, there are several national political and economic influences and constraints, such as government budgets and political commitments, that could impact the industry. Lastly, international and geopolitical factors such as conflict and international deployment, along with emerging infrastructure needs (e.g., AUKUS nuclear submarine program, new correctional facilities), may also impact labour market growth projections in this industry.

⁶First Nations people will be used as preferred terminology inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. When citing a data source (i.e., annual reports, ABS data, and the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services) the terminology of the data source will be used to maintain accurate data representation.
⁷ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, November 2023 [data set], ABS website, 2023, accessed 1 May 2024.
⁸Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), Employment Projections, JSA website, n.d., accessed 1 May 2024.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY INDUSTRY-SECTOR OVERVIEW

The Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector creates safer and more resilient communities and minimises the impact of emergencies by providing response as well as supporting communities in understanding risk, developing plans and delivering warnings. Agencies within this industry-sector support all facets of the emergency management continuum, spanning: prevention, preparation, response, and recovery (PPRR).⁹ The Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector has typically been seen as primarily response based, however, the scope of work conducted by agencies extends much further. Figure 4 outlines the key responsibilities aligned to the PPRR framework.

Figure 4: Overview of responsibilities aligned to the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery framework¹⁰

Prevention	Preparedness	Response	Recovery
• Structural Compliance • Community Engagement Programs • Land Use Planning	• Community Empowerment • Development and Exercising of Preparedness Plans • Disaster Risk Management	• Fire and Emergency Response • Natural Disaster Response • Coastal Safety and First Aid • Fire Investigations • Vehicle Crashes and Road Safety • Search and Rescue	• Community Engagement • Support to Other Agencies • Post-Incident Assistance and Advice to Persons Impacted by Fire and Other Emergencies

In 1993 the industry-sector established the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) to develop common ways of working, enhance interoperability, embrace new technology, and develop a vast array of doctrine to support their operations. There are also national groups that represent employee interests, such as the United Firefighters Union of Australia (UFUA).

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 and Territory Emergency Services (ACSES).

The specific roles and functions of Fire and Emergency Services agencies are legislated by Federal and State/ Territory Governments and may differ between jurisdictions. However, all agencies share a responsibility to protect life, property and the environment. Resource sharing arrangements between agencies supports the deployment of both volunteers and employees interstate and internationally in both technical and incident management roles. Fire and Emergency Services agencies have adopted the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIIMS) which supports these resource sharing arrangements when responding to complex incidents that exceed the response capacity of the primary response agency.¹¹

This Workforce Plan specifically covers career Fire Fighters (ANZSCO 441212), volunteer Fire Fighters (not classified by ANZSCO), Emergency Service Workers (ANZSCO 441211) and surf lifesaving (not classified by ANZSCO), as the primary users of the PUA Public Safety Training Package (PUA Training Package).¹² The PUA Training Package supports the delivery and maintenance of contemporary knowledge and skills across the industry-sector.

Fire and Emergency Services agencies work collaboratively with a wide range of National and State/Territory Emergency Management organisations, including:

- Police and Law Enforcement Agencies,
- Forest and Land Management Agencies,
- National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA),
- State/Territory emergency management bodies (such as Emergency Management Victoria),
- not-for-profit relief and recovery services (such as Disaster Relief Australia, Australian Red Cross and Rotary), and
- international public safety agencies.

Workforce Data

Understanding the complete picture of the Fire and Emergency Services workforce is challenging. Data on this workforce is available across Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data, Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) Nowcast of Employment by Region and Occupation (NERO), Productivity Commission Report on Government Services (ROGS) and industry-sector annual reports. Reporting standards and collection methodology vary significantly between these sources. For example, jurisdictional differences in the Fire and Emergency Services annual reports include:

- utilisation of FTE or headcount metrics,
- classification of occupational roles within agencies,
- absence of volunteer data, and
- the amalgamation of Fire and Emergency Services agencies workforce data with other government departments in select States and Territories.

Figure 5: Total career (FTE) and volunteer (headcount) operational members, and career and volunteer support staff (headcount) across the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector, including Surf Life Saving Australia¹³



⁹Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), National Statement of Capability for Fire and Emergency Services, AFAC, 2021.
¹⁰Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), National Statement of Capability for Fire and Emergency Services, AFAC, 2021.
¹¹Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), AIIIMS Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System [website], accessed 23 April 2024

¹²Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 4412 Fire and Emergency Workers [website], n.d., accessed 30 April 2024; ABS, 4524 Sportspersons [website], n.d., accessed 30 April 2024.
¹³Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024; Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2022/2023 Annual Report, SLSA, 2023. Career operational workers were defined as all paid workers with an operational position in fire, emergency and surf lifesaving roles. Volunteer operational workers were defined as all volunteer workers with an operational position in fire, emergency and surf lifesaving roles. Career support workers were defined as all paid workers in non-operational roles for fire, emergency and surf lifesaving. Volunteer support workers were defined as volunteers in non-operational roles for fire, emergency and surf lifesaving.

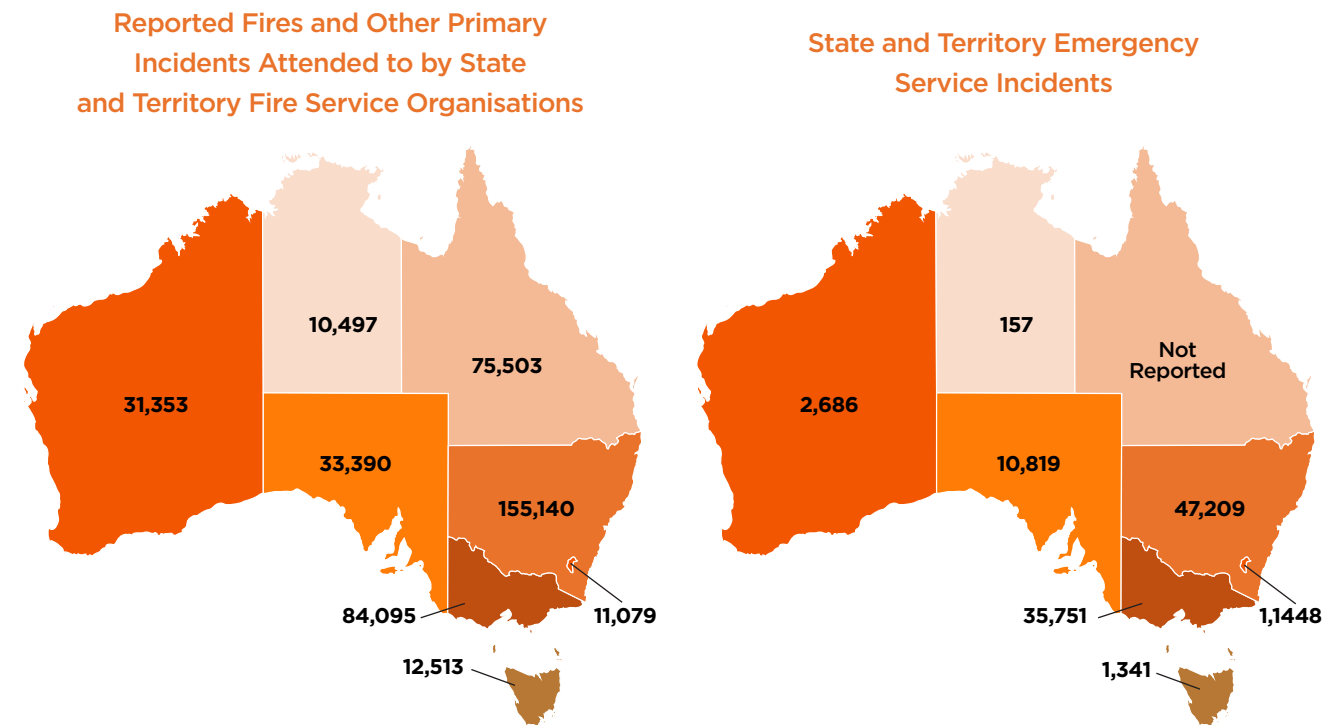
Figure 5 represents the national distribution of the Fire and Emergency Services career and volunteer workforce.¹⁴ ROGS data classifies operational and non-operational staff as well as volunteer and career staff within the Fire and Emergency Services workforce.

Metropolitan and larger regional areas are predominantly serviced by career fire agencies whereas smaller regional and remote communities are serviced by volunteer agencies. Volunteers comprise the majority of the Emergency Services workforce and respond to both metro and regional areas. Volunteers with Surf Life Saving are spread across the Australian coastline.

Demand

Fire and Emergency Services agencies have a legislated responsibility to respond to all call outs. In sum, ROGS data indicates that Fire agencies responded to a total of 413,570 fires, other emergencies and incidents across Australia in 2022-23 (Figure 6A).¹⁵ For Emergency Services agencies, ROGS data indicates a total of 95,411 incidents were responded to across Australia in 2022-23 (Figure 6B).¹⁶

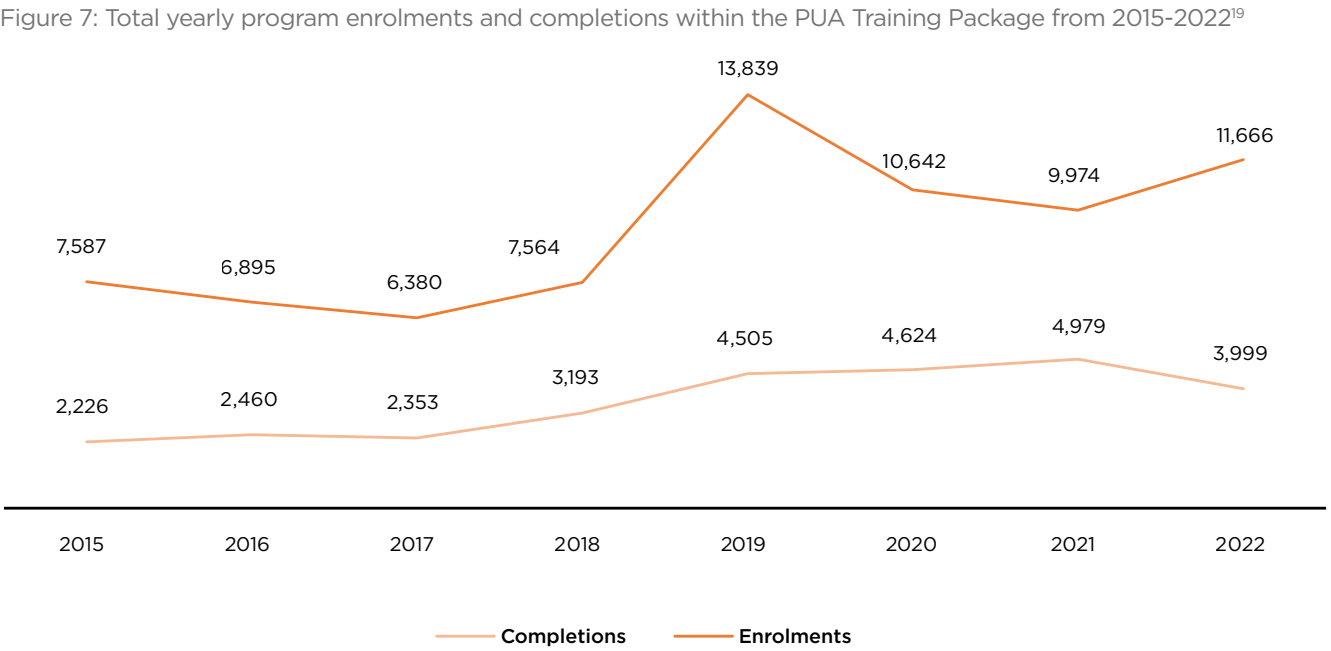
Figure 6: Yearly total number of fire and other primary incidents attended by State/Territory fire service organisations (A) and State/Territory emergency incidents (B) from 2013-14 to 2022-23¹⁷



¹⁴Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024; Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2022/2023 Annual Report, SLSA, 2023.
¹⁵Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.6*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024.
¹⁶Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.7*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024.
¹⁷Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.6*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024; Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.7*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024.

