

Public Skills Australia

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

National Report 2025-2026

June 2026



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Acknowledgement of Country

Public Skills Australia respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

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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

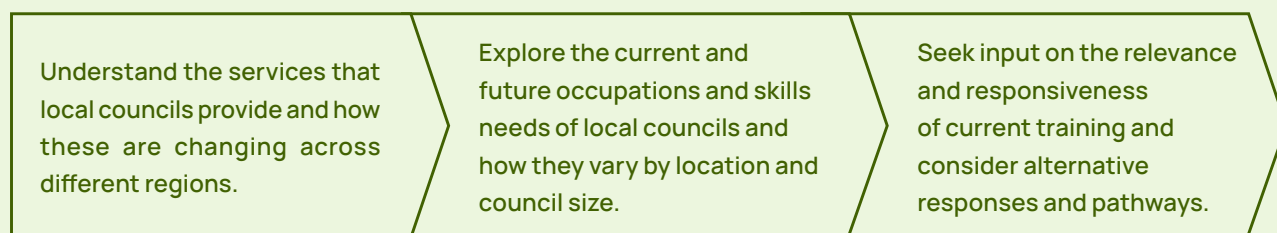
In support of the combined project, Public Skills Australia and ALGA collaborated on the *2025-26 Local Government Workforce Skills and Capacity Survey (the survey)*. The survey forms part of a longitudinal series, with previous iterations conducted in 2018 and 2022, and minor updates made over time.

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

In support of the Project, Public Skills Australia and ALGA collaborated on conducting workshops to surface qualitative information that could be used to validate the survey themes, findings and insights.

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 National Report 2025-2026

The National Report 2025-2026 (the report) summarises the *Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Survey* data and 22 workshops conducted around Australia. It provides summarised insights from all jurisdictions to reflect national perspectives and is further supported by seven jurisdictional reports. 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.

The Australian Local Government workforce is diverse and covers a wide range of occupations making it more vulnerable to ongoing skills gaps, occupational shortages and training challenges. According to the *Local Government Association's 2022 Skills and Capability Survey*, over 91 per cent of local councils reported experiencing occupational shortages during 2021-22.

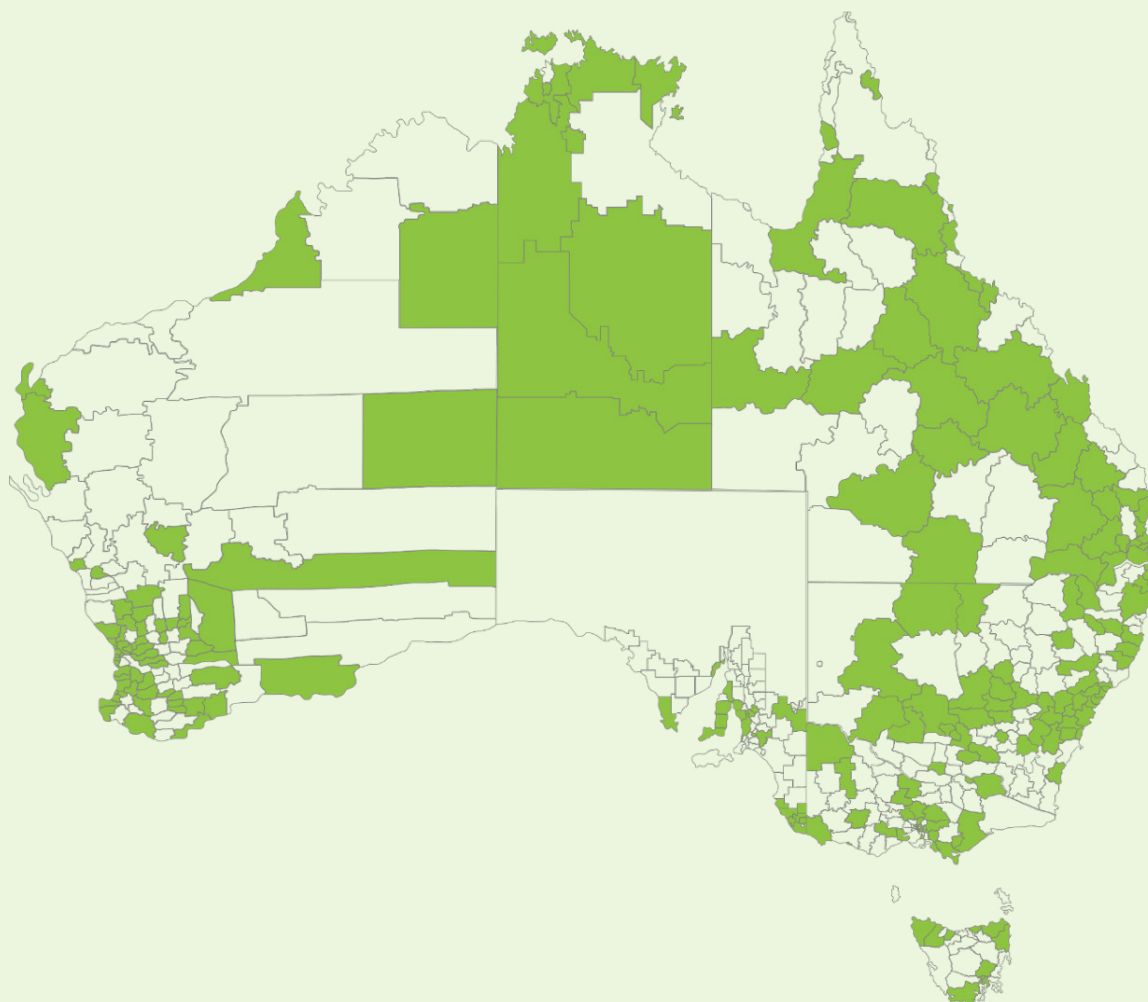
This report, along with the seven jurisdictional reports provides a contemporary evidence base detailing the current and future workforce priorities, current and future occupations, skills gaps and training requirements within the Local Government industry-sector.

The analysis provided herein was developed using insights generated from a survey of 209 local councils and workshops involving 137 local councils across every state and territory, representing an overall response rate of 51 per cent (280 unique councils engaged), as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 below.

Table 1: Workshop and survey engagement by state/territory

Jurisdiction (number of councils)*	Attended workshop	Completed survey	Total unique councils engaged	% unique councils engaged
NSW (131)	38	69	80	60.3%
NT (18)	14	7	15	83.3%
QLD (78)	33	15	40	51.3%
SA (68)	12	21	26	38.2%
TAS (29)	5	9	12	41.1%
VIC (79)	13	27	33	41.8%
WA (141)	22	61	74	52.5%
AUS (537)	137	209	280	51.3%

Figure 1: Councils that participated in 2025-2026 survey and/or workshops



1.7 Structure

The report provides a national overview that is divided into four chapters as follows:

- › Service Delivery Context: Providing an overview of the workforce profile across Local Government based on reported survey data
- › Skills Audit and Assessment: Focussed on occupational and skills gaps and their drivers
- › Training needs and Challenges: Including the uptake of the Local Government Training Package (LGATP) and focussed on workforce planning and training
- › Future workforce outlook: Detailing how service delivery is becoming more complex to help explain future workforce challenges.

The report then concludes with considerations for different tiers of Government.

1.8 Key Findings

The themes, findings and correlating insights for Australian local councils are summarised below.

Section	Key Findings
Service Delivery Context (based on Workforce Profile Data)	Long-term workforce data shows incremental growth alongside stable employment patterns and unchanged diversity data, indicating that workforce growth has not translated into structural or equity-related workforce change.
Skills Audit and Assessment	Occupational shortages are an enduring constraint across local councils, with 83 per cent of councils reporting persistent vacancies, concentrated most acutely in engineers, building surveyors and town planners, and disproportionately affecting rural and remote councils. Local councils are facing enduring workforce challenges underpinned by skills gaps and occupational shortages. This is further compounded by increasing unplanned turnover, shorter tenure and an ageing workforce. In response, local councils are increasingly appointing lower-skilled candidates and relying on on-the-job development to counter persistent occupational and skills shortages. Expectations of future shortages closely mirror current skills gaps indicating an enduring alignment between present workforce pressures and anticipated capability risks.
Training Needs and Challenges	While VET remains a key pathway for skilling Local Government workforces, councils face ongoing challenges with alignment and accessibility. Local councils continue to utilise VET as the primary pathway for compliance and safety critical roles. However, they report persistent challenges in resourcing and accessing training delivery. Additionally, local councils have indicated potential gaps between the training products available through the Local Government Training Package and the skills and occupations most in demand. While 75 per cent of local councils employ apprentices and trainees, more than half indicate that current uptake remains underutilised.

Section	Key Findings
Training Needs and Challenges	Skills demand in Local Government is increasingly concentrated in regulation, safety, digital capability, leadership and interpersonal domains, with persistent gaps in leadership, supervision and change related capability reflecting training approaches that prioritise technical qualifications. Local councils are seeking to adapt their responses to their skills and occupational shortages, and challenges accessing training delivery. Local councils are increasingly relying on non accredited training to build transferable professional and interpersonal capability. However, while rural and remote councils are raising their training investment to counter labour scarcity, regional councils have reduced their spend, indicating uneven capacity across the sector to access and fund the training needed to address gaps.
Future Workforce Outlook	Service delivery for local councils is becoming more complex and responding to increased complexity is becoming more challenging. Increased service delivery complexity is being driven by communities expecting more from their local councils, increasing psychosocial risks in the workforce and the community, tighter regulatory and assurance requirements, rapid digital transformation that is hard to keep pace with, continued impacts of climate change and adapting to generational workforce change. These challenges are accentuated for rural/remote and regional local councils due to a smaller rate base, funding uncertainty, difficulties attracting and retaining workers and limited access to alternative service providers.

National Overview

2.1 Service Delivery Context

Key Finding:

Long-term workforce data shows incremental growth alongside stable employment patterns and unchanged diversity data, indicating that workforce growth has not translated into structural or equity-related workforce change.

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

As of June 2025, local councils employed 218,000 people across a range of occupations, representing an average of 2.2 per cent annual growth between 2018 and 2025.³

The profile of responding local councils has shifted over time, with the *2025-2026 Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Survey* drawing proportionally more responses from small and mid-sized councils and fewer from very large councils compared to 2018.

This change in respondent mix is considered when interpreting longitudinal trends as shown in Figure 2, 3 and 4 below.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Public sector employment and earnings.

Key data

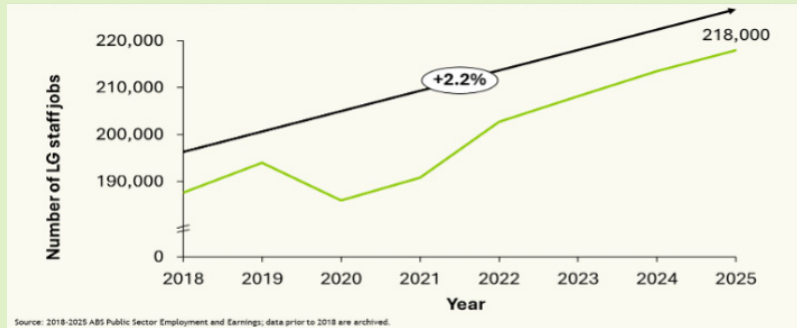


Figure 2:

Local Government employment data, Australia, 2018-2025

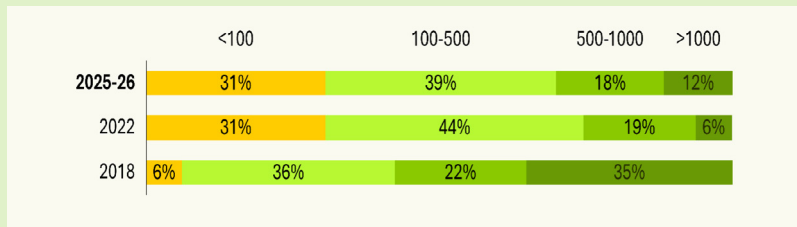


Figure 3:

Distribution of employment size in Australian local councils 2025-2026 compared to 2022 and 2018

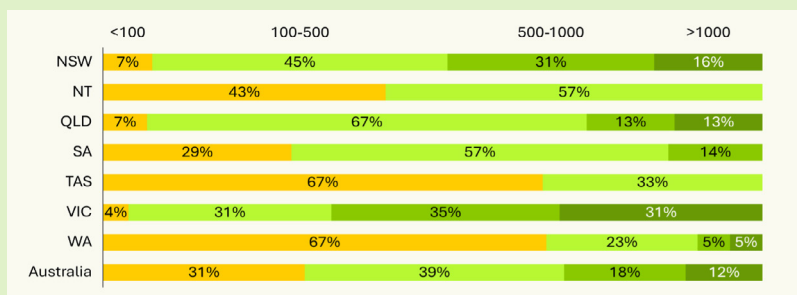


Figure 4:

Distribution of employment size by state/territory, 2025-2026 Survey

Victoria and New South Wales have the largest workforce profiles nationally, with significantly higher shares of local councils employing 500-1000 employees and local councils employing more than 1,000 employees. This reflects greater organisational scale and service complexity.

Western Australia has a relatively high proportion of local councils with fewer than 100 employees.

Queensland and South Australia sit in between, with most local councils employing 100-500 employees and smaller, with a few exceptions in the larger workforce categories that cover large geographic areas (e.g., City of Moreton Bay, City of Logan and Onkaparinga City Council).

Tasmania and the Northern Territory are dominated by small to medium local councils, with no councils employing more than 500 employees.

Local councils have not reverted to casual or part-time employment as a primary response to workforce challenges.

