

Public Skills Australia

New South Wales Report 2025-2026

Local Government Skills Audit and Review
of the Uptake and Utility of the LGA Local
Government Training Package

June 2026



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Introduction

1.1 Background

Public Skills Australia is the Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) for the Public Safety and Government industry. This industry consists of Correctional Services, Fire and Emergency Services, Defence as well as Government (Federal, State and Territory) and Local Government. JSCs are responsible for:

- › supporting the current Vocational Education and Training (VET) reforms under the National Skills Agreement (NSA)
- › working with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to aid workforce planning, industry stewardship and training package development as well as promoting, implementing and monitoring the use of training packages.

1.2 Local Government Project

The Local Government Skills Audit and Review of the Uptake and Utility of the LGA Local Government Training Package (the Project) emanated from Public Skills Australia's 2024 Federal, State/Territory, and Local Government Workforce Plan. The Project seeks to understand workforce trends, occupational shortages, skills gaps, training needs, and future challenges faced by local councils across Australia.

1.3 Partners

The Project was supported by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) (as a company member of Public Skills Australia and the national peak body for Local Government) and the relevant peak industry associations and representative bodies for all local councils¹ in each state and territory. Both ALGA and the jurisdictional peak bodies provided input into the jurisdictional workshop findings, survey questionnaire, supported survey-related communications, facilitated workshop participation and survey responses follow-up. ALGA further contributed to the longitudinal data provided through provision of the *2018 and 2022 Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Surveys* that have informed this report.

¹ For the purpose of this report, Local Governments will be referred to as local councils.

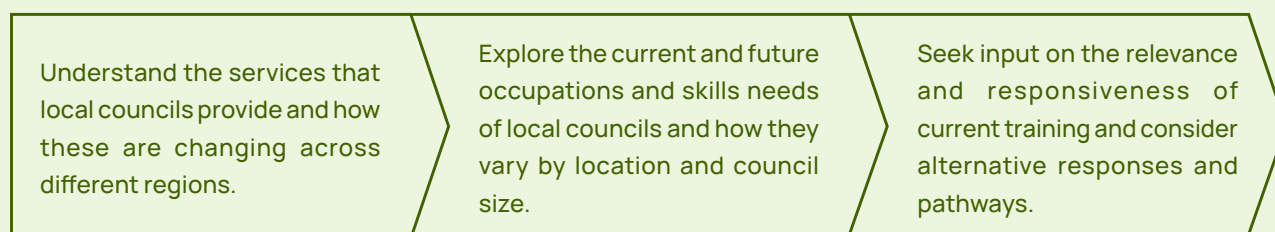
1.4 2025-26 Local Government Workforce Skills and Capacity Survey

In support of the combined project, Public Skills Australia and ALGA collaborated on the 2025-26 Local Government Workforce Skills and Capacity Survey (the survey). The survey forms part of a longitudinal series, with previous iterations conducted in 2018 and 2022, and minor updates made over time.

The survey was hosted on 'Qualtrics,' an online survey platform, through which local councils had the opportunity to participate. Respondents were typically employees responsible for people and culture and learning and development, with input from other local council employees where relevant. Survey responses then underwent a data-cleaning process prior to analysis².

1.5 Workshops

The workshops aimed to provide in-depth qualitative evidence and involved participation from employees responsible for people and culture as well as learning and development within their local councils. The workshop objectives were to:



1.6 New South Wales Report 2025-2026

The New South Wales Report 2025-2026 (the report) is one of the seven jurisdictional reports and offers the outcomes for New South Wales of both the combined project and the survey. The analysis provided in this report is based only on the data provided by those local councils who responded to the survey and/or participated in the workshops. References to local councils should be understood to refer to those responding local councils that either completed the survey or participated in workshops – unless otherwise specified.

² This includes interpretation of results being guided by several methodological considerations which can be found at Appendix A.

1.7 Structure

This report is structured into two primary sections:

Section 1: Quantitative Data
› Based on the 2025-26 Local Government Workforce Skills and Capacity Survey. › Based on 69 responding New South Wales local councils.
Section 2: Qualitative Results
› Based on in-person and online workshops. › Based on consultations in these workshops with 38 New South Wales local councils.

1.8 Key findings

Key findings for New South Wales local councils are summarised below.

Section	Key Findings
Service Delivery Context	An increasingly complex operating environment alongside greater demand for services is placing greater pressure on the capacity of local councils to meet service delivery requirements. This, coupled with structural challenges such as constrained funding and wage pressures, significantly contribute to the recruitment, retention, skilling and training challenges faced by local councils.
Skills Audit and Assessment	Transferable professional skills and interpersonal skills are becoming increasingly critical, as are behavioural traits such as resilience and emotional intelligence. The expanding service delivery complexity and remit of local councils is having increasing impacts on occupations and skills. This includes requiring occupations to have a much broader skillset than the technical capabilities the mandatory qualification came with. This is particularly relevant in rural/remote settings where local councils depend on employees covering multiple essential functions.

Section	Key Findings
Training Needs and Challenges	NSW is leading use of the Local Government Training Package (LGATP), however this is to a large extent restricted to a single unit of competency which accounts for 78 per cent of all enrolments. VET continues to underpin core technical roles, and it is this training that uses a large percentage of local councils training budgets. However, VET effectiveness depends on tailored content, expanded provider options and practical delivery for council jobs. There is an unmet training need in transferable professional and interpersonal skills. To address this, local councils are increasingly utilising non-accredited training, which is perceived by local councils to provide more targeted, accessible and flexible training options than VET.
Future Workforce Outlook	Occupation and skill gaps have remained largely unchanged since 2018. Local councils anticipate the complexity surrounding service provision to accelerate into the future having flow on implications for occupations, skills and training. Limited capacity to plan for this complexity due to its evolving service remit is likely to exacerbate the shortfalls into the future.

Quantitative Data

2.1 Service Delivery Context

Key Findings:

An increasingly complex operating environment alongside greater demand for services is placing greater pressure on the capacity of local councils to meet service delivery requirements. This, coupled with structural challenges such as constrained funding and wage pressures, significantly contribute to the recruitment, retention, skilling and training challenges faced by local councils.

Service delivery contexts are driven by the workforces within local councils. To be able to test and validate these contexts, it is critical to first understand the current workforce profile.

2.1.1 Employment numbers

Key data

The New South Wales Local Government industry-sector employed 65,200 people as of June 2025.

This represents an average annual growth rate of 2.8 per cent per year (2018 to 2025).

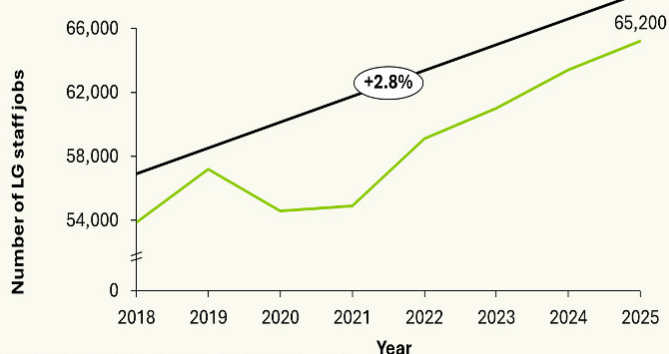


Figure 1:

New South Wales Local Government employment data, 2018-2025

Based on the survey, 37 per cent (n=25) anticipated that by June 2026 the size of their workforce would increase, 52 per cent (n= 35) expected it to remain the same, seven per cent (n=5) believed it would decrease and 3 per cent (n=2) were unsure.

Key data

The majority of New South Wales local councils fall into the mid-sized category, with 45 per cent employing 100–500 staff.

Employment size varied across responding New South Wales local councils, ranging from 70 employees at the smallest (Central Darling Shire Council) to 2,418 employees at the largest (Central Coast council).

In summary, the share of local councils with:

More than 1,000 employees decreased by 3 percentage points

500–1,000 employees increased by 2 percentage points

100–500 employees decreased by 2 percentage points

Fewer than 100 employees increased by 2 percentage points.

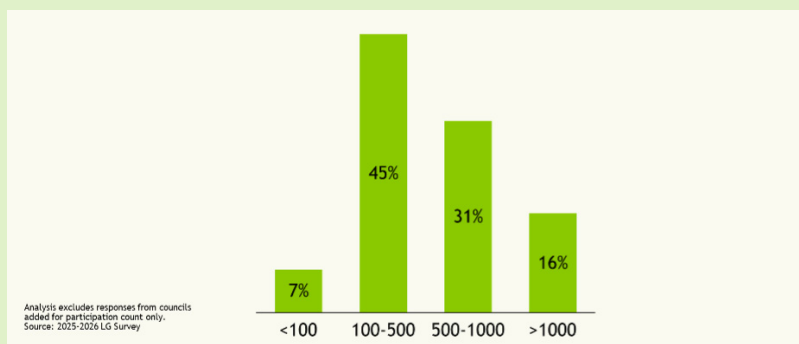


Figure 2:

New South Wales responding local councils, distribution of employment size, 2025-2026 Survey

Employment size also varied based on the Australian Classification of Local Governments (ACLG)³ categories:

- › Rural/remote⁴ local councils employed fewer than 500 employees, with the majority employing 100–500 employees (76 per cent)
- › Regional⁵ local councils demonstrated greater size variation, with 48 per cent employing 500–1000 employees, 37 per cent had 100–500 employees and 15 per cent employed more than 1,000 employees.
- › Metropolitan⁶ local councils were the largest on average, with 37 per cent employing more than 1,000 employees.

3 Multiple systems exist to classify whether a local council is rural/remote, regional or metropolitan. In most instances this classification is self-evident, however there are examples whereby, due to shifting populations a local council could be referred to as metropolitan or regional. Full definition of the Australian Classification of Local Governments categories can be accessed at Appendix B.

4 Local councils servicing populations across very small to large population categories, including local councils classified as remote.

5 Non-metropolitan local councils with primary urban centres located in regional areas.

6 Local councils located within capital city metropolitan areas, including inner city, established suburban and outer-metropolitan or urban-fringe Local Government areas.

2.1.2 Employment categories

Key data

Since 2018, part-time employment has declined alongside an increase in casual employment. Across NSW, 68 per cent of the workforce were full-time employees, 10 per cent were part-time, 20 per cent were casual.

One hundred per cent of responding New South Wales local councils employed 973 apprentices and trainees, representing 2.5 per cent of the New South Wales local council workforce.

By ACLG categorisation, employment patterns varied.