THE PUA PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING PACKAGE

The PUA Public Safety Training Package (PUA Training Package) supports training for a number of emergency agencies such as Fire, Emergency Services, Surf Lifesaving, Emergency Management, Land Management, Maritime Safety, Biosecurity and Emergency Telecommunications. In 2022, there were a total of 11,666 enrolments and 3,999 completions (Figure 7).¹⁸ Some agencies that utilise the PUA Training Package have an ongoing AVETMISS reporting exemption, meaning not all enrolment and completion data is represented.



The PUA Training Package was reviewed in 2018 which may explain the spike in enrolments in 2019. Other factors which may have also driven enrolments during this time include significant emergency events, such as flooding in Queensland and bushfires over the summer of 2019-2020. The subsequent dip in enrolments in 2020 may be linked to COVID-19 and the inability for staff within agencies to undertake face-to-face training. Data relating to enrolments and completions of the PUA Training Package may also be influenced by how volunteers engage with the package. Learners within volunteer agencies may only access individual ‘units’ and may not be represented in enrolment and completion datasets. Volunteers who do elect to enrol in skill sets or entire qualifications will often take many years to complete their qualification. This may account for the significant lag between enrolments and completions.

Fire Agencies

State/Territory fire agencies have a legislative responsibility to manage and respond to emergencies. The staffing framework for each agency may differ, with some fire agencies having career firefighters only, and some having a combination of career and auxiliary firefighters or a combination of career, auxiliary and volunteer firefighters. For example, the Tasmanian Fire Service (TFS) and Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service use a hybrid model that incorporates both career and volunteer firefighters into their organisational structure.

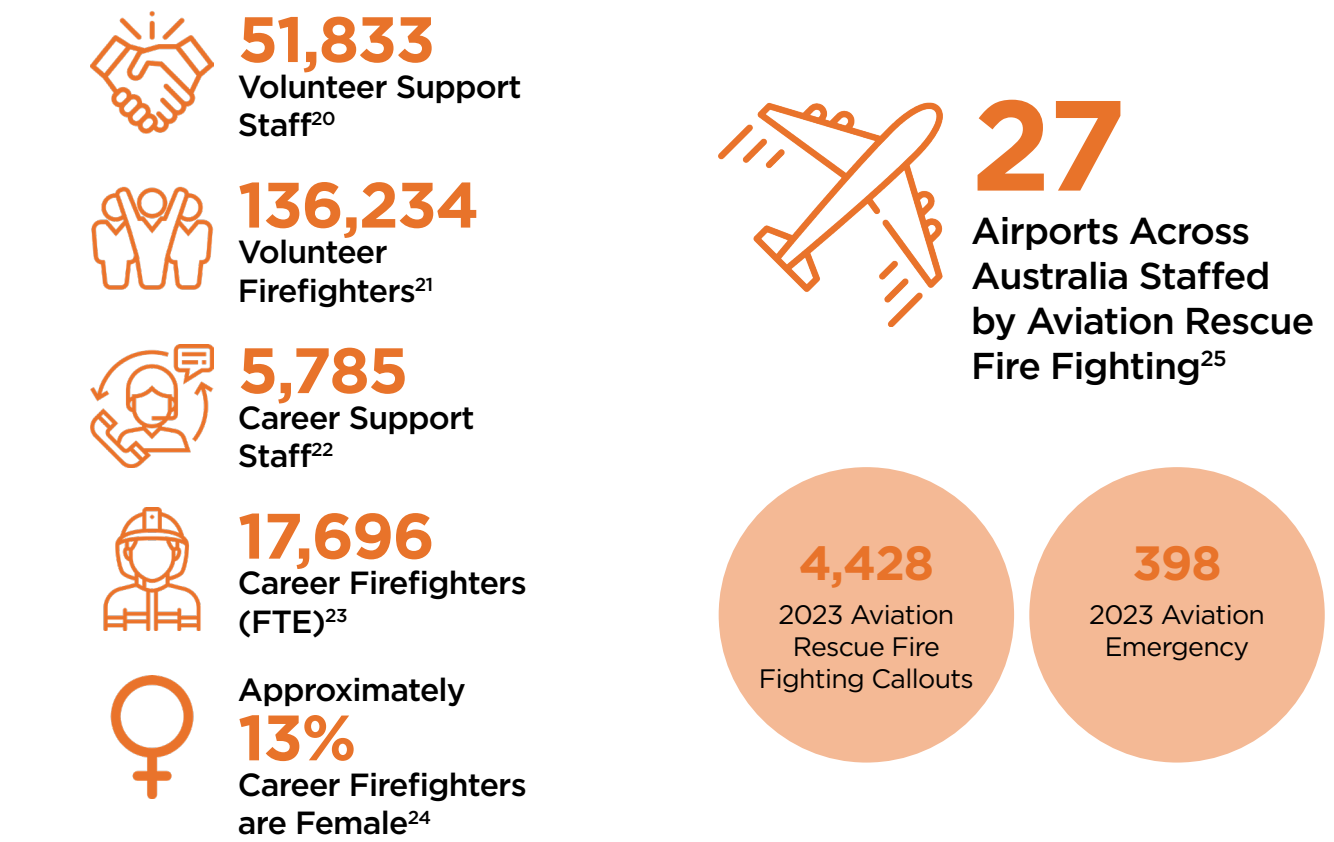
¹⁸National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), *Total VET students and courses 2022: DataBuilder* [data set], 2023, ncver.edu.au, accessed 15 January 2024.
¹⁹NCVER, *Total VET students and courses 2022: DataBuilder* [data set], 2023, ncver.edu.au, accessed 15 January 2024.

Duties and Role Scope

Fire agencies 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. They often live in and among communities, helping them to prepare for future emergencies. Roles requiring specialist expertise in fire agencies include:

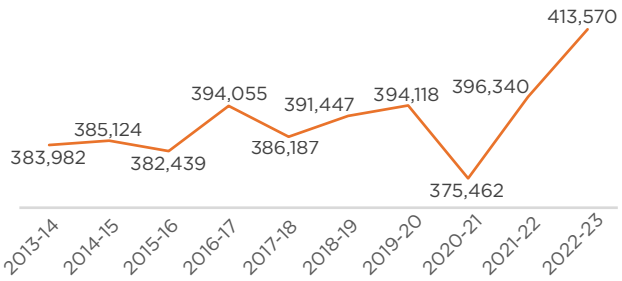
- aviation fire management and rescue
- responding to structure fires in tunnels, fires in hazardous materials facilities, electric vehicle incidents
- bushfires, grassfires burning in remote conditions or along the urban interface
- road crash rescue
- flood rescue
- urban search and rescue after building collapses, landslides, earthquakes or other disasters
- fire investigation
- medical first response
- incident management across all hazards
- prescribed burning to mitigate the loss of life, property, and the environment, and hazard reduction
- providing community education, warnings, and ultimately build community resilience
- supporting the development of standards, legislation and regulatory arrangements, and supporting effective risk management
- high-rise incidents
- marine response and swift water rescue
- technical and high angle rescue.

Figure 8: National overview of the Firefighting industry-sector



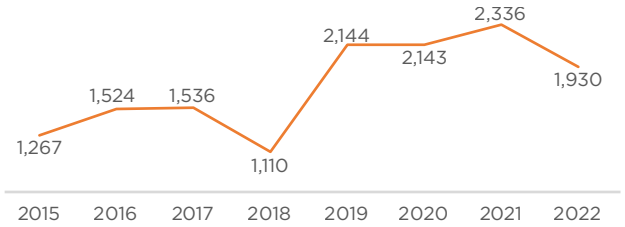
²⁰Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024;
²¹Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024;
²²Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024;
²³Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024;
²⁴Data sourced from Fire and Emergency Service agency annual reports found in Appendix A.
²⁵Airservices Australia, *Airservices Australia Annual Report 2022-23*. Airservices Australia, 2023, accessed 15 January 2024.

Number of Incidents Responded to Since 2013²⁶



Since 2013, there has been an 8% increase in total number of fire and other primary incidents responded to be by State/Territory fire service agencies.

Fire Sector Qualification (Certificate II to Advanced Diploma) awarded nationally 2015-22²⁷



In 2019, all fire sector qualifications underwent a review. As a result, there may have been a push to complete qualifications before they were discontinued, which may explain the sharp increase in completions between 2018-19

Vehicles and Appliances²⁸

Pumpers	Trailers
Tankers	Light Units
Aircraft	Marine Craft
Bulk Water Carrier	Firefighting Appliances
Pumping Appliances	Ladder Platform Appliances
Teleboom Appliances	Aerial Pumper Appliances

International Deployments in 2023²⁹



²⁶Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.6*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024; ‘incidents’ refer to calls for assistance related to structure fires, landscape fires (bush and grass), other fires, non-fire rescue calls including road crash rescue, hazardous conditions, floods, storm and tempest and other natural disasters, good intent calls, malicious false calls, system initiated false alarms, other and incident type not determined or classified.
²⁷National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), *Total VET students and courses 2022*: DataBuilder [data set], 2023, ncver.edu.au, accessed 2 May 2024; Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), *Vet Statistics 2015-2022: Fire, SES and Emergency Management Sector March 2024*, unpublished, accessed 30 April 2024; Fire specific sector qualifications refer to the following, PUA20613 - Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations) Released May 2013 (Superseded); PUA20619 - Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations) Released Jul 2019; PUA20713 - Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) Released May 2013 (Superseded); PUA20719 - Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) Released Jul 2019; PUA30601 - Cert III in Public Safety (Firefighting and Em. Operations) Released Feb 2011 (Superseded); PUA30613 - Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting and Em. Operations) Released Mar 2013 (Superseded); PUA30619 - Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting and Em. Operations) Released Jul 2019; PUA30701 - Cert III in Public Safety (Firefighting Ops) Released Feb 2011 (Superseded); PUA30713 - Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) Released Mar 2013 (Superseded); PUA30719 - Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) Released Jul 2019; PUA40313 - Certificate IV in Public Safety (Firefighting Supervision) Released Mar 2013 (Superseded); PUA40319 - Certificate IV in Public Safety (Firefighting Supervision) Released Jul 2019; PUA50513 - Diploma of Public Safety (Firefighting Management) Released Mar 2013 (Superseded); PUA50519 - Diploma of Public Safety (Firefighting Management) Released Jul 2019; PUA60513 - Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Firefighting Management) Released Mar 2013 (Superseded); PUA60519 - Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Firefighting Management) Released Jul 2019; PUA60913 - Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Fire Investigation) Released Mar 2013 (Superseded); PUA60919 - Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Fire Investigation) Released Jul 2019.
²⁸Data sourced from Fire and Emergency Service agency annual reports found in Appendix A.
²⁹Data sourced from Fire and Emergency Service agency annual reports found in Appendix A.

STATE AND TERRITORY EMERGENCY SERVICES

State and 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, tsunamis, earthquakes and landslides.

