GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WA Workforce Strategy 2026-2030

Consultation Thematic Summary

Executive summary

Western Australia is entering a period of significant economic growth, industry transformation and workforce demand. Major investments in clean energy, defence, housing, infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, essential care services, tourism and hospitality and other priority industries are creating new opportunities for workers, businesses and communities across the State.

To inform the development of the WA Workforce Strategy 2026-2030, the Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) undertook extensive consultation with industry, employers, unions, training providers, Aboriginal organisations, government agencies and community stakeholders. Consultation included industry roundtables, engagement with the State Training Board and Industry Training Councils, an online consultation process from stakeholders across Western Australia.

The consultation process was complemented by DTWD's ongoing workforce modelling, labour market analysis, workforce planning, policy development and sector stewardship activities. As the State's workforce development agency, DTWD continuously monitors workforce demand, training activity, labour market trends and emerging workforce challenges to inform government decision-making and investment.

Many of the workforce challenges raised through consultation are not new. Significant work is already underway across government to strengthen workforce supply, expand training opportunities, support apprenticeships and traineeships, increase workforce participation, address priority skills shortages and improve access to training and employment pathways. Consultation confirmed the importance of continuing these efforts while identifying opportunities to strengthen, promote and better coordinate future action.

This thematic summary presents the key insights that emerged from consultation. Eight interconnected themes were consistently raised by stakeholders across industries, regions and communities.

More than

60

written submissions

from **51** stakeholders

Ongoing

workforce modelling and **labour market analysis**

State Training Board, Industry Training Council, and Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Board

roundtable

6 **Industry roundtables held**

Together, these themes provide an important evidence base for the WA Workforce Strategy and reflect the challenges and opportunities shaping Western Australia's future workforce. The WA Workforce Strategy 2026-2030 sets out the WA Government's response to these challenges and opportunities and provides a coordinated framework for building the skilled workforce needed to support economic growth, community wellbeing and long-term prosperity.

Theme 1: **Workforce demand is outpacing workforce supply**

Related workforce challenges

- Workforce supply
- Workforce pipelines
- Competition for skills

What we heard

Stakeholders consistently reported that workforce demand is growing faster than workforce supply across much of the economy.

Growth in housing construction, major infrastructure delivery, clean energy projects, defence investment, the emerging advanced manufacturing industry, care services and population growth is creating simultaneous demand for workers across multiple sectors.

Participants noted that labour shortages are no longer isolated to individual occupations or industries. Instead, workforce challenges are increasingly shared across the economy, with many sectors competing for the same workers and skill sets.

Stakeholders emphasised that addressing workforce shortages requires a long-term approach focused on increasing overall workforce supply through training, workforce participation, migration and workforce retention rather than simply moving workers between sectors, regions or employers.

> **“The challenge is no longer finding workers for one industry. Every industry is competing for workforce growth at the same time.”**
>
> *- Roundtable attendee*

Theme 2: **Career pathways need to be clearer, earlier and more visible**

Related workforce challenges

- Attraction and retention
- Workforce pipelines

What we heard

Consultation highlighted the importance of creating stronger and more visible pathways into education, training and employment.

Stakeholders reported that many students, parents, teachers, career advisers and career changers are unaware of the breadth of opportunities available across priority industries. This was particularly evident in emerging sectors such as clean energy, defence and advanced manufacturing, as well as traditional sectors experiencing workforce shortages.

Participants consistently supported earlier career education, stronger school-to-work pathways, increased industry engagement with schools and improved visibility of vocational education and training pathways.

Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of recognising transferable skills and supporting people to move between occupations and industries throughout their careers.



> **“People cannot pursue opportunities they do not know exist.”**
>
> *- Roundtable attendee*

Theme 3: **Training capacity has become a critical constraint**

Related workforce challenges

- Training system capacity
- Workforce pipelines

What we heard

Stakeholders consistently identified training system capacity as a growing workforce constraint.

Challenges raised included shortages of trainers and assessors, limitations in specialist facilities and equipment, supervision and placement constraints, and difficulties delivering training in regional and emerging industries.



Many participants noted that workforce development is increasingly dependent on the ability of the training system to respond quickly to industry needs.

There was strong support for continued investment in TAFE and the wider training system, expansion of industry partnerships, innovative delivery models and greater flexibility in training design and delivery.

Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of ensuring training continues to evolve alongside emerging technologies and changing workforce requirements.

