





Acknowledgment of Country

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development acknowledges that it stands on Country which always was and always will be Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging. We are committed to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work.

NSW Primary Industries Workforce Strategy 2025–2030

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Minister's foreword



The Hon Tara Moriarty, MLC

*Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Regional NSW
Minister for Western NSW*

I am pleased to present the NSW Primary Industries Workforce Strategy 2025–2030 – our plan to generate outcomes that support and build the workforce necessary for delivering profitable, sustainable, and innovative agriculture, forestry and fishing industries in NSW now and into the future. In 2024–25, there were more than 80,000 people directly employed in agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors across NSW. An additional 74,000 were employed indirectly in related downstream processing industries. The NSW Government remains committed to supporting the growth of the agriculture, fisheries and forestry workforce, and will continue to work with industry and stakeholders on opportunities to build on and train our primary industries workforce for the future.

The development of the Strategy is a NSW Government election commitment and an outcome of the NSW Agriculture Workforce Roundtable held in September 2023. The Strategy is a result of consultation across industry, government, education and training providers, researchers and members of the public.

The Strategy focuses on delivering a strong, productive primary industries sector underpinned by a capable, sustainable and diverse workforce with access to skills development and employment opportunities and a supportive, safe work environment.

It outlines three key priority areas and recommends a pathway to deliver NSW primary industries workforce outcomes by clearly articulating key actions to guide prioritisation, decision-making and investment by government and stakeholders. The Strategy also includes NSW Government initiatives that address workforce challenges, and which pursue opportunities for a strong and productive primary industries sector.

The NSW Government looks forward to continuing close collaboration and consultation with industry and stakeholders to build on these actions and further develop plans, initiatives and programs that contribute to, and deliver, the shared vision and outcomes.

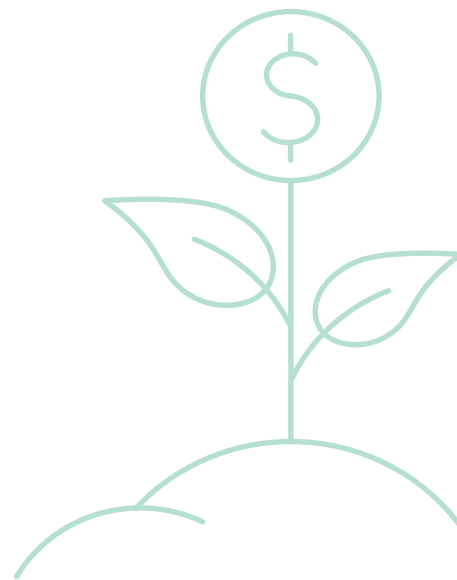
Introduction

NSW primary industries contribute significantly to society and the economy. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries have been significant contributors to the development of communities and regions across the state. In 2024–2025, these three sectors reached a record \$25.5 billion in gross value production and \$12.8 billion in export earnings, reported by the annual NSW Primary Industries Performance & Data Insights.

The primary industries workforce is a key component of the food supply chain. Having ‘the right skills in the right locations at the right time’, will ensure food can be produced, manufactured and distributed effectively in Australia.¹

Attraction and retention of a workforce across primary industries is complex, influenced by factors such as seasonal demand and supply chains, an ageing workforce, technological changes, infrastructure and services and policy and legislative settings, including migration and labour schemes. It is important that government at all levels and industry work together through a coordinated and collaborative approach to help address these complexities.

This Strategy is a framework through which the NSW Government, industry and other stakeholders (such as education and training providers, researchers, and the wider community including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) can collaborate to develop action plans, initiatives and programs that address workforce challenges and leverage opportunities for a strong and productive primary industries sector. The Strategy complements and builds upon the existing government-funded programs and initiatives to strengthen the primary industries workforce.



In 2024–2025,
NSW primary industries
contributed
\$25.5 billion
in gross value of production
to the NSW economy.²



¹ Jobs and Skills Australia report: <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/publications/essential-ingredient-food-supply-chain-workforce>

² NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (NSW DPIRD) PDI webpage – <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/publications/pdi>

Factors impacting the primary industries workforce²

Climate change implications for production and workforce



Environmental regulations and compliance requirements



Biosecurity risks and need for increased capability



Utilisation of technology and data



Diversification of business activity and production processes



Workplace health and safety within high-risk industries



Social licence and community expectations



Farm size and consolidation



Markets and trade driving production trends and demand



Legal and regulatory requirements relating to production



² Queensland Agriculture Industry Workforce Plan 2022-2027 (2022), p.17

Vision for the NSW primary industries workforce

The Strategy focuses on a shared vision which has been developed by government in consultation with industry and stakeholders:

Vision:

‘A strong, productive primary industries sector underpinned by a capable, sustainable and diverse workforce with access to skills development and employment opportunities, and supportive, safe work environments.’