ACLG Categorisation	Full-time	Part-time	Casual	Apprentices and Trainees
Rural/remote	71%	9%	15%	5%
Regional	71%	10%	16%	3%
Metro	64%	10%	25%	1%
NSW	68%	10%	20%	2%

Analysis excludes responses from councils added for participation count only.
Source: 2025-2026 LG Survey

Figure 3:

New South Wales responding local councils, employment type by ACLG categorisation, 2025-2026 Survey

2.1.3 Employment gender profile

Key data

According to data from local councils, gender balance in full-time roles has improved since 2018; however, women continue to be concentrated in part-time and casual employment.⁷

Apprenticeships and traineeships data from responding New South Wales local councils showed a strong male bias pointing to gender imbalance in entry-level and pipeline occupations.

7 While this indicates greater access to ongoing roles for women, it may not result in increased senior representation as the survey does not measure progression or tenure by gender.

Key data

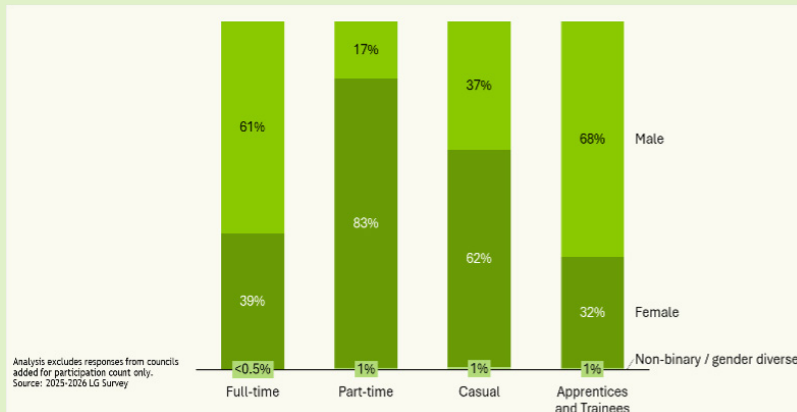


Figure 4:

New South Wales responding local councils, employment category by gender, 2025-2026 Survey

2.1.4 Workplace diversity⁸

Key data

Among the 19 responding local councils (28 per cent), Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) employees represented an average of 6.9 per cent of their workforce.

Of the 31 responding local councils (46 per cent), employees with disability represented an average of 1.9 per cent of the workforce.

Fifty-four local councils (81 per cent) reported having First Nations employees, with representation of 2.6 per cent of the total workforce.

⁸ The data captured for First Nations, people from non-English speaking background and people with a disability has limitations as it required self-identification.

2.1.5 Workforce age profile

Key data

The 2018 survey raised an ageing workforce as a significant challenge. Since 2018, the age profile shows modest rebalancing, with proportional growth in employees aged under 30 and a decline in the concentration of mid-career employees aged 30-54.

The expanding 65+ cohort indicated increasing reliance on older employees, which may heighten risks around retirements, succession and workforce sustainability.

Age distribution varied by ACLG categorisation:

- Rural/remote workforces faced the most acute ageing and succession risks.
- Regional local councils show a more balanced age distribution with lower proportion of employees aged 65+ (six per cent).
- Metropolitan local councils had the highest representation aged under 30 at 19 per cent.

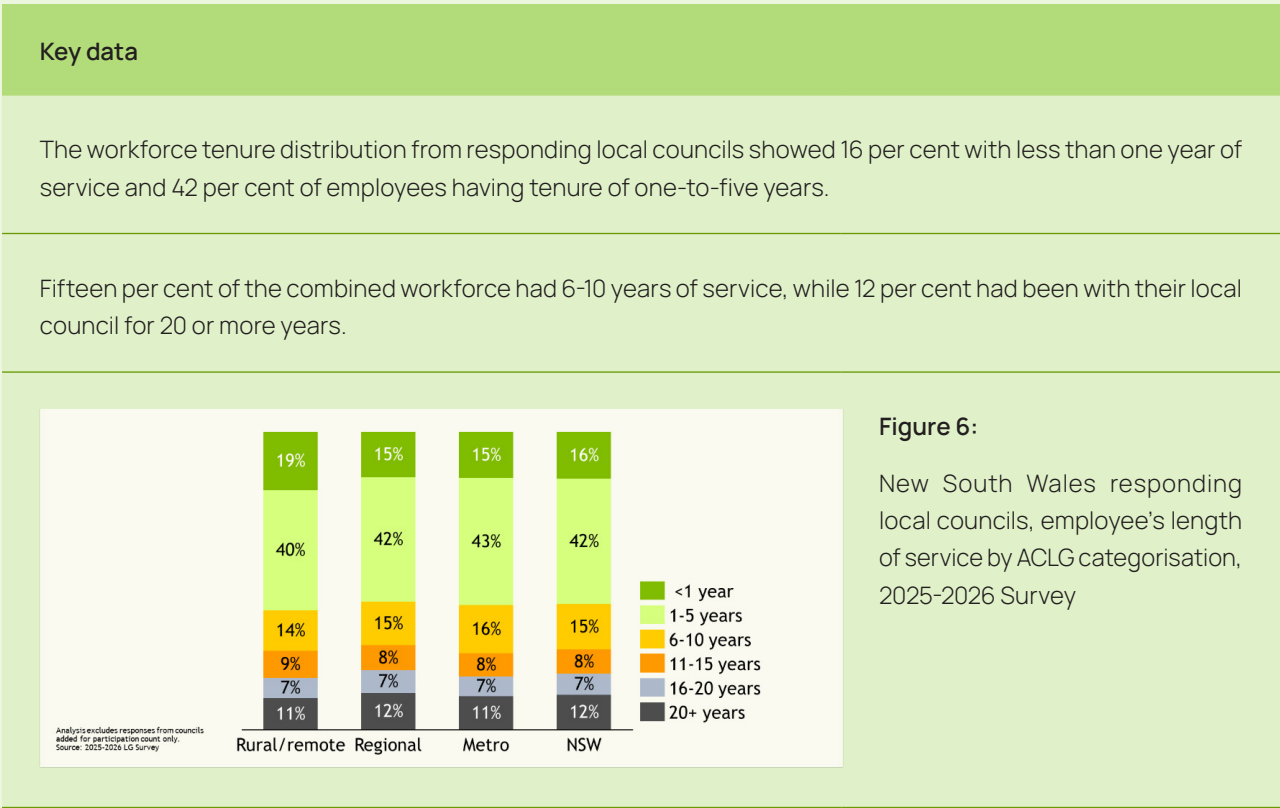
Category	15-19 years	20-29 years	30-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65+ years
Rural/remote	3%	13%	26%	22%	27%	9%
Regional	4%	14%	30%	24%	22%	6%
Metro	4%	17%	30%	22%	20%	7%
NSW	4%	15%	30%	23%	22%	7%

Figure 5:

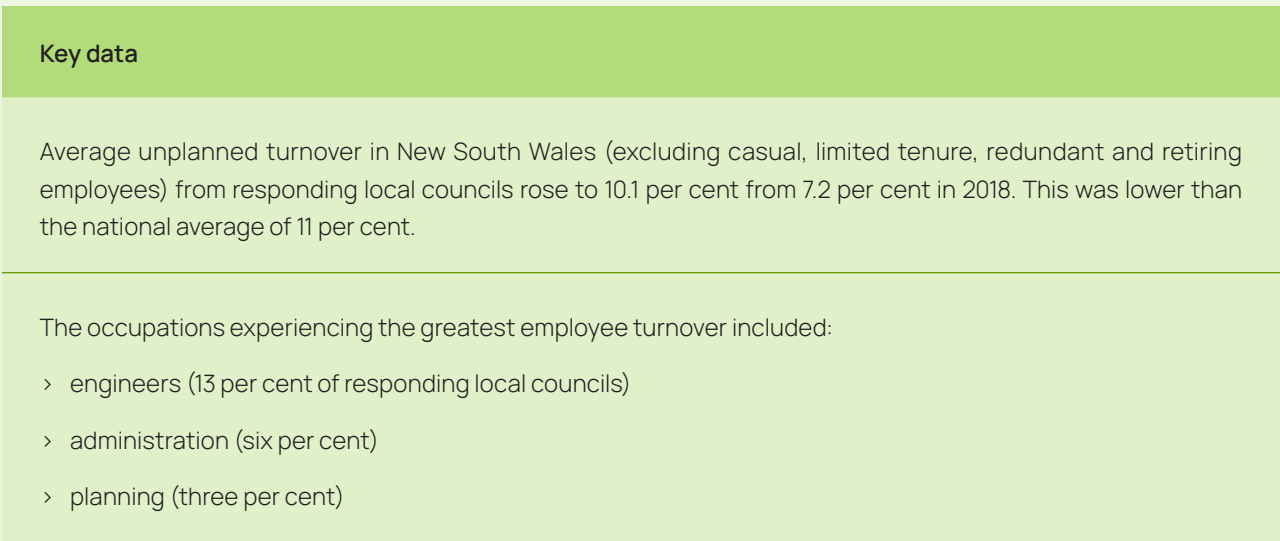
New South Wales responding local councils, age profile by ACLG categorisation, 2025-2026 Survey

Analysis excludes responses from councils added for participation count only. Age profile derived from Professional & Administrative and Operational & Trade age distributions, representing the closest available proxy for a whole-of-workforce split.
Source: 2025-2026 LG Survey

2.1.6 Employee length of service



2.1.7 Employment turnover



2.2 Skills Audit and Assessment

Key Finding:

Transferable professional skills and interpersonal skills are becoming increasingly critical, as are behavioural traits such as resilience and emotional intelligence. The expanding service delivery complexity and remit of local councils is having increasing impacts on occupations and skills. This includes requiring occupations to have a much broader skillset than the technical capabilities the mandatory qualification came with. This is particularly relevant in rural / remote settings where local councils depend on employees covering multiple essential functions.

2.2.1 Skills landscape

The current skills landscape identifies the breadth of skills utilised within Local Government based on a thematic analysis of data collection from the Critical Occupations and Skills workshops in each State and Territory. Workshop participants consistently described local council workforce skills as three broad tiers, as shown below:

Interpersonal skills	Transferable professional skills	Occupation-specific skills
These skills enhance interaction, collaboration and relationship-building, focusing on communication and social dynamics. These skills are crucial for teamwork, stakeholder engagement, people management and customer service.	Broad, role-independent capabilities that enable effective work across different functions, departments or industries. These skills are practical and task-oriented, focusing on how work gets done.	Technical or specialised abilities required to perform tasks unique to a specific job or profession. These skills are role-dependent and often linked to formal training, certifications or regulatory requirements.

