



RESPONSE TO THE
LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY ECONOMY
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE INQUIRY
INTO VICTORIAN
UNIVERSITIES'
INVESTMENT IN SKILLS

Table of Contents

1	Response to Committee’s findings and recommendations.....	1
2	Enhancing university collaboration with industry	2
2.1	Strengthened partnerships and collaboration.....	2
2.1.1	Joined-up government	2
2.1.2	University-Victorian Government partnerships.....	3
2.2	Work-integrated learning (WIL) and work placements	4
2.2.1	Current WIL programs	5
2.3	Advocacy and information sharing	6
2.3.1	Australian Universities Accord	6
3	University collaboration with vocational education providers and local communities	7
3.1	Structured collaboration of TAFEs and universities	7
3.2	University-TAFE partnerships hybrid or dual qualifications.....	7
3.3	Advocacy to the Commonwealth Government	8
4	Learning support and skills planning in priority employment areas	8
4.1	Victorian Skills Plan	9
4.2	Information and data sharing.....	9
4.3	Microcredentials Framework	10
4.4	Priority sectors.....	10
5	Summary of actions.....	11

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1 Response to Committee's findings and recommendations

The Victorian Government thanks the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee (the Committee) for its Inquiry into Victorian universities' investment in skills, and all stakeholders who made submissions, including Victoria's public universities.

The Victorian Government welcomes the Committee's findings and recommendations, which underline the importance of the Government's partnership with universities to drive our State's economic growth and deliver Victoria's future workforce and skills needs.

Victorian universities are key partners in Victoria's economic growth. The university sector educates the future workforce; generates research output, supports technology transfer and commercialisation; attracts skilled migration and international investment; and provides significant employment opportunities across the State.

The Committee's report acknowledges that the university sector will play a pivotal role in understanding the future of Victoria's skilled workforce in priority employment areas and considers how universities can help grow the pipeline of skilled workers to meet that future demand and alleviate current workforce shortages, particularly across education, community services, health and allied health sectors.

While the recommendations broadly call for a centralised approach, this needs to be considered against the broader operating environment. Universities are independent institutions providing unique course offerings in a competitive market, fostering innovation through research and responding to the diverse needs of government, industry, students, and the communities they serve.

The Committee's final report (the Report) outlines 34 findings and 31 recommendations after assessing Victorian universities' ability to meet workforce priorities, relating to the following three themes:

- Enhancing university collaboration with industry
- Collaboration with vocational education and training (VET) providers and local communities
- Learning support and skill planning in priority employment areas.

The Victorian Government supports the overall intent and direction of the recommendations, which align with the Government's priority to continue to work in partnership with universities and industry to deliver Victoria's future workforce and skills needs. The recommendations are supported in principle where they are within the remit of the Victorian Government. However, further consideration will be given to where recommendations interact with the Australian Government's primary responsibilities for policy settings, funding, and regulation of higher education, or where existing reviews or pilot initiatives are underway. The Victorian Government is focused on strengthening its coordinated approach to deliver closer engagement between government, universities, TAFEs, and industry.

This document represents the Victorian Government's formal response to the Committee's findings and recommendations and has been developed by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR), informed by consultation across the Victorian Government, including with the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), the Department of Treasury and Finance, the Department of Education (DE), the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, and the Department of Health.

2 Enhancing university collaboration with industry

Each university maintains its own strong collaborative ties with industry, which can be independent of the Victorian Government and each other. There are many examples of collaboration with industry and other universities; local, national, and international. It is important to recognise these strengths and build on them as we deliver Victoria's social and economic priorities.

The Committee found that the disconnect between in-demand skills and supply is driven by several factors, including low levels of enrolments in priority skills courses; low unemployment rates; border closures; workforce demands due to the COVID-19 pandemic; as well as the misalignment between industry skill requirements and the skills of graduating students. The Report outlines ways that universities can ameliorate skills and labour shortages in priority employment sectors. These include collaboration and partnerships; course content that incorporates practical learning; encouraging enrolments in priority skills areas; adequate funding for priority skill courses; and developing local upskilling learning pathways.