In this vision:

- **‘strong, productive primary industries’** refers to a sector that sustainably uses natural resources, Agtech and innovation to produce quality Australian food, fibre and forestry products, to maximise outcomes for the agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries, the communities they support and the resources they rely on.
- **‘capable, sustainable and diverse workforce with access to skills development and employment opportunities’** refers to an innovative, adaptable and dynamic workforce, equipped with the right skills and knowledge to drive modern and progressive agricultural systems.
- **‘supportive, safe work environments’** refers to a work environment that protects and supports the health and safety of its workers.

The vision is underpinned by three key priority areas for government, industry and stakeholders to concentrate their actions:



Priority Area 1:

Improving business management, adaptability and innovation



Priority Area 2:

Fostering a diverse workforce that is accessible across NSW



Priority Area 3:

Building on careers and capabilities in primary industries

Government, industry and stakeholders must work together to deliver the shared vision and priority actions of this Strategy.

The role of government is to ensure that appropriate regulatory and policy settings are in place to support a thriving primary industries workforce. Key amongst these settings are the workplace laws relating to employment conditions and work health and safety standards, education curriculums and training, and appropriate and strategic regional development opportunities.

Government also:

- considers primary industries workforce needs in broader state and national policy and decision making, particularly in relation to cost of living, accommodation and housing, transport, education, and migration
- facilitates close and ongoing collaboration and consultation with industry and key stakeholders, including initiatives that are industry-funded or led
- monitors and considers Commonwealth initiatives and findings from relevant Parliamentary inquiries, reviews and reports, in relation to primary industries workforce
- identifies opportunities, including funding opportunities, for programs and initiatives to deliver actions and outcomes.

Industry, including its businesses and representative bodies, can drive best practice and facilitate shared learning. Industry leads in setting the future direction of NSW's primary industries sector, and in targeting the workforce needed to reach those goals.

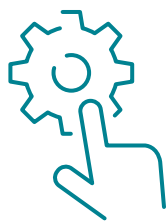
Collectively, government and industry have the responsibility to work together and with stakeholders, to implement programs and projects that deliver the outcomes of this Strategy.

NSW Primary Industries Workforce Strategy 2025–2030

Vision:

‘A strong, productive primary industries sector underpinned by a capable, sustainable and diverse workforce with access to skills development and employment opportunities, and supportive, safe work environments.’

		
Priority Area 1:	Priority Area 2:	Priority Area 3:
Improving business management, adaptability and innovation	Fostering a diverse workforce that is accessible across NSW	Building on careers and capabilities in primary industries
OUTCOME 1.1 Business practices	OUTCOME 2.1 An innovative, inclusive and diverse workforce	OUTCOME 3.1 Primary Industries in schools
Best practice in people management, industrial relations, financial and digital capability, leadership and work health and safety is prioritised to support business growth, employee success and a sustainable workforce.	The primary industries workforce supports participation of employees from diverse backgrounds and demographics.	School students see primary industries as a viable career pathway that offers a diverse range of opportunities.
OUTCOME 1.2 Employment incentives	OUTCOME 2.2 Regional workforce solutions	OUTCOME 3.2 Primary industry careers and pathways
Primary industry businesses increase their capability to attract and retain employees.	There is regional and local capacity and capability to meet the immediate and future primary industries workforce needs.	Careers and employment opportunities in primary industries are widely acknowledged and understood.
OUTCOME 1.3 Technology and innovation	OUTCOME 2.3 Regional attraction, liveability and resilience	OUTCOME 3.3 Qualifications and skilling
Increased adoption of new technologies is supported and complemented by the development of an appropriately skilled workforce.	There is increased participation in primary industries through establishing community networks and addressing existing challenges to improve regional liveability.	Flexible, responsive and engaging education and training pathways are available to support a capable and resilient primary industries workforce.