This thematic analysis identifies the consistent skills clusters that were repeated regardless of different occupations and local contexts and aligns these to the three broad tiers identified above:

Tier	Skills Theme	Specific skill types	
Interpersonal Skills	Communication	› Professional communication (written and verbal) › Report and technical writing › Listening and observing	› Collaboration › Teamwork › Stakeholder engagement, and management
	Customer and community focus	› Customer service › Community minded	› Social inclusion › Community consultation and education
	Leadership, people management and mentoring	› People leadership and management › Supervision	› Mentoring and coaching › Influencing › Diplomacy
Transferrable Professional Skills	Organisation and workflow	› Digital literacy › Time management › Organisational skills	› Flexibility › Attention to detail › Long term planning
	Project planning and time management	› Project management › Planning and scheduling	› Long term planning

Tier	Skills Theme	Specific skill types	
Transferrable Professional Skills	Problem Solving, critical thinking and analysis	› Political acumen › Strategic thinking › Problem solving › Solution focus › Decision making › Critical thinking › Analytical	› Diagnostics › Research and data analysis › Business transformation › Business intelligence › Numerical reasoning › Ethical reasoning and conduct
	Conflict management and enforcement	› Conflict resolution	› Negotiation
	Change management and transformation	› Change management › Business transformation	› Project management › Business leadership
	Data, reporting and analytics	› Data analysis	› Data management

Tier	Skills Theme	Specific skill types	
Occupation Specific Skills	Environmental sustainability	› Environmental sustainability	› Disaster management and resilience.
	Digital and technology systems	› Digital / IT systems & software competency › Digital surveying / modelling › Artificial Intelligence › GIS familiarity › Spatial mapping › Programming	› Automation › Auto cad / drafting › Drones › EV maintenance › Remote operations › Cybersecurity
	Risk and safety	› Risk assessment › Risk management › Workplace health and safety	› Site safety › Traffic management › Working at heights
	Legislation, regulation and governance	› Legislation and regulation interpretation › Policy analysis and development › Knowledge of planning regulation	› Environmental overlay and legislative knowledge › Industry knowledge › Privacy awareness

Tier	Skills Theme	Specific skill types	
Occupation Specific Skills	Finance and procurement	> Financial management > Budgeting > Procurement > Circular economy > Grant writing	> Grant management and acquittal > Logistics > Inventory > Asset management
	Technical skills	> Plant operation > Plumbing > Manual work > SCADA > Climbing / pruning	> AQF 5 Level 5 > Bricklaying > Heavy machinery > First aid > Teaching

2.2.2 Occupation shortages

Eighty-eight per cent of responding local councils (n=59) reported experiencing occupational shortages in 2024-2025, indicating that occupational shortages are not isolated issues, but represent a systemic workforce challenge. Engineers, planners and building surveyors have remained the most prevalent professional shortages since 2018, with a slight increase in the proportion of local councils experiencing shortages in these roles. Occupational shortages are broadly consistent across ACLG classification.

Other shortages experienced by local councils varied by ACLG category:

Rural and remote local councils report experiencing shortages in accountants and labourers (Operational and Trade category).	Regional local councils faced a higher proportion of reported shortages of engineers, planners and building surveyors, while shortages in supervisors/ team leaders were cited in operation and trades.	Metropolitan local councils identified shortages of project managers and larger proportions of trade occupations.
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The most common occupational shortages across New South Wales responding local councils were evident in the 'professional and technical' and 'operational and trade' categories.

Table 1: New South Wales responding local councils, top occupational shortages, 2025-2026 Survey

Category	Occupation	# Responding local governments	% Responding local governments (n=67)
Professional and Technical	Engineers	38	56.7%
	Building Surveyors	30	44.8%
	Urban/Town Planners	30	44.8%
	Environmental Health Officers	21	31.3%
	Accountants	17	25.4%
	Engineering Technicians	15	22.4%
	Governance/Risk Managers	14	20.9%
	Project Managers	14	20.9%
	Surveyors	13	19.4%
	ICT Professionals	12	17.9%
Operational and Trade	Trades - Mechanical	25	37.3%
	Trades - Horticultural	24	35.8%
	Labourers	19	28.4%
	Wastewater/ Sewerage Operator	18	26.9%
	Trades - Automotive	18	26.9%
	Truck Drivers	17	25.4%

Category	Occupation	# Responding local governments	% Responding local governments (n=67)
Operational and Trade	Supervisors/Team Leaders	17	25.4%
	Water Treatment Operator	15	22.4%
	Trades - Plumber	14	20.9%
	Trades - Electrical	12	17.9%

Some local councils reported recruiting less-skilled applicants to mitigate shortages in occupations such as engineers, urban and town planners, building surveyors and accountants. For example, engineering technicians holding diplomas can fulfill most engineering roles under the oversight of a qualified engineer.

2.2.3 Drivers of occupational shortages

Inability to compete with private sector market remuneration is the primary driver of occupational shortages, followed by geographic location.

Table 2: New South Wales responding local councils, drivers of occupational shortages, 2025-2026 Survey

Driver of skills shortages	% local governments responding (n=67)
Uncompetitive salaries/remuneration	64%
Regional/rural/remote location	37%
Industry-wide skill shortages	24%
Competition from other sectors/employers	16%
Insufficient qualified candidates/applicants	13%
Lack of housing/accommodation	12%
Insufficient qualifications/training/experience	9%
High cost of living	7%
Limited local talent pool	3%
Ageing workforce/population decline	3%

Based on ACLG classification, the following themes emerged:

Rural/remote local

councils: Rural and remote location was the primary barrier (29 per cent of responses), compounded by acute housing scarcity and competition from the private sector. Geographic location also contributed to lack of access to training and networks.

Regional local councils:

Salary competition with private sector employers was the principal driver of occupational shortages. Industry-wide shortages also contributed to workload pressures regardless of remuneration.

Metropolitan local

councils: Salary competitiveness persists with the high cost of living and housing exclude lower-income operational employees despite shortages.

2.2.4 Vacancies

Regional local councils are most likely to be understaffed while rural/remote local councils that are understaffed face the most severe shortages. Across the sector, 70 per cent (n=47) were understaffed, with average vacancy rates of 7.4 per cent among the 33 local councils reporting vacancy numbers. High rates of understaffing were distributed across all ACLG classifications.



2.2.5 Strategies to address occupational shortages and skills gaps

Local councils noted the following as successful strategies to fill occupational gaps:

Reskilled or upskilled existing employees
Use of advertising and social media platforms
Engaged external recruitment agencies
Sought candidates through graduate pathways
Reported using contingent employees

Local councils identified addressing skills gaps by:

Allowing employees to temporarily 'act' in higher positions or to cross into other roles to develop internal capability while also filling immediate gaps
Offering informal on-the-job training
Providing targeted training courses
Offering coaching and mentoring
Facilitating secondments or exchanges to other workplaces

Twenty-two per cent (n=15) reported employing a total of 22 employees on the Temporary Skills Shortage Visa (ranging from one-to-four employees per council) to work in difficult to fill positions, such as engineering, finance, mechanics, and project management roles.

2.2.6 Service and resource sharing

Twenty-seven local councils (40 per cent) stated that they undertook service and/or resource sharing with other local councils. Analysis of the responses reveals diverse models are used for sharing arrangements:

Regulatory and professional services including internal ombudsman services, building certification, Aboriginal Heritage Office roles and internal audit services	Operational services and infrastructure including road safety officers, waste services, water and sewer operaitons, IT support	Community and social services including library services, community transport and leadership positions
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2.3 Training Needs and Challenges

Key Findings:

- › NSW is leading use of the Local Government Training Package (LGATP), however this is to a large extent restricted to a single unit of competency which accounts for 78 per cent of all enrolments. VET continues to underpin core technical roles and it is this training that uses a large percentage of local councils training budgets. However, VET effectiveness depends on tailored content, expanded provider options and practical delivery for council jobs.
- › There is an unmet training need in transferable professional and interpersonal skills. To address this, local councils are increasingly utilising non-accredited training, which is perceived by local councils to provide more targeted, accessible and flexible training options than VET.

2.3.1 Training needs

Training needs identified by responding local councils in 2025-26 focussed on people-management and organisational capabilities required to operate in complex environments. This is reflective of local councils primarily allocating training budgets to mandatory training required to undertake certain occupations. Training needs not met in New South Wales increased from 36 per cent of local councils in 2018 to 54 per cent (n=36) in 2025-26.

Specific training needs not met are shown in descending order in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: New South Wales responding local councils, unmet training needs, 2025-2026 Survey



Relative to 2018, drivers in 2025 reflect a shift away from disruption-driven factors, such as organisational change and amalgamations, toward more persistent constraints related to training availability, budgetary constraints, time and compliance requirements.

Table 3: New South Wales responding local councils, Drivers of unmet training needs, 2025-2026 Survey

Driver of unmet training need	% local governments responding (n=67)
Council budget is insufficient for this training	28%
Unable to source quality training programs and/or trainers that can be delivered locally	28%
Employees haven't had time to attend training	24%
Travel cost of sending staff away to attend training is too high	24%
Mandatory training consuming the entire training budget	18%
Unable to source training programs with relevant content	15%
Lack of support from managers/supervisors to send staff on training courses	13%
Lack of time to organise training	12%

2.3.2 Training expenditure

Most local councils maintained or increased training investment despite fiscal pressures.

Key data				
Rising training costs driven by expanded mandatory training requirements and by training providers.				
Strategic investment in leadership development initiatives, with several local councils specifically mentioning multi-year leadership programs and significant investment in leadership qualifications.				
Grant funding enabling some expenditure increases, with local councils reporting increased access to grants and support payments.				
Table 4: New South Wales responding local councils, change in training expenditure by ACLG, 2025-2026 Survey				
Change in training expenditure	Rural/remote	Regional	Metro	NSW
Decreased	1 (5%)	1 (4%)	1 (5%)	3 (4%)
Increased	6 (29%)	8 (30%)	10 (53%)	24 (36%)
Remained the same	14 (67%)	18 (67%)	8 (42%)	40 (60%)
Total	21	27	19	67

2.3.3 Preferred delivery mode

Blended learning (67 per cent) is the preferred delivery mode for training across responding local councils. Preference for blended learning was strongest among regional and metropolitan councils. Rural/remote local councils also indicated a preference for in-person, face-to-face delivery. Table 5 provides the detailed breakdown by ACLG classification.