It is important to recognise the role of universities in addressing the findings of the recommendations. Universities are drivers of innovation and research, allowing them to make significant economic and societal contributions. By partnering with government and industry, universities invest in research that fosters the development of new technologies, products and services that create jobs and drive economic growth. Research is a vital tool for driving progress, advancing human understanding, and accelerating future industries.

The Victorian Government recognised this valuable role as it made its major investment in Victorian universities during the COVID-19 pandemic through the Victorian Universities Support Package (VUSP). The \$350 million Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund (VHESIF), as part of the VUSP, supported universities with capital works, applied research and research infrastructure focused on boosting Victoria's productivity and the economy as the state recovered from the impacts of the pandemic. Projects funded by the VHESIF were co-designed with the Victorian Government and highlight how the State and universities can work closely together to align to priority areas.


Universities could further strengthen collaboration through active engagement with government agencies and industry partners, with the aim of focusing on areas of research that are of strategic importance to their partners. This should enable the translation of research findings into practical applications and commercialisation, including consideration of future skill requirements and development of course offerings.

2.1 Strengthened partnerships and collaboration

The Report highlights that partnerships and collaboration are critical to maximising and coordinating efforts to address workforce shortages and develop the future supply of skilled workers. Stronger partnerships and collaboration between universities, TAFEs, industry, and Government will support universities to invest in skills and workforce development in priority areas for the labour market and provide the pipeline of workers required for a growing economy.

2.1.1 Joined-up government

The Victorian Government supports the Report's findings, including to recognise the importance of promoting strong collaborative ties between universities and industry partners to improve universities' investment in skill development in priority areas of the labour market.



On 1 January 2023, the Victorian Government formed DJSIR. DJSIR is firmly focused on driving a strong and resilient economy that benefits all Victorians, by creating more opportunities for people through jobs and skills; supporting businesses and industries to grow and prosper; and building vibrant communities and regions.

DJSIR brings together the Training and Skills and Higher Education portfolios with the government's economic development and investment attraction functions, including oversight of the \$2 billion Breakthrough Victoria Fund (BVF) administered by Breakthrough Victoria (BV), Global Victoria's promotion of international education as Victoria's major services export, and Invest Victoria's investment attraction agency which fosters long term economic prosperity by enabling business opportunities and job creation for Victoria. The establishment of DJSIR provides significant opportunity to improve coordination and maximise engagement between government, universities, TAFEs, and industry. This will provide the conduit to clearly signal future workforce and skills priorities to the university sector, assist with planning, and ensure responsiveness to student and industry needs.

2.1.2 University-Victorian Government partnerships

Partnership Agreements between the Victorian Government and Victorian universities were established in 2021 to codify the relationship between the Victorian Government and each Victorian university.

The Partnership Agreements:


- Reflect an ongoing and evolving partnership approach to working together;
- Set out agreed areas of common interest and mutual benefit, to deliver positive economic and social impacts to the State; and
- Influence decisions that universities and the Victorian Government take jointly and individually.

The Partnership Agreements are intended to be revisited in 2023, and the Victorian Government will consider the recommendations of the Report with the intent of incorporating the themes of strengthened partnerships and collaboration, advocacy and information sharing, work-integrated learning (WIL) and learning pathways.

Invest Victoria establishes connections and facilitates introductions between industry and higher education institutions. It engages directly with universities via working groups and works to align investment strategies and promote the state's research and development (R&D) ecosystem. This effort has resulted in partnerships such as that between Moderna and Monash University to construct an mRNA vaccine manufacturing facility on the University's Clayton campus. The facility will create jobs, opportunities for innovation and investment, and provide ongoing benefits for the broader community. It includes a focus on university-level workforce training that will support the expansion of this nascent local sector, which has enormous global potential.

The Victorian Government investment into the future workforce is not only in the skills and needs of future employees, but also in employers. A range of programs that aim to address industry skills gaps and build the skills of Victoria's workforce are delivered in partnership with universities.