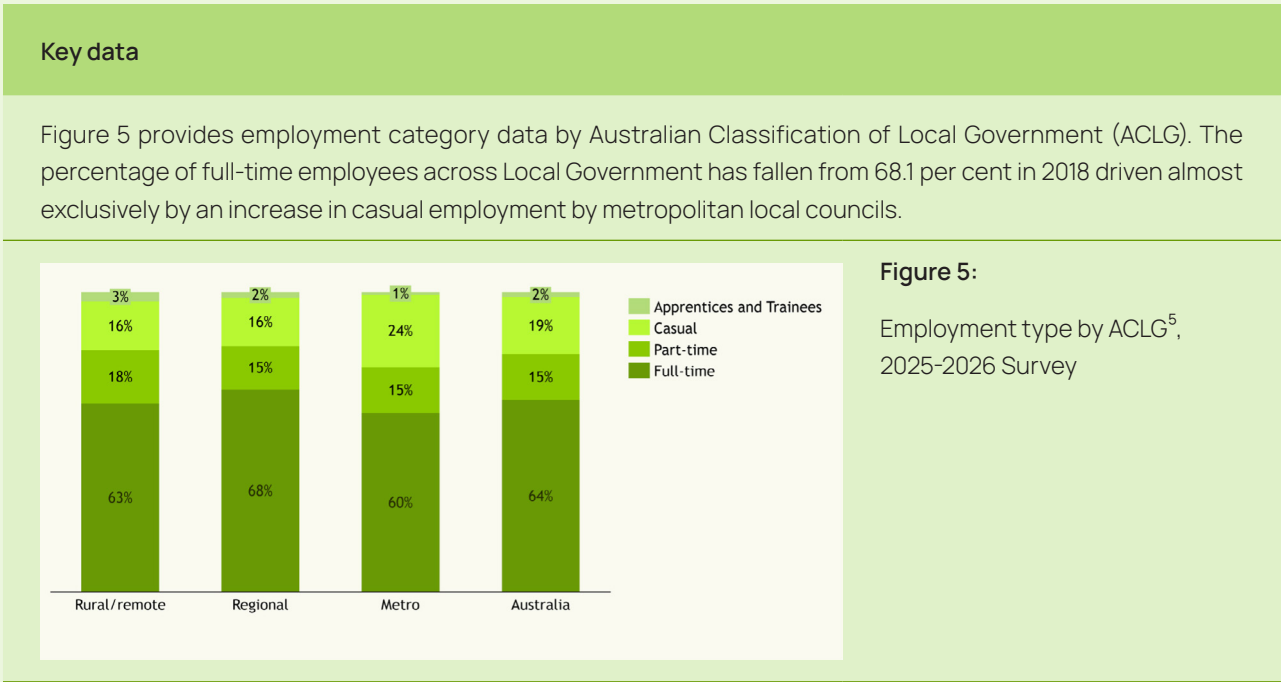
Despite ongoing workforce pressures, full-time employment continues to dominate nationally, accounting for 65 per cent of roles and remaining broadly stable between 2018 (68.1 per cent) and 2025-26. There are however some differences in the workforce composition across jurisdictions, for example:

Queensland has high reliance on full-time employment, at around 85 per cent in 2025-2026. South Australia (71 per cent) and New South Wales (69 per cent) also sit above the national average 64 per cent.

Western Australia (28 per cent), Northern Territory (25 per cent) and Victoria (22 per cent) had the highest rates of casual employment in 2025-2026, sitting above the national average of 19 per cent.

Tasmania (26 per cent), Victoria (25 per cent), Northern Territory (24 per cent) and South Australia (22 per cent), all had relatively high proportions of part-time employment, compared to the national average of 15 per cent.

2.1.2 Employment categories⁴



⁴ 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. For a full explanation of the methodology applied, see Appendix B and Appendix C for each participating local council's classification.

⁵ Australian Classification of Local Government.

2.1.3 Employment gender profile and workplace diversity

Key data

Workforce diversity patterns remain largely unchanged. This includes gender equity by employment type. While diversity is more geographically widespread, it is not yet translating into proportional representation across the sector. Men continue to dominate full-time employment (60 per cent) and women remain concentrated in part-time roles (82 per cent), indicating limited structural change.

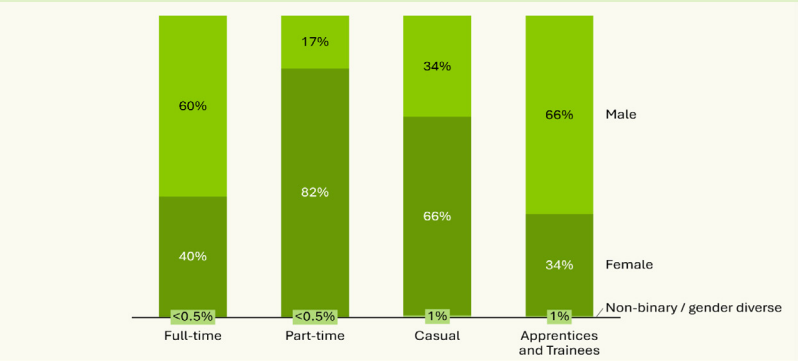


Figure 6:
Employment type by gender,
2025-2026 Survey

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, people with a disability and First Nations employment has spread across more local councils but declined as a share of the total workforce, suggesting that broader workforce growth is diluting representation rather than strengthening inclusion outcomes. These changes are likely driven by substantial growth in total workforce participation across several jurisdictions, most notably Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia.

Table 2: Workforce diversity in Local Government⁶

Workforce diversity	% of responding local governments	Total staff as a % of total LG workforce	pp change since 2018 (Total staff as a % of total LG workforce)
CALD	41.3%	2.9%	-5.7pp
Disability	37.9%	0.8%	-0.9pp
First Nations	69.9%	2.5%	-2.0pp

6 The 2025-2026 survey introduces non-binary and gender-diverse representation. While this group remains very small—around 1 per cent or less across all employment types—its inclusion represents an important improvement in workforce visibility and reporting.

Table 3: Culturally and linguistically diverse participation 2025-2026 Survey

Jurisdiction	# of responding local governments with CALD employees	% of responding local governments with CALD employees	Total CALD employees as a % of total LG workforce	Total CALD employees as a % of total LG workforce (2018)
NSW	19	28.4%	2.8%	7.5%
NT	4	57.1%	20.9%	90.0%
QLD	5	33.3%	2.9%	6.6%
SA	5	23.8%	1.3%	6.3%
TAS	2	22.2%	0.4%	n/a
VIC	6	23.1%	1.0%	14.5%
WA	44	72.1%	5.6%	3.7%
AU	85	41.3%	2.9%	8.6%

Table 4: First Nations employment 2025-2026 Survey

Jurisdiction	# of responding local governments with First Nations employees	% of responding local governments with First Nations employees	Total First Nations employees as a % of total LG workforce	Total First Nations staff as a % of total LG workforce (2018)
NSW	54	80.6%	2.6%	2.1%
NT	7	100.0%	47.4%	62.1%
QLD	11	73.3%	1.6%	6.6%
SA	8	38.1%	0.6%	0.5%
TAS	3	33.3%	1.3%	0.7%
VIC	20	76.9%	0.5%	0.2%
WA	41	67.2%	1.9%	2.9%
AU	144	69.9%	2.5%	4.5%

2.1.4 Workforce age profile

Key data

The Local Government workforce nationally is strongly concentrated in mid-career age groups, with around one-third of workers aged 30-44 across all ACLG classifications. This pattern is consistent between metropolitan, regional, rural/remote local councils and the national profile, indicating broadly similar workforce age structures regardless of location.

However, rural/remote local councils stand out for their older workforce profile. They have a higher proportion of workers aged 55 years and over (32 per cent) compared with metropolitan local councils (27 per cent) and the national average (28 per cent). This suggests heightened exposure to retirement-driven workforce loss in rural and remote areas, where replacement and succession pipelines are typically more constrained.

Younger workers (under 30) make up a small share of the workforce across all local council types, sitting at around 16-18 per cent nationally and showing little variation by geography. This indicates that early-career entry into Local Government remains limited overall, rather than being a problem confined to regional or remote councils.

Overall, the age profile highlights a system-wide need to strengthen early-career pipelines, alongside more targeted retention, succession planning and knowledge-transfer strategies in rural and remote local councils, where ageing workforce pressures are most acute.

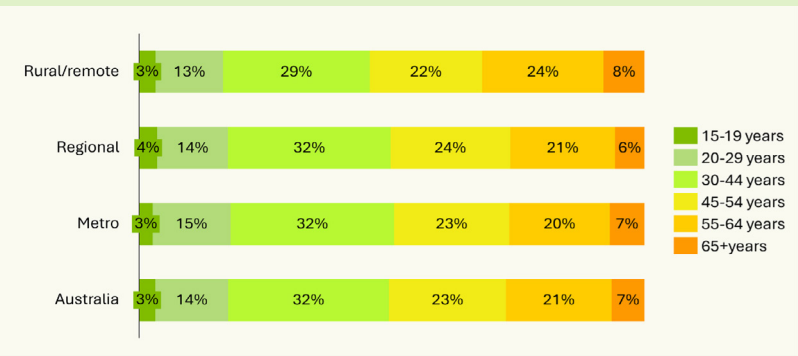


Figure 7:
Local Government workforce
age profile by ACLG, 2025-2026
Survey

2.1.5 Employment turnover

Key data

Unplanned average turnover has increased, impacting the local council workforce and risks related to retention, capability and succession. Nationally, average turnover rose by four per cent to 12 per cent from 2018 to 2025-26. This reflects a moderate increase in workforce churn after the extreme labour market pressures of 2022, which saw turnover peak at 15.6 per cent. In summary:

Northern Territory is a clear outlier, with turnover increasing from 29 per cent in 2018 to 38 per cent in 2025-2026.

Since 2018, all states have experienced increased average turnover, moving from below 10 per cent to between 11 per cent and 15 per cent.

Turnover is particularly high in rural/remote local councils, at 19 per cent, which is seven per cent above the national average.

At the same time, the workforce profile has shifted. There is now a higher proportion of employees with less than five years' service and a corresponding decline in long-tenured employees across metropolitan, regional and rural/remote local councils, signalling ongoing churn and recent recruitment, as shown in Figure 8 below. This change heightens risks to retention, knowledge transfer and succession planning.

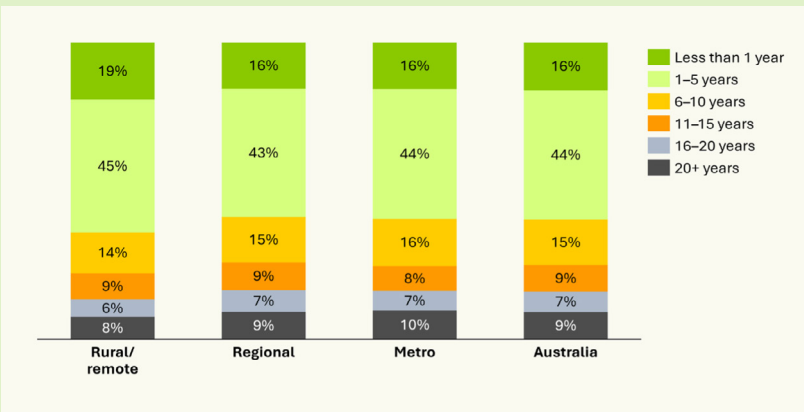


Figure 8:
Local Government employee length of service by ACLG category, 2025-2026

Key data

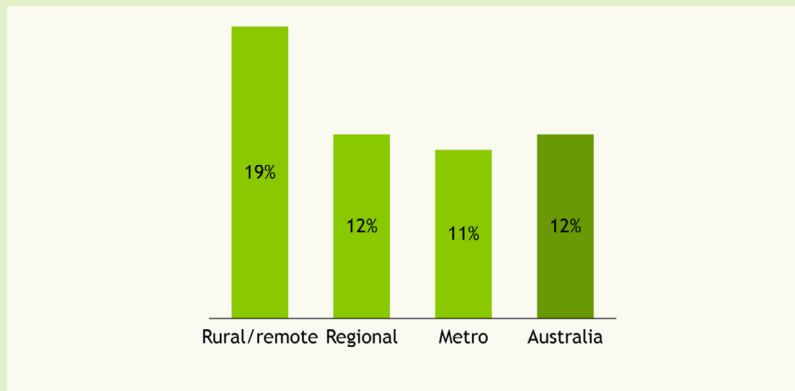


Figure 9:

Average turnover in the local council sector by ALGA, 2025-2026

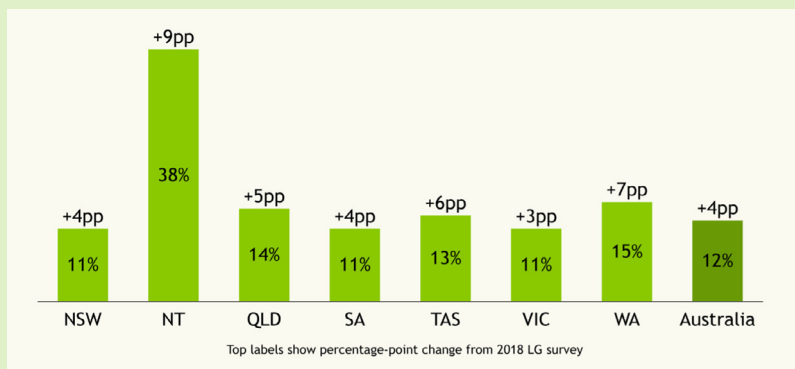


Figure 10:

Average turnover in the local council sector by state/territory, 2025-2026 compared to 2018

2.2 Skills Audit and Assessment

Key Findings:

- › Occupational shortages are an enduring constraint across local councils, with 83 per cent of local councils reporting persistent vacancies, concentrated most acutely in engineers, building surveyors and town planners, and disproportionately affecting rural and remote councils.
- › Local councils are facing enduring workforce challenges underpinned by skills gaps and occupational shortages. This is further compounded by increasing unplanned turnover, shorter tenure and an ageing workforce. In response, local councils are increasingly appointing lower-skilled candidates and relying on on-the-job development to counter persistent occupational and skills shortages. Expectations of future shortages closely mirror current skills gaps indicating an enduring alignment between present workforce pressures and anticipated capability risks.

This section outlines the current skills landscape and the skills and occupational shortages of local councils across Australia.

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 › Public Speaking › Media engagement › Presentation skills › Listening and observing › Counselling/managing difficult conversations › Collaboration › Teamwork › Stakeholder engagement, management and consultation › Relationship building and management
	Customer and community focus	› Customer service › Public engagement › Community advocacy › Community consultation and education › Events management › Cultural competency › Bias control
	Leadership, people management and mentoring	› People leadership and management › Supervision › Capability and capacity management › Mentoring and coaching › Team leadership › Organisational learning and development

Tier	Skills Theme	Specific skill types
Interpersonal Skills	Emotional intelligence, empathy and resilience	> Self-reflection
		> Social awareness
		> Adaptability
		> Individual capability and capacity management
Transferrable Professional Skills	Organisation and workflow	> Digital literacy
		> Time management
		> Prioritisation and planning
		> Record keeping
		> Diligence
	Project planning and time management	> Project management
		> Planning and scheduling
		> Long term planning
		> Task management
		> Project scoping
		> Capital delivery
		> Prioritisation
	Problem Solving, critical thinking and analysis	> Strategic thinking
		> Problem solving
		> Critical thinking
		> Diagnostics
		> Research and data analysis
		> Business intelligence
		> Business modelling
		> Numerical reasoning
		> Ethical reasoning

Tier	Skills Theme	Specific skill types
Transferrable Professional Skills	Conflict management and enforcement	> Conflict resolution > Negotiation > De-escalation > Dispute resolution > Mediation > Investigation and reporting
	Change management and transformation	> Change management > Business transformation > Project management > Prioritisation
	Data, reporting and analytics	> Data collection > Data analysis > Data modelling > Data reporting
Occupation Specific Skills	Environmental sustainability	> Environmental management > Climate adaptation > Disaster resilience
	Digital and technology systems	> Digital / IT systems & software competency > Artificial Intelligence > Automation > Cybersecurity

Tier	Skills Theme	Specific skill types
Occupation Specific Skills	Risk and safety	› Risk management › Workplace health and safety › Site safety › Hazards identification › Emergency and disaster management
	Legislation, regulation and governance	› Legislation and regulation interpretation › Audit and compliance › Corporate governance › Policy analysis and development
	Finance and procurement	› Financial management › Budgeting › Financial planning › Contract management › Procurement

2.2.2 Skills gaps

Skills gaps are dominated by regulatory, safety, digital capability, and interpersonal skills.