Table 5: New South Wales responding local councils, preferred training delivery mode by ACLG, 2025-2026 Survey

Preferred training delivery mode	Rural/remote	Regional	Metro	NSW
Blended learning (in person, self-paced and virtual)	11 (52%)	19 (70%)	15 (79%)	45 (67%)
In person, face-to-face delivery	9 (43%)	8 (30%)	4 (21%)	21 (31%)
Virtual delivery	1 (5%)	0	0	1 (1%)
Self-paced learning	0	0	0	0
Total	21	27	19	67

2.3.4 Training delivery challenges

Fifty-two responding local councils (78 per cent) identified challenges affecting training delivery, with constraints spanning budget, workforce logistics and delivery mode.

Cross-cutting training delivery challenges:
Distance and travel costs from sending employees to metropolitan providers and bringing facilitators in.
Complexities in managing employees' time and service disruption impacting frontline and outdoor workers disproportionately.
Budget constraints, rising training costs, travel and accommodation, backfill and internal coordination.

Challenges specific to in-person delivery:

Limited availability of appropriately qualified local registered training organisation (RTO) especially affecting rural/remote local councils.

Small training cohort sizes deter RTOs from providing in-person delivery.

Facilities and infrastructure such as training room availability, venue capacity, and reliable internet particularly in regional and metropolitan local councils.

2.3.5 First Nations training and development

Twelve per cent (n=8) reported undertaking joint training and development with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). This included work with Clontarf and Murook, Awabakal and Worimi Land local councils, and National Wellbeing Alliance to deliver cultural awareness training, immersion programs and Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid training. These were noted as beneficial and represent an opportunity for cultural competency development.

2.3.6 Uptake of Local Government Training Package

The LGATP superseded the LGA04 in February 2021. This reduced the Local Government Training Package from 37 qualifications to five. The five qualifications are as follows:

- > Certificate II in Local Government
- > Certificate III in Local Government
- > Certificate IV in Local Government
- > Diploma of Local Government
- > Diploma of Local Government - Elected Member

Of these qualifications, three are being utilised with enrolment and completion data provided in Figures 8-10 below.

Figure 8: LGATP Certificate III, Enrolments and Completions, 2019-2024

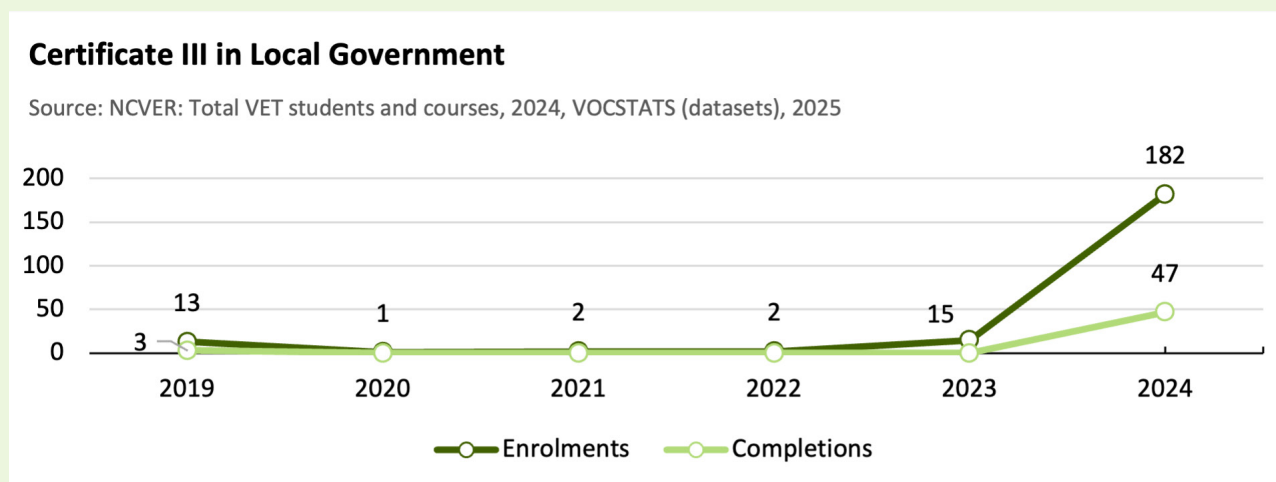


Figure 9: LGATP Certificate IV, Enrolments and Completions, 2019-2024

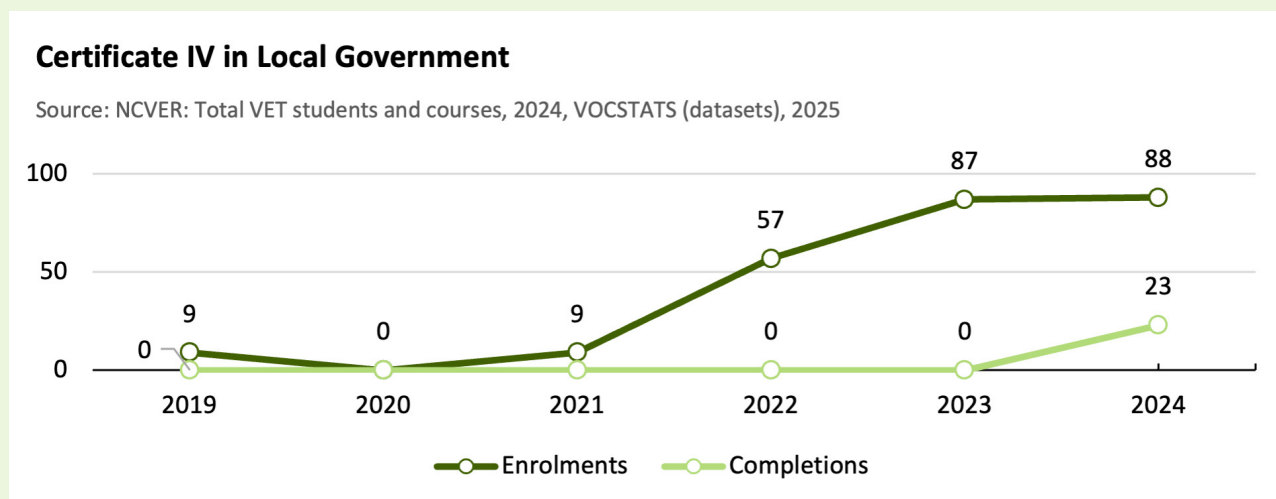
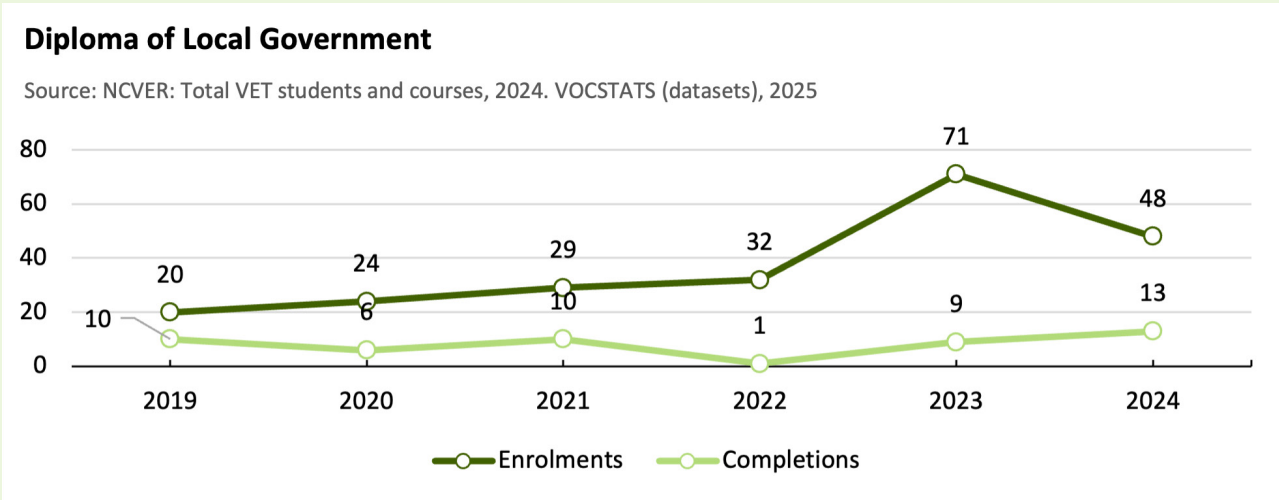


Figure 10: LGATP Diploma of Local Government, Enrolments and Completions, 2019-2024



A further breakdown by Unit of Competency (UoC) is provided at Table 5. UoCs are focused on core Local Government functions, such as working in Local Government, rates administration and community consultation and engagement. Overall, the training package is intended to support work-related training, rather than act primarily as a recruitment pathway into the approximately 400 occupations within Local Government.

Table 5: LGATP Enrolment data by Unit of Competency, 2022-2024

Units of Competency	Enrolments		
	2022	2023	2024
LGACOR001 - Work in local government	43	86	220
LGAREG001 - Implement parking controls	0	7	22
LGAREG003 - Manage conflict situations in a regulatory environment	0	9	20
LGAOPS003 - Develop works maintenance schedule	0	2	7
LGAREG002 - Provide evidence in court	2	0	5

Units of Competency		Enrolments	
LGACOR006 - Provide public education	0	0	3
LGACOR002 - Administer rates	0	0	2
LGAOPS001 - Prepare for operational works	0	0	1
LGAOPS004 - Evaluate works maintenance needs and priorities	0	7	1
TOTALS	45	111	281

Since the LGATP was reviewed enrolments across the UoC have increased considerably, although this is overwhelmingly concentrated in a singular UoC, with 'Work in local government' accounting for 78 per cent of all UoC enrolments in 2024.

2.3.7 Uptake of apprentices/trainees

More than half of local councils reported inadequate trainee and/or apprentice intake. Fifty-four per cent (n=36) reported that they do not believe they are taking on enough trainees to meet future skilling needs, while 46 per cent (31 local councils) reported their current apprentice intake is insufficient. Barriers included:

Financial constraints related to wages and training. While competition from mines, civil construction companies and state government entities drove up wage expectations.

Insufficient internal capacity to supervise and support apprentices, alongside the administrative burden associated with directly employing trainees.

Challenges in recruiting suitable applicants particularly in regional and rural/remote locations.

2.3.8 Engagement with State and Federal initiatives

Engagement with government workforce programs was high with 99 per cent (n=66) of responding local councils engaging with state or federal education, training, or other initiatives to support workforce development.

Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program
NSW Fresh Start Program
Smart and Skilled Funding Program
Strong Start/Start Strong Cadetship Program
TAFE partnerships

2.4 Future Workforce Outlook

Key Finding:

Occupation and skill gaps have remained largely unchanged since 2018. Local councils anticipate the complexity surrounding service provision to accelerate into the future having flow on implications for occupations, skills and training. Limited capacity to plan for this complexity due to its evolving service remit is likely to exacerbate the shortfalls into the future.

2.4.1 Emerging occupational shortages

The same occupations that are hardest to fill now are expected to remain critical in the future including engineers, urban/town planners and building surveyors, which remain unchanged from 2018.

Table 6: New South Wales responding local councils, occupational shortages in the future, 2025-2026 Survey

Category	Occupation	# Responding local governments	% Responding local governments (n=67)
Professional and Technical	Engineers	43	64.2%
	Urban/Town Planners	36	53.7%
	Building Surveyors	35	52.2%
	Environmental Health Officers	24	35.8%
	ICT Professionals	23	34.3%
	Accountants	22	32.8%
	Governance/Risk Managers	22	32.8%
	Project Managers	19	28.4%
	HR Professionals	18	26.9%
	WHS Professionals	18	26.9%
Operational and Trade	Trades - Mechanical	26	38.8%
	Trades - Horticultural	23	34.3%
	Wastewater/Sewerage Operator	20	29.9%
	Water Treatment Operator	19	28.4%
	Supervisors/Team Leaders	17	25.4%
	Trades - Automotive	17	25.4%
	Truck Drivers	17	25.4%

Category	Occupation	# Responding local governments	% Responding local governments (n=67)
Operational and Trade	IT/ICT Technicians	16	23.9%
	Labourers	16	23.9%
	Accounts/Payroll Clerk	15	22.4%

2.4.2 Factors impacting future skilling needs

Compared with 2018, the drivers of future skilling needs in 2025 have shifted away from delivery-focused pressures towards workforce and system-level challenges.

Table 7: New South Wales responding local councils, factors impacting future skilling needs, 2025-2026 Survey

Factor	# Responding local governments	% Responding local governments (n=67)
Generational workforce changes	58	87%
Increasing community needs and expectations	54	81%
Changes in government funding levels	53	79%
Major council or external infrastructure projects	47	70%
Increasing levels of governance and compliance	45	67%
Technological change including AI	44	66%
Growth in local government area	36	54%
Climate change	16	24%

2.4.3 Future occupational analysis

In 2025-26, 30 per cent of responding local councils reported undertaking analysis of future job roles and requirements, which is broadly unchanged from the reported percentage in 2018. This suggests that local councils face capacity constraints in conducting formal workforce analysis.

2.4.4 New occupations expected to emerge

Fifty-one responding local councils identified new roles expected to emerge over the next three years, revealing the following themes:

Technology and digital transformation occupations such as data analysts, data engineers, digital transformation specialists, business analysts, systems and automation specialists, full stack developers and digital marketing represented the top need.

Artificial Intelligence specialist occupations will create new jobs and transform existing jobs. AI driven occupations will also emerge while occupations with a manual element may see a reduction as AI becomes more embedded.

Dedicated cybersecurity occupations are expected to emerge reflecting local councils' recognition of digital security risks.

Climate change specialists, and environmental sustainability occupations reflect a growing focus on climate resilience as a distinct capability area requiring expertise.

Governance and compliance occupations including regulatory specialists, risk management professionals and positions focused on Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) requirements, reflect intensifying regulatory oversight of Local Government operations.

2.4.5 External pressures on workforce attraction and retention

Local councils noted the following external pressures ranked by impact:

Housing Pressures

The most significant impact, reflecting broader housing affordability challenges across the state.

Long Term Funding Certainty

Reflects concerns about maintaining workforce levels in uncertain fiscal environments.

Changing Local/ Regional Economies

Reflects economic volatility, industry transitions and competition for skilled workers from sectors offering wages local councils cannot match.

Natural Disasters

Reflects NSW's bushfire and flood exposure requiring emergency response capacity.

Community Hostility

Reflects increasing complexity of community engagement and occasional aggression toward employees.

Mental Health

Reflects growing recognition of workforce wellbeing challenges.

2.4.6 Addressing future skill needs and strategies

The following themes were identified when local councils were asked what would help meet their future skills needs:

Funding and financial support including for training programs, wage and training subsidies, ongoing apprenticeship and traineeship, and subsidised qualifications and micro-credentials. Several local councils specifically noted the need for flexible, skills-based grants to allow them to develop bespoke programs.

Improved access to training and education including availability of local training particularly for operation and trade occupations.

Wage regulations and competitive flexibility to attract skilled employees and to be competitive with private enterprises.

Access to diverse and affordable housing and accommodation.

Policy and structural changes to improve fiscal sustainability and state-level campaigns to lift the profile of Local Government as a prospective career opportunity.

To address these themes, the following strategies were identified for potential use by local councils:

Flexible training and development approaches	87 per cent
Targeted training programs	82 per cent
Improving access to educational opportunities for employees	72 per cent
Building industry partnerships	30 per cent
Sharing resource arrangements	12 per cent

While not an option for survey responders, 'Careers at Council' was highlighted anecdotally as an example of an initiative for increasing awareness of career opportunities, and a strategy for attracting school and university leavers to work in New South Wales Local Government.

Qualitative Results

3.1 Introduction

Across November 2025, a series of Local Government Skills Audit Workshops were undertaken involving representatives from 38 local councils in New South Wales.

This report provides an overview of the insights from these workshops, capturing both the shared and unique experiences of local councils in different settings. In New South Wales, workshops were held in:

Table 9: New South Wales local councils participating in Skills Audit Workshops

Workshop Location	Date	Participating Local councils	
Sydney	5 November 2025	1. Blue Mountains City Council	8. Lane Cove Council
		2. Byron Shire Council	9. Port Macquarie Hastings Council
		3. Camden Council	10. Shellharbour City Council
		4. Cumberland City Council	11. Wollondilly Shire Local councils
		5. Georges River Council	12. Wollongong City Council
		6. Gwydir Shire Council	13. Yass Valley Council
		7. Kiama Municipal Council	
Griffith	6 November 2025	14. Bland Shire Council	18. Griffith City Council
		15. Carrathool Shire Council	19. Hay Shire Council
		16. Edward River Council	20. Leeton Shire Council
		17. Forbes Shire Council	21. Riverina Water County Council
Scone	12 November 2025	22. Armidale Regional Council	25. Port Stephens Council
		23. Cessnock City Council	26. Singleton Council
		24. Lake Macquarie City Council	27. Upper Hunter Shire Council

Workshop Location	Date	Participating Local councils	
Online	20 November 2025	28. Albury City Council	36. Lismore City Council
		29. Berrigan Shire Council	37. Northern Beaches Council
		30. Central Coast Council	38. Randwick City Council
		31. City of Newcastle	Additional attendance:
		32. Eurobodalla Shire Council	> Byron Shire Council
		33. Kempsey Shire Council	> Camden Council
		34. Ku-ring-gai Council	> Port Macquarie Hastings Council
		35. Lachlan Shire Council	

Workshops involved four sessions, exploring the themes identified (giving rise to findings and insights):

Service Delivery Context	Occupational Shortages and Skills Gaps	Training Needs and Challenges	Future Workforce Outlook
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A note on New South Wales' local councils:

NSW has 128 local councils, spanning metropolitan, regional and rural/remote areas, from 33 metropolitan local councils across Greater Sydney to 95 regional and rural/remote local councils. These local councils are on the front line of service delivery, providing the key amenities, services and infrastructure that drive communities.

3.2 Service Delivery Context

Focused on identifying workforce challenges and service delivery shifts across local councils. Participants worked in small groups to explore how these challenges vary by location and size. Through focused discussions, participants examined which services are most impacted by occupations and skills gaps, how these services are evolving and what skills and knowledge are increasing in importance. This section summarises the key points that emerged from those conversations

Service delivery in NSW local councils is undergoing significant transformation.

The nature of service delivery is changing in response to workforce pressures, technological advances and shifting community expectations. These changes are explored further below:

Fleet management, water operations and infrastructure services face technological transformation: Automation and electrification are reshaping operational roles. Local councils are adopting smart meters, digital planning tools (e.g., spatial mapping technology) and AI-driven solutions (e.g., Forbes using AI for GIS pothole identification). Electrification of fleets and automation require mechanics and operators to develop new technical skills.	Customer services and community engagement services face heightened community expectations: Increased access to technology and technological transformation has led to public expectations of local councils to provide 24/7 access to flexible, digital-first support. Meanwhile, diverse communities, including culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations, require multilingual resources and assistance transitioning to digital platforms. In addition, rising reports of customer aggression toward frontline employees is driving investment in conflict resolution training, safety protocols and engagement strategies.	Compliance, waste services and aged care support face increasing complexity of compliance and governance: Legislative changes (e.g., <i>Aged Care Act 2024</i>⁹, mandated FOGO recycling for households by 2030¹⁰) increase the complexity for project officers, engineers and compliance employees. Local councils face challenges attracting candidates skilled in navigating regulatory requirements and often lack clarity on specific hiring needs.
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9 Australian Government - Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, About the new rights-based Aged Care Act, Australian Government, 2025.
10 New South Wales Environmental Protection Agency (NSW EPA), FOGO mandates and rollout, NSW EPA, 2026.

Emergency response and infrastructure maintenance are managing cross-skilling and workforce mobility:

Local councils are trialling role rotation and mentoring to balance flexibility with expertise. While multi-skilling supports service continuity, it risks de-skilling specialists, particularly in critical areas like emergency response.

Waste management and sustainability services are undergoing circular economy adaptation:

Local councils are moving from traditional waste disposal to resource recovery and circular economy models. This requires specialised skills in recycling processes, equipment operation and sustainability planning.

Infrastructure delivery and planning are responding to major infrastructure complexity:

Growth in areas like Cessnock and Upper Hunter is driving large-scale projects. Local councils need internal project management capability and skilled engineers and planners for multi-stakeholder initiatives.

Specialist services face **recruitment and retention challenges:** Local councils struggle to secure specialists, especially in regional areas, competing with the private sector and major projects (e.g., Western Sydney International Airport). Additional responsibilities from state government increase pressure on recruitment strategies.

Resource constraints and an ageing workforce: Short-term grant funding and project-based contracts create challenges in sustaining service delivery beyond funding cycles. Meanwhile, a significant proportion of council employees are nearing retirement, with limited succession planning and leadership development programs. Without proactive investment, local councils risk losing critical expertise and corporate knowledge. Younger employees seek mobility and higher pay, while older employees value stability and proximity.