For example, DJSIR's \$63.8 million Digital Jobs Program provides 12-week digital skills training delivered by university, TAFE, and private training providers to upskill 5,000 mid-career Victorians. In addition to the training, participants receive career coaching, technical mentoring, and opportunities to apply for work placements to apply their new skills in the workplace.



The \$4.5 million Digital Jobs for Manufacturing Program is further investment to provide 12-week training delivered by university, TAFE, and private training providers to upskill more than 300 manufacturing workers in specialist digital skills.

DJSIR's SummerTech Live program matches digitally skilled tertiary ICT students and recent graduates with Victorian businesses to solve tech challenges and boost competitiveness. SummerTech Live bridges the skills gap for businesses and gives students and recent graduates invaluable on-the-job experience. The program offers participants a \$5,000 studentship for 10–12 weeks over the summer break and there is no cost to employers.

Established in 2021, BV is an independent investment fund manager with a mandate to invest for impact – supporting companies to commercialise new technologies and innovations that will create jobs and investment in Victoria and have a positive impact on people's lives.

The innovation arising from the university and research sector is key to the innovative companies of the future. One notable recent investment is with the US quantum leader Infleqtion (formerly ColdQuanta) to establish Infleqtion's Asia Pacific headquarters. This investment aims to generate workforce skills in cold atom quantum technology and turbocharge quantum discoveries at the new ColdQuanta–Swinburne Quantum Technology Centre. This investment also benefits the broader university sector's quantum technology capabilities and networks.

BV's University Innovation Platform (UIP) has committed up to \$100 million to establish pre-seed funds with Victorian universities. Each university is provided the opportunity to create a new pre-seed investment fund with BV with equal contributions from each party. This enables university-driven translational research to access early-stage capital for proof of concept, prototyping and other activities to shape up the entity for investment by BV and other investors. BV, in partnership with the University of Melbourne, launched the \$15 million Genesis Pre-Seed Fund which is the first fund announced under the UIP.

2.2 WIL and work placements

Many of the Committee's recommendations focus on workforce needs, primarily in education, community services, health, and allied health sectors. The recommendations are also focused on encouraging enrolments in priority areas through Government support and tailored programs in regional areas and for disadvantaged and under-represented cohorts. The recommendations call on Government to increase and improve WIL opportunities across industry areas that require mandatory placements, including regional placements, as well strengthening opportunities with industry for non-mandatory or general WIL opportunities.

The findings of the Report recognise that WIL opportunities are important across a variety of sectors and provide students with valuable lived experience, while noting that WIL opportunities also directly support priority workforce areas.

Universities are independent institutions with unique course offerings and partnerships, and the unique WIL opportunities they provide help to attract students in a competitive market. Tools and frameworks already exist through the Australian Collaborative Education Network to support each institution in implementing their own fit-for-purpose arrangements. Students further play a role to hold themselves accountable for maintaining good and open communication with employers to ensure they understand the expectations and protocols of the workplace, including any assessment standards. It is important that the Victorian Government maintains its current investment in programs that promote WIL

opportunities, and that industry stakeholders and individual employers look for ways to expand their involvement in WIL opportunities.

2.2.1 Current WIL programs

The Victorian Government continues to invest in and build on pilot programs that promote WIL opportunities, such as the Global Victoria Intellect Program. This two-week program provides Victorian export businesses with an invaluable opportunity to gain market research intelligence from student teams at Victorian universities. The student teams are guided through a structured online market research process to generate beneficial insights and data that are relevant to the company.

The Digital Jobs, Digital Jobs for Manufacturing and SummerTech Live programs referenced in section 2.1.2 also incorporate WIL elements.

There is a range of programs that address target sectors and cohorts. For example, the Teach Rural pilot program supports pre-service teacher (PST) placements in regional and rural Victoria. The 2022-23 Victorian Budget included funding of \$2.6 million for DE to partner with Country Education Partnership to pilot a new Teach Rural program, to attract and support PSTs to undertake placements at rural and regional Victorian government schools. The program involves coordinating participating PSTs to undertake placements in groups, each located at a cluster of rural and regional schools. The program will provide participating PSTs with a suite of supports to facilitate the placements and welcome them into the local school and community. This includes placement accommodation, mentor teacher support, welcome packs and events, and cluster peer network or community engagement events. Addressing financial barriers and supporting PSTs to undertake placements at rural and regional schools as part of their teaching degree is key to building relationships between teachers of the future and rural and regional schools.