The table below indicates the demand based on the tiers described above.

Table 5: Top 5 skills that are most in demand across local councils in each tier based on workshops

Tier	Most in demand
Occupation-specific skills	› Artificial intelligence › Legislative / regulatory knowledge › Work Health & Safety (WHS / OH&S) › Cybersecurity › Digital / IT systems & software competency
Transferrable professional skills	› Digital literacy › Project management › Data analysis / analytics / reporting › Change management › Problem solving
Interpersonal skills	› Communication (written & verbal) › Stakeholder engagement / management / consultation › Conflict resolution / de-escalation › Customer / community engagement › Collaboration / teamwork

Local councils are experiencing simultaneous shortages and internal skills gaps in the same roles.

Critical skills gaps are concentrated in roles that councils already struggle to recruit, compounding workforce pressures across both hiring and capability development. Based on the 2025-2026 survey data, a total of 136 Local Governments reported critical skills gaps across 348 occupational areas.

Core capability issues exist across jurisdictions and are each explored below:

Strong regulatory and compliance capability is a consistent requirement across jurisdictions. It is most pronounced in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia and in Western Australia.

Work health and safety (WHS) is a shared priority nationally, reflecting high-risk operating environments. It is especially critical in the Northern Territory and Queensland, where compliance obligations intersect with remote service delivery, disaster exposure and community safety.

Digital capability and reporting is a common pressure point, though its expression varies. New South Wales and Victoria face complexity from advanced systems, digital reporting and data-driven regulation, while other jurisdictions contend with scaling digital capability in more constrained labour markets or geographically dispersed contexts.

Technical, engineering and asset management skills underpin service delivery across jurisdictions, particularly in Western Australia (asset management and engineering at scale), Queensland (infrastructure resilience and disaster recovery) and South Australia (planning and environmental expertise).

Stakeholder, community and political engagement capability challenges are evident nationally but manifests differently. Victoria and New South Wales experience heightened political and stakeholder scrutiny, while the Northern Territory places stronger emphasis on community-focused capability, cultural competence and locally grounded engagement.

Behavioural Traits, for example, personal qualities, aptitudes, mindsets and behavioural tendencies that influence how someone approaches work and interacts with others was a key discussion during the workshops. Workshops focussed on a fourth tier of 'skills' relating to behavioural traits. Many local councils are looking to identify such skills in these traits in their recruitment process.

Workshop discussions centred on two issues:

The increasing importance of these skills, particularly in regional, rural/remote local councils where there are labour market constraints, operating scale and environmental pressures, with many such local councils looking to identify such skills in their recruitment process.

Whether or not behavioural traits such as emotional intelligence, resilience, adaptability and empathy can be ascribed as skills. Despite concerns being raised in terms of training and whether these traits can be measured, the overwhelming consensus of workshop participants, was that these are indeed skills.

A summary by ACLG classification is provided below:

Metropolitan local councils focus on advanced digital systems and specialist skills, regional councils emphasise compliance and technical capabilities and rural/remote councils prioritise compliance and generalist skills, all due to varying operational complexities, workforce sizes and community needs. In summary by ACLG classification:

- › Metropolitan local councils tend to prioritise advanced digital systems, data integration, governance and specialist professional capability, reflecting more complex operating environments, higher regulatory and political scrutiny and greater service scale. These councils typically require sophisticated risk management, reporting and stakeholder engagement skills, supported by access to larger and more competitive labour markets that enable greater specialisation.
- › Regional local councils place stronger emphasis on compliance, WHS and technical capability alongside broad generalist skills, reflecting smaller workforces and greater role breadth. Persistent challenges in attracting and retaining skilled employees mean employees are often required to cover multiple functions. This increases their need for adaptability, resilience, practical problem-solving and strong community-facing and interpersonal skills due to closer service visibility.
- › Rural and remote local councils prioritise compliance, WHS, generalist capabilities and formal qualifications, shaped by very small workforces, limited labour markets and high operational risk. Capability needs are strongly practical and applied, with employees frequently managing diverse responsibilities across service areas. This is coupled with a heightened emphasis on community engagement, cross-cultural competence and frontline interpersonal skills where councils operate in close connection with communities and with fewer supporting resources.

2.2.3 Occupational shortages

This section outlines the national findings regarding occupational shortages and skills gaps within the local council workforce.

Occupational shortages remain persistent and have increased since 2018.

In 2025-26, 83 per cent of local councils nationally reported occupational shortages, an increase of 14pp since 2018. While labour market pressures have softened slightly since the peak of 2022, the prevalence of shortages remains a structural challenge rather than an isolated or temporary issue.

Jurisdictional differences are summarised below:

Queensland continues to face the most occupational shortages, with 93 per cent of local councils affected, followed by Tasmania (89 per cent)

Western Australia and South Australia face the most significant rise since 2018, with an increase of 32 per cent and 30 per cent respectively

New South Wales and the Northern Territory have remained consistent, reflecting entrenched labour-market constraints

2.2.4 Drivers of occupational shortages

Occupational shortages are driven primarily by local workforce barriers.

Over half of the local councils (51 per cent) cite uncompetitive salaries as the main driver of shortages, with regional, rural and remote locations (38 per cent) and housing availability and affordability (20 per cent) further compounding attraction and retention challenges. By contrast, relatively few councils attribute shortages to insufficient qualifications or experience (15 per cent) or a lack of qualified applicants (nine per cent). These pressures are reinforced by broader structural factors that vary by jurisdiction.

Housing availability and affordability are the primary workforce constraints nationally, compounded by funding uncertainty, economic volatility and rising frontline service pressure.	
Jurisdictional profiles differences	
New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia highlight long-term funding certainty as the key retention issue.	Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory place greater emphasis on community hostility and frontline behaviour, reflecting heightened wellbeing risks.
New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory identify natural disasters as a significant compounding pressure.	Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania report economic transition and local labour market change as prominent drivers.

While the inability to compete with the private sector on remuneration remains the top driver since 2018, in regional, rural and remote locations, housing and accommodation shortages, have now become significant factors. Notably, neither of these featured in the top three drivers in 2018.

Table 6: Drivers of occupational shortages, national, 2025-2026 Survey

Driver of occupational shortages	% local governments responding (n=206)
Uncompetitive salaries/remuneration	51%
Regional/rural/remote location	38%
Lack of housing/accommodation	20%
Competition from other sectors/employers	17%
Industry-wide skill shortages	17%
Insufficient qualifications/training/experience	15%
Insufficient qualified candidates/applicants	15%
Limited local talent pool	5%
Ageing workforce/population decline	3%
High cost of living	3%

2.2.5 Vacancies

Across the sector, 66 per cent of local councils (135) are understaffed, with average vacancies of 8.4 per cent.

High vacancies were distributed across Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG) categories:		
Rural/remote: 62 per cent (59 of 95 councils)	Regional: 71 per cent (48 of 68 councils)	Metropolitan: 65 per cent (28 of 43 councils)

Most positions are filled within 1-3 months.

While certain hard-to-fill specialist positions extend average recruitment timelines and contribute to prolonged understaffing. In summary:

For both professional/administrative roles and operational/trade roles, the modal timeframe was 1-3 months, with most local councils (approximately 75 per cent) reporting timeframes within this range.	Extended timeframes were reported by some local councils. For professional and administrative roles, approximately 16 per cent of local councils (32 councils) reported that it took six months or more to fill vacancies. For operational and trade roles, approximately 18 per cent of councils (36 councils) reported timeframes of six months or more.
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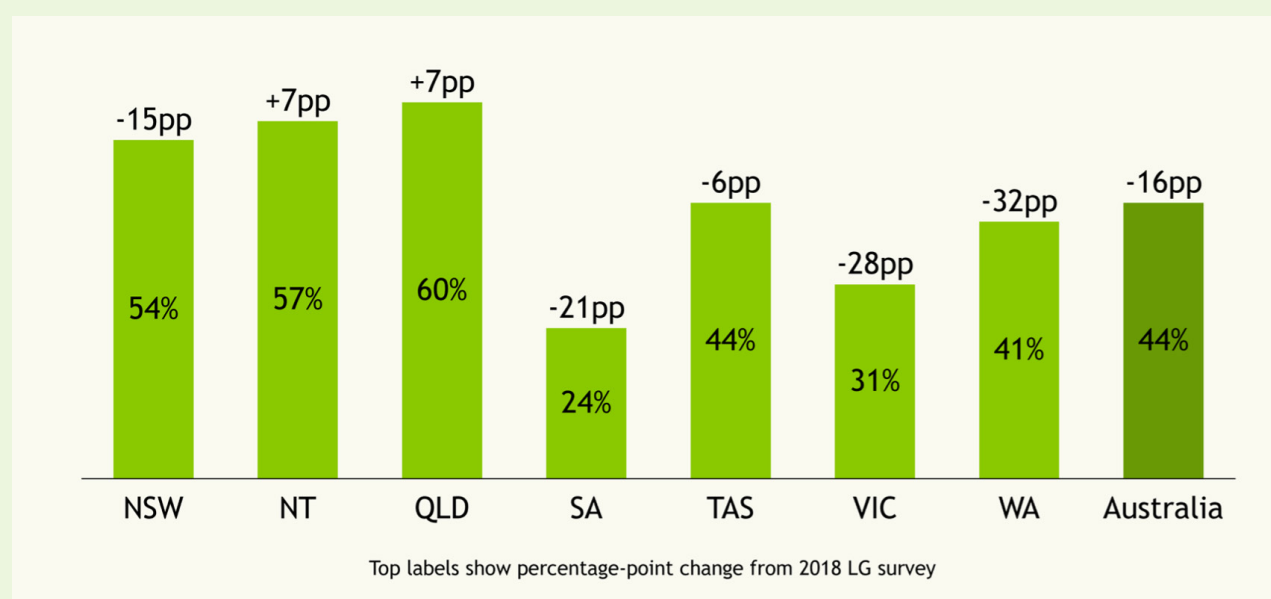
Table 7 below identifies the top occupations in shortage across both professional and technical roles and operational and trade roles. The top occupations in shortage have remained consistent since 2018, with engineers, urban and town planners and building surveyors consistently in the top three.

This may be due to various factors, including stringent qualification requirements and less competitive remuneration compared to the private sector. Moreover, the focus of Local Government roles on regulatory compliance and community needs may not be as appealing to those seeking the dynamic projects available in the private sector.

Table 7: Occupational Shortages in 2025-2026 and change in rank since 2018

Category	Occupation	% Responding local governments (n=206)	Change in rank since 2018
Professional and Technical	Engineers	40.3%	0
	Building Surveyors	36.4%	+1
	Urban/Town Planners	35.9%	-1
	Environmental Health Officers	27.7%	0
	Accountants	24.3%	+5
Operational and Trade	Trades - Mechanical	24.8%	+7
	Labourers	21.8%	+8
	Truck Drivers	20.4%	NEW
	Trades - Horticultural	19.4%	NEW
	Supervisors/Team Leaders	18.0%	-4

Figure 11: Percentage of local councils with occupational shortages by state/territory, 2025-2026, compared to 2018



The following tables reflect the occupational shortages for rural/remote, regional and metropolitan local councils as reported through the 2025-2026 survey.

Table 8: Occupational shortages in rural/remote local councils, 2025-2026 Survey

Category	Occupation	# Responding local governments	% Responding local governments (n=95)
Professional and Technical	Building Surveyors	29	30.5%
	Engineers	27	28.4%
	Accountants	27	28.4%
	Environmental Health Officers	26	27.4%
	Urban/Town Planners	23	24.2%
Operational and Trade	Customer Service	25	26.3%
	Labourers	25	26.3%
	Truck Drivers	23	24.2%
	Trades - Mechanical	20	21.1%
	Accounts/Payroll Clerk	18	18.9%

Table 9: Occupational shortages in regional local councils, 2025-2026 Survey

Category	Occupation	# Responding local governments	% Responding local governments (n=68)
Professional and Technical	Engineers	41	60.3%
	Urban/Town Planners	38	55.9%
	Building Surveyors	29	42.6%
	Environmental Health Officers	22	32.4%
	ICT Professionals	20	29.4%
Operational and Trade	Trades - Mechanical	21	30.9%
	Supervisors/Team Leaders	18	26.5%
	Labourers	15	22.1%
	Trades - Horticultural	15	22.1%
	Wastewater/ Sewerage Operator	15	22.1%

Table 10: Occupational shortages in metropolitan local councils, 2025-2026 Survey

Category	Occupation	# Responding local governments	% Responding local governments (n=43)
Professional and Technical	Building Surveyors	17	39.5%
	Engineers	15	34.9%
	Urban/Town Planners	13	30.2%
	Project Managers	11	25.6%

Category	Occupation	# Responding local governments	% Responding local governments (n=43)
Professional and Technical	Environmental Health Officers	9	20.9%
Operational and Trade	Trades - Mechanical	10	23.3%
	Trades - Horticultural	9	20.9%
	Trades - Automotive	8	18.6%
	Truck Drivers	8	18.6%
	Accounts/Payroll Clerk	6	14.0%

Occupational shortages most pronounced in regional areas, particularly for engineers, building surveyors and urban/town planners. These shortages likely reflect increasing infrastructure investment and population growth. They are also driven by ongoing challenges such as small labour markets, less competitive remuneration, higher role intensity where employees manage multiple portfolios and housing and transport constraints that reduce the attractiveness for workers to relocate.

Rural/remote Top shortages remain consistent in roles requiring professional standards, led by building surveyors (30.5 per cent), engineers (28.4 per cent) and accountants (28.4 per cent).

Regional Top shortages are similar to those in rural/remote local councils but more acute, led by engineers (60.3 per cent), planners (55.9 per cent) and building surveyors (42.6 per cent).

Metropolitan Shortages are similar to those in other local councils and at comparable levels of intensity to rural/remote councils, led by building surveyors (39.5 per cent), engineers (34.9 per cent) and urban/town planners (30.2 per cent).

2.2.6 Strategies to address occupational shortages and skills gaps

National aggregate survey results on strategies:

Eighty-three per cent of responding local councils reported experiencing skills gaps across many occupations. The overlap between skills gaps and shortages in occupations compounds workforce challenges, with local councils facing both recruitment constraints and capability shortfalls within their existing workforce. Councils noted the following strategies to fill occupational shortages in order of usage:

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

To address skill gaps, local councils identified the following in order of usage:

Provided employees with opportunities to temporarily 'act' in higher positions or to gain cross-functional skills to develop internal capability.
Provided targeted training courses
Offered coaching and mentoring
Offered informal on-the-occupation training
Facilitated secondments or exchanges to other workplaces
Utilised the Temporary Skills Shortage Visa

2.2.7. Service and resource sharing

Recruiting for trainability has become more common.