Local councils face common service delivery challenges.

Participating local councils consistently identified six service areas as the most challenging to deliver:

Public works and infrastructure operations: face challenges in recruiting and retaining employees for public works, including mechanics and multi-skilled operators. Fast-growing areas like Cessnock, where housing affordability is attracting new residents, face challenges with an ageing workforce and limited capacity to support apprenticeships and skills development. These challenges are compounded by competition from major infrastructure projects, such as the airport development in Western Sydney, that offer significantly higher wages and attract the same talent pool. Local councils are unable to compete with these pay scales, making it harder to secure skilled employees for essential local services.

Planning, development and regulatory compliance: Planning, building surveying and development assessment occupations are challenging statewide, with employee shortages exacerbated by competition from state agencies and private sector employers. Attracting qualified planners and surveyors are also a challenge, often due to uncompetitive salaries and lengthy qualification pathways. Roles in compliance, by-law enforcement and governance are affected by retirements and increasing legislative complexity. Local councils reported a steep learning curve for new employees, with limited training options for legal compliance and regulatory functions.

Utilities and essential services: Water, sewerage and waste management emerged as critical yet challenging functions, especially for regional areas and local councils that operate their own utilities (e.g., Upper Hunter, Singleton). Recruiting and upskilling water operators is complicated by complex training requirements and by the limited availability of formal training providers. Not all local councils deliver these services, with some relying on external authorities, as a result.

Digital services and IT infrastructure: The rapid evolution of technology and digital service delivery has made delivering IT infrastructure and cybersecurity increasingly critical. Local councils face challenges in attracting and upskilling IT officers and GIS specialists, as well as adapting to new systems and automation due to competition with the private sector for IT employees.

Community and social services: Variation in service provision is pronounced in community wellbeing functions. Some local councils operate aged care and childcare services, while others do not. Recruitment and retention are ongoing challenges, particularly in regional areas where regulatory requirements and high turnover exist. Childcare services struggle to fill permanent roles due to certification requirements, while casual positions are easier to employ.

Environmental and land management: Tree management, horticulture and environmental engineering are increasingly difficult to attract employees, with high training costs and external market demand driving up wages. Environmental compliance and sustainability initiatives are also expanding, requiring new skillsets and approaches.

3.3 Skills Audit and Assessment

Focused on identifying the occupations most critical for delivering local council services both now and in the future. Through small-group discussions, participants identified up to ten priority occupations, drawing on shared experiences around service delivery, workforce pressures, and future readiness. These conversations revealed common challenges, emerging occupation types, and the diversity of occupation needs across local council types and regions. A whole-group plenary session enabled cross-local council reflection and helped consolidate key themes and implications, summarised below.

There is local variation in critical occupations across NSW local councils, driven by scale, community needs and service delivery.

Workforce priorities across New South Wales local councils vary widely and are shaped by differences in local council size, geography and diversity of service provision. While some occupations, such as planning, engineering and IT, are consistently in demand, priorities vary significantly between metropolitan and regional local councils.

Technical and regulatory occupations: Primarily emphasised by metropolitan local councils and surrounds, these occupations highlight the role that local government has in managing complex city services. Occupations include planners and engineers. Labourers and technical specialists also feature prominently, reflecting the operational pressures of maintaining public spaces and essential services in high-density areas. Occupations such as water operators, trades, building surveyors were a focus for regional, rural and remote local councils.

Internal service operations occupations: Metropolitan local councils prioritise these occupations to sustain local government service delivery, encompassing positions such as IT and cybersecurity specialists, which are consistently sought after to address rapid population growth.

External service delivery occupations: These are a focus of regionals and rural/remote local councils that sustain community wellbeing and resilience. Childcare educators were identified as critical for maintaining infrastructure and supporting families in towns and remote communities.

Local councils highlighted a wide range of critical occupations and while there were some distinct commonalities, each council's critical occupations were shaped by their geographic context and service delivery. This highlights both shared workforce pressures and the diversity and complexity of workforce needs across the state.

Frequently cited critical occupations are captured in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Critical occupations identified across workshops

Role	Frequency
1. IT Officer / Cyber Specialist	20
2. Planner (including Town and Urban)	18
3. Engineer (including Civil and Environmental)	18
4. Tradesperson (including Mechanic and Construction)	18
5. Building Surveyor	13
6. Childcare Educator	12
7. Executive Leadership	9
8. Water and Sewerage Operator	9
9. Geographic Information System (GIS) Officer	8
10. Arborist	8

The landscape of critical occupations is shifting, with many remaining hard to fill as sector and workforce demands grow.

Participants identified critical occupations across all technical and regulatory, and internal and external service operations and noted that these are hard to fill due to:

Uncompetitive salaries or allowances: Local councils find it difficult to offer competitive salaries to attract and retain employees. Upskilling existing employees can take years.	Complex regulatory environments: Legislative changes and strict compliance and regulatory requirements are increasing workloads and making it harder to retain qualified employees.
Limited succession planning: Executive leaders face cyclical recruitment challenges, with many approaching retirement and limited succession planning in place. There is a lack of supervisors to support apprentices and trainees, making it difficult to sustain a pipeline of new talent.	Limited training availability: Training is not widely available with only a handful of RTOs offering suitable qualifications for technical occupations. Local councils also reported entry and completion barriers to training due to specialised technical capabilities required for some qualifications.

3.4 Training Needs and Challenges

Explored how well current training pathways support priority occupations and skills. Using a workshop survey tool and group discussions, participants assessed the relevance of VET, Higher Education, and non-accredited training.¹¹ Barriers to VET participation were identified including accessibility, efficiency, and quality.

11 This report refers to Vocational Education and Training (VET), non-accredited training, and higher education (HE). Where these terms are used, they are to be understood to refer to the following: VET - units of competencies and qualifications contained in Training Packages used within the VET sector delivered through Registered Training Organisations and TAFEs (Technical and Furter Education); Non-accredited training - training that is not aligned to VET units of competencies or qualifications; and HE - education delivered by universities and other similar institutions.

While VET still underpins core technical roles, non-accredited training is increasingly being used to bridge gaps in skills.

Participants identified the following themes in relation to the different types of training:

VET remains the cornerstone for technical and compliance capability: VET was consistently identified as the most relevant pathway for roles requiring technical expertise and compliance assurance. Local councils emphasised VET's role where formal qualifications underpin regulatory compliance and risk management in functions such as water treatment and civil construction and for many technical occupations that require a Certificate III or IV qualification such as Water Operator, Mechanic and Childcare Educator. Some local councils noted they prefer private providers over TAFE for greater responsiveness, tailored content and onsite delivery options, while some strictly preferred TAFEs.

Non-accredited training is a strategic and adaptable avenue for developing transferable professional skills: These skills include customer service, leadership, conflict resolution and project management. Local councils have embraced short courses, micro-credentials and internal programs for their flexibility and speed in addressing skills gaps. Some local councils have proactively created their own programs to meet local workforce needs when formal qualifications are impractical. Local councils consider these programs as supplements to VET.

Higher Education remains important for specialist technical roles, though its relevance is declining in other areas: In many other roles, local councils report that higher education is less critical due to cost, time and limited alignment with immediate workforce needs. To address barriers, local councils are using cadetships, scholarships and hybrid models that combine on-the-job experience with academic progression.

VET is central for recruitment in priority sectors and shared service models are being explored to facilitate training.

Participants identified the following to improve relevance and quality of VET for New South Wales Local Governments workforce planning:

Facilitating VET training through shared service models: To address skills gaps and resource constraints, regional local councils have embraced shared service models to support VET training. By collaborating to share apprentices and trainees across locations, local councils are enhancing VET training program viability and achieving economies of scale. This collaborative approach broadens practical experience for trainees, exposing them to diverse projects across multiple local councils.

VET effectiveness depends on tailored content, expanded provider options and practical delivery for council jobs.

Local councils identified several targeted opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of VET for priority workforce needs including:

Relevance and contextualisation of training: Local councils emphasise the need for VET programs that accurately reflect the realities of Local Government work, citing issues with current qualifications such as the *Certificate III Civil Construction* and *Certificate III Water Industry Operations*. These qualifications hold several relevant electives but are often not offered by RTOs and TAFEs as they may choose other electives to deliver. The LGATP was identified as a solution for addressing skills gaps across local councils, however its effectiveness hinges on adaptability. They also highlighted the importance of contextualising content to reflect jurisdiction-specific requirements, particularly for units of competency covering regulations and local laws, which may differ across council areas.

There are cultural and financial barriers to effective VET training:

Cultural resistance persists in some local councils, where managers have expressed concerns about employees turnover following training investments. The idea that upskilling employees leads to their departure can hinder workforce development initiatives. High costs and logistical challenges, particularly for smaller and rural local councils, also limit access. These constraints have driven interest in non-accredited training as a more affordable, flexible alternative to VET.

Accessibility and provider capacity:

Regional and rural/remote local councils face acute challenges in accessing suitable VET programs. For example, some local councils reported having to contract external trainers to sign off apprentices or travel significant distances for face-to-face instruction.

Ineffective and non-tailored delivery models:

Local councils consistently reported that self-paced online learning, which may be offered by both TAFEs and private RTOs, is ineffective for practical, hands-on roles, such as horticulture or construction. In addition, delivery models are not always suitable for all, particularly for low language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills.

3.5 Future Workforce Outlook

Focused on determining the current and future skills required in Local Government occupations. Participants worked in groups to discuss evolving skill requirements and to build shared understanding across local councils. These conversations highlighted shifts in capability needs, emerging skill gaps and regional variations in workforce priorities. The following sections summarise the key insights and implications that emerged from these discussions.