Priority Area 1:

Improving business management, adaptability and innovation

Key challenges include:

- Workplace health and safety risks
- Attraction, development and retention of employees
- Adoption of new technology in business management

Outcomes and actions to address challenges

OUTCOME 1.1

Business practices

Best practice in people management, industrial relations, financial and digital capability, leadership and work, health and safety is prioritised to support business growth, employee success and a sustainable workforce.

ACTIONS

1.1 (a) Build capability in business planning and management practices through training, resources and tools, including culturally appropriate methods for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

1.1 (b) Explore practical and innovative ways to raise the profile of safety and reduce serious incident rates.

OUTCOME 1.2

Employment incentives

Primary industry businesses increase their capability to attract and retain employees.

ACTIONS

1.2 (a) Build and share initiatives and approaches for attracting and retaining employees and facilitating seasonal workforce mobility, including culturally appropriate initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

1.2 (b) Strengthen and promote the primary industries as a sector with good employment conditions and benefits.

OUTCOME 1.3

Technology and innovation

Increased adoption of new technologies is supported and complemented by the development of an appropriately skilled workforce.

ACTIONS

1.3 (a) Support the development and adoption of technology by primary industry businesses that will improve business management.

1.3 (b) Ensure there is essential planning for the future of the workforce with relevant technology-based skills and training.

Examples of initiatives to improve business management, adaptability and innovation:

The **Farm Business Resilience Program** provides support and empowers farmers to transform their businesses into models of resilience and future success through personalised coaching, workshops, digital learning and invaluable peer insights case studies. Phase II of this program aims to strengthen agribusiness with a focus on business planning and capacity-building activities, business coaching, and farm performance and monitoring.

The **Young Farmer Business Program** empowers next generation of farmers by providing them with necessary tools and guidance to achieve their business goals.

The **Business Concierge Service** supports businesses, including primary industries business, by providing ongoing one-on-one guidance at every stage of the business journey, including navigating government regulations and processes, applying for licences and permits, selling to government, accessing support to expand locally and overseas, connecting with mental health support, and disaster recovery assistance.

The **Business Concierge Service** as well as **SafeWork NSW** Initiatives include technical, business, management and support services to support primary industries businesses make their businesses safe.

The **SafeWork NSW Small Business Rebate** provides up to \$1,000 to eligible small businesses and sole traders to help cover the cost of purchasing approved safety equipment and solutions. The rebate aims to support businesses to improve workplace health and safety, reduce risks and prevent incidents.

SafeWork NSW delivers a range of targeted industry events, including SafeWork NSW's Smart Farms, Safe Futures events which showcase how technology and innovation can be used to improve both farm safety and productivity. These events provide practical demonstrations, expert insights, and opportunities for engagement with farmers, suppliers, and industry experts.

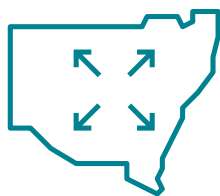
The **Essential Worker Attraction Campaign** attracts and retains essential workers in regional NSW. The program consists of the Make the Move advertising campaign, and The Welcome Experience. The Make the Move (MtM) campaign is a 3-year advertising campaign the targets Sydney-based essential workers, promoting the lifestyle benefits of living in regional NSW. The Welcome Experience is a local concierge service that supports essential workers who are moving to regional NSW by helping them find housing and partner employment, and build social connections that support long term retention.

Farms of the Future is focused on enhancing digital skills in farming, promoting the use of Internet of Things (IoT) devices to boost productivity and sustainability.

The **NSW Digital Skills and Workforce Compact 2023-2030** focuses on addressing digital skills and workforce needs.

The **Small Business Month collaboration partner program** focuses on building capability, skills, networking, and access to free services.

The **Small Business Commission** offers dispute resolution for leasing disputes, including business to business and business to government. The Commission is also exploring avenues to upskill small businesses, including primary industry businesses, in cyber security resilience and safe adoption of technologies.



Priority Area 2:

Fostering a diverse workforce that is accessible across NSW

Key challenges include:

- Complex policy environment that requires government at all levels, to deliver solutions in partnership with industry
- Low participation of key sectors of society such as women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and challenges with an ageing workforce
- The need to address regional-specific conditions to support and empower regional NSW economies.
- Social licence and community expectations

Outcomes and actions to address challenges

OUTCOME 2.1

An innovative, inclusive and diverse workforce

The primary industries workforce supports participation of employees from diverse backgrounds and demographics.

ACTIONS

2.1 (a) Foster a diverse workforce, including creating innovative solutions, addressing barriers and increasing participation of key sectors.