By 2025-26, the proportion of local councils recruiting less-skilled applicants reached nearly 30 per cent for certain roles, compared to a previous high of approximately 15 per cent across the top roles in 2018. This shift reflects constrained access to job-ready labour and aligns with earlier findings that councils are adapting capability expectations within traditional employment structures, rather than changing employment models.

For roles such as urban and town planners and surveyors, it was noted that hiring a technician with a diploma may be sufficient, provided there is a certified professional role available to offer oversight. Some local councils have adopted this approach; overall, employing technicians in this manner can be a valuable strategy as it also allows councils to upskill as required.

This is reinforced by the finding that across the 172 local councils that reported successful approaches to filling skill-shortage roles, reskilling and upskilling existing employees was the dominant strategy (71 per cent), ahead of external advertising (64 per cent) and recruitment agencies (41 per cent). Overall, in response to persistent labour shortages, councils are hiring into ongoing roles and embedding training and development post-hire, rather than relying on flexible or contingent employment models.

Table 8: Resource and service sharing arrangements by ACLG, 2025-2026 Survey

ACLG category	No	Yes	Total
Rural	54 (56.8%)	41 (43.2%)	95 (100%)
Regional	33 (48.5%)	35 (51.5%)	68 (100%)
Metro	17 (39.5%)	26 (60.5%)	43 (100%)
AU	104 (50.5%)	102 (49.5%)	206 (100%)

Table 9 shows that recruitment of less-skilled applicants is common across several roles, reaching close to 30 per cent in some cases.

Table 9: Recruitment of Less Skilled Applicants, 2025-2026

Category	Occupation	# Responding local governments	% Responding local governments (n=206)
Professional and Technical	Urban/Town Planners	60	29.1%
	Engineers	57	27.7%
	Building Surveyors	46	22.3%
	Accountants	36	17.5%
	HR Professionals	36	17.5%
Operational and Trade	Labourers	35	17.0%
	Supervisors/Team Leaders	31	15.0%
	IT/ICT Technicians	30	14.6%
	Trades - Mechanical	28	13.6%
	Trades - Horticultural	26	12.6%

While this approach helps local councils fill vacancies and sustain service delivery, it can defer workforce risk downstream, increasing reliance on supervision, mentoring and structured training.

Table 10: Resource and service sharing arrangements nationally and by state/territory, 2025-2026

Jurisdiction	No	Yes	Total
NSW	27 (40.3%)	40 (59.7%)	67 (100.0%)
NT	0 (0.0%)	7 (100.0%)	7 (100.0%)
QLD	6 (40.0%)	9 (60.0%)	15 (100.0%)
SA	15 (71.4%)	6 (28.6%)	21 (100.0%)
TAS	9 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (100.0%)
VIC	12 (46.2%)	14 (53.8%)	26 (100.0%)
WA	35 (57.4%)	26 (42.6%)	61 (100.0%)
AU	104 (50.5%)	102 (49.5%)	206 (100.0%)

Resource and service sharing has plateaued rather than scaled as a systemic workforce solution.

While collaboration is now common, it is not embedded as standard practice and appears to benefit local councils with greater capacity more than those under the greatest workforce pressure.

Nationally, councils are evenly split, with 49.5 per cent participating in sharing arrangements and 50.5 per cent not, which indicates that sharing is widespread but not routine. Jurisdictional differences include: the Northern Territory reports universal participation (100 per cent), while uptake is high in Queensland (60.0 per cent), New South Wales (59.7 per cent) and Victoria (53.8 per cent), but low in South Australia (28.6 per cent), Western Australia (42.6 per cent) and Tasmania (0 per cent), pointing to the importance of enabling frameworks and intermediaries. Overall, without targeted support, resource sharing risks becoming a regressive solution that is most accessible to councils with the greatest capacity and least effective where workforce shortages, location and capacity constraints are most severe.

A summary by ACLG classification is provided below:

- › **Rural/remote local council participation has declined**, falling from 54 per cent in 2022 to 43.2 per cent in 2025-2026 despite acute shortages, suggesting sharing is difficult to sustain in low-capacity environments. This may be attributable to geographic factors, coordination costs and concerns regarding amalgamation.
- › **Regional local councils are showing significant growth**, increasing from 36 per cent to 51.5 per cent, where sufficient scale and proximity allow sharing to function as a deliberate workforce mitigation strategy.
- › **Metropolitan local councils now have the highest uptake**, increasing from 37 per cent to 60.5 per cent, reflecting resource and service sharing is as a tool for capability optimisation rather than necessity.

Recruitment via Temporary Skills Shortages Visa (Subclass 482) is being used selectively to address the most persistent occupational shortages.

Thirty-one local councils (15 per cent) reported having employees on Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visas. Where occupation data was provided, TSS visa holders were concentrated in engineering, planning and finance roles, aligned with fields consistently identified as difficult to fill through domestic recruitment.

Service delivery in First Nations communities:

Service delivery in local councils serving predominantly First Nations communities is consistently described as highly context-specific and culturally grounded, reflecting the need to align services with local cultural norms, community governance structures and lived experience.

Rather than applying uniform service models, these local councils often adapt how, when and by whom services are delivered to ensure they are culturally appropriate and trusted by the community. This approach is particularly important in settings where councils play a central role in community life and where engagement, legitimacy and cultural safety are critical to service uptake and effectiveness.

Simultaneously, these local councils operate under more constrained workforce conditions than others. Higher workforce absenteeism, often driven by complex social, cultural and community obligations, can disrupt service continuity, particularly in small teams.

These challenges are compounded by literacy and numeracy barriers in parts of the workforce, which can affect compliance-driven tasks, reporting requirements and the delivery of technically regulated services. As a result, frontline and operational roles experience sustained pressure, with local councils frequently relying on a small number of employees to maintain essential services.

Together, these factors mean that service delivery in First Nations contexts is less about scale or standardisation and more about adaptability, local knowledge and relational capability, while also being more vulnerable to disruption when workforce capacity is constrained.

Rural/remote and regional local councils face more pronounced challenges to service delivery.

They are increasingly required to act as providers of last resort, delivering a wider range of essential and highly regulated services with smaller, less specialised workforces and fewer alternative providers to rely on. Examples are provided in the table below:

Table 11: Drivers and implications of change in rural/remote and regional local councils

Unique Challenges	Implications
› Absence of alternative service providers: State agencies, private providers or NGOs are often unavailable in rural/remote and regional areas, requiring local councils to step in. › Climate risk, remoteness and limited external support: Increasing frequency and severity of emergencies, combined with geographic isolation, drive the need for permanent emergency capability. › Limited workforce capacity and small organisational scale: Small teams and limited labour markets necessitate multi-role positions rather than specialist functions. › Funding uncertainty and compliance requirements: Reliance on government funding shapes service delivery around compliance and reporting demands that are often misaligned with local realities. › Constraints on digital investment: Limited scale, skills and capital restrict local councils' ability to modernise systems at the same pace as metropolitan counterparts. › Rising community expectations: Communities expect service levels comparable to larger centres, despite local councils operating with fewer employees, smaller budgets and greater logistical challenges.	› Service remit under constrained capacity: Local councils are delivering a wide range of services with significantly fewer resources and access to a much smaller pool of skilled workers, requiring them to cover functions with limited scale and specialist capacity. › Portfolio-based service delivery: Where functions are not funded or delivered as standalone services, responsibility is often absorbed into broader portfolios rather than dedicated roles (e.g., emergency management), with significant implications for service quality and workforce wellbeing. › Greater reliance on multiskilled generalists: Service delivery increasingly depends on employees 'wearing many hats', spanning technical, corporate and frontline roles. › Variable digital maturity: Local councils are advancing digital services where possible, with variation in implementation reflecting limited access to council rate funding and discretionary capacity. › Stronger focus on culturally appropriate, place-based services: Services are increasingly tailored to local cultural and community contexts, particularly in areas with significant First Nations populations.

2.3 Training Needs and Challenges⁷

Key Findings

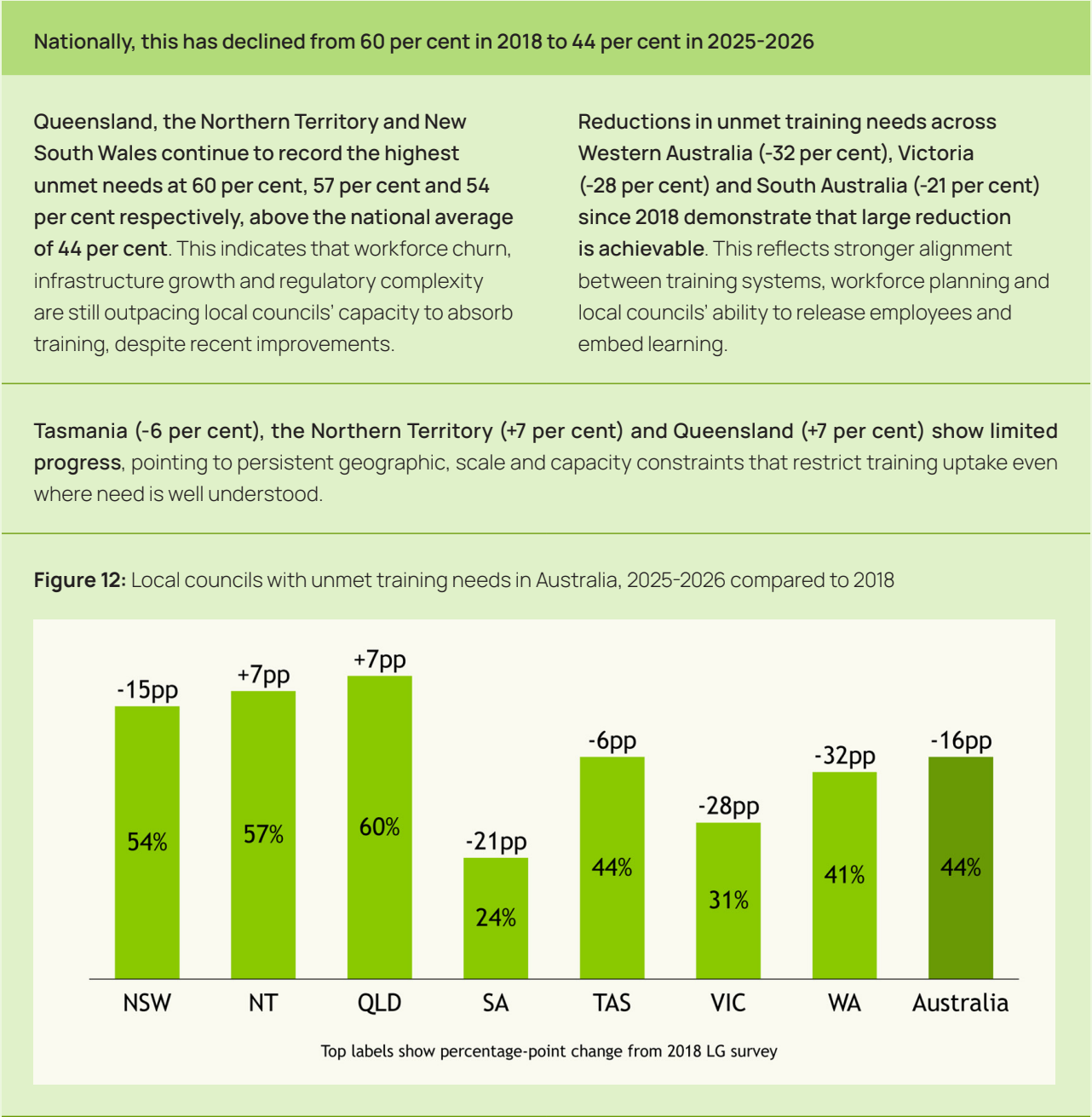
- › While VET remains a key pathway for skilling Local Government workforces, local councils face ongoing challenges with alignment and accessibility. Local councils continue to utilise VET as the primary pathway for compliance and safety critical roles. However, they report persistent challenges in resourcing and accessing training delivery. Additionally, local councils have indicated potential gaps between the training products available through the Local Government Training Package and the skills and occupations most in demand. While 75 per cent of local councils employ apprentices and trainees, more than half indicate that current uptake remains underutilised.
- › Skills demand in Local Government is increasingly concentrated in regulation, safety, digital capability, leadership and interpersonal domains, with persistent gaps in leadership, supervision and change related capability reflecting training approaches that prioritise technical qualifications.
- › Local councils are seeking to adapt their responses to their skills and occupational shortages, and challenges accessing training delivery. Local councils are increasingly relying on non-accredited training to build transferable professional and interpersonal capability. However, while rural and remote local councils are raising their training investment to counter labour scarcity, regional councils have reduced their spend, indicating uneven capacity across the sector to access and fund the training needed to address gaps.

⁷ 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 Further 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.

2.3.1 Training needs

Unmet training needs⁸ have declined since 2018 (-16 per cent), yet 44 per cent still face gaps.

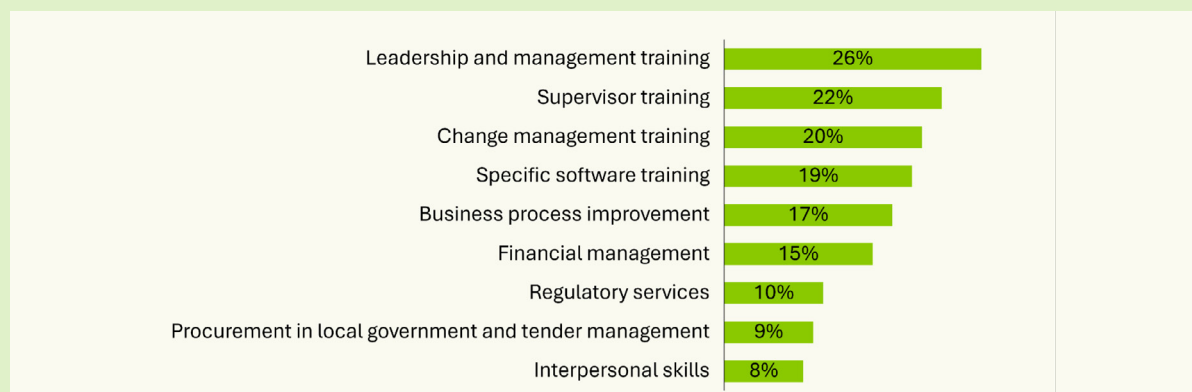
Unmet training needs are currently focused on transferable professional and interpersonal skillsets driven by training budgets being taken up by mandatory qualifications. In summary:



8 The term 'unmet' is used here as it is the term used in the Local Government Workforce and Skills Capability Survey. It should not be viewed as a reflection of local councils individually or Local Government in general.