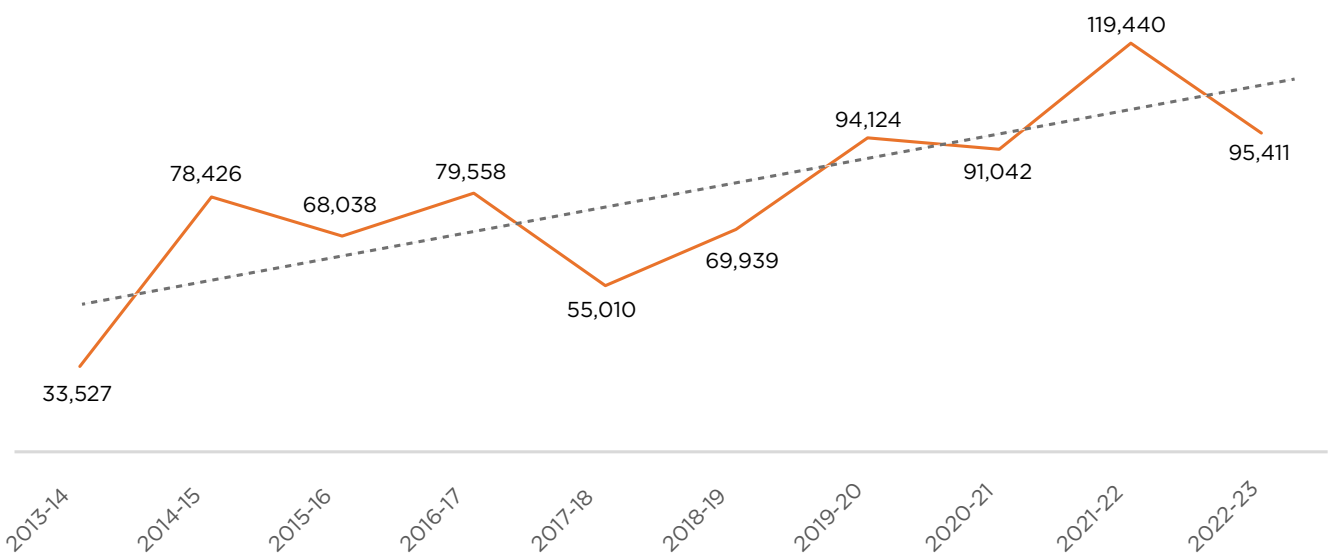
State and Territory Emergency Services agencies play a pivotal role in Australia's Emergency Management Framework. Operating at the State/Territory level, most agencies within Emergency Services are referred to as the State Emergency Service (SES). These agencies are primarily comprised of dedicated volunteers that are supported by a small contingent of paid employees. The workforce is organised into 'units' that are responsible for a specific geographical area. SES response efforts are coordinated with other emergency response and emergency management agencies 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 agencies may have a role in a range of emergency management activities across the PPRR cycle including:

- flood and swift water rescue
- storm response
- tsunami response
- earthquake response
- landslide response
- Road Air Industrial Rail (RAIR) vehicle extraction
- search and rescue
- interagency support
- hazard planning
- community warnings
- community education
- supporting Fire Operations
- incident management

Number of Yearly Incidents Responded to Since 2013³⁰

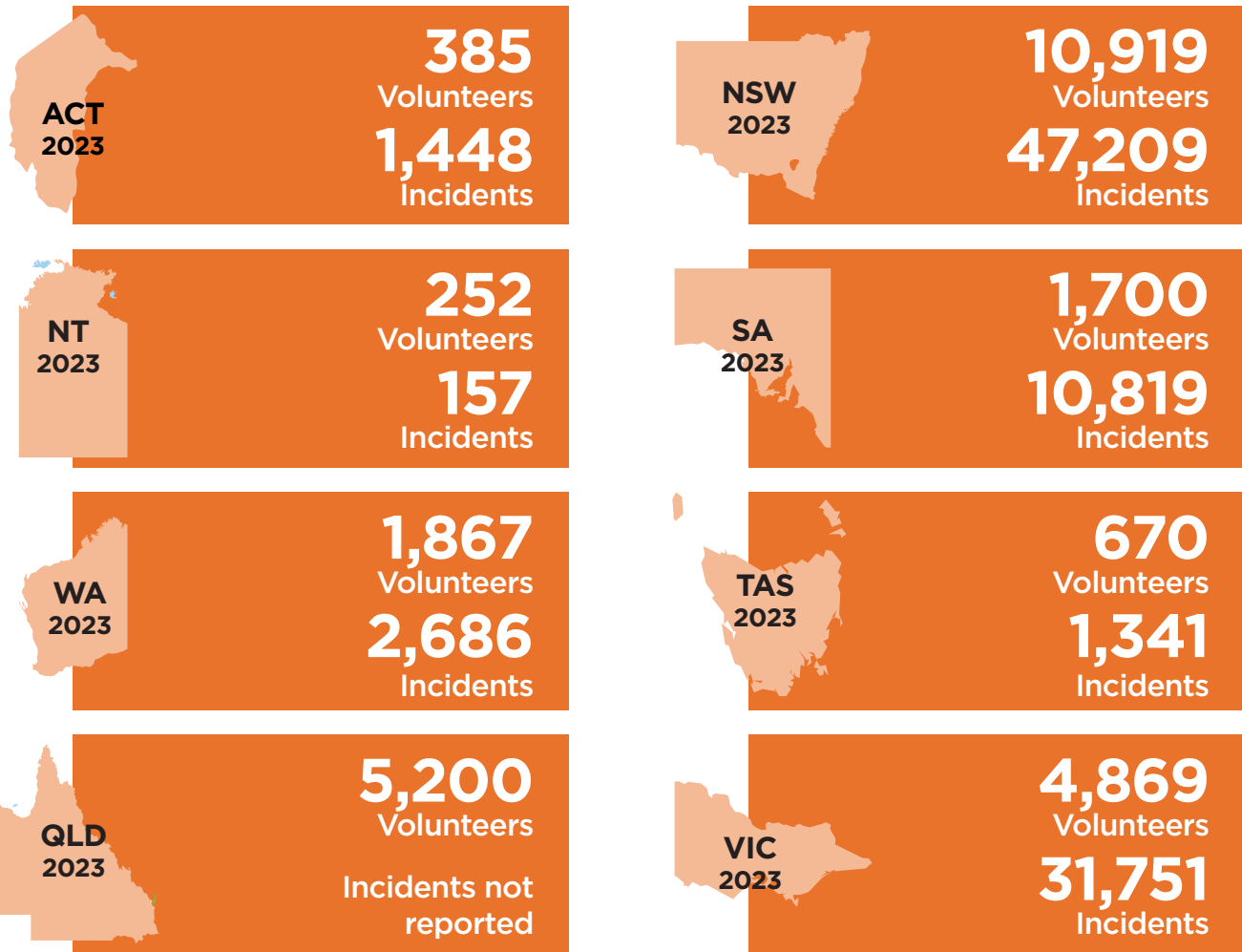


Despite yearly fluctuations, over the last decade there has been an overall increase in the number of incidents responded to by SES units.

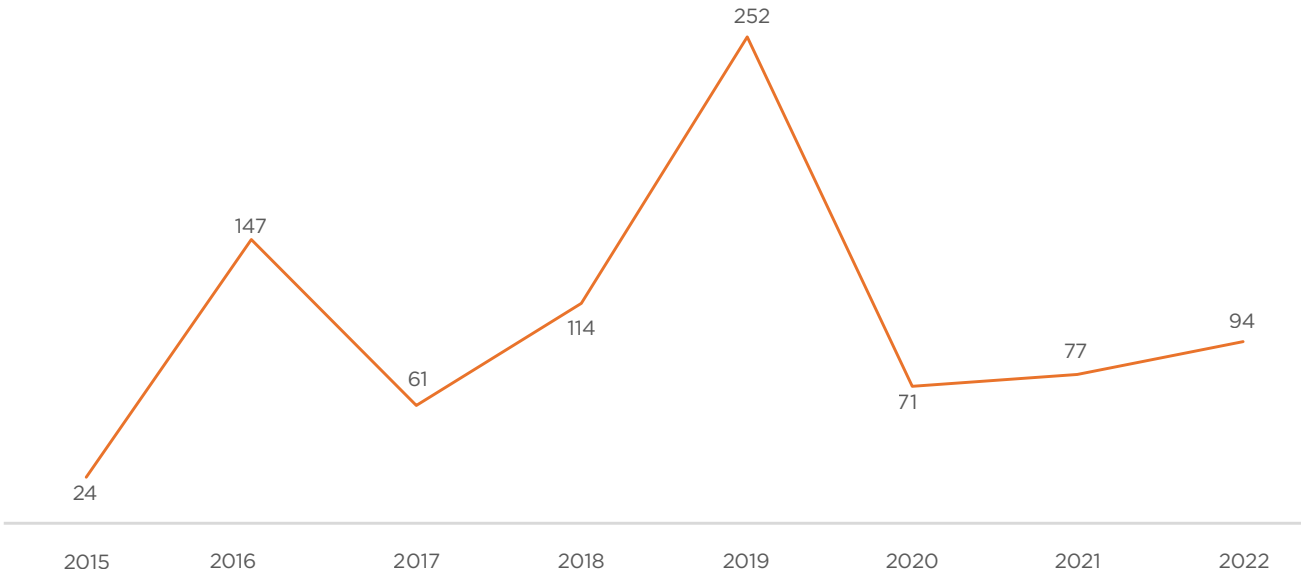
³⁰Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.7, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024.

Figure 9: National overview of the SES industry-sector

Number of SES Volunteers and Incidents by State/Territory³¹



SES-Specific PUA Training Package Qualification Completions³²



SES predominantly undertakes training at a 'unit-level' rather than at a qualification level, which may explain the low completion numbers

³¹For the number of SES volunteers see SES annual reports located in Appendix A; Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.7, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024; 'Incidents' refer to calls for assistance related to storms and cyclones, flood, other natural disasters, road crash rescue, vertical rescue, other search and rescue, community first response, hazardous conditions and other emergency incidents.
³²National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), Total VET students and courses 2022: DataBuilder [data set], 2023, ncver.edu.au, accessed 2 May 2024; Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), Vet Statistics 2015-2022: Fire, SES and Emergency Management Sector March 2024, unpublished, accessed 30 April 2024; SES-specific qualifications refer to the following, PUA21312 - Certificate II in Public Safety (SES) released Aug 2012 (superseded), PUA20219 - Certificate II in Public Safety (SES) Released Jul 2019, PUA30412 - Certificate III in Public Safety (SES rescue) released Aug 2012 (superseded), PUA 30512 - Certificate III in Public Safety (SES operations) released Aug 2012 (superseded), PUA30420 - Certificate III in Public Safety (SES rescue) released Dec 2020, PUA40212 Certificate IV in Public Safety (SES leadership) released Aug 2012 (superseded), PUA40219 Certificate IV in Public Safety (SES leadership) released Jul 2019.

SURF LIFE SAVING

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) is the peak authority for coastal water safety, drowning prevention and rescue operations nationally.³³ With more than 193,000 volunteer members and 315 affiliated clubs nationwide, SLSA is the largest volunteer agency in Australia and the largest volunteer lifesaving agency in the world.³⁴ SLSA maintains a significant presence by actively patrolling beaches and responding to water-related emergencies. The agency'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. The iconic red and yellow patrol flags signify areas monitored by SLSA-trained lifesavers.³⁵

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.