Skills demand occurs across three ‘tiers’

Workshop participants consistently described council workforce skills falling into three broad tiers, as shown below (while noting that some overlap exists between these categories):

Occupation-specific skills: Technical or specialised abilities required to perform tasks unique to a specific occupation or profession. <i>These skills are occupation-dependent and often linked to formal training, certifications, or regulatory requirements.</i>	Transferable professional skills: Broad, occupation-independent capabilities that enable effective work across different functions, departments, or industries. <i>These skills are practical and task-oriented, focusing on how work gets done.</i>	Interpersonal skills: These skills enhance interaction, collaboration, and relationship-building, focusing on communication and social dynamics. <i>These skills are crucial for teamwork, stakeholder engagement, people management, and customer service.</i>
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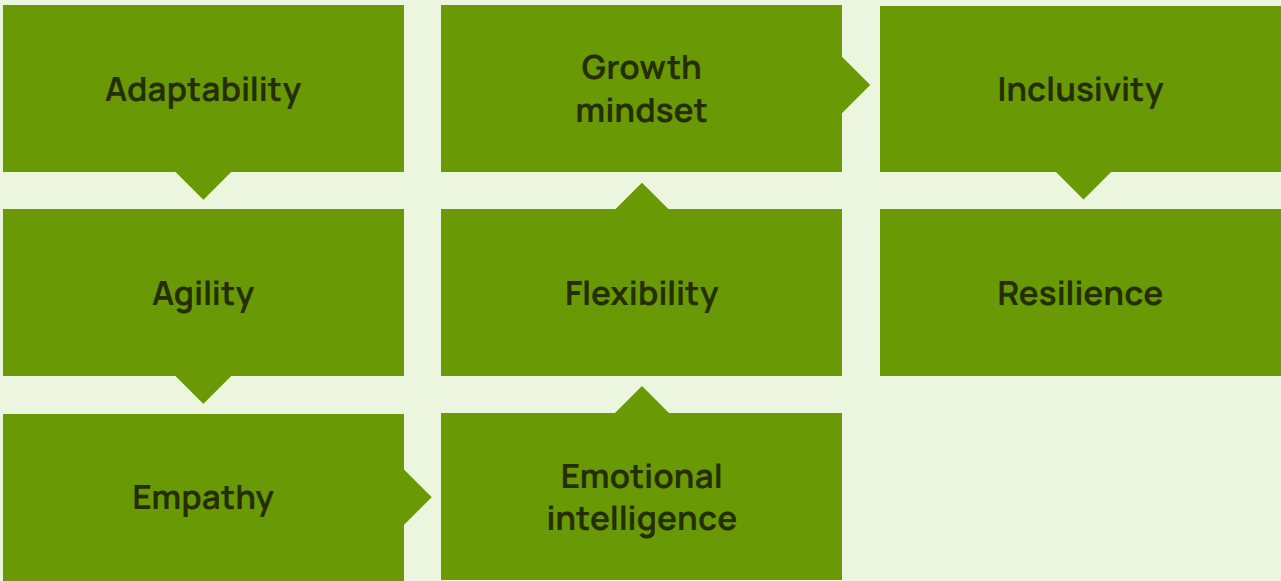
Table 11: Skills most in demand by category across NSW local councils

Occupation-specific skills	Transferable Professional Skills	Interpersonal Skills
› Artificial intelligence › Automation proficiency › AutoCAD / drafting › Cybersecurity › Diagnostics and EV maintenance › Digital surveying / modelling › Drone operation › GIS and spatial mapping › Industry standards knowledge › Legislative knowledge and compliance › Plant operation › Plumbing › Programming › Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) control system and plant operation › Scientific knowledge (arborist) › System integration › Technical IT / software knowledge › Technology adoption › Trade qualifications / licenses	› Analytical skills › Asset management › Change management › Contract management › Critical thinking › Data analysis › Decision making › Disaster management › Planning and future planning › Procurement › Project management › Report writing › Research › Risk management and risk assessment › Solution focus › Strategic thinking and planning › Sustainability mindset › Workload management	› Collaboration/teamwork › Communication (written and verbal) › Community consultation › Conflict resolution / management › Customer service › Influencing › Listening and feedback › Negotiation › Political acumen / political nous › Stakeholder engagement and management

Behavioural Traits

There was considerable discussion across the Workshops on a fourth tier relating to behavioural traits, personal qualities, aptitudes, mindsets, and behavioural tendencies that influence how people approach work and interact with others.

In the New South Wales context, the traits highlighted included:



Current skill needs are occupation-specific and transferrable, however interpersonal, and behavioural traits are becoming increasingly important. This is creating a widening gap between current capabilities and future needs. In summary:

Occupation-specific skills: Highly specialised skills, are often tied to formal qualifications, which are expensive and hard to source, with local councils competing against private sector salaries

Digital literacy, automation and AI are now critical for roles traditionally seen as manual.

Transferrable Professional skills: Despite being critical for engineers, planners and managers, project management is often underdeveloped. Skills such as data analytics, risk management and change management are increasingly required across all roles, from engineers to rates officers.

Trades roles and other physical jobs now demand creativity and relationship management, skills not traditionally associated with these positions.

Interpersonal skills: Mentoring and coaching are emerging as priorities, yet capability remains uneven. Leaders require confidence in giving and receiving feedback, having difficult conversations, fostering trust and supporting development. Similarly, planners and arborists highlight gaps in negotiation and mediation, skills essential for managing community expectations and navigating regulatory complexity.

Even highly technical occupations, such as IT specialists, water operators and tradespeople, now require strong customer service orientation as local councils shift toward customer-centric models.

Behavioural traits: Responsiveness, clear communication and empathy are becoming equally as critical as technical expertise in technical occupations. Adaptability, resilience and agility are increasingly recognised as critical for success as leaders are increasingly required to have empathy, vulnerability and psychosocial awareness alongside strategic and financial acumen. Local councils are also embracing values-based recruitment, prioritising motivation and mindset over technical experience. Continuous improvement, a growth mindset and openness to change underpin efforts to modernise service delivery and bridge further skills gaps.

Appendices

Appendix A: Detailed Methodology

The project was delivered over four phases:

Jurisdictional workshops: in every state and territory from September to November 2025.

Workshop response analysis and reporting: from October to December 2025.

Survey collection: from 24 November 2025 to 30 January 2026.

Survey response analysis and national report: from February to March 2026.

This Report features a comprehensive qualitative component due to the inclusion of workshop data alongside surveys conducted in prior years. Both the survey data and insights from the workshops were critical to develop a deeper understanding of workforce challenges.

The workshops aimed to provide in-depth qualitative evidence and involved participation from employees responsible for people and culture, as well as learning and development, within their local councils. The workshops had three key objectives:

OBJECTIVE 1

To understand the services that local councils provide and how these are changing across different regions and sectors.

OBJECTIVE 2

To explore the current and future occupations, jobs and skills needs of LGAs and how they vary by location and LGA size.

OBJECTIVE 3

To seek input on the relevance and responsiveness of current training to these needs and consider alternative responses and pathways.

The 2025-2026 survey forms part of a longitudinal series, with previous iterations conducted in 2018 and 2022, with minor updates made over time. In August 2025, Public Skills Australia and ALGA agreed to jointly support the design, delivery and promotion of the Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Survey (the survey). The survey was hosted on 'Qualtrics', an online survey platform, through which all local councils had the opportunity to participate. Respondents were typically employees responsible for people and culture and learning and development, with input from other local council employees where relevant.

Survey responses underwent a thorough data-cleaning process prior to analysis. Interpretation of results is guided by the following methodological considerations:

- › The survey data is subject to limitations, particularly for inclusion-related questions, as most questions were optional and responses relied on self-identification, meaning not all local councils provided data for these measures.
- › Percentages are calculated based on responding local councils for each specific question, not total survey participants, unless otherwise stated.
- › Changes since previous years (2018 and 2022) are reported in graphs and tables in percentage points (pp), reflecting absolute shifts in the proportion of local councils and supporting comparison across survey years with different response counts.
- › For most comparisons, 2018 data is used to reflect longitudinal changes and account for COVID-related impacts, while 2022 data is used when 2018 data is unavailable. In some cases, new questions introduced this year prevent immediate comparisons.
- › Workforce statistics are reported as employee headcount (Q3) unless otherwise specified.
- › Vacancy rates are calculated as a percentage of total employees and council-level percentages are rounded to whole numbers.
- › The survey was conducted between November 2025 and February 2026, capturing workforce data as of June 2025 (FY2024-25) alongside forward-looking assessments for 2025-2026. This timing enables local councils to reflect on completed recruitment and training cycles while planning for the year ahead.

Appendix B: Terms

For consistency and clarity in interpreting the survey results, the following definitions have been adopted in this report:

Term	Description		
Geographical classification	Multiple systems exist to classify whether a Local Government Area (LGA) is rural/remote, regional or metropolitan, and councils often span multiple boundaries. The Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG) categorises local councils into 22 groups based on socioeconomic characteristics and their capacity to deliver diverse services to the community. We have adopted three categories from these ACLG groups:		
	<table><tr><td>Rural/remote: Local councils servicing populations across very small to large population categories, including councils classified as remote.</td><td>Regional: Non-metropolitan local councils with primary urban centres located in regional areas.</td><td>Metropolitan: Local councils located within capital city metropolitan areas, including inner city, established suburban and outer-metropolitan or urban-fringe local government areas.</td></tr></table>	Rural/remote: Local councils servicing populations across very small to large population categories, including councils classified as remote.	Regional: Non-metropolitan local councils with primary urban centres located in regional areas.
Rural/remote: Local councils servicing populations across very small to large population categories, including councils classified as remote.	Regional: Non-metropolitan local councils with primary urban centres located in regional areas.	Metropolitan: Local councils located within capital city metropolitan areas, including inner city, established suburban and outer-metropolitan or urban-fringe local government areas.	
ACLG classifications	ACLG classifications are likely to have shifted slightly since the 2018 and 2022 survey.		
'Local councils' versus 'Local Government'	In the Australian context, the term ' <i>local council</i> ' refers to the elected arm of council, whereas the term ' <i>Local Government</i> ' refers to the administrative and management arm of council.		

Term	Description
'Occupation' in the context of the survey	Using the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) for occupation classification despite the introduction of the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA), as ANZSCO allows us to maintain consistency and compare results with previous years. Occupation, as defined by ANZSCO, refers to a set of jobs that share similar tasks and responsibilities, generally requiring comparable skills, knowledge and expertise. ANZSCO groups jobs into occupations based on the type of work performed and the skills required.
'Job' versus 'occupation'	'Job' is used in preference to 'occupation' for workshop reporting since it is more familiar and easier for people to relate to. A job refers to an individual position held by a person, involving specific roles, duties and responsibilities within an organisation. It relates to a person's current employment status. In contrast, an occupation is a broader classification, encompassing a variety of jobs that share similar core characteristics, independent of a particular employer or location.
FTEs	Full time equivalents.
Skills gap	The gap between the skill level of the employee and the skills needed to perform their role description, as intended by their employer.
Skills shortage	A labour shortage that requires the recruitment of more people into the workforce.