Nationally, this has declined from 60 per cent in 2018 to 44 per cent in 2025-2026

Figure 13: Unmet Training Needs Nationally, 2025-2026



Leadership, supervision and change-related training needs persist.

This likely reflects promotion practices that prioritise technical expertise over leadership capability, and training that is largely focused on mandatory qualifications. This is compounded by shorter employee tenure and increased recruitment of less-skilled workers, placing greater pressure on leadership and supervisory capacity. Despite improvement, these areas remain the most constrained, highlighting that local councils are being asked to lead, coach and manage complexity at a scale not previously required, while simultaneously signalling ongoing pressure on councils' ability to implement change efficiently alongside day-to-day service delivery.

In summary:

Leadership, supervision and change capability remain the most constrained areas, highlighting the need to enhance people and management skills to navigate the growing complexity of service delivery.

Digital and operational training pressures persist, reflecting the ongoing effort required to embed new systems, processes and ways of working alongside core service delivery, even as access to this training has improved.

Technical and compliance training gaps are comparatively smaller, suggesting local councils are more effective at delivering formal, structured training; however, residual gaps remain consequential given the high risk and regulatory exposure of these functions

Overall, progress has been strongest in areas where training is formal, discrete and transactional, and weakest where capability development is relational, adaptive and people-centred.

Local councils increasingly struggle with internal capacity to effectively engage with the broader formal training system, as well as ongoing challenges in accessing quality and relevant training.

In summary:

Internal resource constraints are the primary bottleneck, compared to 2018 where the top driver was finding quality trainers to deliver locally.

Time, budget and absorptive capacity (employee availability, ability to organise and attend training) now outweigh issues of supply.

Mandatory compliance training is increasingly crowding out discretionary development, particularly in leadership and change capabilities.

These pressures are most acute in smaller and regional local councils and are reinforced by higher workforce churn and recruitment of less-skilled applicants. Overall, improving training outcomes involves creating organisational capacity (e.g., time, funding flexibility and workforce stability) to take advantage of training that already exists, as reported by Table 11 below.

Table 11: Broader unmet training needs and drivers nationally, 2025-2026

2025-2026 % impacted (descending)	% impacted
Council budget is insufficient for this training	24%
Employees haven't had time to attend training	22%
Unable to source quality training programs and/or trainers that can be delivered locally	22%
Travel cost of sending staff away to attend training is too high	18%
Unable to source training programs with relevant content	16%
Lack of time to organise training	15%
Mandatory training consuming the entire training budget	12%
Lack of support from managers/supervisors to send staff on training courses	9%

To address skill shortages, local councils may need to consider investing in credentialing and on-the-job development, especially for specialist roles.

This requires a balance of formal qualifications and practical experience. Among the 112 local councils identifying new skill requirements:

54% (61 councils)	43% (48 councils)	18% (20 councils)
noted a need for formal qualifications like plant certificates, diploma-level credentials, truck and heavy vehicle licences and Certificate IV level competencies.	emphasised practical experience and system knowledge.	highlighted the importance of both formal qualifications and practical application.

Local councils see VET as the primary, fit-for-purpose pathway for roles requiring qualifications for compliance or safety.

While also valuing non-accredited training for its agility and efficiency, particularly in online settings. Across workshops, VET was consistently rated the most relevant option for roles in local council requiring qualifications for compliance or safety, while higher education was rated lowest in many regions. This indicates that accredited vocational pathways are better aligned to immediate workforce needs, whereas universities are seen as less responsive to Local Government operating contexts. While VET is widely valued, its role and perceived effectiveness vary significantly by jurisdiction.

In summary:

Queensland and regional New South Wales: Strong confidence in VET as a job-relevant training mechanism with clear workforce impact.	Western Australia: VET is used more as a recruitment and entry-level credentialing pathway than for upskilling.
Victoria: Mixed views, with low confidence in metropolitan local councils.	Northern Territory: Highest uncertainty, particularly in Darwin, reflecting inconsistent experiences and unclear workforce outcomes.

Local councils want training, particularly through the VET sector, that is more relevant, accessible and time-efficient, while also being relevant to Local Government roles clearly identified as the single most important lever for improving impact.

Relevance is the top priority;	Access remains a structural constraint;	Efficiency is increasingly critical;
with majorities in nearly all locations ranking better alignment of VET to local council roles above all other reforms.	especially in rural/remote and regional areas, driving strong support for more providers, local delivery and flexible formats.	reflecting pressure to minimise time away from work and reduce administrative and logistical burden, particularly in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Victoria.

2.3.2 Training expenditure

Training is being treated as a core investment rather than a discretionary cost.

Nationally, training spend is being increased or maintained, with 34 per cent of local councils increasing expenditure, 57 per cent maintaining current levels and only nine per cent reducing spend. This suggests that training investment is being sustained nationally, with local councils prioritising workforce capability despite broader fiscal pressures. However, while overall expenditure is being protected, increases are uneven and often reactive, rising most sharply where workforce shortages are acute and lagging where pressures are more complex and compounding.

A summary by ACLG classification is provided below:

- › Rural/remote local councils are increasing training spend due to labour shortages, regional councils face the highest reduction rate, and metropolitan councils boost investment using their scale and existing capabilities.
- › Rural/remote local councils are increasing investment, with 35 per cent enhancing training expenditure, 58 per cent maintaining and just seven per cent decreasing spend, reflecting necessity-driven 'grow-your-own' strategies amid acute labour shortages and limited access to job-ready workers.
- › Regional local councils are the most constrained, with only 32 per cent increasing spend, 56 per cent maintaining and 12 per cent reducing expenditure—the highest reduction rate of any ACLG category—indicating a capability squeeze as training demand outpaces financial and workforce capacity.
- › Metropolitan local councils are increasing investment, with 37 per cent increasing, 56 per cent maintaining and seven per cent decreasing training spend, leveraging scale and established internal capability to absorb demand through incremental increases.

2.3.3 Preferred delivery mode

Blended learning through a combination of face-to-face and online training is the preferred training delivery mode as it provides a balance between the efficiency of virtual learning with the utility of in-person delivery. Generally, training delivered virtually is not deemed by local councils to deliver adequate skill development, but in-person training can be cost prohibitive, especially for local councils far from metropolitan centres.

Table 12: Australia Local Government preferred training delivery mode by ACLG broad category, 2025-2026 Survey

Preferred training delivery mode	Rural/ Remote	Regional	Metro	AU
Blended learning (in person, self-paced and virtual)	60	45	33	138
In person, face-to-face delivery	32	22	9	63
Virtual delivery	3	1	0	4
Self-paced learning	0	0	1	1
Total	95	68	43	206

Table 13: Change in training expenditure by ACLG broad category, 2025-2026 Survey

Change in training expenditure	Rural/ Remote	Regional	Metro	AU
Decreased	7 (7%)	8 (12%)	3 (7%)	18 (9%)
Increased	33 (35%)	22 (32%)	16 (37%)	71 (34%)
Remained the same	55 (58%)	38 (56%)	24 (56%)	117 (57%)
Total	95	68	43	206

2.3.4 Training delivery challenges

Most local councils have engaged with government workforce programs.

One hundred and sixty of 206 local councils (78 per cent) had engaged with state or federal education, training or other initiatives to support workforce development over recent years, such as the Fresh Start program in New South Wales and the Earn and Learn programs in Victoria.

One hundred and forty-eight councils provided details of specific programs, revealing:

NSW Fresh Start Program: 38 councils

Cadetship programs:
12 councils (including Strong Start/Start Strong)

Smart and Skilled:
7 councils

Local councils have decisively shifted to blended training as the default delivery model.

This mode seeks to balance flexibility, access and quality under sustained workforce pressure, enabling learning to occur alongside operational demands rather than competing with them.

In summary:

Blended delivery is now the default model across local councils, replacing face-to-face-only training, while fully virtual or self-paced options remain secondary.

Rural/remote local councils have shifted most strongly to blended learning (from 46 to 60 councils), using it to reduce travel and employee-release pressures while retaining in-person engagement.

Metropolitan local councils rely least on face-to-face-only delivery, leveraging stronger digital maturity to support blended approaches.

Overall, local councils are redesigning training to fit alongside operational demands, rather than compete with them. This shift reflects the need to support job-embedded learning as local councils onboard less-skilled employees and address persistent leadership and supervision gaps.

2.3.5 Uptake of the Local Government Training Package (LGATP)

The purpose of the LGATP is to provide nationally accredited VET qualifications and units of competency to train the Local Government workforce.

It currently consists of the five qualifications and skill sets:

Qualifications	Skill Sets
> 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	> Elected Member Collaborative Decision Making > Elected Member > Local Government Entrant > Manage in Local Government > Manage Workplace Sustainability > Property Management > Rates Officer > Supervise in Local Government

Units of competency (UoC) 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.

The LGATP sits alongside other training packages (e.g., Business Services, Construction, Plumbing and Services) which are also used for specific roles within local councils. This section examines the uptake of the LGATP within the Local Government sector. Previous work undertaken by Public Skills Australia⁹, has highlighted inconsistent uptake of the training package.

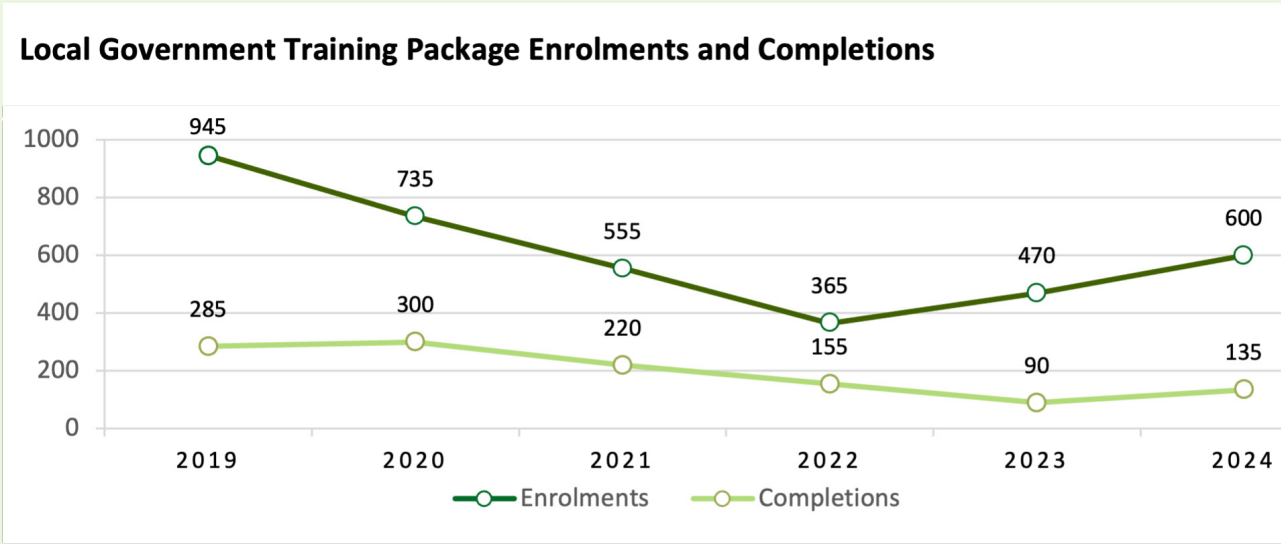
While the survey has a whole section (and eight questions) devoted to training, because of the enormous range of service delivery, occupations and skills required in Local Government, none of these are specific to the LGATP. However, responses to these survey questions, combined with the qualitative data compiled through the workshops and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) data on enrolments and completions, have enabled more specific insights into the uptake and utility of the LGATP.

9 Public Skills Australia, Federal, State/Territory and Local Government Workforce Plan, Public Skills Australia, 2024.

Enrolments and completions

Enrolments and completions data for the LGATP had been decreasing prior to its review in 2021. The review of the LGATP in 2021 transitioned 37 qualifications to the current five. This transition reflected a shift toward fewer, more flexible and streamlined qualifications to better meet industry requirements, moving away from the more granular, specialised qualifications. Since the review, enrolments in the LGATP have started to increase again as indicated in below:

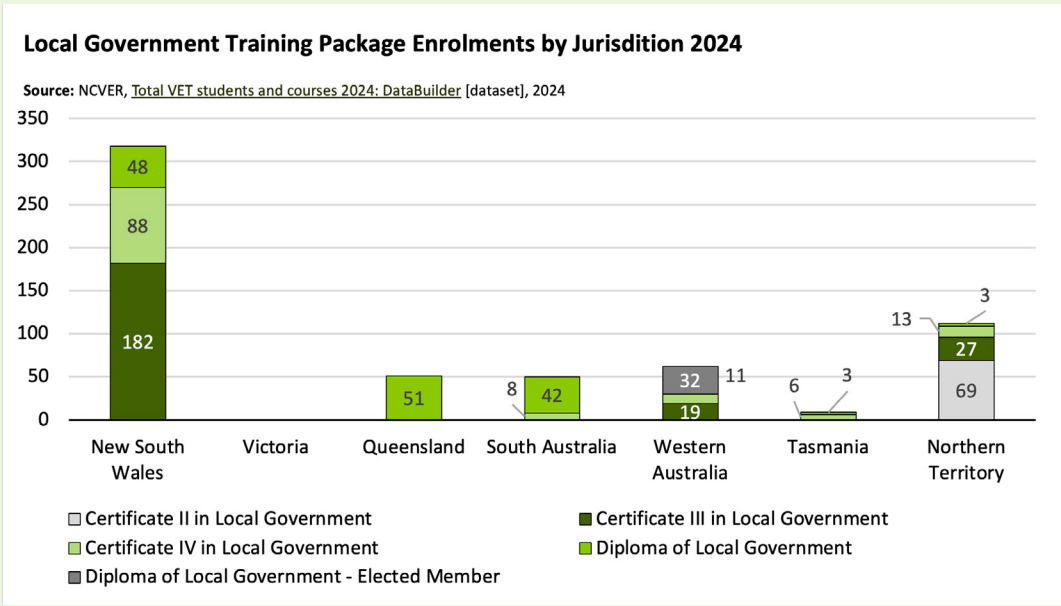
Figure 14: Local Government Training Package Enrolments and Completions 2019-2024