In Victoria's health sector, the Government is committed to providing more accessible pathways to address workforce needs, including support for clinical placements. This requires collaboration with peak bodies as well as universities.

Following significant disruption to clinical placements in 2020 from the COVID-19 pandemic, \$13.2 million over two years will be invested in the Boosting Our Health Workforce initiative to restore the health workforce pipeline through expanded clinical education and training capacity. A further \$270 million investment was announced to recruit and train nurses and midwives under the Making it Free to Study Nursing and Midwifery initiative.

A Clinical placement review is scheduled to commence in 2023 to consider reform opportunities to improve the funding, quantity, and quality of clinical placements. Recommendations of the Report relating to health care and clinical student placements will be considered under this review.

The Committee's recommendations regarding WIL will be further considered through a range of existing and planned programs, initiatives, and reviews aligned with specific priority workforce areas. For example, Action 3 of the VSP commits to 'Expand opportunities and approaches for students to put theory into practice during their course.' While this action focuses primarily on the TAFE and training system, there is opportunity to explore how this can be applied to the higher education sector through the VSP2. Existing government grant programs also provide an excellent vehicle to explore new and flexible models of WIL. The Government will continue to explore TAFE-university-industry collaborations to expand and 'mainstream' WIL, particularly in the regions and for disadvantaged cohorts.

2.3 Advocacy and information sharing

The Commonwealth Government has primary responsibility for policy settings, funding, and regulation of higher education in Australia. Several of the Report's recommendations support ongoing advocacy by the Victorian Government to the Commonwealth to drive reform, including improvements to higher education funding settings, initiatives to improve access and education and improved learning pathways to better connect the post-secondary education and training system. The Victorian Government supports these recommendations as they align with the Government's existing advocacy efforts and engagement with the higher education sector, including strengthening collaboration and partnerships between the sector and industry.

There are several Commonwealth Government reviews and consultations underway that provide opportunities for the Victorian Government to engage in advocacy and support for the sector, including:

- **Australian Universities Accord**, including a review of the Job-ready Graduates Package (final report due in December 2023).
- **Australian Research Council Review** (final report due by 31 March 2023).
- Consultation to inform the permanent arrangements of **Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA)** (consultation closes on 10 February 2023).
- **Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Review** (released in October 2019, a joint working group of senior officials from the education and skills portfolios across all jurisdictions was established to progress the recommendations from the Review). Please refer to section 3.3 below for further information.
- **National Microcredential Framework review** (published in March 2022). It is envisaged that the Framework will be reviewed 12 months following its implementation, noting no formal review has been announced to date). Please refer to section 4.4 below for further information.

These reviews provide opportunities for the Victorian Government to advocate for federal higher education policy, funding and regulatory settings that support Victoria's future economic and workforce needs and facilitate improved cooperation and collaboration between universities, industry, and the community. Further consideration will be given as to how the Report's recommendations can be incorporated through this work.

2.3.1 Australian Universities Accord

Since the Report was delivered, the Hon Jason Clare MP, Commonwealth Minister for Education, has announced a major review of Australia's higher education sector, known as the Australian Universities Accord. The Accord provides an opportunity for the Victorian Government to engage with the Commonwealth Government on key higher education issues impacting the State and advocate for favorable outcomes for Victoria. The Victorian Government is working to identify priority areas for engagement and advocacy in the Accord and will consider the recommendations of the Report as part of this process.

Engagement across Government and with universities will inform the development of these priorities and build upon the response to this review.

3 University collaboration with vocational education providers and local communities

The Committee recognised that, while there are examples of strong collaboration between the TAFE and Higher Education sectors, there is a need for greater collaboration to ensure that students can readily access both vocational and higher education and move between the sectors with greater ease to respond to local skills needs, particularly in regional areas.