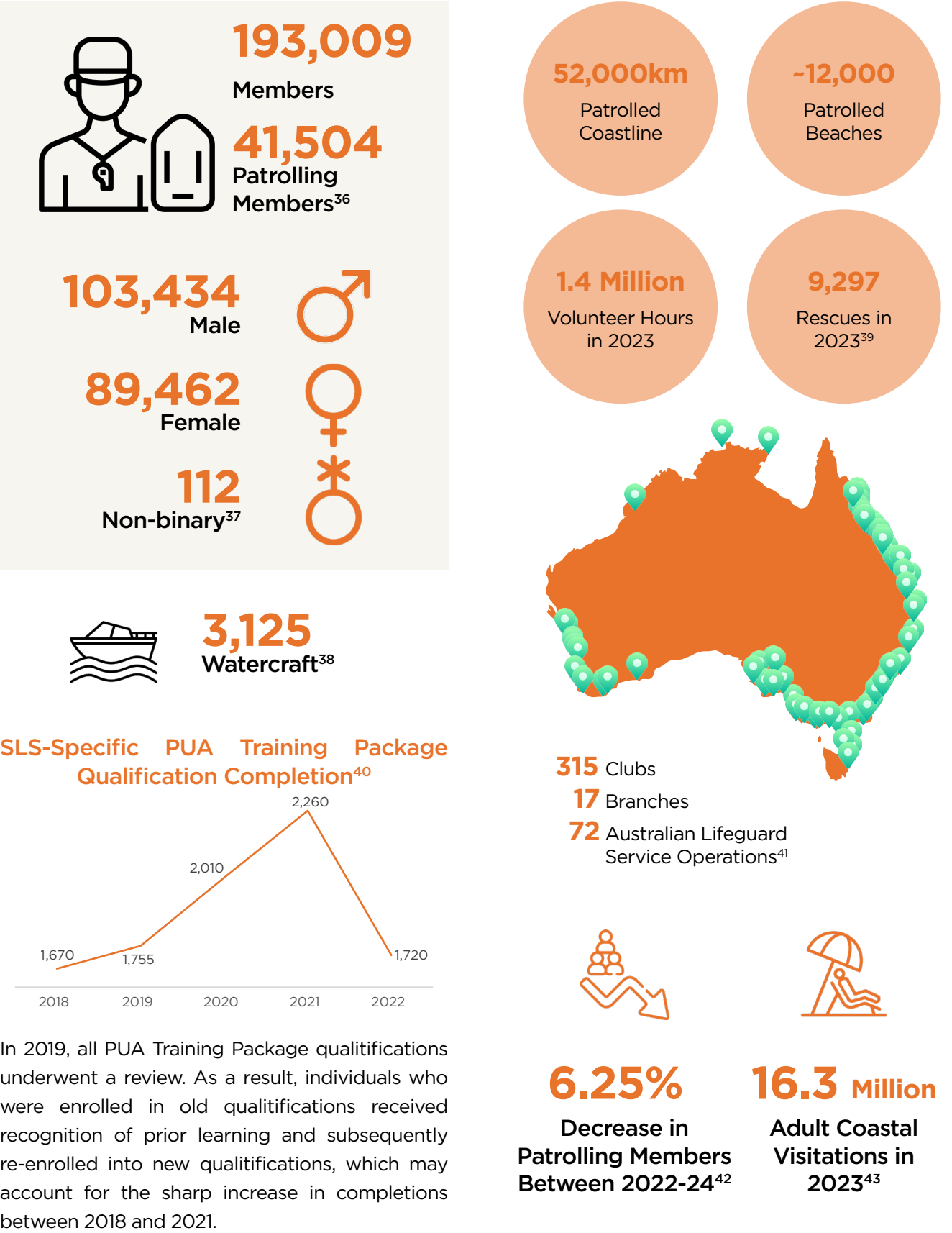
A significant proportion of its volunteer members join through SLSA's Nippers program, a youth program aimed at children between the ages of 5 to 14 that promotes water safety and teaches lifesaving skills. As a requirement of enrolment into the 'Nippers' program, at least one parent must join as an associate member, further boosting volunteer participation in the organisation.

SLSA clubs have also run targeted recruitment campaigns to encourage participation in specific age groups, such as the Silver Salties program aimed at attracting members who are 60 years and older. The program includes events such as yoga and beach walks and has increased the number of volunteers joining from this age group.



³³Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2022/2023 Annual Report, SLSA, 2023.
³⁴SLSA, 2022/2023 Annual Report, SLSA, 2023.
³⁵SLSA, National Coastal Safety Report 2022, SLSA, 2022.

Figure 10: National overview of the Surf Life Saving industry-sector



³⁶Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2022/2023 Annual Report, SLSA, 2023.
³⁷SLSA, 2022/2023 Annual Report, SLSA, 2023.
³⁸SLSA, 2022/2023 Annual Report, SLSA, 2023.
³⁹SLSA, 2022/2023 Annual Report, SLSA, 2023.
⁴⁰National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), Total VET students and courses 2022: DataBuilder[data set], 2023, ncver.edu.au, accessed 15 January 2024. SLS-specific qualifications refer to the following, PUA21012 - Certificate II in Public Safety (Aquatic Rescue) released Aug 2012 (superseded), PUA20119 - Certificate II in Public Safety (Aquatic Search and Rescue) released Jul 2019 (superseded), PUA31312 - Certificate III in Public Safety (Aquatic Search and Rescue) released Aug 2012 (superseded), PUA30319 - Certificate III in Public Safety (Aquatic Search and Rescue) released Jul 2019 (superseded), PUA30322 - Certificate III in Public Safety (Aquatic Search and Rescue) released Dec 2022.
⁴¹SLSA, State Centres, SLSA Website, n.d., accessed 15 January 2024.
⁴²SLSA, 2022/2023 Annual Report, SLSA, 2023.
⁴³SLSA, National Coastal Safety Report 2022, SLSA, 2023.

CROSS-INDUSTRY MEGATRENDS

Across all Public Safety and Government industry-sectors, nine cross-industry megatrends have consistently been identified as impacting the workforce (Figure 11). Cross-industry megatrends are often interrelated and may amplify or compound other trends. Future workforce planning may look to map these interdependencies.

Figure 11:

Identified cross-industry megatrends

Competition for Labour	Demographic Shifts	Recruitment and Retention
Career Pathways	Expansion of Core Duties	Diversity and Inclusivity
Climate Change	Technological Development	Public Trust and Perceptions

MEGATREND 1: COMPETITION FOR LABOUR

- ✓ Defence
- ✓ Police
- ✓ Fire and Emergency Services
- ✓ Correctional Services
- ✓ Federal, State/Territory and Local Government

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Prospective employees to the career Fire and Emergency Services roles may be drawn from other Public Safety organisations, including Police, Defence and other fire agencies. As there is growing demand for career Fire and Emergency Services roles across the country, prospective employees are more likely to be driven by the role, job security, remuneration, the diversity of the work, workplace flexibility, providing a community service and a positive workplace environment.

Discussion at the Workforce Planning Subcommittee highlighted that there are several competition for labour challenges specific to volunteers. These include agencies competing with a volunteer’s personal time and family commitments, and against other volunteer activities that present low risk to health and safety. For example, a firefighting employer representative noted that prospective volunteers are opting to perform voluntary duties in other areas of the industry-sector, such as Surf Lifesaving. Further, in small communities an individual may volunteer with more than one agency.

With the increasing severity and duration of emergencies, it was noted that volunteering can impact on a volunteer’s paid employment.

Competition for labour is a complex and multifaceted challenge for Australia’s labour force. The Public Safety and Government industry often attracts applicants who are committed to public service and the safety of Australian communities. This means that its industry-sectors find themselves competing for labour not only with the private sector but also with each other.

In the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector specifically, the demanding nature of the work, as well as the need for highly skilled, physically fit, and dedicated staff, intensifies competition for their labour.

MEGATREND 2: DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

- ✓ Defence
- ✓ Police
- ✓ Fire and Emergency Services
- ✓ Correctional Services
- ✓ Federal, State/Territory and Local Government

Demographic shifts, such as the movement of people between remote, regional, coastal and urban areas are likely to pose a significant challenge for the Public Safety and Government industry-sectors. Population growth is also likely to place increased demands on Public Safety and Government industry-sectors as more services will be required (often in increasingly dense areas). As highlighted in the *2023 Intergenerational Report*, the population of people who are 65 years and older in Australia is expected to double across the next 40 years.⁴⁴

Fire and Emergency Services agencies will need to meet increased demands as the population ages rapidly and their workforces experience attrition. Vulnerable communities may be less capable to engage in prevention and preparedness activities. Further, these communities may require assistance with self-evacuation in emergencies and education.

A growing population in regional or remote areas, where access to labour, training facilities, services and equipment is limited, can be challenging. In response, some Fire and Emergency Services agencies have bolstered regional and remote empowerment, to aid prevention and preparedness efforts. For example, the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) hosts an annual event ‘Get Ready Weekend’ encouraging communities to learn about fire and land management and how to best prepare ahead of the bushfire season.

⁴⁴Commonwealth of Australia, *2023 Intergenerational Report: Australia's future to 2063*. The Treasury, Australian Government, 2023.

MEGATREND 3: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- ✓ Defence
- ✓ Police
- ✓ Fire and Emergency Services
- ✓ Correctional Services
- ✓ Federal, State/Territory and Local Government

Recruiting and retaining new employees is a significant challenge across all industry-sectors in Public Safety and Government and is examined in further detail in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Recruitment and retention challenges across the public safety and government industry.

Recruitment	
Competitive salaries and flexible working conditions	Attractiveness of higher education
Competitive labour markets or low volume of workers in specific fields	Perceptions of the industry
Retention	
Australia's sustained economic growth	Changes to employer's expectations of the workforce
Increasing demand and scope of public safety work	Staff wellbeing

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Recruitment and retention challenges in the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector differ between career and volunteer workforces.

For example, during consultations, firefighting representatives highlighted that recruiting career members is not currently a challenge. Conversely, recruitment and retention of volunteer members remain a challenge, which is explored in Industry-Sector Challenge 1.

MEGATREND 4: CAREER PATHWAYS

- ✓ Defence
- ✓ Police
- ✓ Fire and Emergency Services
- ✓ Correctional Services
- ✓ Federal, State/Territory and Local Government

Clearly defined career pathways are crucial to support employee value propositions and to retain staff. Career pathways may include:

- structured and connected personal development plans that enable career employees and volunteers to enter an industry, develop core skills, and achieve training goals, and
- clearly defined educational pathways to support career employees and volunteers into promotional pathways or move laterally into specialised roles.

In the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector, career pathways differ between agencies based on agency job role requirements and jurisdictional risk profiles, including requirements for vocational education and training (VET) qualifications.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Both career progression and training are well-mapped for career Fire and Emergency Services employees, however, lateral transfers between agencies may be challenging due to the different jurisdictional legislative frameworks, requirements, policies, and procedures.

Mapping of volunteer pathways is limited due to the secondary employment nature of volunteering (as opposed to the primary employment of volunteers).

Volunteer pathways at an agency level are aligned to the training volunteers are required to undertake to perform specific job roles and to meet the skill needs of their specific brigade/unit. As the specific needs will vary based on risk and location, developing a nationally consistent pathway for volunteers poses a challenge.

MEGATREND 5: EXPANSION OF CORE DUTIES

- ✓ Defence
- ✓ Police
- ✓ Fire and Emergency Services
- ✓ Correctional Services
- ✓ Federal, State/Territory and Local Government

Expanding core duties is a challenge affecting all Public Safety and Government industry-sectors. The expansion of core duties and responsibilities (or 'role creep') refers to the gradual and unintended expansion of responsibilities and tasks beyond the original scope of a role or rank. In a professional context, it often occurs when additional duties and responsibilities are assigned to an individual or a team without a corresponding adjustment in resources, time, or compensation. For employees, this can result in increased workloads and responsibilities and may contribute to employee attrition and separation. Expansion of core duties and responsibilities may be driven by:

- budgetary restrictions and the challenge to 'do more with less',
- increasing government or community expectations,
- emerging evidence and changing understandings of effective practices, and
- technological advancements.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

It was noted within consultations that Fire and Emergency Services agencies continue to support preventative measures in the community, including education, risk assessments, and strategic planning, to mitigate the impact of potential disasters.

The community's heightened awareness and expectations regarding public safety and emergency responses have contributed to an expanded role for the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector. There is a growing demand for timely and effective communication with the community, as well as a need for engagement initiatives to support preparedness, particularly as bushfires and natural disasters increase in frequency and intensity.

Over time, community expectations can influence the response of governments to the core duties and responsibilities of the workforce. Roles are continuously evolving across prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery activities increasing demand for this industry-sector.

MEGATREND 6: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY

- ✓ Defence
- ✓ Police
- ✓ Fire and Emergency Services
- ✓ Correctional Services
- ✓ Federal, State/Territory and Local Government

Public Safety and Government industry-sectors have made progress towards fostering inclusive and equitable practices in recruiting First Nations peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse individuals, women, gender-diverse people, and people with disabilities; however, representation remains an ongoing challenge in some operational roles.⁴⁵ While there are pre-existing national strategies to promote inclusive and equitable practices (such as those being led by the AFAC Diversity and Inclusion Group and the Champions of Change program), measuring the success of such strategies requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

First Nations peoples and women continue to be under-represented in the Fire and Emergency Services workforce. This imbalance is even more pronounced in operational roles, as certain jurisdictions report that less than 10 per cent of operational firefighters or emergency service workers are women.⁴⁶

Despite these efforts, there is a continued need to implement inclusive policies, cultural competency training, and outreach initiatives to attract and retain people from the broadest possible pool of workers and volunteers within the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Between the 2016 and 2021 Censuses, there was an increase in female Firefighters of 1.2 percentage points.⁴⁷ Efforts to increase female representation in this workforce are ongoing and appear to be working, however, representation remains an ongoing challenge.

