



The Hon Stuart Robert MP
Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business

MEDIA RELEASE

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Official data confirms Australian apprenticeships continue to surge

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) has released the *Australian vocational education and training statistics: apprentices and trainees 2021, June quarter* which confirms the ongoing strength of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and TAFE system under the Morrison Government.

NCVER has found apprentice and trainee numbers continue to surge across Australia, up 27 per cent over the past year. NCVER also found annual apprentice and trainee commencements are at their highest level since 2014 with numbers increasing in all states and territories and across nearly all industry sectors.

The official update found there were 341,385 apprentices and trainees in-training as at 30 June 2021, an increase of 27.5 per cent from the same period a year prior. It found trade occupations increased by 18.2 per cent, to 214,970 and non-trade occupations increased by 47.4 per cent, to 126,410. There was a 59.5 per cent rise in commencements and completions were up by more than 21 per cent.

Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business, Stuart Robert, said it once again confirmed the Australian skills sector and TAFEs were thriving under the Morrison Government.

‘Our policies and record funding, \$7.1 billion in 2021 alone, put Australians at the front of the queue—whether that is starting an apprenticeship, mastering an in-demand skill or getting into a job,’ Minister Robert said.

‘We are seeing results. We start 2022 with almost half a million job-ready Australians skilling up or skilled up with well over 270,000 JobTrainer enrolments and the highest level of trade apprentices on record with over 220,000 in training.’

The current surge in apprenticeships contrasts with the experience of the final year of the former Labor Government, which according to official NCVER data saw the number of apprentices and trainees in-training collapse by 22 per cent, or 111,300 from June 2012 to June 2013. This was as a direct result of policy changes introduced by the Gillard Labor Government in 2012 aimed at addressing widespread rorting of incentive payments to employers, which led to the sharp decline in traineeships witnessed from 2013.

Minister Robert called on Federal Labor to join their State counterparts in celebrating the strength of the Australian skills system.

‘Our skills system is in a renaissance, not in crisis, the only people talking down TAFE in Australia seems to be Anthony Albanese and Richard Marles, it is time they stopped spouting ‘alternative facts’ on apprentices in Australia and came back to reality,’ Minister Robert said.

‘It is bad enough that Labor talk down our TAFEs but more concerning is their anaemic skills platform, which should send a chill down the spine of every Registered Training Organisation in the country—our RTOs stand to lose everything under Labor’s proposed cuts.’

Background:

The update has been found to be in line with more contemporary Departmental program data which demonstrates in-training trade apprentices hit around 220,000 in 2021, the highest on record.

Table 1: Apprentices and trainees in-training by State and Territory and trade status, as at 30 June 2021 (NCVER data)

	Total (2020 comparison)	Trade	Non-trade
Total	341,385 (up 27.5%)	214,970	126,410
New South Wales	106,740 (up 25.5%)	66,225	40,515
Victoria	76,620 (up 25.4%)	54,325	22,295
Queensland	74,465 (up 30.8%)	46,490	27,980
South Australia	23,410 (up 30.5%)	13,695	9,715
Western Australia	38,400 (up 36%)	22,745	15,655
Tasmania	10,845 (up 23.4%)	6,000	4,850
Northern Territory	3,750 (up 17.3%)	2,005	1,750
Australian Capital Territory	7,145 (up 10.6%)	3,485	3,655

Note: Numbers have been rounded to the nearest five, as such totals may differ from the sum of commencements.

Table 2: Apprentices and trainee commencements in the 12 months ending 30 June 2021 (NCVER data)

	Commencements	Change from the previous 12 months (%)
Total	214,930	Up 59.5%
New South Wales	62,800	Up 56.2%
Victoria	43,730	Up 51.5%
Queensland	52,785	Up 63.4%
South Australia	13,965	Up 60.2%
Western Australia	26,660	Up 81.2%
Tasmania	7,105	Up 70.2%
Northern Territory	2,495	Up 45.4%
Australian Capital Territory	5,390	Up 32.1%

Note: Numbers have been rounded to the nearest five, as such totals may differ from the sum of commencements.

The main contributors to the increase in trade commencements were construction (up 9,865 or 52.9 per cent) and automotive and engineering trades (up 5,860 or 36.1 per cent).

For non-trade commencements, clerical and administrative workers (up by 17,355 or 113.3 per cent), and community and personal service workers (up 10,350 or 43.5 per cent) had the largest increases.

The industries with the highest increases in commencements were Construction (up 18,495 or 57.3 per cent), Accommodation (up 12,125 or 88.6 per cent), Health Care and Social Assistance (up 8,270 or 71.9 per cent), and Manufacturing (up 7,000 or 65.0 per cent).

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