The Government's establishment of the Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery (OTCD) as well as the Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) are crucial elements in enabling stronger collaboration and supporting increased pathways between the TAFE and university sectors in Victoria.

The creation of the OTCD provides greater opportunities for Government, universities, and industry to engage with Victorian TAFEs and dual sector institutions in a coordinated way, which can allow for effective responses to the future skills needs of the State as a whole, and more specifically in regional communities.

3.1 Structured collaboration of TAFEs and universities

The VSA's remit includes fostering collaboration across Victoria's education sectors. The VSA will work with all post-compulsory education providers to map career pathways, provide adaptable skills development opportunities, and clear, flexible entry points for all learners. It will bring this commitment into its work on the Government's priority sectors, ensuring that universities are engaged as part of the VSA's systemic approach to bringing together industry, education providers and other stakeholders with a shared commitment to meeting skills needs.

The establishment of JSA presents the opportunity for a collaborative approach to skills policy and implementation across tertiary education, and the VSA will continue to build strong connections and linkages with the JSA, particularly around the sharing of data and intelligence and industry connections to maximise these opportunities. In 2023, JSA will begin its role in workforce planning, including the scope of the higher education and VET sector to provide a pipeline of trained workers to address employment needs. This cross-sectoral approach to workforce supply will integrate the efforts of the higher education and VET sectors in industries to which they both contribute, such as nursing.

3.2 University-TAFE partnerships hybrid or dual qualifications

Dual sector institutions are a key feature of the Victorian higher education landscape, and opportunity exists to utilise dual sector universities for valuable insights into pathways, collaborations, and other interactions between the vocational and higher education sectors, for wider application across other university and TAFE partnerships.

There are a number of high-profile partnerships between dual sector universities and industry focused on the development of a higher apprenticeship model that integrates components of the higher education and VET sectors. These projects are under development with the aim of taking enrolments from 2024. Other opportunities and further trialing of this approach across other industry sectors and occupations should also be explored.

Development of hybrid qualifications could be considered through current grant programs, such as the Workforce Training Innovation Fund (WTIF) and the Workforce Skill Sets Fund, targeting Victorian Government strategic priorities. The WTIF is designed to be led by TAFEs in collaboration with industry

and potentially universities. While examples currently exist, TAFE-University collaborations will be further elevated as an objective of the program.

3.3 Advocacy to the Commonwealth Government

As outlined at section 2.3.1, the Commonwealth Government's University Accord process provides the opportunity to strengthen the alignment and connectivity between the higher education and VET sectors, including to strengthen pathways and collaboration. Key areas of focus could include the nexus between funding, course accreditation, the AQF, regulation, and speed to market.

The Final Report of the AQF Review was delivered in October 2019. Following this, a joint working group of senior officials from the education and skills portfolios across all jurisdictions was established to progress the recommendations. This joint working group is considering how the review's recommendations can facilitate more structured collaboration between VET and higher education and expects to progress proposals during 2023.

In relation to improving the connection between universities, TAFE and training providers, and local communities, the agenda needs to move beyond discussions about the 'pathways between sectors,' where the narrative is typically about moving from the vocational sector to the higher education sector (or vice versa) to deliver the desired educational attainment and skills relevance. This requires 'two doors' into education, adding cost, complexity, and disincentives for participants. Instead, the focus should shift to greater integration between vocational and higher education, with the occupation as a destination, and both sectors collaborating on the course development and delivery to reach the destination. This should also make it easier for employers and students, as it is only one door to open to achieve the skills and education needed for the desired occupational outcome.

Smoother pathways between higher education and VET will continue to be an important reform objective for the tertiary system. However, there needs to be a greater focus on the purpose of these pathways, which is about people 'rounding out' their skills and experiences through different forms of education. Such reframing will help avoid the sequential nature of the current narrative which often positions TAFE as a gateway to higher education, but rarely TAFE as way for students to add practical skills and relevance to improve their employability and career options.