Source: NCVER, Total VET students and courses 2024: DataBuilder [dataset], 2024

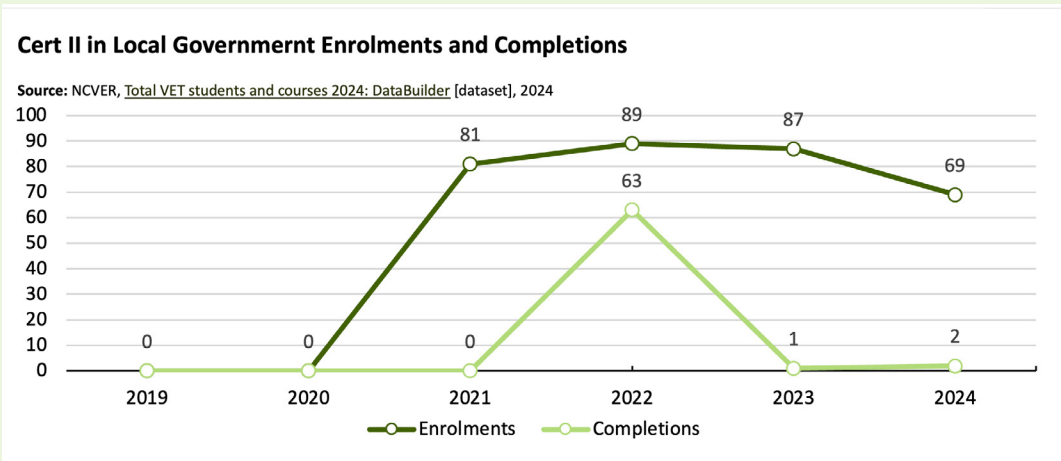
The increase in LGATP enrolments is largely attributed to New South Wales and the Northern Territory which have supplied over two-thirds of all enrolments in the past two years of available data:

Figure 15: Local Government Training Package Enrolments by Jurisdiction 2024



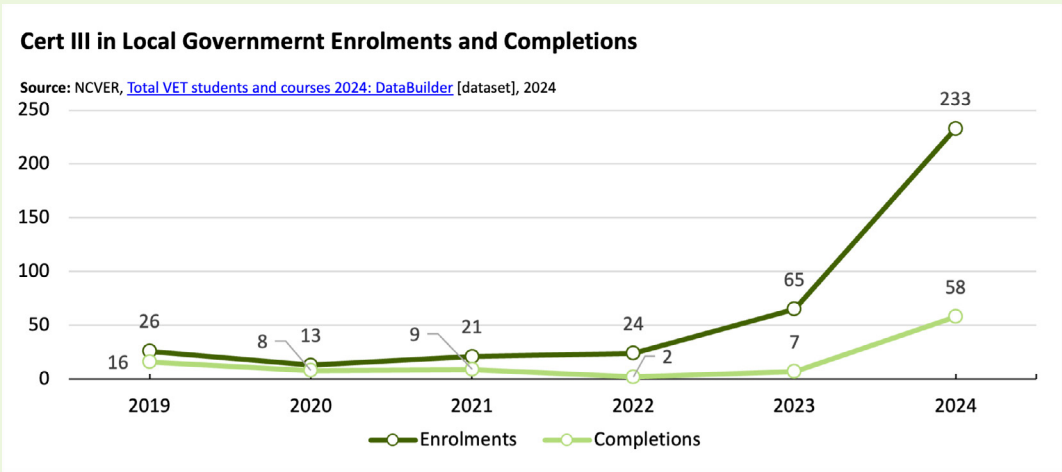
Additionally, the increasing uptake of the LGATP has not been uniform across all qualifications. The Certificate II in Local Government had remained relatively steady in relation to enrolments since the 2021 review, but has seen a notable decrease between 2023 and 2024.

Figure 16: Certificate II in Local Government Enrolments and Completions 2019-2024



Conversely, enrolments Certificate III in Local Government significantly increased since 2023, with a commensurate increase in completions. This qualification also saw the largest rate of enrolments of any of the LGATP qualifications.

Figure 17: Certificate III in Local Government Enrolments and Completions 2019-2024



The Certificate IV and Diploma of Local Government both experienced notable increases in enrolments since the 2021 review. For both qualification, enrolments peaked in 2023, with the Certificate IV experiencing a slight decrease for 2024, while the Diploma remained unchanged. Additionally, while completions of the Certificate IV experienced commensurate increases in completions, completions of the diploma remained steady even as enrolments increased.

Figure 18: Certificate IV in Local Government Enrolments and Completions 2019-2024

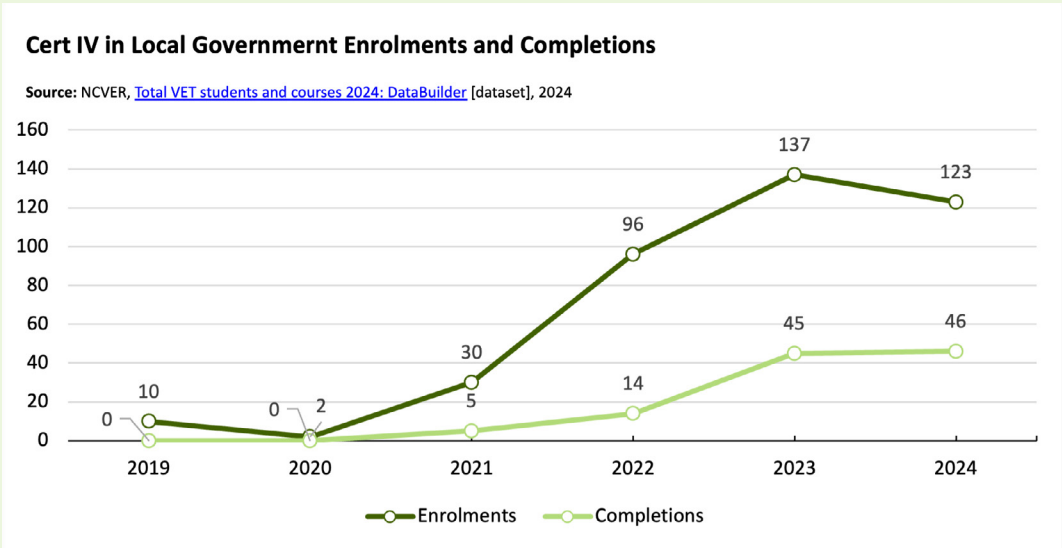
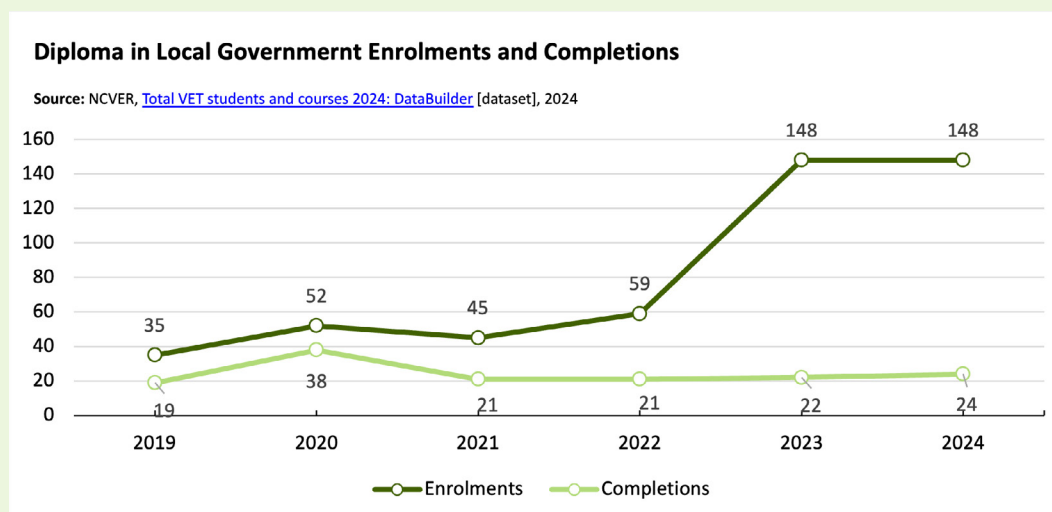
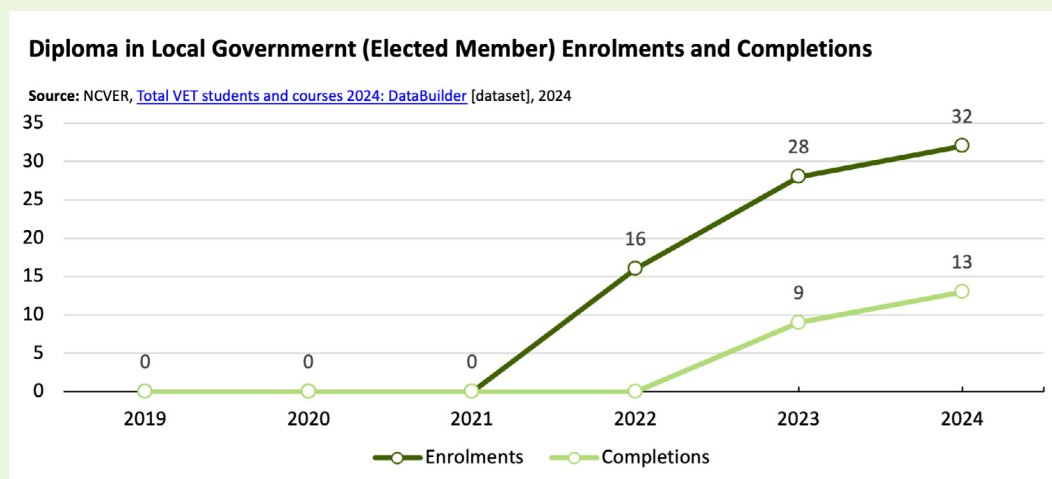


Figure 19: Diploma in Local Government Enrolments and Completions 2019-2024



Lastly, the Diploma of Local Government (Elected Member) has experienced a steady increase in enrolments, with commensurate increases in completions since the review in 2021.

Figure 20: Diploma in Local Government (Elected Member) Enrolments and Completions 2019-2024



At the UoC level, the LGATP is comprised of 25 Local Government units, and a number of UoC from other training packages. Utilisation of the 25 Local Government UoC is summarised below by most enrolments in 2024:

Units of Competency	Enrolments		
	2022	2023	2024
LGACOR001 - Work in local government	170	272	402
LGAREG001 - Implement parking controls	112	269	286
LGACOR008 - Provide advice to council	6	38	59
LGACOR007 - Conduct community consultations	15	47	55
LGAOPS001 - Prepare for operational works	15	19	39
LGAREG002 - Provide evidence in court	1	36	36
LGAMEM002 - Perform elected member functions	19	21	32
LGACOR011 - Analyse financial reports and budgets	16	24	29
LGAMEM001 - Meet elected member responsibilities	18	22	28
LGAREG003 - Manage conflict situations in a regulatory environment	9	35	24
LGAOPS003 - Develop works maintenance schedule	7	19	24
LGACOR010 - Oversee asset management strategy	6	11	21
LGAPLA001 - Interpret and apply development planning legislation, schemes and instruments	4	9	21

Units of Competency		Enrolments	
LGAOPS002 - Prepare site for new operational works	6	15	18
LGACOR005 - Represent council in the community	8	10	18
LGAMEM003 - Contribute to high level strategic decision making	5	11	16
LGAPLA005 - Protect heritage and cultural assets	12	2	14
LGAPLA003 - Assess development applications and implement planning scheme	3	18	13
LGAOPS004 - Evaluate works maintenance needs and priorities	3	9	7
LGACOR006 - Provide public education	0	4	6
LGACOR009 - Manage grants	0	0	3
LGAOPS005 - Manage civil plant and resources	2	1	0
LGAPLA002 - Perform minor development assessments	4	10	3
LGAPLA004 - Identify native title issues relevant to local government	0	1	2
LGACOR002 - Administer rates	0	1	2
TOTALS	441	904	1158

Since the LGATP was reviewed enrolments across the UoC have increased by 173 per cent, although this is heavily concentrated in two UoCs:

- > 'Work in local government' which in 2024 accounted for nearly 35 per cent of all UoC enrolments.
- > 'Implement parking controls' which in 2024 accounted for nearly 25 per cent of all UoC enrolments.

That 'Work in local government' is the most utilised UoC is not surprising given this a core unit in all five of the LGATP qualifications and the following four of eight skill sets.

- > Local Government Entrant
- > Manage in Local Government
- > Property Management
- > Supervise in Local Government.

Workshop observations

During the workshops two themes were consistently highlighted in relation to the LGATP – relevancy and accessibility.

Relevancy	Accessibility
Local councils value accredited training in principle. However, there is a perception that LGATP does not meet practical and operational needs in its current form. Local councils report a growing preference for non-accredited training options due to their agility, shorter delivery timeframes and better fit with operational pressures and limited workforce capacity. Nevertheless, there may also be an opportunity to better inform the specialist nature that remains within the Units of Competencies (UoC). Each qualification has elective UoCs that enable specialisation towards the Local Government context across a range of functions including rates, parking, regulatory control and corporate services.	Regional and rural local councils in particular face acute challenges in accessing the LGATP due to a lack of RTOs delivering the qualifications. While there are 42 RTOs approved to deliver the LGATP, all but 10 of these only deliver individual UoC and not whole qualifications. Furthermore, of these 10 RTOs, most are capital city based, while Tasmania and the Northern Territory have no RTOs delivering the LGATP based in these jurisdictions. The limited selection of elective UoCs available for delivery also often reduces the relevance of the qualification, particularly when a student requires a specific specialisation, but the necessary UoCs are not on the RTOs scope of registration.

Training needs and the LGTAP interface

During the workshops the following implications were highlighted in relation to the interface between training needs of local councils and the uptake of the LGATP:

- › Local councils are increasingly turning to non-accredited training to address shortages in transferable professional and interpersonal skills, valuing its accessibility, responsiveness and efficiency.
- › Rural/remote local councils are increasing their training spend due to labour shortages, while regional councils face the highest reduction rate in training investment.
- › Leadership, supervision and change-related training needs persist, reflecting promotion and training practices that prioritise technical requirements.
- › Local councils view VET as the primary pathway for roles requiring qualifications for compliance or safety but face ongoing accessibility and capacity challenges.
- › The Local Government Training Package (LGTAP) could be better aligned with local councils' occupations in shortage, and their fastest-growing capability needs.

2.3.6 Uptake of apprentices/trainees

While 75 per cent of local councils engage apprentices and trainees, it only accounts for 1.8 per cent of total employment, limiting their system-wide impact. There are jurisdictional and demographic differences, as detailed below:

New South Wales has the largest number in absolute terms (973) , reflecting scale rather than intensity of use.	The Northern Territory has the highest concentration at 3.3 per cent of its workforce, while Victoria and Western Australia remain below 1 per cent, highlighting wide jurisdictional variation.
Female apprentice and trainee representation has declined from 41 per cent to 34 per cent.	First Nations trainee and apprentice numbers have remained broadly stable , with participation uneven across jurisdictions.