2.1 (b) Work with communities and peak organisations to support and enhance business, and leadership and career pathways in partnership with Aboriginal Peoples in primary industries.

OUTCOME 2.2

Regional workforce solutions

There is regional and local capacity and capability to meet the immediate and future primary industries workforce needs.

ACTIONS

2.2 (a) Improve the availability of data and information to build understanding of and develop solutions to address local and regional workforce challenges.

2.2 (b) Develop regional initiatives, approaches, and partnerships to attract, develop and retain a local and regional workforce.

OUTCOME 2.3

Regional attraction, liveability and resilience

There is increased participation in primary industries through establishing community networks and addressing existing challenges to improve regional liveability.

ACTIONS

2.3 (a) Promote and build awareness of the opportunities of a career in primary industries and living, working and doing business in the regions.

2.3 (b) Represent primary industries workforce needs in policy and decision making.

Examples of initiatives to foster a diverse workforce that is accessible across NSW:

NSW First shares practical insights for businesses via face-to-face workshops, webinars and online resources to help visitor economy businesses to develop, promote and sell world-class experiences.

Women NSW provides grants and funding for a range of programs to improve employment outcomes and the quality of life for women in regional, rural and remote communities.

The **Rural Women's Network (RWN)** aims to link women in regional and rural NSW to information and services and create networking opportunities. Key actions for the RWN include facilitating the annual Rural Women's Gathering, the Hidden Treasure Honour Roll, the Rural Women's Resource and supporting the AgriFutures national Rural Women's Award. The Rural Women's Network is 33 years old and constantly evolving to meet the needs of modern women living in rural, regional and remote NSW including women in agriculture, small business owners, young women, Aboriginal women and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women.

The **Aboriginal Fisheries Business Development Program** is a partnership between the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), the Aboriginal Fishing Advisory Council, the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation, the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council to support the development of up to three new, economically viable commercial fishing, aquaculture, seafood processing or tourism related businesses that are owned and managed by Aboriginal community organisations/ entities or Aboriginal community owned and run businesses in NSW.

Tocal College delivers full and part qualifications in Conservation and Ecosystem Management with a focus on Indigenous Land Management including cultural burning. Tocal also delivers agricultural and skills training through the Aboriginal Rural Training Program (30+ years) in rural and remote areas of NSW.

NSW Roadmap for Aboriginal Business Growth is a whole of government approach that provides support for Aboriginal businesses to start up, scale up and skill up.

The **Barranggirra-Skilling for Employment** provides end to end support for Aboriginal students to improve retention and completion of training, and employment outcomes.

The **Aboriginal Fishing Trust Fund** provides grants and loans for the enhancement, maintenance and protection of Aboriginal cultural fishing as well as for Aboriginal communities to develop businesses associated with fisheries resources throughout NSW.

The **NSW Marine Estate Management Strategy 2018–2028** Initiative 4 includes an aim to increase the economic opportunities and employment for Aboriginal people, as well as increase their ownership and active involvement in managing the NSW marine estate to reduce threats and risks to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

DPIRD is exploring opportunities to:

- improve data and information availability through the **DPIRD's Performance, Data and Insights** to address local and regional workforce challenges.
 - support the primary industries workforce through the **Regional Development Trust** – investments from the Trust are designed to support the key focus areas of sustainable regional industries, Aboriginal economic development and enterprise, community connection and capacity building, and improving regional service delivery.
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The **Interstate Worker Research Project** identifies interstate markets of skilled workers (including agricultural workers and veterinarians) and determines motivations, perceptions and barriers to relocating to regional NSW to inform targeted attraction initiatives.

The **Government Veterinary Diagnostic Services Workforce Assessment** makes an assessment of veterinary workforce capacity to respond to emergency animal disease outbreaks and meet projected future demands for diagnostic services.

The **Temporary and Seasonal Workers' Accommodation Toolkit** provides clear and practical guidance to regional councils on managing spikes in housing demand from seasonal and temporary workers exhibition.

The **Local Land Services Veterinary Attraction & Retention Program** is a targeted veterinary workforce attraction and retention program focused on enhancing the brand of LLS, developing a comprehensive employer value proposition, and improving visibility and appeal of advertised roles.

The **Welcome Experience** is a free service supporting essential workers (such as veterinarians and their families) who are considering applying for or have accepted a job in regional NSW. 'Local Connectors' can assist with relocation and help vets settle into the community by finding suitable accommodation, childcare, health care, transport, education and social connections.