Industry-sectors have identified a significant disparity in female representation in volunteerism, especially in club sport endeavours within organisations such as Surf Lifesaving Australia. Understanding the drivers behind lower levels of female volunteerism have helped inform industry-sector strategies.⁴⁸ For example, the Women in Powercraft initiative sought to bolster women trained to crew and drive IRB Powercraft to assist in resolving persistent shortages. Surf Lifesaving Australia representatives noted that this collaborative pilot program with New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia had a positive impact on female participation in these training awards.

⁴⁵Gender-diverse refers to individuals who do not identify as male or female, for example non-binary.

⁴⁶See State/Territory Fire and Emergency Services Annual Reports in Appendix A.

⁴⁷Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Sex (SEXP) by 6-digit Level Occupation (OCCP) [Census TableBuilder], 2016, accessed 15 January 2024; ABS, Sex (SEXP) by 6-digit Level Occupation (OCCP) [Census TableBuilder], 2021, accessed 15 January 2024.

⁴⁸A Pankowiak, M Casey, R Eime, and H Westerbeek, 'Sport clubs' volunteer capacity to drive women and girls' participation in community sport, Victoria University, 2022.

MEGATREND 7: CLIMATE CHANGE

- ✓ Defence
- ✓ Police
- ✓ Fire and Emergency Services
- ✓ Correctional Services
- ✓ Federal, State/Territory and Local Government

Climate change and weather-related disasters are having a significant influence on every industry-sector, including those overseen by other JSCs. While the effects of climate change may be widespread, the implications for individual industry-sectors vary.

Disasters are compounding and negatively affecting the ability of communities and Fire and Emergency Services' workforces to absorb disasters and bounce back stronger. As the earth warms, the bushfire seasons are becoming longer and more intense, the frequency of extreme rainfall is increasing, sea levels are rising and the strength and duration of heatwaves have increased in Australia.⁴⁹ Increasing fires also impacts community health due to bushfire smoke.⁵⁰

The increasing frequency and severity of disasters places a considerable demand on agency resources and requires the continual development and training of Fire and Emergency Services personnel at a time when resources are being stretched more than ever. Emergency managers are recognising the value of a systemic approach to disaster risk reduction where deeper connections are growing across all elements of communities, governments, and businesses. In addition, recent disasters have necessitated greater levels of

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Just as fire agencies and communities were recovering from the devastating 2019/20 bushfires, communities in the east were plunged into extended periods of heavy rain and flooding.

Communities still recovering from fire were faced with floods. In 2023 under the influence of an El Niño, fire conditions returned to the east with fires burning in areas that were burned in 2020. Experienced fire practitioners are seeing fire behaviour beyond the bounds of their experience.

interoperability between response agencies, relief and recovery organisations, and with support organisations and communities.

Lengthening bushfire seasons create more overlap across our country and reduces the ability to share resources with international counterparts. Significant bushfire events necessitate a deeper focus on managing supply chain and optimising the targeted use of skilled staff and equipment, reducing the ability to share resources and offer surge support.

Further work in this area is required to enhance cooperative arrangements and practices, including interagency relationship building, intelligence sharing to support decision-making, and disaster preparedness planning.

⁴⁹Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), *State of the climate 2022*, CSIRO and BOM, Australian Government, 2022, accessed 30 April 2024.

⁵⁰CSIRO and BOM, *State of the climate 2022*, CSIRO and BOM, Australian Government, 2022, accessed 30 April 2024.

MEGATREND 8: TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

- ✓ Defence
- ✓ Police
- ✓ Fire and Emergency Services
- ✓ Correctional Services
- ✓ Federal, State/Territory and Local Government

The rapid evolution of technology presents a challenge for Public Safety and Government industry-sectors and most commonly impacts:

- workplace capability and practices (i.e. streamlining processes and enhancing communications),
- response or operational practices, and
- standardised training practices.

In the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector, technological innovations have enhanced the safety and capabilities of emergency personnel. Advanced firefighting gear, thermal imaging cameras, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) equipped with sensors provide valuable tools for assessing situations, locating people in distress and monitoring fire behaviour. This not only enhances the safety of Fire and Emergency Services personnel but also improves the accuracy and speed of emergency operations.

Technological partnerships have become important to effectively respond to natural disasters and weather-related events. For example, ACT Fire and Emergency Services have partnered with the Australian National University to use satellites, drones, and machine-learning algorithms to enhance operational capabilities.⁵¹ Utilising technology is an increasingly powerful tool for Fire and Emergency Services agencies to complement other practices, including cultural burning practices, community empowerment, and training activities. Technology has allowed broadcast messages to become more targeted while at the same time allowing information (and misinformation) to be broadcast more regularly. Fire and Emergency Services are dealing with multiple channels of sometimes conflicting information and will increasingly use decision support system to support their activities.

The increasing reliance on technology brings

challenges such as the need for ongoing training to ensure that personnel are proficient in using new equipment and systems. This additional training places further expectations on the workforce, particularly volunteers. Through AFAC's collaborative arrangements, the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector has a key role in exploring, developing and sharing information on new technologies. AFAC has developed a range of guidelines regarding equipment and technology designed to promote flexible learning for members, and internal systems that can enable the capture of detailed and accurate workforce data.⁵²

The rapid transition of Artificial Intelligence (AI) promises to be transformative for many Public Safety and Government industry-sectors. There are opportunities to use this technology to respond to some of the megatrends identified in this plan. Effective utilisation of AI however requires new and emerging skills that will be in high demand across industries better resourced and funded to recruit to new AI job roles. To realise the benefits of AI, Public Safety and Government industry-sectors will likely need to introduce internal skill development rather than rely upon recruiting appropriately skilled personnel.

Technological developments in areas such as solar power generation, electric vehicles, hydrogen-electric vehicles etc. have increased the complexity of responding to emergency incidents, primarily by introducing new hazards into responders' workplaces. The resultant risks require responders to acquire additional skills. Increasing reliance on evolving technology also increases the exposure of the community to emergency incidents.

⁵¹A Diaz, Fighting fires from space: how satellites and other tech could prevent catastrophic bushfires, Australian National University (ANU), ANU Reporter, 2023, accessed April 30 2024.

⁵²Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), Operations and Capability, AFAC website, n.d. accessed 23 April 2024.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Members of the Workforce Planning Subcommittee noted that there are new and emerging industry-sector risks related to technological advancements in lithium-ion batteries. This is an evolving challenge and will impact on tactical response options and operational safety training in the future.

AFAC hosts an Alternative and Renewable Energy Technologies (ARET) Working Group to address priority issues relating to alternative energy technologies. ARET has developed national guidelines to support the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector in large energy infrastructure installations, residential energy infrastructure installations, and has also developed a national Fire and Emergency Services position on electric vehicles (EV) and EV charging equipment in the built environment.

MEGATREND 9: PUBLIC TRUST AND PERCEPTIONS

- ✓ Defence
- ✓ Police
- ✗ Fire and Emergency Services
- ✓ Correctional Services
- ✓ Federal, State/Territory and Local Government

Public Safety and Government industry-sectors are commonly impacted by public trust and community perceptions, which can influence the ability of agencies to effectively undertake their work.

Firefighters are consistently rated by communities as the most 'ethical' occupation.⁵³

In 2023 Firefighters were rated
82 out of 100
for perceived ethical
behaviour⁵⁴

Although during consultation Fire and Emergency Services personnel did not identify public trust as a current issue for the industry-sector, maintaining the capacity and capability of agencies to effectively respond to incidents in a timely manner and effectively deliver services will continue to ensure this high level of public trust.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

In the wake of an emergency, the community expects the availability of authoritative and consistent information. Industry-sector representatives noted that senior officials across Fire and Emergency Services must often balance the role of coordinating an incident, making critical response decisions, and providing the necessary information to the community via media platforms.

⁵³Governance Institute of Australia. *Ethics index – 2023*, Governance Institute of Australia, 2023.

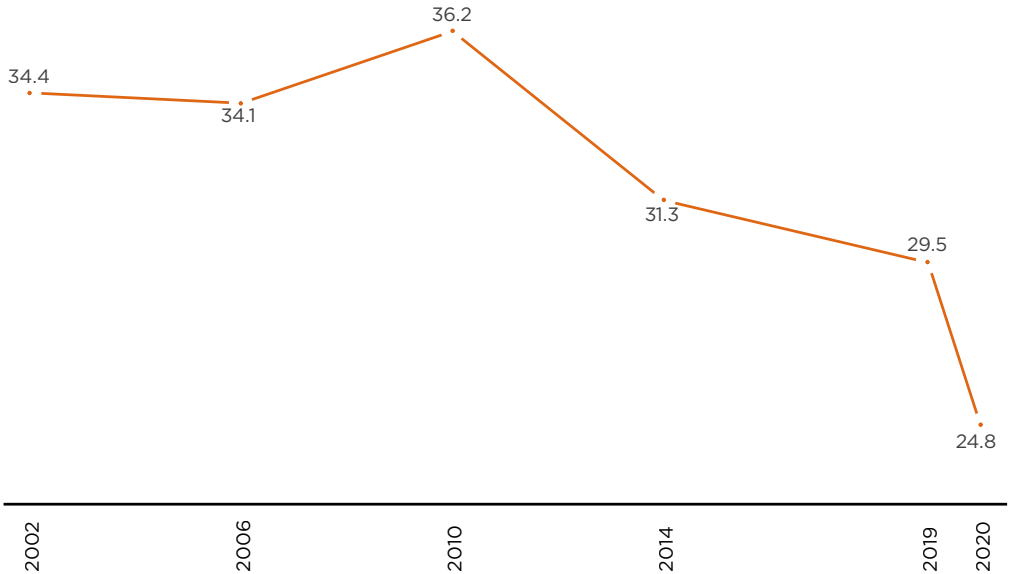
⁵⁴Governance Institute of Australia. *Ethics index – 2023*, Governance Institute of Australia, 2023.

INDUSTRY-SECTOR CHALLENGES

Challenge 1: Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers

Reported rates of 'formal' volunteering,⁵⁵ have steadily declined across Australia in the past decade (Figure 13).⁵⁶ This decline accelerated during COVID-19, however, there are indications this trend is slowly recovering.

Figure 13: Proportion of persons (%) who have participated in formal volunteering in the previous 12 months of undertaking the General Social Survey⁵⁷



Declining participation in volunteering has a disproportionate effect on Fire and Emergency Services when compared to other industry-sectors. Volunteers not choosing to commence or continue to formally volunteer is a challenge across volunteer Fire and Emergency Services agencies as evidenced in Figure 14 below.

⁵⁵Involvement in volunteering through established agencies.

⁵⁶Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *General Social Survey* [data set], abs.gov.au, 2020, accessed 30 April 2024.

⁵⁷ABS, *General Social Survey* [data set], abs.gov.au, 2020, accessed 30 April 2024.

Figure 14: Overview of key volunteer statistics for Fire and Emergency Services agencies and Surf Lifesaving



As the sustainability of the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector relies on a viable pipeline of skilled career and volunteer personnel, strategies aimed at improving rates of volunteer participation need to first prioritise the key drivers for volunteers who cease volunteering. Throughout consultations, challenges with volunteer leadership capability were routinely identified as one of these key drivers for separation. Further, industry consultation identified the following drivers for volunteer separations or challenges with recruitment:

- Ageing of the volunteer pool of workers and the workforce in general.
- Cost of living and the reduction of an individuals’ ability to volunteer due to increased time pressures and multiple sources of employment.
- Increases in opportunity cost/personal burden of volunteering and the possible indication that perceived benefits of volunteering are decreasing.
- Increases in training and skills maintenance requirements for volunteers.
- Individuals are seeking lower risk volunteer opportunities.
- Younger people are less interested in volunteering.
- Increasing gap in volunteer expectations versus agency requirements.