Appendix C: Workshop Critical Occupations and Skills Assessment

The table below summarises the list of skills and occupations discussed in workshops:

Skills in <i>italics</i> were identified as important for the future Skills gaps are highlighted in bold		
Job	Skill	
IT Officer / Cyber Specialist	<i>Adaptability</i>	<i>Pragmatic</i>
	<i>Agility</i>	<i>Problem solving</i>
	<i>AI</i>	Project management
	<i>Change management</i>	Research
	Communication	<i>Resilience</i>
	<i>Cybersecurity</i>	<i>Risk management</i>
	<i>Emotional intelligence</i>	Software knowledge
	<i>Financial management</i>	Solution focus
	<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Strategic thinking and planning</i>
	<i>Influencing</i>	Technical IT
	Organisational education	Time management
Planner (including Town and Urban)	Risk management	<i>Digital literacy, AI</i>
	Flexibility, adaptability	<i>Agility</i>
	Bachelor Degree	Data analysis
	Knowledge of planning regulation, contextualisation	Stakeholder engagement
	Report and technical skill writing	Political acumen

Job	Skill	
	<i>Communications skills</i>	Strategic thinking
	<i>Conflict resolution</i>	Decision making
	<i>GIS familiarity</i>	Negotiation
	Time management	Digital upskilling
	Project management	Environmental adaptability / sustainability
	<i>Environmental overlay and legislative knowledge</i>	Conflict resolution
Engineer	Critical thinking	Resilience
	Analytical	Auto cad / drafting
	Detail oriented	Financial management
	Project management	<i>Automation proficiency</i>
	Stakeholder engagement	<i>Data analysis</i>
	Programming	<i>Business leadership</i>
	Communication	Emotional intelligence
	Mentoring	AI
	Collaboration	Time management
	Bachelor's degree / qualifications	<i>Contract management</i>
	Policy understanding	Drones
	Negotiation	Environmental sustainability

Job	Skill	
Tradesperson (including Construction and Mechanic)	Trade qualification / license	Technology skills
	Problem solving	<i>Knowledge of industry standards</i>
	Supervisor capability	Automation
	Planning	Leadership
	EV maintenance	Procurement
	Diagnostics	Communication
	Experience	<i>Asset management</i>
	Physical ability	Stakeholder management
	WHS	
Building Surveyor	Qualification (e.g. Diploma in Building Surveying)	Problem solving
	Legislation / compliance knowledge	<i>Upskilling</i>
	Customer service	Drone
	Conflict management	AI
	Written reports	<i>Leadership</i>
	Digital literacy	Negotiation
	<i>Workload management</i>	<i>Environmental sustainability</i>
	Digital surveying / modelling	<i>Conflict resolution</i>
	<i>Project management</i>	<i>Resilience</i>
	Ethics	<i>Stakeholder collaboration</i>
	Communication	

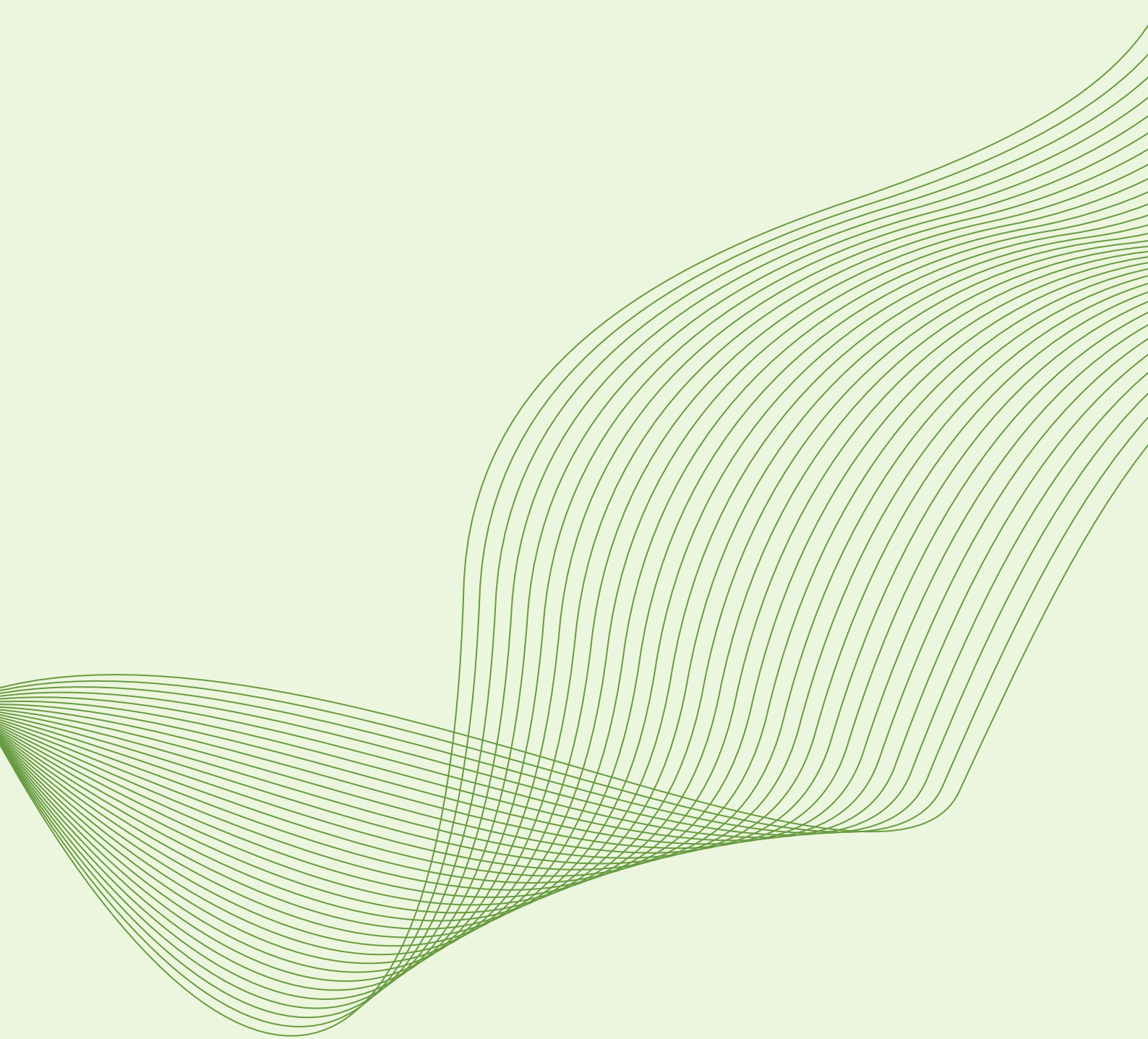
Job	Skill	
Childcare Educator	Teaching	<i>Safety aptitude</i>
	Qualification	Interpersonal skills
	Inclusivity	<i>Learning agility</i>
	Conflict management	Digital literacy
	<i>Empathy</i>	<i>Growth mindset</i>
	Digital literacy	Leadership
	Privacy awareness	Legislative knowledge
	WHS knowledge	
Executive Leadership	Performance management	Risk, governance, legislation
	Empathy	<i>Political nous</i>
	Emotional intelligence	Community minded
	Clear understanding of psychosocial hazards	<i>Agility</i>
	People skills	Technology adoption
	Vulnerability and admit mistakes	<i>Change management</i>
	Lead teams	Influence
	Project Management	Risk tolerance
	Contract Management	Strategic
	Mentoring	Stakeholder management
	Listening and observing	Critical thinking
	Feedback	Business transformation

Job	Skill	
Water and Sewerage Operator	Plant operation	Mentoring
	Plumbing	Digital literacy
	Customer service	<i>Modelling</i>
	Problem solving	Manual work
	Risk management	<i>Disaster management</i>
	Technical skills	Automation
	<i>Planning</i>	<i>Procedural knowledge</i>
	Qualification (Cert III/IV)	Safety
	SCADA	
Geographic Information System (GIS) Officer	Spatial mapping	<i>System integration</i>
	GIS software	AI
	Collaboration	Communication
	Attention to detail	Data management
	Technology skills	Drone operation
	Leadership	Adaptability
	Programming	Report writing
	Governance	Analysis
Arborist	Conflict management	<i>Digital literacy</i>
	Customer service	<i>Community consultation</i>
	Risk assessment / WHS	Teamwork
	Technical (climbing / pruning)	Negotiation
	Qualification (AQF 5 level 5)	Future planning
	Scientific knowledge	Environmental sustainability

Job	Skill	
Labourers	Bricklaying	Physical health awareness
	Traffic management	Customer service
	Site safety	Communication
	Working at heights	Experience
	Heavy machinery	Physical ability
	Digital literacy	WHS
	Mental health awareness	Technology skills
Rangers	Diplomacy	<i>WHS mindset</i>
	Communication	Learning agility
	Resilience	Collaboration
	Legislative knowledge	Leadership
	<i>Adaptability</i>	Influence
	Digital literacy	Educating
Corporate Services Professionals (Governance, Finance, Risk, Financial Accountants)	Financial reporting	<i>Compliance</i>
	Numerical reasoning	AI
	Problem solving	Critical thinking
	Stakeholder management	Communication
	Digital skills	Long term planning
	Analytics	Influencing

Job	Skill	
Work Health & Safety Officers	Qualification (diploma/degree)	Data analytics
	Communication	Organisational skills
	Influence	Continuous improvement
	Procurement	Strategy skills
	Computer skills	Risk management
	Empathy	
Business Analysts	Analytical	Data analysis
	Critical thinking	IT proficient
	Digital literacy	Business modelling
	Reporting systems	Attention to detail
	Strategic	Business intelligence
	AI	Emotional intelligence
	User experience	
Rates Officers	Attention to detail	Data and analytics
	Empathy	AI
	Customer service	Digital literacy
	Software / technology proficiency	Adaptability
	Problem solving	Ethical conduct
	Organisational management	Legislative change
	Time management	

Job	Skill	
Aged Care Employees	First aid / CPR qualification	Reporting
	Qualifications	Stakeholder management
	Communication	<i>Social inclusion</i>
	NDIS compliant	<i>Adaptability</i>
	Program development	<i>Long term planning</i>
	<i>Legislations</i>	Emotional intelligence
Return-to-Work Officers	Attention to detail	<i>AI</i>
	Customer service	<i>Digital literacy</i>
	Proficiency with software	<i>Adaptability</i>
	Problem solving	<i>Legislative change</i>
	Organisational management	Ethical conduct
	Time management	Numerical reasoning
	<i>Data and analytics</i>	Negotiation skills



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