The following tables sets out the past and current uptake in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships:

Table 14: First Nations Apprentices and Trainees, 2025-2026 Survey

Jurisdiction	# total trainees and apprentices with First Nations background in responding local governments	# total trainees and apprentices in responding local governments	% of total trainees and apprentices who identify as First Nations in responding local governments
NSW	87	973	8.9%
NT	42	42	100.0%
QLD	8	219	3.7%
SA	2	80	2.5%
TAS	2	37	5.4%
VIC	5	93	5.4%
WA	13	75	17.3%
AU	159	1519	10.5%

Table 15: Apprentices and trainees in Local Government, 2025-2026 Survey

Jurisdiction	Total apprentices and trainees	Total apprentices and trainees as a % of total LG workforce	# of responding local governments with apprentices and trainees	% of responding local governments with apprentices and trainees
NSW	973	2.5%	67	100.0%
NT	42	3.3%	4	57.1%
QLD	219	2.6%	14	93.3%
SA	80	1.6%	17	81.0%
TAS	37	2.7%	7	77.8%
VIC	93	0.5%	16	61.5%
WA	75	0.6%	31	50.8%
AU	1519	1.8%	156	75.7%

More than half of the local councils report underutilised trainee and/or apprentice intake.

58% (120 councils) reported;	57% (117 councils) reported;
their current trainee uptake is underutilised	their current apprentice intake is underutilised

2.3.7 Engagement with State and Federal initiatives

Most local councils are engaging with state or federal education, training or other initiatives to support workforce development. Local council are taking advantage of initiatives in the following ways:

Entry-level initiatives including apprenticeship and traineeship Programs such as Busy at Work Program and Fresh Start	Targeted employment programs for underrepresented groups, including Tangentyere Employment Services and the NDIS	Through vocational and tertiary pathways, covering technical and further education certificate programs, such as Earn and Learn	Targeting specific occupations, most notably construction, including Construction Skills Queensland funding
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2.4. Future Workforce Outlook

Key Finding:

Service delivery for local councils is becoming more complex and responding to increased complexity is becoming more challenging. Increased service delivery complexity is being driven by communities expecting more from their local councils, increasing psychosocial risks in the workforce and the community, tighter regulatory and assurance requirements, rapid digital transformation that is hard to keep pace with, continued impacts of climate change and adapting to generational workforce change. These challenges are accentuated for rural/remote and regional local councils due to a smaller rate base, funding uncertainty, difficulties attracting and retaining workers and limited access to alternative service providers.

Service delivery is becoming more complex. This has been driven by the following factors:

1. Generational workforce change and shifting expectations

2. Rising community expectations and psychosocial risk

3. Tighter regulatory and assurance requirements

4. Increasingly complex service remit

5. Uneven but unavoidable digital transformation

6. Climate change and emergency response as standing functions

These factors are summarised in further detail below:

1. Generational workforce change and shifting expectations:

Generational change is reshaping local council roles, wellbeing expectations and retention risks. Younger and mid-career workers enter local councils with strong expectations around psychological safety, role clarity, digital enablement and manageable workloads, yet increasingly encounter frontline roles that are complex, risk-exposed and emotionally demanding. Rising aggression toward employees across customer service, libraries, community facilities and disaster-response roles has increased psychological load and accelerated demand for conflict-resolution capabilities, safety controls and stronger supervisory support. At the same time, role expansion beyond traditional local council functions, such as librarians supporting social services or councils delivering vaccinations and emergency recovery, is contributing to role drift and emotional overload, particularly for newer entrants.

2. Rising community expectations and psychosocial risk:

Community-facing roles are becoming significantly more demanding as local councils manage heightened community expectations, increasing aggression and growing psychosocial risk. Planning and service delivery are more complex in growth corridors and new communities, while customer service functions are under pressure from 24/7 digital expectations and CALD community needs. Local councils report rising occupational violence, particularly in libraries and community services, alongside new psychosocial hazard regulations in some jurisdictions (e.g., Victoria) that are embedding wellbeing and safety systems, de-escalation skills and trauma-informed practice into core operations.

3. Tighter regulatory and assurance requirements

Service delivery is increasingly shaped by tighter regulatory, assurance and reporting requirements, layered over a funding environment characterised by high reliance on tied government funding and limited discretionary capacity. Local councils must meet expanding compliance obligations across planning, environmental health, aged care, waste and governance functions, often with funding uncertainty and short-term program cycles. This combination of high compliance burden and constrained flexibility is driving risk-averse service models, increasing administrative workload and limiting local councils' ability to redesign services or invest in longer-term capability.

4. Increasingly complex service remit

Local councils are delivering a more complex mix of services, particularly community-facing functions. In some instances, this is due to other levels of governments and markets retreating, increasingly positioning Local Government as a provider of last resort (e.g., delivering vaccinations in Tasmania, water and infrastructure in New South Wales and youth and disability support in South Australia). However, some local councils noted having to scale back the delivery of highly regulated services where compliance burdens are unsustainable (e.g., aged care in Victoria).

5. Uneven but unavoidable digital transformation

Digital transformation is unavoidable but uneven across the sector, as local councils seek to modernise systems while managing legacy technology, limited internal capability and change fatigue. Investment is increasing in integrated IT platforms, analytics and project management, alongside automation, electrification and digital tools in areas such as fleet management, water operations and infrastructure, including smart meters, Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping and artificial intelligence (AI) enabled asset monitoring. However, legacy systems, digital literacy gaps and rising cyber security risks are accelerating the need for change, particularly in local councils with limited council rate funding or internal specialist skills, resulting in variable digital maturity and uneven service outcomes.

6. Climate change and emergency response as standing functions

Climate change and emergency response have become permanent features of local council service delivery rather than episodic responsibilities. Local councils are increasingly focused on preparedness, response and recovery as climate-driven risks intensify, including bushfires, floods and cyclones, leading to the emergence of permanent or portfolio-based emergency-management teams. Disaster management is now a standing capability, with local councils redeploying latent workforces during emergencies and integrating climate resilience into water, waste and infrastructure services, particularly in regions experiencing repeated or compounding climate events.

Table 16 below ranks the factors by importance based on the survey.

Table 16: Factors impacting councils

Factor	AUS		NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
	#	%							
Generational workforce changes	160	78%	87%	43%	93%	67%	100%	77%	69%
Increasing community needs and expectations	158	77%	81%	71%	60%	95%	56%	69%	77%
Increasing levels of governance and compliance	141	68%	67%	57%	53%	62%	67%	58%	82%
Major council or external infrastructure projects	135	66%	70%	71%	67%	76%	67%	54%	61%
Changes in government funding levels	134	65%	79%	86%	53%	62%	22%	73%	54%
Technological change including AI	118	57%	66%	0%	60%	71%	89%	58%	44%
Growth in local government area	113	55%	54%	71%	60%	71%	67%	50%	48%
Climate change	48	23%	24%	0%	20%	33%	44%	31%	16%

2.4.1. Emerging occupational shortages

Local councils' expectations of future occupational shortages remain consistent, reinforcing that current constraints are expected to persist rather than resolve. In summary:

In 2025-2026, engineers (43.2 per cent), urban and town planners (42.2 per cent) and building surveyors (40.3 per cent) remain the top future risks, with their percentages higher than in 2018.

Since 2018, there have been slight changes in technical and trade occupations. Mechanical trades now lead at 23.3 per cent, followed by the introduction of IT/ICT technicians at 20.9 per cent. Supervisors and team leaders also remain in the top three at 20.9 per cent.

Local councils increasingly identify digital, technology and AI-related roles as future priorities, with 16 per cent flagging AI roles specifically and 44 per cent citing technology transformation as driving new role needs.

Overall, the consistency of future critical occupational shortages indicates that local councils expect workforce constraints to be enduring, even where short-term conditions fluctuate. The slight moderation in reported severity suggests improved adaptation through training, less-skilled recruitment and shared arrangements, but not a fundamental easing of supply constraints.

2.4.2 Planning for future skilling needs

Most local councils still do not systematically plan for role and skill evolution.

Despite progress (plus nine per cent since 2018), successful workforce planning requires dedicated resources, time and funding to effectively analyse future service demands, redesign roles and align training investments. Many local councils, particularly rural/remote ones, face constraints in these areas, making it challenging to plan while managing daily operational pressures. Consequently, they may rely on reactive approaches that sustain outdated role structures and ongoing capability gaps.

Table 17: Proportion of local councils undertaking analysis of future job roles and requirements nationally and by state, 2018, 2022 and 2025-2026

Response	2018	2022		2025-2026						
	AU	AU	AU	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
No	70.0%	62.0%	73.3%	70.1%	57.1%	80.0%	76.2%	77.8%	57.7%	82.0%
Yes	18.0%	33.0%	26.7%	29.9%	42.9%	20.0%	23.8%	22.2%	42.3%	18.0%

The low rate of systematic planning being undertaken across Australian local councils strongly indicates ongoing capacity issues as local council budgets are stretched to provide an increasing array of services in an increasingly complex operating environment. In summary:

The Northern Territory (42.9 per cent) and Victoria (42.3 per cent) lead planning nationally, likely reflecting, necessity-driven role redesign in extreme labour markets and stronger planning frameworks with better integration across workforce, training and governance.

Planning is least common among rural/ remote local councils, with only 15 per cent undertaking future role analysis, compared with 35 per cent of regional and 40 per cent of metropolitan local councils.

Planning increases with local council size, with 87 per cent of small councils (<100 employees) not planning, compared with 43 per cent of very large councils (1,000+ employees).

2.4.3 New occupations expected to emerge

New occupations are expected to emerge in the following areas:

Technology and digital transformation	Digital transformation and integration specialists, smart infrastructure and Internet of Things (IoT) technicians and digital inclusion and accessibility officers emphasising that digital capability development is the primary workforce priority for Victorian local councils.
Artificial Intelligence	AI specialists, engineers, developers, and AI adoption specialists with local councils noting that AI will both create new occupations and transform existing ones.
Cybersecurity	Cybersecurity officers and cybersecurity and data privacy officers, reflecting growing recognition of digital security risks and data governance requirements.
Climate and sustainability occupations	Climate adaptation and resilience officers, climate change specialists, circular economy and waste innovation specialists and environment and sustainability management positions. Councils specifically noted "climate resilience" as a distinct capability area requiring dedicated expertise.
Change management and business transformation	Change management and resilience specialists, workforce flexibility and occupation redesign consultants and business analysis and process improvement occupations, reflecting organisational transformation pressures accompanying digital and service delivery changes.
Governance, risk, compliance and regulatory occupations	Increased regulatory complexity such as the Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024 is driving anticipated demand for governance specialists, risk management officers and compliance coordinators.
Community engagement and social services	Roles in aged care, community support, healthy ageing and homelessness response were reflecting demographic changes in their communities and the increasing expectation on local councils in social services delivery.

2.4.4 External pressures on workforce attraction and retention

Across all jurisdictions, housing was determined to have the most significant impact on recruitment and retention challenges, particularly the further from a local council was from a metropolitan area.

Table 18: Most significant impacts on workforce attraction and retention by jurisdiction, 2025-2026 Survey

Rank	AU	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
1	Housing pressures	Housing pressures	Housing pressures	Housing pressures	Housing pressures	Housing pressures	Housing pressures	Housing pressures
2	Long-term funding certainty	Long-term funding certainty	Community hostility / customer behaviour	Natural disasters	Long-term funding certainty	Mental ill health	Long-term funding certainty	Long-term funding certainty
3	Changing local/regional economy	Changing local/regional economy	Natural disasters	Community hostility / customer behaviour	Changing local/regional economy	Changing local/regional economy	Changing local/regional economy	Changing local/regional economy

2.4.5. Addressing future skill needs

The following was cited by responding local councils as needed to address future skill needs:

Funding and financial support	Increased funding for training programs, higher rebates for apprenticeships and traineeships, grants to upskill employees in target industries and funding for retention and attraction activities.
Training access and education partnerships	Access to training opportunities through partnerships with education providers, including cadetship programs for degree qualifications.
Collaboration and sector-wide strategies	Sharing, industry-sector partnerships and collaborative training models as practical mechanisms, especially for smaller local councils that cannot sustain independent programs.

Workforce planning	Support for workforce planning and analysis, including sector-wide workforce strategies and benchmarking opportunities
Housing and relocation support	Housing and relocation support as a critical workforce attraction barrier, particularly for regional, rural/remote councils.
Wage competitiveness and pay parity	Pay parity across all local councils.
Tailored support	Particularly for rural/remote local councils including a collaborative pool model that recognises that standard models do not translate to remote contexts.

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

Flexible training and development approaches	Targeted training programs	Improving access to educational opportunities	Building industry partnerships	Sharing resource arrangements
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Considerations

3.1 Considerations for Federal, State and Territory Governments

The following considerations have been identified for Local, State/Territory and Federal Governments. It is acknowledged that these considerations may already be progressing or being addressed through other work or initiatives.

1. Align funding and policy settings to local council capacity and service complexity

Consider how they align workforce and policy models to reflect differences in council size, service remit and regional capacity, with targeted support for small, rural/remote, regional and under resourced councils.

2. Invest in workforce pipelines and place based attraction

Consider expanding sustained funding for apprenticeships, traineeships and early career pathways into Local Government, alongside place based incentives (e.g. housing, relocation, flexible work) to attract and retain workers in regional and rural/remote areas.

3. Reduce access barriers to accredited training

Consider subsidising travel, accommodation and delivery costs for accredited training to increase participation, particularly for rural/remote and regional local councils. Consider systemic approaches to access to training by bringing together funding decision makers, TAFEs and RTOs and local councils to collaborate to maximise class sizes and remote delivery.

4. Strengthen shared workforce and capability models

Enable and incentivise shared staffing arrangements and pooled workforce models across local councils for hard to fill and specialist roles, including apprentices and trainees.

5. Embed workforce planning and leadership capability as essential

Position workforce planning as a minimum governance requirement, supported by national tools, shared scenario modelling and sustained investment in leadership, governance and change capability.

6. Review the LGATP to ensure it reflects the needs of local councils

Consider reviewing the LGATP in line with Local-Government-dominant occupations, capabilities and roles. This review should also include region-specific electives that better reflect local operating contexts.

7. Promote the use of training packages other than the LGATP to Local Government

Consider what other training packages are required for occupations and roles in Local Government that are shared with other industries e.g. IT, business and finance.

3.2 Considerations for Local Government

1. Align training pathways with long-term workforce planning in response to skills gaps and occupational shortages

Consider whether there are opportunities for local councils to embed apprenticeship, traineeship, cadetship and graduate pathways as part of long-term workforce planning to enhance workforce renewal and target occupational and skills shortages.

2. Shift from recruitment only to retention led workforce strategies

Consider the value of shifting workforce planning from a recruitment focus career progression and retention focus. This could seek to align strategies on career progression, supervision, inclusion and job sustainability for First Nations employees, CALD employees and people with disability, and not retain focus on recruiting entry level roles. This consideration may have greater value for those local councils experiencing sustained workforce growth.

3. Invest in leadership, supervision and succession

Consider what opportunities could be provided to the workforce to develop leadership and supervisory capabilities and strengthen mentoring and structured knowledge transfer. Investment in this approach could support local councils to manage higher churn, early career concentration and ageing workforce challenges.

4. Collaborate with government to overcome scale constraints

Consider potential approaches to State/Territory and Federal governments to support establishing shared workforce pools, joint training resources and regional collaboration models that could improve access to specialist skills and build workforce resilience.