The **NSW Government also engages with the Australian Government on a range of policy areas** important to primary industries workforce, including migration policy, skills and education, and housing.



Priority Area 3:

Building on careers and capabilities in primary industries

Key challenges include:

- Community perception of primary industries sector
- Access to targeted and quality education and training pathways, including access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific training options
- Diverse training options to meet skills and qualifications needs

Outcomes and actions to address challenges

OUTCOME 3.1

Primary Industries in schools

School students see primary industries as a viable career pathway that offers a diverse range of opportunities.

ACTIONS

3.1 (a) Continue to grow the opportunities to include primary industries within the school curriculum and experiential learning opportunities.

3.1 (b) Develop and promote resources for educators and careers advisors.

OUTCOME 3.2

Primary industry careers and pathways

Careers and employment opportunities in primary industries are widely acknowledged and understood.

ACTIONS

3.2 (a) Promote and showcase the existing and emerging career opportunities and pathways, as well as the rise of 'modern' primary industries and non-traditional careers (such as working with agricultural industries and universities to support careers in agricultural science, engineering and economics) with a focus on diversity and inclusion through representation.

3.2 (b) Support the professional development and career progression of students, graduates and new entrants through advisory and guidance resources and mentorship opportunities, including in-region mentorship opportunities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific opportunities and support.

OUTCOME 3.3

Qualifications and skilling

Flexible, responsive and engaging education and training pathways are available to support a capable and resilient primary industries workforce, including the teacher workforce.

ACTIONS

3.3 (a) Provide diverse forms of education and training that are accessible and clearly linked to skill development, career progression and specialisation (including tertiary education, traineeships, apprenticeships and stackable micro-credentials) with a focus on improving course retention and completion rates.

3.3 (b) Maintain relationships between government, training organisations and industry to ensure that education and training is responsive to industry needs and priorities now and into the future, including technology and digital capabilities.

Examples of initiatives to build on careers and capabilities in primary industries:

Secondary school students have access to a range of **Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathways** that support this Strategy. The range of programs available help students gain practical skills and industry-recognised qualifications across a wide range of occupations through paid employment. This also includes providing early school leavers (under the age of 17) the support to transition from school to study at TAFE NSW. The NSW Government also delivers a range of “Employment Ready” programs to support students looking for employment in the agriculture industry including shearing schools and Farm Vehicle Safety.

The **Educational Pathways Program** aims to improve education and career outcomes for young people by introducing NSW public high schools students to a range of vocational training and employment pathways.

The **Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment (OCHRE) Opportunity Hubs** provide Aboriginal young people with the confidence and knowledge to follow a supported pathway between primary and secondary school and onto further education and/or employment.

The **Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP) program** connects employers with secondary schools, providing students the opportunity to engage directly with industry to explore different career paths or transition into work, apprenticeships and traineeships or further study.

The **Farms of the Future – AgTech Education program** is committed to helping farmers embrace technology in agriculture by equipping them with the knowledge and tools to identify Agtech and connectivity solutions that fit their specific needs.

Launch your Career promotes career pathways in agriculture (including AgTech) and shows students the broad range of career pathways available.

The **AgSkilled 3.0 program** provides industry-specific training opportunities across the agricultural workforce. Besides other outcomes, the program helps producers attract and retain a productive workforce, support career entry pathways and progression, and increase capacity to adopt new technologies in farming practices.

As a specialised training provider for rural industries, **Tocal College** offers quality training to both new industry entrants and to support the upskilling of existing workers to improve workforce safety, productivity and agribusiness skills. Current and future students are offered a range of face to face, online and blended training products to help students prepare for careers across a range of agriculture and land management occupations.

The **Smart and Skilled** program provides fee-free subsidised training in priority skill areas as well as advice and assistance on vocational training pathways, and apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The **On Farm Carbon Advice** project provides farmers with a range of education and training products to increase awareness of impacts of a changing climate, global action and their meaning for Australian agriculture, agricultural emissions, how to estimate emissions on farm, and what emissions reduction and carbon sequestration strategies are available.

Youth Development Scholarships delivered by the NSW Government assist young people living in social housing and Out-of-Home Care who are enrolled in education or training. The program provides \$1,000 to offset school-related expenses and access secondary support services. It targets high school students in Years 10, 11, and 12 or equivalent TAFE levels. Continued funding is available for recipients who remain in education and social housing.