The Victorian Government has developed higher apprenticeships (refer to section 3.2) to tie together employer needs, university partners, learners, and place-based employment opportunities. Such pilots provide a useful model for testing and expanding the concept.

4 Learning support and skills planning in priority employment areas

The Committee acknowledged that universities alleviate forecasted skill shortages by increasing enrolments in priority sector courses and better informing students about the skillsets required in different sectors to help them graduate and prepare for their careers. The Report outlines how universities can support and encourage students to study or upskill in priority employment areas to address skills shortages, by increasing access and retention in priority skills areas. Industry participation was identified as a vital component to inform students of the diverse roles available across diverse sectors.

The VSA engages with industry sectors and can facilitate connections between universities and industry to develop new course offerings, creating or improving pathways for students as well as increasing universities' understanding of the emerging requirements of industries. For example, the VSA can connect universities to its network of 10 Industry Advisory Groups (IAGs), which provide advice on skills

matters and through which workforce development priorities can be communicated back to industries. This form of engagement evolves in response to industry changes, but also seeks to engage proactively with industry leaders to ascertain the nature of future skills and workforce needs.

The VSA also has staff who are engaged in Victoria's regions, who work alongside colleagues from DJSIR to explore localised skills-based solutions with local industry, employers, and local education providers. The VSA can facilitate connections at a local level where there is a specific opportunity identified by universities or an industry partner needing higher education-qualified workers.

4.1 Victorian Skills Plan

The first Victorian Skills Plan (VSP), published by the VSA in August 2022, is the focal point for the Victorian Government's engagement and collaboration on skills matters, responding to the needs of government, industry, students, and the education sectors. The Plan sets a new era for skills and presents a road map for the provision of training and skills across Victoria aligned to current and future job needs. It has been informed by significant and wide-ranging consultation, including with universities. It connects areas of government investment including in early childhood, Victoria's Big Build, digital skills, and the care economy, to current and future skill needs. It includes an action plan to respond to challenges and opportunities, providing advice to industry, post-secondary education providers and government to support planning and for economic growth.

The VSA has commenced planning for the development and delivery of the second Victorian Skills Plan (VSP2), due for release in late 2023.

Insights from the first VSP indicate that half of Victoria's forecast employment growth will be met by university-qualified workers. The consultation program will incorporate bespoke consultation with the higher education sector to inform the content of VSP2. This enhanced consultation approach clearly articulates the Victorian Government's expectation that universities are active contributors to meeting Victoria's future workforce needs.

4.2 Information and data sharing

The Report further notes opportunities for government to facilitate high quality and timely data collection regarding the supply and demand for skills. The Victorian Government, through the VSA, continues to consider opportunities for direct collaboration with the university sector about data sharing mechanisms and the timeliness of data provision. The higher education sector must support the Victorian Government by improving the transparency and timeliness of data provision, including student enrolments and completion data and particularly in those areas of priority workforce demand. This would help to overcome the limitations of the current arrangement, where higher education data is provided directly to the Commonwealth Department of Education with a significant time delay before it is published.

The VSA has expertise in skills forecasting and publishes best practice data products and insights to support government, industry, and post-secondary education provider to make informed decisions in planning and provision.

The priorities and actions identified in the VSP are informed by extensive evidence on the state of the Victorian economy. The VSA has published a range of dashboards and analysis and insights reports that provide detailed data on employment and occupation demand by industries and regions. These products are provided to enable planning by government, industries, and post-secondary education providers.

While the VSA's data and insights products are publicly available, the VSA has committed to provide more targeted distribution of information to nominated university representatives.

4.3 Microcredentials Framework

The Microcredentials Framework was published by the former Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills and Employment in March 2022 in response to the critique of microcredentials. It is understood that the Framework will be reviewed 12 months after its implementation. This review will enable the Commonwealth Government to assess and refine the Framework. As mentioned above, there is an opportunity for the Victorian Government to engage in this review to support the education sector to address identified issues with microcredentials.