⁵⁸Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.4, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024
⁵⁹Productivity Commission, Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.5, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024
⁶⁰Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA), 2022/2023 Annual Report, SLSA, 2023
⁶¹E D’Agostino and T Dalton, Dramatic flood rescue in Victorian town Spurs effort to revive local SES units, ABC News, 2024, Accessed 20 March 2024.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Some employer representatives noted volunteer recruitment challenges are commonly experienced in select cohorts or communities, primarily in the attraction of younger people and members from rural and remote communities. Challenges in supporting rural and remote communities have been noted in media reporting on response times and inactive stations, most recently through reporting on the SES units at Wedderburn, Victoria becoming inactive.⁶¹

Volunteer representatives observed formal volunteering has significant impacts on the personal lives of volunteers including balancing paid work, family and volunteering commitments. This may also lead to fatigue and burnout for volunteers especially during periods of intense demand. **Some employer representatives felt shortfalls in volunteer leadership capabilities** are leading to higher rates of attrition, as very few organisations deliver volunteer-specific leadership training.

One industry-sector representative noted opportunities to re-enter volunteering are not supported by bespoke training focussed on only the necessary skills that volunteers may require as they re-enter. The majority of training is focussed on training new volunteers, which is similar to the challenge of ‘lateral-entry’ faced by other industry-sectors.

Some representatives stated agency requirements of volunteers do not match volunteer expectations for volunteers who prefer episodic, spontaneous or short-term volunteering engagements.

One industry-sector representative observed revitalisation of volunteering units is most effectively driven by close localised engagement with communities and their needs rather than State/Territory or Federal-based campaigns.

One industry representative noted that the challenge of recruitment and retention of volunteers is especially prevalent in remote areas. Barriers such as training capacity and insufficient coordination and management can limit the utilisation of emergency service volunteers.

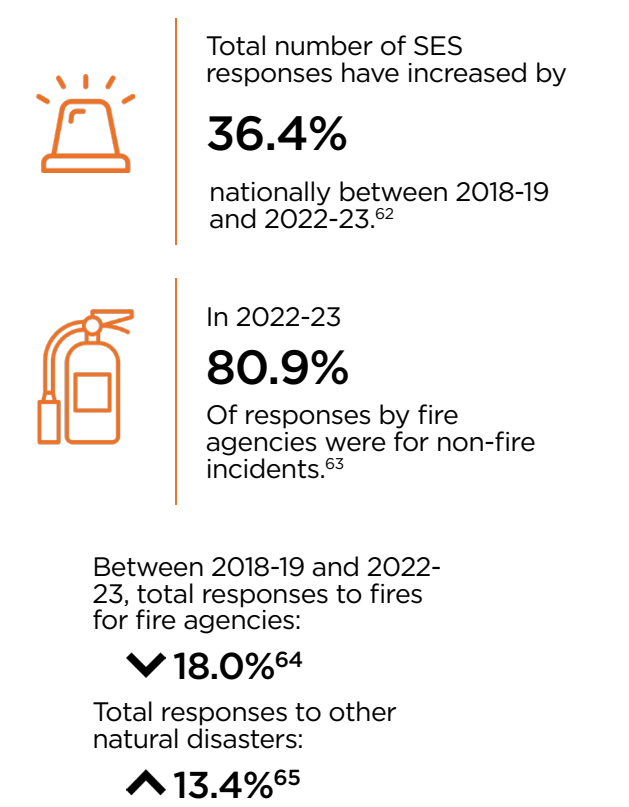
A research project is currently underway through Natural Hazards Research Australia, working in partnership with Fire and Emergency Services agencies, to undertake a national project around practical, tangible action to successfully recruit and retain volunteers. This research reinforces the Fire and Emergency Services recognition of having a sustainable volunteer workforce to support Australia’s emergency management capability.

Challenge 2: Changing Demand

Demand for Fire and Emergency Services agencies has changed over time (Figure 15), and has been influenced by three key factors:

- Increased number of climate and emergency-related events (see Megatrend 7: Climate Change)
- International deployments to provide support during large-scale Fire and Emergency events
- Shifting focus from response and recovery efforts to prevention, mitigation and preparedness efforts, increasing the need to maintain and develop partnerships with the community including First Nations peoples and other public safety agencies.

Figure 15: Demand for Fire and Emergency Services responses



⁶²Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.7*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024.
⁶³Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.7*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024.
⁶⁴Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.6*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024.
⁶⁵Productivity Commission, *Emergency services for fire and other events – Table 9A.7*, [data set], pc.gov.au, 2024, accessed 30 April 2024.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Fire agencies in some jurisdictions are providing emergency medical first response and the demand for these services is growing.

SLSA indicated some personnel are also providing response to flood and bushfire events, as the impact of natural disasters often exceeds the resource availability of local emergency services in affected areas.

SES personnel are reporting their workload is increasing, particularly in relation to increased road crash responses, and more frequent and severe natural disasters.

Increased demand across specialised roles requires volunteer agencies to deliver more training, which places further time demands on volunteers, which may contribute to a decline in volunteering.

Increasingly, more parts of government are being called upon to support all facets of disaster risk reduction. The need to build and maintain incident management capability across all hazards is an ongoing challenge across the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector. At the centre of effective emergency response is a consistent incident management system. AllIMS is the adopted doctrine used to ensure effective and coordinated interoperability across Fire and Emergency Services agencies in Australia. However, the development of basic training and ongoing skills maintenance is needed to manage the increase in disasters requiring a coordinated response. Fire and Emergency Services agencies have robust mechanisms to maintain standards and meet training requirements through Enterprise Registered Training Organisations (ERTO). They may also draw on other delivery mechanisms such as online training, exercising, face-to-face instruction and use of simulation to support growing demand.

The impacts of changing demand are likely to continue to be felt by Fire and Emergency Services agencies, if the number and extremity of weather events increase, and recruitment and retention challenges deepen.

National resource sharing arrangements are in place to support surge capacity during times of high demand. These are currently managed by:

- AFAC National Resource Sharing Centre (NRSC), for interstate and international requests for firefighting assistance.
- NEMA, for national emergency management resource sharing, providing funding for Disaster Relief Australia and national disaster relief.
- State/Territory Fire and Emergency Services agencies, for resource sharing between organisations.

Challenge 3: Training Volunteers

A significant number of Fire and Emergency Service agencies operate an ERT0. However, volunteer agencies and volunteers have routinely identified the impacts of increased training commitments as well as the cost and burden of compliance on volunteer participation.

In order to enter into volunteering, prospective volunteers will often enrol into units of competency, skills sets or entire qualifications. Table 3 outlines the entry-level qualifications for Lifesaving, SES, and fire volunteers along with the number of units of competency required to complete the qualifications.

Table 3: Number of units of competency for Certificate II Public Safety qualifications⁶⁶

Qualitification	Number of units of competency
Certificate II in Public Safety (Aquatic Rescue)	8
Certificate II in Public Safety (SES)	10
Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations)	11
Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations)	11

It must be remembered that the time commitments required to successfully complete the qualifications listed above are compounded by the time required to complete agency-specific training (such work health and safety). As such, many volunteers will instead enrol into singular units of competency or skill sets that align with the particular requirements of their agency. As a result, volunteers will not typically enrol into entire qualifications, which reduces the number of reported learners.

⁶⁶Training.gov.au, *Training Package Details, PUA – Public Safety (release 5.0)*, training.gov.au website, n.d. accessed 9 May 2024.

The National Strategy for Volunteering has identified creating *Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive* as a focus area and aims to identify, through community consultation, ways in which to increase support for volunteers and volunteer-led organisations.⁶⁷ Public Skills Australia, in partnership with its industry-sector representatives, may seek to support consultation and provide a voice to the balance of operational safety, skilling opportunities and volunteer management.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Volunteer agencies generally focus on the delivery of specific units of competency to perform the role rather than on the awarding of qualifications. Examining qualification completion data does not illustrate the volume of completions that is occurring at the unit of competency level and skill set level.

Volunteer training priorities are often linked to risk rather than personal preferences, which can lead to an impact on volunteering decline.

Ongoing skills maintenance and skills gap training and assessment for updated units and qualifications are particularly onerous, for volunteers, trainers, and assessors.

Volunteer agencies report a shortage of qualified trainers and assessors, who may themselves be volunteers, creating a further barrier to delivering training.

⁶⁷Volunteering Australia, *National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-2033*, 2022.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT & TIMEFRAMES

Public Skills Australia has not identified any strategies for the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector through this Workforce Plan or for the Public Skills Australia work program across 2024-25. The Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector is well supported by AFAC and its partners for research, as well as policy development for these workforces. Public Skills Australia will conduct its Training Product Development function supported by AFAC, as the industry-sector continues to review and update the PUA Training Package. Any future workforce strategy development for the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector will be conducted in partnership and consultation with:

- AFAC (and any related national groups, committees and networks they facilitate),
- State and Territory Police Fire and Emergency Services organisations, where direct contact and data collection is required (that AFAC is unable to facilitate),
- United Firefighters Union of Australia (UFUA),
- ACSES
- Surf Lifesaving Australia
- Any other relevant Fire and Emergency Services organisation as required.

Potential workforce strategies for the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector will be identified in the next 12 months, for scoping and development in the 2025 Workforce Plan for Fire and Emergency Services. The following Training Product Development-based strategies will be undertaken to support the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sectors.

Table 4: Proposed actions to address identified industry-sector challenge

Labour Market Dynamics	Proposed Action	Key Stakeholders
Megatrend 4: Career Pathways	JSC Function: • Training Product Development • Implementation, Promotion and Monitoring	• AFAC • UFUA • ACSES • Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
Symptom: Quality Mismatch	Activities: Support Fire and Emergency Services capability by researching or developing relevant training products. Actions: • Firefighting Appliance Pump Technician Training Products (Approved Activity Identifier: GEP_ANN_2324_004). • Producing a Findings Report into Emergency Tree Operations (Approved Activity Identifier: GEP_ANN_2324_003). Anticipated Timing: • 1 June 2024 – 31 May 2025 • 1 June 2024 – 10 January 2025	• Department Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry • Other JSCs • ERTOs • Canberra Institute of Technology • STTA/SROs.

EXISTING WORKFORCE STRATEGIES

This chapter maps the connections between existing workforce strategies in the Public Safety and Government industry-sectors and Public Skills Australia’s *Workforce Plan 2024: Fire and Emergency Services*. This mapping identifies strategies that are currently used by Government and industry-sectors to inform Public Skills Australia’s workforce planning efforts.