> **“Building workforce supply ultimately depends on building training system capacity.”**
>
> *- Roundtable attendee*

Theme 4: **Apprenticeships remain central to workforce growth**

Related workforce challenges

- Training system capacity
- Workforce pipelines
- Attraction and retention

What we heard

Across consultation, apprenticeships and traineeships were consistently identified as one of Western Australia's most important workforce development tools.

Stakeholders recognised the critical role apprenticeships play in developing skilled workers for industries including construction, manufacturing, defence, electrical trades and other technical occupations.

Participants highlighted challenges associated with apprentice attraction, retention, supervision capacity, completion rates and employer costs.

Many stakeholders also identified opportunities to strengthen apprenticeship pathways through mentoring, wraparound support, school-based pathways, employer incentives and procurement mechanisms that encourage workforce development outcomes.

> **"Workforce pipelines take years to build but can be weakened quickly if support is not in place."**
>
> *- Roundtable attendee*

Theme 5: **Increasing participation is one of WA's greatest workforce opportunities**

Related workforce challenges

- Participation barriers
- Attraction and retention
- Workforce supply

What we heard

Stakeholders consistently identified increasing workforce participation as one of the most significant opportunities to grow Western Australia's workforce and meet future labour demand.

Consultation highlighted opportunities to improve participation, retention and progression for groups that remain under-represented in many industries and occupations, particularly women, Aboriginal people, people with disability, mature-age workers, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people returning to work after career breaks.

Stakeholders emphasised that increasing participation requires more than recruitment initiatives. Success depends on creating inclusive and culturally safe workplaces, improving access to flexible work arrangements, addressing childcare and caring responsibilities, strengthening mentoring and support programs, and ensuring pathways into training and employment are accessible to all Western Australians.

There was particularly strong support for initiatives that increase participation in industries and occupations where some groups remain significantly under-represented, including women in trades, construction, manufacturing and STEM-related occupations, and Aboriginal people across priority industries and regional workforce initiatives.

Stakeholders also recognised the significant contribution Aboriginal people make to Western Australia's economy and communities, particularly in regional areas, and highlighted the importance of Aboriginal-led approaches, partnerships and place-based workforce development initiatives that support sustainable training and employment outcomes.

> **"Increasing participation is not only a social opportunity, it is one of the State's most important workforce opportunities."**
>
> *- Roundtable attendee*

Theme 6: **Regional workforce challenges require place-based solutions**

Related workforce challenges

- Regional workforce challenges
- Attraction and retention
- Workforce supply

What we heard

Regional stakeholders consistently emphasised that workforce challenges are closely linked to broader economic and community factors.

Housing availability, workforce accommodation, childcare, transport, connectivity, access to training and local services were identified as significant influences on workforce attraction and retention in regional and remote communities.

Participants noted that workforce solutions must recognise the diversity of regional labour markets and local economic opportunities. What works in one region may not be effective in another.

Stakeholders strongly supported place-based workforce planning and partnership approaches that bring together local industry, communities, training providers and government.



> **“Regional workforce challenges are often housing challenges, service challenges and liveability challenges.”**
>
> *- Roundtable attendee*

Theme 7: **Industry transformation is reshaping workforce capability**

Related workforce challenges

- Skills transformation
- Specialist occupations

What we heard

Stakeholders highlighted the growing impact of technological change, automation, digitalisation, artificial intelligence and the transition to a low-emissions economy.



Consultation identified increasing demand for technical, digital and specialised capabilities across many industries, including clean energy, advanced manufacturing, defence, health and care services.

Participants emphasised that future workforce needs will not be met solely through training new workers. Significant effort will also be required to support the upskilling and reskilling of existing workers.

Many stakeholders highlighted the importance of lifelong learning and the need for flexible learning models that support workers throughout their careers.

> **“The workforce challenge is not only preparing new workers, but helping existing workers adapt.”**
>
> *- Roundtable attendee*

Theme 8: **Stronger coordination is essential to long-term success**

Related workforce challenges

- Workforce supply
- Competition for skills
- Attraction and retention
- Training system capacity
- Workforce pipelines
- Skills transformation
- Participation barriers
- Regional workforce challenges
- Specialist occupations

What we heard

A recurring theme throughout consultation was that workforce development is a shared responsibility.

Stakeholders consistently called for stronger coordination across government, industry, training providers, unions, Aboriginal organisations and communities.