5. Build baseline digital and change capability across all roles

Consider the opportunities to work collectively across multiple local councils to adopt a whole of workforce digital uplift plans and/or strategy, which may combine digital literacy, change management and cross skilling and reducing the reliance on scarce ICT specialists.

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.
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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	OBJECTIVE 2	OBJECTIVE 3
To understand the services that local councils provide and how these are changing across different regions and sectors.	To explore the current and future occupations, jobs and skills needs of LGAs and how they vary by location and LGA size.	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: 2025-26 Participating Councils¹⁰

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
New South Wales 80 participants	Albury City Council	Regional
	Armidale Regional Council	Regional
	Ballina Shire Council	Regional
	Balranald Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Bathurst Regional Council	Regional
	Bayside Council	Metropolitan
	Berrigan Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Blacktown City Council	Metropolitan
	Bland Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Blue Mountains City Council	Metropolitan
	Bourke Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Brewarrina Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Burwood Council	Metropolitan
	Byron Shire Council	Regional
	Cabonne Council	Rural/remote
	Camden Council	Metropolitan
	Canada Bay Council	Metropolitan
	Canterbury-Bankstown Council	Metropolitan
	Carrathool Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Central Coast Council	Regional
	Central Darling Shire Council	Rural/remote

¹⁰ Survey respondents and/or workshop participants.

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
New South Wales	Cessnock City Council	Regional
	Clarence Valley Council	Regional
	Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Cumberland Council	Metropolitan
	Edward River Council	Rural/remote
	Eurobodalla Shire Council	Regional
	Forbes Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Georges River Council	Metropolitan
	Goulburn Mulwaree Council	Regional
	Griffith City Council	Regional
	Gunnedah Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Gwydir Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Hawkesbury City Council	Metropolitan
	Hay Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Hornsby Shire Council	Metropolitan
	Inner West Council	Metropolitan
	Inverell Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Kempsey Shire Council	Regional
	Kiama Municipal Council	Regional
	Ku-ring-gai Council	Metropolitan
	Lachlan Shire Council	Rural/remote

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
New South Wales	Lake Macquarie City Council	Regional
	Lane Cove Municipal Council	Metropolitan
	Leeton Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Lismore City Council	Regional
	Lithgow City Council	Regional
	Lockhart Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Mid-Coast Council	Regional
	Narrandera Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Narromine Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Newcastle City Council	Regional
	Northern Beaches Council	Metropolitan
	Oberon Council	Rural/remote
	Orange City Council	Regional
	Parkes Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Parramatta City Council	Metropolitan
	Penrith City Council	Metropolitan
	Port Macquarie-Hastings Council	Regional
	Port Stephens Council	Regional
	Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council	Regional
	Randwick City Council	Metropolitan
	Richmond Valley Council	Regional
	Shellharbour City Council	Regional
	Singleton Council	Regional

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
	The Hills Shire Council	Metropolitan
	Tweed Shire Council	Regional
	Upper Hunter Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Upper Lachlan Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Uralla Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Wagga Wagga City Council	Regional
	Weddin Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Regional
	Wollondilly Shire Council	Metropolitan
	Wollongong City Council	Regional
	Woollahra Municipal Council	Metropolitan
	Yass Valley Council	Rural/remote
	Goldenfields Water County Council	Rural/remote
	Riverina Water County Council	Regional
	Rous County Council	Regional
Northern Territory 15 participants	Alice Springs Town Council	Regional
	Barkly Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Belyuen Community Government Council	Rural/remote
	Central Desert Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Coomalie Community Government Council	Rural/remote
	Darwin City Council	Metropolitan
	East Arnhem Regional Council	Rural/remote

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
	Groote Archipelago Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Katherine Town Council	Regional
	MacDonnell Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Tiwi Islands Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Victoria Daly Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Wagait Regional Council	Rural/remote
	West Arnhem Regional Council	Rural/remote
	West Daly Regional Council	Rural/remote
Queensland 40 participants	Banana Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Barcaldine Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Blackall-Tambo Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Boulia Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Brisbane City Council	Metropolitan
	Burdekin Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Cairns Regional Council	Regional
	Carpentaria Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Cassowary Coast Regional Council	Regional
	Central Highlands Regional Council	Regional
	Charters Towers Regional Council	Rural/remote
	City of Logan	Regional
	City of Moreton Bay	Regional
	Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council	Rural/remote

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
Queensland	Flinders Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Goondiwindi Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Gympie Regional Council	Regional
	Ipswich City Council	Metropolitan
	Isaac Regional Council	Regional
	Livingstone Shire Council	Regional
	Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Lockyer Valley Regional Council	Regional
	Mareeba Shire Council	Regional
	Noosa Shire Council	Regional
	North Burnett Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Paroo Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Quilpie Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Redland City Council	Regional
	Rockhampton Regional Council	Regional
	Scenic Rim Regional Council	Regional
	South Burnett Regional Council	Regional
	Southern Downs Regional Council	Regional
	Sunshine Coast Regional Council	Regional
	Toowoomba Regional Council	Regional
	Torres Strait Island Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Townsville City Council	Regional

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
	Western Downs Regional Council	Regional
	Winton Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council	Rural/remote
South Australia 26 participants	Adelaide Plains Council	Rural/remote
	Alexandrina Council	Regional
	Barossa Council	Regional
	Charles Sturt City Council	Metropolitan
	Copper Coast Council	Rural/remote
	Gawler Town Council	Regional
	Grant District Council	Rural/remote
	Holdfast Bay City Council	Metropolitan
	Lower Eyre Peninsula District Council	Rural/remote
	Loxton Waikerie District Council	Rural/remote
	Marion City Council	Metropolitan
	Mitcham City Council	Metropolitan
	Murray Bridge Rural City Council	Regional
	Onkaparinga City Council	Regional
	Port Adelaide Enfield City Council	Metropolitan
	Port Lincoln City Council	Regional
	Port Pirie Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Prospect City Council	Metropolitan
	Robe District Council	Rural/remote

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
	Salisbury City Council	Metropolitan
	Tea Tree Gully City Council	Metropolitan
	Wakefield Regional Council	Rural/remote
	Wattle Range Council	Rural/remote
	West Torrens City Council	Metropolitan
	Whyalla City Council	Regional
	Yorke Peninsula Council	Rural/remote
Tasmania 12 participants	Break O'Day Council	Rural/remote
	Brighton Council	Regional
	Central Coast Council - TAS	Regional
	Circular Head Council	Rural/remote
	Clarence City Council	Regional
	Dorset Council	Rural/remote
	George Town Council	Rural/remote
	Glenorchy City Council	Regional
	Hobart City Council	Metropolitan
	Huon Valley Council	Rural/remote
	Southern Midlands Council	Rural/remote
	Waratah-Wynyard Council	Rural/remote
Victoria 33 participants	Ararat Rural City Council	Rural/remote
	Bass Coast Shire Council	Regional

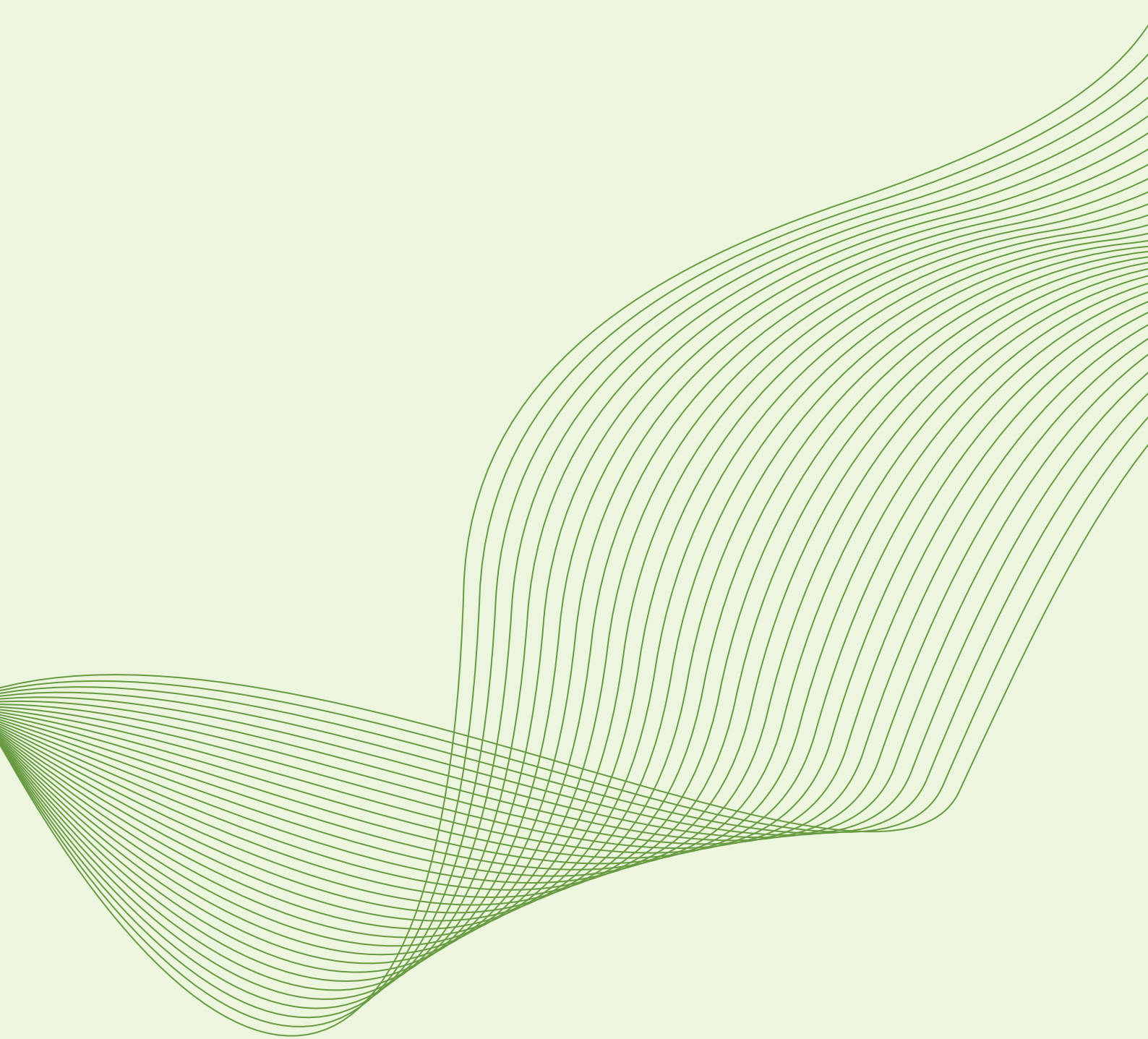
State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
Victoria	Boroondara City Council	Metropolitan
	Campaspe Shire Council	Regional
	Cardinia Shire Council	Regional
	Frankston City Council	Metropolitan
	Glen Eira City Council	Metropolitan
	Glenelg Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Golden Plains Shire Council	Regional
	Greater Bendigo City Council	Regional
	Knox City Council	Metropolitan
	Latrobe City Council	Regional
	Macedon Ranges Shire Council	Regional
	Manningham City Council	Metropolitan
	Melbourne City Council	Metropolitan
	Mildura Rural City Council	Regional
	Mitchell Shire Council	Regional
	Moonee Valley City Council	Metropolitan
	Murrindindi Shire Council	Rural/remote
	Nillumbik Shire Council	Metropolitan
	Port Phillip City Council	Metropolitan
	Borough of Queenscliffe	Regional
	South Gippsland Shire Council	Regional
	Stonnington City Council	Metropolitan
	Towong Shire Council	Rural/remote

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
	Warrnambool City Council	Regional
	Wellington Shire Council	Regional
	Whittlesea City Council	Metropolitan
	Wodonga City Council	Regional
	Wyndham City Council	Regional
	Yarra City Council	Metropolitan
	Yarra Ranges Shire Council	Regional
	Yarriambiack Shire Council	Rural/remote
Western Australia 74 participants	City of Albany	Regional
	City of Armadale	Regional
	City of Bayswater	Metropolitan
	City of Bunbury	Regional
	City of Busselton	Regional
	City of Cockburn	Metropolitan
	City of Gosnells	Metropolitan
	City of Greater Geraldton	Regional
	City of Joondalup	Metropolitan
	City of Kalamunda	Regional
	City of Karratha	Regional
	City of Kwinana	Regional
	City of Mandurah	Regional
	City of Melville	Metropolitan

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
Western Australia	City of Nedlands	Metropolitan
	City of Stirling	Metropolitan
	City of Subiaco	Metropolitan
	City of Swan	Regional
	City of Wanneroo	Rural/remote
	Shire of Augusta Margaret River	Rural/remote
	Shire of Beverley	Rural/remote
	Shire of Boddington	Rural/remote
	Shire of Boyup Brook	Rural/remote
	Shire of Brookton	Rural/remote
	Shire of Broome	Rural/remote
	Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup	Rural/remote
	Shire of Capel	Rural/remote
	Shire of Carnarvon	Rural/remote
	Shire of Chittering	Rural/remote
	Shire of Collie	Rural/remote
	Shire of Dalwallinu	Rural/remote
	Shire of Dardanup	Rural/remote
	Shire of Esperance	Rural/remote
	Shire of Exmouth	Rural/remote
	Shire of Gingin	Rural/remote
	Shire of Gnowangerup	Rural/remote
	Shire of Goomalling	Rural/remote

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
	Shire of Halls Creek	Rural/remote
	Shire of Harvey	Rural/remote
	Shire of Jerramungup	Rural/remote
	Shire of Katanning	Rural/remote
	Shire of Kondinin	Rural/remote
	Shire of Lake Grace	Rural/remote
	Shire of Manjimup	Rural/remote
	Shire of Menzies	Rural/remote
	Shire of Merredin	Rural/remote
	Shire of Mingenew	Rural/remote
	Shire of Moora	Rural/remote
	Shire of Mount Magnet	Rural/remote
	Shire of Mukinbudin	Rural/remote
	Shire of Murray	Rural/remote
	Shire of Narembeen	Rural/remote
	Shire of Ngaanyatjaraku	Rural/remote
	Shire of Northam	Rural/remote
	Shire of Nungarin	Rural/remote
	Shire of Pingelly	Rural/remote
	Shire of Tammin	Rural/remote
	Shire of Trayning	Rural/remote
	Shire of Victoria Plains	Rural/remote
	Shire of Waroona	Rural/remote

State/Territory	Local Government	ACLG
Western Australia	Shire of West Arthur	Rural/remote
	Shire of Williams	Rural/remote
	Shire of Wongan-Ballidu	Rural/remote
	Shire of Woodanilling	Rural/remote
	Shire of Wyalkatchem	Rural/remote
	Shire of Yilgarn	Rural/remote
	Shire of York	Rural/remote
	Town of Bassendean	Metropolitan
	Town of Cottesloe	Metropolitan
	Town of East Fremantle	Metropolitan
	Town of Mosman Park	Metropolitan
	Town of Victoria Park	Metropolitan
	Bunbury Harvey Regional Council	Regional
	Mindarie Regional Council	Metropolitan



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