Table 5: Existing national and industry-sector strategies

National Strategies						
Strategy	Link to Industry-Sector Challenge	Link to Cross-Sector Megatrend	Owner	Timing	Purpose and Components	How it will inform our work
Towards a National Jobs and Skills Roadmap: Annual Jobs and Skills Report 2023 ⁶⁸	1, 3	1, 3, 4	JSA	2023 (complete)	This report maps trends in the labour market including digital transformation, and the transformation to a clean energy and net-zero economy. Reforms undertaken within the VET and higher education system to meet the identified workforce challenges, including the formation of the JSC program, proposed National Skills Passport, and the <i>Australian University Accord Interim Report</i> are also considered.	Public Skills Australia will support JSA by undertaking and facilitating consultation with the Public Safety and Government industry-sectors on components of the Report. This will include engaging key stakeholders and JSA throughout the development of the Skills Priority List (SPL) to ensure access to critical industry intelligence.
The Clean Energy Generation: Workforce needs for a Net Zero Economy ⁶⁹	2	7	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.	Public Skills Australia will work with Powering Skills Organisation and the Department for Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to facilitate access to key stakeholders within its remit. Public Skills Australia will continue to focus on first responders and the safety aspects of future clean energy such as lithium batteries by assessing whether any new training might be required.
Skills Priority List (SPL) ⁷⁰	1, 2		JSA	Ongoing	The SPL is an online tool that assesses whether an occupation is in shortage and its anticipated future demand. The SPL is released annually, and classifies occupations into one of three categories: shortage, no shortage and regional shortage. The SPL outcomes may be used to inform, along with other inputs and evidence, the direction of national and State/Territory workforce policies.	Public Skills Australia will continue to broker the capturing of intelligence from the Public Safety and Government industry-sectors to inform the development and review of the SPL.
The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) Review ⁷¹	2		ABS	2023 - 2024	A review of the ANZSCO occupation classification structure is underway. The ABS review provides an opportunity to update the classification structure to better reflect contemporary occupations in the Australian economy. This will ensure that more accurate data is collected regarding the Australian labour market to inform, along with other inputs and evidence, the direction of national and State/Territory workforce policies.	Public Skills Australia has and will continue to work closely with its industry-sectors to collate industry intelligence and provide advice regarding required changes to the ANZSCO occupational classification structure. Outcomes of this review may ensure that occupational shortages in the Public Safety and Government industry are better represented in datasets that are aligned to ANZSCO.

⁶⁸Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), *Towards a National Jobs and Skills Roadmap*. Towards a National Jobs and Skills Roadmap, JSA, Australian Government, 2023.
⁶⁹Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), *The Clean Energy Generation: Workforce needs for a Net Zero Economy*. JSA, Australian Government, 2023.
⁷⁰Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), *Skills Priority List*, JSA, Australian Government, 2023, Accessed: 13 February 2024.
⁷¹Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *ANZCO Comprehensive Review – Consultation Round 3*, ABS, Australian Government, 2023, accessed 30 April 2024.

Table 5: Existing national and industry-sector strategies

National Strategies						
Strategy	Link to Industry-Sector Challenge	Link to Cross-Sector Megatrend	Owner	Timing	Purpose and Components	How it will inform our work
Closing the Gap ⁷²		6	Council of Australian Governments	2019 - 2029	The <i>Closing the Gap Report</i> informs the development of specific recruitment, health and social programs for First Nations peoples. These programs are deployed across the Public Safety and Government industry.	Public Skills Australia acknowledges that representation of First Nations peoples within the five Public Safety and Government industry-sectors varies greatly. Improving the quality of workforce data pertaining to First Nations peoples' representation is an ongoing priority in workforce planning.
Australian Cyber Security Strategy ⁷³		8	Department of Home Affairs	2023 - 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. Most relevant to Public Safety and Government, the Strategy aims to ensure: - Australia has a diverse and professional cyber workforce that can protect citizens and businesses from cyber-attacks. - Critical infrastructure and government systems can withstand and bounce back from cyber-attacks.	Public Skills Australia will aim to support the Cyber Security Strategy in its work with Public Safety and Government industry-sectors. 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.
Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper ⁷⁴	2	7	Department of Home Affairs National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)	Ongoing	The fundamental objective of the Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper is to build national capacity to ensure Australia is prepared to face the increasing number of frequent and severe natural disasters due to climate change (Department of Home Affairs, 2023). The strategy also touches on recommendations that the ADF should only be used as the last resort for domestic aid to the community during and following disasters except in extreme circumstances.	The Department of Home Affairs and National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) will use information gathered from the Discussion Paper to inform the policy development process and advice to Government on potential options. This Discussion Paper aligns to many of the challenges identified at consultation and the outcomes will be routinely monitored for further intelligence.

⁷²Council of Australian Governments, *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, Council of Australian Governments, Australian Government, 2020.
⁷³Digital Transformation Agency, *2023–2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy*, Digital Transformation Agency, Australian Government, 2023.
⁷⁴Department of Home Affairs, *Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response: Discussion Paper – August 2023*, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Australian Government, 2023.

Table 5: Existing national and industry-sector strategies

Industry-Sector Specific Strategies						
Strategy	Link to Industry-Sector Challenge	Link to Cross-Sector Megatrend	Owner	Timing	Purpose and Components	How it will inform our work
AFAC Strategic Directions for Fire and Emergency Services ⁷⁵	All	All	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 6 key areas of focus for the sector point to the collective priorities identified by organisations across the country. They 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.	Public Skills Australia will continue to work closely with AFAC, its member agencies, and other members of the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector. Consultation will be undertaken to explore how workforce planning and training product development may support the identified challenges.
AFAC Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027 ⁷⁶	All	7	AFAC	2023 - 2027	The <i>AFAC Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027</i> 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.	Public Skills Australia will continue to work closely with AFAC, its member agencies, and other members of the Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector. Consultation will be undertaken to explore how workforce planning and training product development may support the identified challenges.
Champions of Change Fire and Emergency ⁷⁷	1	3, 6	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	In recognition the Public Safety and Government industry's continued focus on improving diverse and inclusive practices, Public Skills Australia will work closely with Fire and Emergency Services industry-sector to consider how workforce planning and training product development may support the identified challenges.
National Strategy for Volunteering 2023 - 2033 ⁷⁸	1, 3		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 which seek to provide a stronger rationale for the value of volunteering.	Public Skills Australia will use the objectives and focus areas to inform its 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.

⁷⁵Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), AFAC Strategic Directions for Fire and Emergency Services 2022-2026, AFAC, 2021.

⁷⁶Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), AFAC Strategic Plan 2023-2027, AFAC, 2023.

⁷⁷Champions of Change Coalition – Fire and Emergency Group, 2022 Progress Report, Champions of Change Coalition – Fire and Emergency Group, 2022.

⁷⁸Volunteering Australia, National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-2033, 2022.

CONSULTATION PLAN

2024 Workforce Plan Engagement

In the development of the 2024 Workforce Plans, Public Skills Australia undertook extensive industry-sector consultation. The approach adopted by Public Skills Australia towards the engagement of consultees, gathering and analysing their insights, and generating high-level themes and challenges across the industry-sector, is summarised in the Methodology section above. Table 6 illustrates the industry-sector representatives engaged in the development of the *Workforce Plan 2024: Fire and Emergency Services*.

Table 6: Summary of stakeholders engaged for Workforce Plan 2024

AIRSERVICES AUSTRALIA	AUSTRALASIAN FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES AUTHORITIES COUNCIL (AFAC)	COUNCIL OF VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSOCIATION (CAVFA)
DISASTER RELIEF AUSTRALIA	DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES WESTERN AUSTRALIA	FIRE RESCUE VICTORIA (FRV)
NEW SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE	QUEENSLAND FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES	RURAL FIRE SERVICE NEW SOUTH WALES
STATE EMERGENCY SERVICES NSW	SURF LIFE SAVING NSW	SOUTH AUSTRALIA RURAL FIRE SERVICES
SURF LIFE SAVING AUSTRALIA	TASMANIA FIRE SERVICE	UNITED FIREFIGHTERS UNION OF AUSTRALIA (UFUA)
AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR STATE EMERGENCY SERVICES (ACSES)		

2025 Workforce Planning Engagement

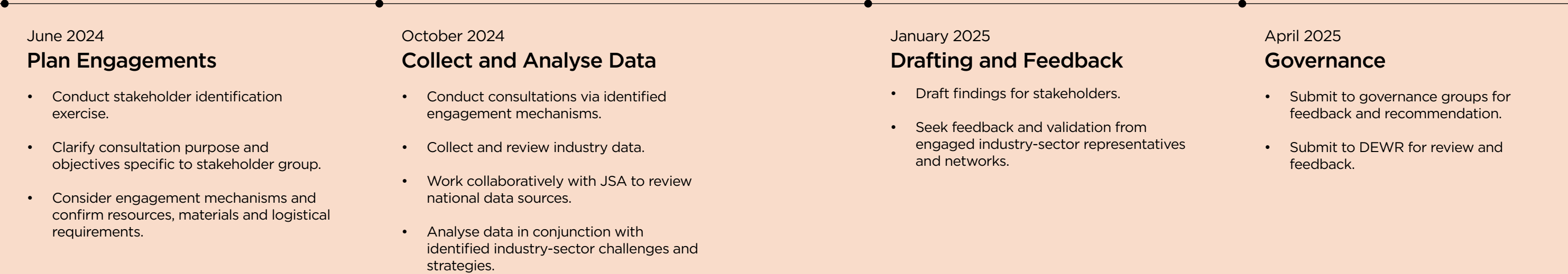
In the development of the 2025 Workforce Plans, Public Skills Australia will target identified stakeholders for consultation using different engagement mechanisms, as outlined in Table 7.

Table 7: Consultation methods for the 2025 iteration of the Workforce Plans

ONLINE PRESENTATIONS AND FORUMS	GOVERNANCE, ADVICE AND FEEDBACK MECHANISMS
This may include online forums, webinars or consultation that explores specific industry-sectors and their challenges, evidence gaps and strategies.	This may include consulting with and implementing the feedback provided by Networks, Subcommittees, the Industry Advisory Group (IAG), the Public Skills Australia Board, and DEWR.
TECHNICAL GROUPS	WORKSHOPS, ROUNDTABLES AND THINK TANKS
This may include identifying and engaging with subject-matter specialist technical groups focusing on identified workforce challenges, data gaps, futures analysis, or industry-sector specific projects.	This may include workshops involving industry-sector representatives and other stakeholders to engage in collaborative problem-solving, brainstorming, and strategy development.
SITE VISITS AND ROADSHOWS	IN-PERSON STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS
This may involve conducting visits to stakeholders' offices, to foster a better understanding of their operations and challenges. This extends to the proactive promotion of our work as a JSC, and better engaging each industry-sector on research findings, project outcomes, and implementing strategies.	This may include targeted in-person meetings with industry-sector representatives, subject-matter experts, employee bodies and other key stakeholders to explore industry-sector specific challenges, gaps in evidence and potential strategies.

STAGING AND TIMING

Public Skills Australia will consult with identified stakeholders from June 2024 to April 2025. The specific phasings of the consultation efforts are illustrated below:



ENGAGING WITH INDUSTRY-SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES

In the development of the 2025 Workforce Plans, Public Skills Australia will adopt the consultative approach detailed above to continue valuable conversations with identified stakeholders relevant to the Police industry-sector. Table 8 presents an overview of the planned engagements in the development of the 2025 Workforce Plan. This is an indicative list of the organisations that have been identified as relevant to Public Skills Australia’s ongoing workforce planning. Public Skills Australia will identify and engage with any additional stakeholders as necessary as part of consultation efforts.

Table 8: Engagement plan with industry-sector representatives

Industry-Sector Representative	Representation Type	Industry-sector specific challenges	Megatrends	Purpose of Ongoing Consultation
ARFF within Airservices Australia	Employer	2	All	ARFF provides aviation rescue firefighting services at Australian airports. As an employer of firefighters, Public Skills Australia will continue to engage with ARFF to provide employer representative insights on identified sector specific challenges, megatrends, and strategies.
AFAC	Association	All	All	AFAC represents over 250,000 emergency management professionals, both volunteers and career staff, across emergency services or fire management agencies within all Australian states or territories. Public Skills Australia will continue to consult with AFAC as a key stakeholder in providing holistic industry-sector intelligence from their member agencies on all industry-sector specific challenges and megatrends, advice on strategies development to address workforce challenges, in particular the potential development of leadership training guidance for volunteer-based agencies.
CAVFA	Volunteer Association	All	1 and 9	CAVFA member associations together represent over 250,000 volunteer firefighters. CAVFA aims to assist volunteer firefighters and operational support volunteers by advocating for members across all States and Territories. Public Skills Australia will continue to consult with CAVFA to obtain input into the development of strategies that impact volunteers, in particular the potential development of leadership training guidance for volunteer-based agencies.
NEMA	Government	2	All	The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is responsible for the coordination and management of emergency responses at the national level. Public Skills Australia is yet to engage with NEMA but will prioritise this in the development of the 2025 Workforce Plan. Consultation with NEMA will focus on national-level insights into changing demand in the industry-sector and further insights into cross-agency resource sharing arrangements for surge capacity. NEMA are also responsible for development of policy regarding the Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper which is likely to have impacts on demand within this industry-sector.