Participants noted that workforce challenges often span multiple systems and policy areas, including education, training, migration, housing, economic development, regional development and social services.

Many stakeholders highlighted the importance of strong workforce intelligence, long-term planning and clear accountability arrangements to support effective decision-making and investment.

There was widespread support for government continuing to play a leadership and stewardship role in bringing partners together around shared workforce priorities.

> **“Workforce challenges are shared. The solutions must be shared too.”**
>
> *- Roundtable attendee*

A shared commitment

While stakeholders identified workforce challenges that differ across industries, occupations and regions, common themes emerged consistently throughout consultation. Workforce supply, workforce participation, training capacity, skills development, regional workforce challenges and industry transformation were all identified as priorities requiring sustained attention and coordinated action.

Stakeholders consistently identified greater workforce participation as one of the most significant opportunities available to Western Australia. In particular, increasing participation, retention and career progression for women and Aboriginal people was seen as critical to both workforce growth and improved economic and community outcomes.

Participants highlighted the importance of building on existing initiatives, removing barriers to participation and creating workforce systems that enable all Western Australians to contribute and thrive.

Stakeholders expressed confidence in Western Australia's economic future and recognised the State's strong foundations, including its training system, industry capability, workforce participation rates, apprenticeship system and the substantial workforce initiatives already underway.

Across the consultation, stakeholders emphasised that workforce development is a shared responsibility. Success will depend on strong partnerships between government, industry, employers, unions, training providers, Aboriginal organisations, communities.

The consultation has reinforced existing evidence, identified emerging issues and highlighted areas where greater coordination and action will be required.

The WA Workforce Strategy 2026-2030 outlines the Western Australian Government's response to these challenges and opportunities. Building on the significant work already underway across the skills, training and workforce development system, the Strategy provides a coordinated framework for strengthening workforce supply,



supporting workforce participation, expanding workforce capability and preparing Western Australia for future economic and social growth.

The consultation process highlighted both the scale of the workforce challenges facing Western Australia and the collective commitment to addressing them.

“Western Australia’s workforce challenges are significant, but so are the opportunities. Through collaboration, investment and shared commitment, the State is well positioned to build the workforce needed.”

Roundtable attendees

ABN Group	AustVolt	Cubic Interiors
Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia	Auto Control Systems	Curtin University
Accor	BAE Systems Australia	Department of Communities
Adarsh Australia	BioCina	Department of Energy and Economic Diversification
Ageing Australia	Building and Construction Consultative Committee	Department of Health
Australia's Submarine Company (ASC)	Built	Department of Housing and Works
Austal	Chamber of Commerce and Industry Western Australia	Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Australian Childcare Alliance WA	Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia	Department of the Premier and Cabinet – Defence West
Australian Hotels Association (WA)	Child Australia	Early Childhood WA
Australian Industry Defence Network WA (AIDN WA) and Energy Power Systems Australia	Civmec	Edith Cowan University
Australian Industry Group	Community Skills WA	Electrical and Communications Association WA (ECA WA)
Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union	Construction Training Fund	Electrical Trades Union of Western Australia
Australian Medical Association (WA)	Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU)	Fortescue (FMG)
Australian Services Union – Western Australian Branch	Cooke & Dowsett Plumbing Group	Future Battery Industries Cooperative Research Centre
Australian Workers' Union	Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia (CASWA)	Great Southern Development Commission

H&B Defence	National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA)	TAFE WA
Henderson Alliance	Neoen	The University of Western Australia
Hesperia	Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre	Thales Australia
Horizon Power	Prendiville Group	Tourism Council Western Australia
Hospitality Disability Network	Property Council of Australia (WA)	Tourism Western Australia
Hospitality Group Training	Raytheon Australia	Transport Workers' Union of Western Australia
Housing Industry Association	Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry WA	UnionsWA
Hyperion Systems	Regional Early Education and Development WA	United Workers Union
Juniper	Returned & Services League of Australia WA (RSLWA)	Urban Development Institute of Australia (WA)
Kwinana Industries Council	Satterley	Vocational Training Services
Lendlease	Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA)	WA Council of Social Service
Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance	Silverchain	Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council
Master Builders Western Australia	South West Development Commission (SWDC)	Western Power
Melchor	SRG Global	Western Roads Federation
Multiplex	Synergy	Yindjibarndi Energy Corporation