Microcredentials are an important mechanism to support workers to rapidly re-skill to meet workforce needs, particularly where an industry sector (e.g., energy) is undergoing major transformation and job dislocation. Revisions to the Framework will provide the Victorian Government with the opportunity to engage with higher education providers and industry to advocate for common standards and consistency in microcredentials, and to ensure that the Framework meets the standards needed by Victorian industry.

4.4 Priority sectors

The Report explores skill imbalances and workforce shortages in priority sectors, outlines the role of universities in addressing these, and offers tailored initiatives to respond to local workforce shortages and priorities. This includes a particular focus on the need for improvements and enhancements in WIL and learning pathways to produce more work-ready graduates more quickly.

The Report's recommendations align with the Government's priorities for future-proofing key workforces and forward planning.

The VSA, through the VSP, has committed to actions on the clean, care and digital economies, as well as to developing innovative solutions to support future skills development. As the detailed work on these priorities and actions progresses, universities will be engaged in the development of solutions. This engagement will not only harness educational outcomes, but also university research capabilities. As demonstrated by Victoria University's "Skills and Jobs for Melbourne's West" report (funded through VHESIF), universities can provide an evidence base for policies and interventions that engage employers and employees for mutual social and economic benefit.

There is also potential for national workforce planning arising from JSA to draw upon the pipeline of graduates from both universities and training providers.

Further, universities' role as anchor-points in precincts and the regions, including their role in major projects such as Commonwealth Games delivery and Victoria's Big Build, can be further expanded. Most priority precincts have a university presence, and the Victorian Government will actively engage with them to contribute to the social amenity (for example through public access to facilities), as well as to meeting workforce requirements. The focus can be sharpened on initiatives to improve access and participation in higher education among under-represented and disadvantaged cohorts. Initiatives such as Victoria University's Stronger Communities Hub (also funded under VHESIF), demonstrate how universities can combine research and teaching expertise to improve health, well-being, and resilience at both the individual and community level.

5 Summary of actions

The Victorian Government is committed to working with Victoria's universities and industry partners to deliver Victoria's future workforce and skills needs. While there is more work to be done, the future work priorities for DJSIR will harness the momentum of work to date and will be informed by the Committee's Report.

The Victorian Government, through the actions and commitments outlined in this response, will continue to work with universities and industry to deliver Victoria's future workforce and skills needs. The Victorian Government will draw on the Committee's findings to progress initiatives that support the recommendations.

Key actions for 2023 include:

- Strengthen a coordinated approach across government to facilitate closer engagement between government, universities, the tertiary education sector, and industry. This co-ordination will ensure that universities are held accountable as partners delivering on social and economic priorities for Victoria.
- Partnership Agreements between the Victorian Government and Victorian universities revisited in 2023 with a renewed emphasis on initiatives to enhance collaboration and the industry relevance of course offerings, including through partnerships with TAFEs. Partnerships to make a stronger commitment to two-way sharing of information to support policy and planning.
- Review current grant program settings and options to prioritise new and flexible models of WIL, with a focus on TAFE-university-industry collaborations to expand and 'mainstream' WIL and improve access and outcomes for regions and under-represented cohorts.
- Facilitate consultation between industry peak bodies and universities to explore opportunities for work placements and an appropriate framework to ensure high quality, relevant, and safe learning, training, and work experiences for students.
- Accelerate review of clinical placements to consider reform opportunities to improve the funding, quantity, and quality of clinical placements.
- In consultation with universities, advocate through the Universities Accord process with consideration given to the recommendations identified in the Committee's Report.
- Prioritise development of hybrid or dual qualifications in grant programs, such as the WTIF and the Workforce Skill Sets Fund, targeting Victorian Government strategic priorities, industries, regions, and cohorts.
- Consult closely with the university sector on the VSP2 to clearly articulate the Victorian Government's expectation that universities are active contributors to meeting Victoria's future workforce needs.
- Facilitate sharing and adoption of innovative approaches to course design and delivery across Victoria to ensure the benefits of Government funded investment are accessible to all providers and adopted and scaled up when appropriate to do so.
- Work with all post-compulsory education providers to map career pathways, provide adaptable skills development opportunities and clear, flexible entry points for all learners.