Table 8: Engagement plan with industry-sector representatives

Industry-Sector Representative	Representation Type	Industry-sector specific challenges	Megatrends	Purpose of Ongoing Consultation
SLSA	Employer	All	All	Surf Life Saving Australia is Australia's peak coastal water safety, drowning prevention, and rescue authority. Public Skills Australia will continue to engage with SLSA to gain input on identified challenges and strategies that support volunteer-based agencies.
State/Territory Fire Authority/Agencies	Employer	All	All	Public Skills Australia will continue to consult with State and Territory Fire Authorities/Agencies to engage holistic employer perspectives on all identified industry-sector specific challenges and mega trends.
State/Territory Emergency Services Agencies	Employer	All	All	Public Skills Australia will continue to consult with State and Territory Emergency Services agencies to engage holistic employer perspectives on all identified industry-sector specific challenges and megatrends.
United Firefighters Union of Australia (UFUA)	Employee	2	3, 4, 5, 7 and 8	UFUA represents more than 13,000 career employees working across Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria, ACT, New South Wales, Western Australia, Queensland, and the aviation sector. Public Skills Australia will continue to consult with UFUA to understand the employee representative perspective on changing demand, expansion of core duties, and challenges associated with career pathways.
Australian Council of State Emergency Services (ACSES)	Association	All	All	Public Skills Australia will continue to consult with ACSES to engage holistic volunteer perspectives on all identified industry-sector specific challenges and megatrends.
Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)	Employer	All	All	Public Skills Australia will consult with AMSA for future Workforce Plans to understand how the PUA Training Package is utilised. AMSA has not been consulted in previous rounds of consultation due to time constraints but will be prioritised in the 2025 Workforce Plan.

ENGAGING WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

In the development of the 2025 Workforce Plans, Public Skills Australia will explore industry-sector specific challenges and cross-industry megatrends identified within the Workforce Plans. Stakeholders and their proposed contributions to workforce planning are summarised below. It is likely this approach will continue to evolve as the mapping of industry, gaps and challenges matures.

	JOBS AND SKILLS AUSTRALIA JSA conducts significant research and analysis of the Australian workforce and labour market, drawing on Federal Government datasets. Public Skills Australia will continue to work with JSA to efficiently communicate industry-sector intelligence and support JSA's data collection. This relationship will also conversely ensure that Public Safety and Government workforce planning and product development is informed by JSA research.
NCVER NCVER is the primary body responsible for collecting, analysing and publishing data and conducting research on the Vocational Education and Training sector in Australia. Public Skills Australia will continue to work with NCVER to source relevant datasets that provide key insights into the training of the Public Safety and Government workforce.	STATE/TERRITORY TRAINING AUTHORITIES State/Territory Training Authorities (STTA) oversee the implementation of VET in States/Territories and gather industry intelligence to identify future skills needs. Public Skills Australia will continue to engage with STTAs to share industry intelligence, identify emerging skill requirements, and ensure the effective implementation of training products nationally.
ABS The ABS provides the foundational data that enables an analysis of the Australian labour market, including the ANZSCO classification system that classifies occupations in the Australian labour market. Public Skills Australia will continue to engage with the ABS to ensure that their data collection efforts accurately reflect the Public Safety and Government workforce, and the occupations that sit within each industry-sector.	CROSS-JSC COLLABORATION Public Skills Australia will prioritise industry-sector intelligence sharing and cross-collaboration through building strong relationships with the other nine JSCs. In continuing to engage in this way, Public Skills Australia will identify workforce trends that impact on multiple industries or sectors and will collaborate with other JSCs on effective processes and methodologies for both workforce planning and training product development. Public Skills Australia will also undertake consultation and collaboration with individual JSCs on cross-council projects.

PUBLIC SKILLS AUSTRALIA'S GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Public Skills Australia has established a governance framework to support industry-sector engagement and integrate subject-matter expertise into its workforce planning and training products.

• NETWORKS

Provides comments and feedback using their subject-matter expertise on key priorities. Networks *provide* feedback to Subcommittees.

Volunteer Network: Provides specialist advice on volunteer participation in the Public Safety and Government industry.	Diversity and inclusion Network: Provides specialist advice on diversity, inclusivity and cultural respect.	First Nations Network: Provides specialist advice on First Nations peoples participation in and interaction with Public Safety and Government.	RTO Network: Provides specialist advice related to the implementation and delivery of VET training products.	Careers and Pathways Network: Provides specialist advice on pathways between VET and higher education.
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• SUBCOMMITTEES

Provides information and advice on our products and supports nominations to the Working Groups. Subcommittees *recommend* products to the Board through the IAG.

Government Subcommittee: Recommends endorsement of workforce planning and training products for the Federal, State/Territory and Local Government to the IAG.	Correctional Services Subcommittee: Recommends endorsement of workforce planning and training products for the Correctional Services industry-sector to the IAG.	Workforce Planning Subcommittee: Recommends endorsement of workforce planning and training products for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Defence industry-sectors to the IAG.	Training Product Development Subcommittee: Recommends endorsement of training products for Public Safety and Government industry-sectors to the IAG.
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• Industry Advisory Group (IAG)

Provides industry intelligence, as well as strategic input and advice. The IAG endorses products.

IAG: Endorses workforce planning and training products to the Public Skills Australia Board for approval to be presented to DEWR.

ONGOING WORKFORCE PLANNING

Challenges with Traditional Workforce Planning

To date, workforce planning exercises have largely been driven by quantitative analysis of national datasets (such as ABS or other datasets) and economic modelling. This approach presents some unique challenges for the Public Safety and Government industry.

Employment Projections, Modelling and Quantitative Analysis

When used in isolation, quantitative and economic modelling approaches to workforce planning present challenges for the Public Safety and Government industry. Although data sources that are generally used for workforce planning - including ABS Census, ABS Labour Force Survey and JSA data holdings - are helpful to identify rates of workforce participation and vacancy trends, they are not able to clearly represent the complexities and unique characteristics of Public Safety and Government workforces. As a not-for-profit industry, employment projections and modelling provide a limited view of the current and future workforce as:

Budgets for each of the Public Safety and Government industry-sectors are determined by the Federal Government and may vary depending on political cycles. These budgets may also be impacted by community sentiment, political objectives, public reviews and the perceived value of public services and/or criminal justice.

Recruitment targets and the size of the Public Safety and Government industry are not solely driven by economic conditions - they are also impacted by community expectations, regulatory and policy contexts, government budgets and political priorities. These may shift and change as geopolitical events, emergencies and climate-related disasters emerge.

The ANZSCO and Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) frameworks, which are used to classify ABS and JSA data, present four main challenges for Public Safety and Government industry-sectors:

1. The Public Safety and Government industry employs a diverse range of skills across the breadth of the Australian labour market and is not restricted to a specific range of ANZSIC or ANZSCO classifications.
2. ANZSIC and ANZSCO classifications do not represent the range of roles within the Public Safety and Government industry.
3. Volume-based measurements do not identify skills shortages in specialised roles. Such measurements only identify roles that are currently classified within the ANZSCO and ANZSIC structures, and do not drill into specialised roles. For example, specialised roles could only require a handful of additional people to be trained, but the training could take years, or the size of capability required is not dependant on volume but rather on the criticality of the role.
4. Employment data only captures people's area of paid employment, which may be in industries other than the one that they volunteer for.

Understanding the size and nature of vacancies in the Public Safety and Government workforce is vital to recognising the challenges this workforce faces. These evidence gaps could be addressed by:

- collaborating with industry-sectors (where possible) to make their data available for workforce planning purposes,
- leveraging Public Skills Australia's position to develop partnerships with its industry-sectors to access workforce data,
- working with ABS and JSA to review their classifications and better represent the roles in Public Safety and Government workforces, and
- engaging with JSA to capture identified data gaps with input from industry.

Industry Data

Fire and Emergency Service agencies are required under their legislative and regulatory commitments to publicly report on key metrics. This information is commonly presented in annual reports and may include information such as headcount, FTE, demographics, number of incidents responded to, and others. In the formation of this Workforce Plan the following challenges were identified:

- Size of workforce data is not consistently or reliably reported between Fire and Emergency Services agencies and/or State/Territory jurisdictions,
- Data on the volunteering workforce is limited,
- Collection and reporting of workforce demographic information is inconsistent.

As such, utilisation of industry-sector data to support ABS and JSA data is complex. Further consultation will be undertaken with industry to identify more effective sources of data and reporting methods.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Demographic data on volunteer firefighters and emergency services workers is not routinely or consistently captured, making it challenging to fully understand the dynamics of the volunteer workforces.

An industry-sector representative noted the benefits in moving towards a centralised national workforce database or register, accessible to all organisations within the industry-sector.

Alternative Approaches to Workforce Planning

Considering the gaps presented by quantitative analysis, exploring other research methodologies will be required to accurately represent the Public Safety and Government workforce, and to fully understand skills shortages, personnel challenges and potential strategies. As such, Public Skills Australia will explore how to support quantitative analysis by using the following:

Futures and Strategic Foresight

Strategic foresight is a structured and systematic method for examining plausible, potential and preferred futures. It utilises analytic tools to forecast future outcomes across a range of alternate scenarios that have been identified by thought leaders. Through strategic foresight, targeted activities can be implemented that address challenges and identify opportunities using different scenarios.

Life Cycle Analysis and Case Studies

Life cycle analysis involves examining the progress of workforce staff through their entire paid and volunteer journey – from their early career until they exit from the workforce. This will allow for a greater understanding of entry and exit points in a career lifecycle and how individuals’ requirements from their employment changes over time and as a result of personal changes in circumstances.

Skills and Capabilities Profiles

Skills and capabilities profiles further examine the range of skills and associated capabilities across industry-sectors, and identifies where those skills are found within a particular organisation or occupation. In doing so, it highlights critical skills shortages in specialist roles that are generally not captured by volume-based quantitative datasets.

APPENDIX A

Fire and Emergency Services Annual Reports

ACT Fire and Rescue, *Annual Report 2022-23*. Justice and Community Safety Directorate, ACT Government, 2023.

ACT Rural Fire Service, *Annual Report 2022-23*. Justice ACT, 2023.

ACT State Emergency Service, *Annual Report 2022-23*. Justice ACT, 2023.

Airservices Australia, *Annual Report 2022-23*. Airservices, 2023.

Country Fire Authority (CFA) Victoria, *Annual Report 2022-23*, CFA Victoria, 2023.

Country Fire Service (CFS) South Australia, *Annual Report 2022-23*, CFS South Australia, 2023.

Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) Western Australia, *Annual Report 2022-23*. DFES Western Australia, 2023.

Fire & Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW), *Annual Report 2022-23*, FRNSW, 2023.

Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV), *Annual Report 2021-22*, FRV, 2022.

Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) South Australia. *Annual Report 2022-23*. MFS South Australia, 2023.

National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), *Annual Report 2022-23*, NEMA, 2023.

Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service (NTFRS), *Annual Report 2022-23*, NTFRS, 2023.

New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS), *Annual Report 2021/22*. NSW RFS, 2022.

New South Wales State Emergency Service (NSW SES), *Annual Report 2021/22*. NSW SES, 2022.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), *Annual Report 2022-23*. QFES, 2023.

South Australian State Emergency Service (SASES). *Annual Report 2021-22*. SASES, 2022.

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA). *Annual Report 2022-23*. SLSA, 2023.

Tasmania Fire Service (Fire Tas), *Annual Report 2022/23*. Fire Tas, 2023.

Tasmanian State Emergency Service (TASSES). *Annual Report 2022-23*, TASSES, 2023.

Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES), *Annual Report 2022-23*, VICSES, 2023.

