

**Submission by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation**

# **ANMF Submission to Jobs and Skills Australia on the Jobs and Skills Roadmap for Regional Australia – Phase 1 Consultation**

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Nursing &  
Midwifery  
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## Introduction

1. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) is Australia's largest national union and professional nursing and midwifery organisation. In collaboration with the ANMF's eight state and territory branches, we represent the professional, industrial and political interests of more than 345,000 nurses, midwives and care-workers across the country.
2. Our members work in the public and private health, aged care and disability sectors across a wide variety of urban, rural and remote locations. We work with them to improve their ability to deliver safe and best practice care in each and every one of these settings, fulfil their professional goals and achieve a healthy work/life balance.
3. Our strong and growing membership and integrated role as both a trade union and professional organisation provides us with a complete understanding of all aspects of the nursing and midwifery professions and see us uniquely placed to defend and advance our professions.
4. Through our work with members, we aim to strengthen the contribution of nursing and midwifery to improving Australia's health and aged care systems, and the health of our national and global communities.
5. The ANMF thanks Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Jobs and Skills Roadmap for Regional Australia – Phase 1 Consultation.

## Guiding Questions

To what extent do the underpinning vision principles of the Roadmap provide a comprehensive vision for the jobs and skills system in Regional Australia? Are these vision principles a useful framework to help consider the jobs and skills system? Do they support an appropriate consideration of the jobs and skills system for all groups of people?

6. While the underpinning vision principles of the Roadmap provide a strong foundation, they currently fall short in addressing equity and inclusion. The Roadmap aspires to be universally applicable across people, regions, industries and employers, however, the articulation of the principles gives insufficient attention to how outcomes vary by gender, ethnicity, disability, age and other intersecting factors. While, acknowledging that Phase 2 will involve greater attention to



intersectionality, informed by the Gender Economic Equality Study and ongoing work to better understand the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, people with disability, older workers, women, and other key groups, which is a welcome commitment, deferring this to Phase 2 risks embedding inequities in the design and implementation of reforms. Intersectional analysis should be embedded across all vision principles from the outset, supported by measurable indicators to assess fairness of outcomes and drawing on best-practice regional models such as targeted programs for First Nations communities. Importantly, the co-design processes in Phase 2 must include community members from diverse groups and their representative organisations, so that their voices are central to shaping reform. By explicitly recognising and addressing these considerations, the Roadmap can better deliver on its commitment to ensuring no one is left behind.

7. While migration is acknowledged under Vision Principle 4 (Meeting Demand), the Roadmap gives only limited consideration to the broader implications of migration in regional labour markets. A stronger and more explicit focus on ethical migration is required, particularly given the reliance of many regional industries on migrant workers to address short-term labour shortages. While migrant workers make an important contribution to sustaining regional economies, this reliance also carries risks, including potential worker exploitation, limited pathways for long-term settlement, and over-dependence on a transient workforce that could undermine the development of sustainable local labour markets. Further, migration must be conducted in an ethical manner to ensure that where migration is encouraged, this is matched by housing and social support and policy that protect the rights and safety of migrants and encourage long term settlement in regional areas. For skilled jobs, such as those in the health, aged care, and disability sector, consideration must also be given towards the potential detrimental impacts of skilled migration and 'brain drain', particularly on low resource source countries. Here global policies and recommendations, such as those posed in the 2022 WHO World Report on the Health of Refugees and Migrants should be considered.
8. While migrant workers make an important contribution to sustaining regional economies, this reliance also carries risks, including potential worker exploitation, limited pathways for long-term settlement, and over-dependence on a transient workforce that could undermine the development of sustainable local labour markets. To build a more resilient jobs and skills system, migration



policies must be integrated into the Roadmap in a way that safeguards workers' rights, promotes fair and ethical employment practices, and prioritises long-term community integration over short-term labour solutions and ensure that migration strengthens, rather than substitutes for, sustainable workforce development in Regional Australia.

9. An important consideration largely overlooked under Vision Principle 2 is the role of education providers in regional Australia. To effectively achieve the goals of the Roadmap, regional schools, vocational training providers and tertiary institutions must be adequately supported to deliver the required education and training. This includes ensuring that educators have the necessary skills, expertise, and resources to meet the diverse needs of people living in regional communities, and that funding arrangements are updated to reflect the higher costs and smaller cohorts typical of regional delivery. Strengthening career pathways between VET and higher education should also be a central focus of the Roadmap. Vocational education offers critical 'earn while you learn' opportunities that allow young people and adults to remain in their communities while building skills and serves as a key pathway into tertiary qualifications that enhance workforce participation. Stronger emphasis should be placed on improving coordination and collaboration between metropolitan and regional education providers. Working in regional, rural, and remote areas requires a distinct skill set to effectively contribute to the local community, economy, and culture. Therefore, students undertaking vocational and tertiary education must be afforded meaningful opportunities to train in regional settings as part of their professional preparation. Currently, these opportunities are often underutilised or poorly managed. For example, while partnerships between universities and regional health services do exist, the coordination of metro-to-rural exchange placements for midwifery students remains inconsistent and fragmented, which limits their exposure to diverse clinical environments, hinders the development of critical rural practice skills, and reduces workforce retention in regional areas. A more strategic and coordinated approach is needed to address these gaps. This could include formalised placement pipelines, improved funding and logistical support for student travel and accommodation, and stronger partnerships between tertiary institutions and regional service providers.
10. Under Vision Principle 3, the current roadmap lacks sufficient focus on psychosocial safety as a critical component of job quality. At present, the roadmap primarily measures physical safety outcomes through indicators such as workers' compensation incidence rates, however, true



workforce engagement and sustainability cannot be achieved without recognising and addressing the psychological and social dimensions of workplace safety. To achieve this, measures around elements such as discrimination, harassment, risks of violence or aggression, workload pressures, isolation, and exposure to traumatic events should be incorporated into the roadmap.

11. The Roadmap also omits the impact of climate change and environmental disasters, which disproportionately affect regional communities and workforces. Climate change should be incorporated into the vision principles as both a barrier and an opportunity. Environmental crises can displace workers, damage infrastructure and disrupt education and training pathways, while also creating new demands for green skills and disaster preparedness. Policies under Vision Principle 1 (Addressing Barriers) should consider supports for individuals affected by disasters to remain in or re-enter the workforce. Vision Principle 2 (Developing Skills) should explicitly include the development of green skills and disaster preparedness skills, highlighting the role of VET and higher education. Vision Principle 3 (Quality Jobs) should address how climate change affects job quality and safety, and Vision Principle 4 (Meeting Demand) should anticipate shifts in labour demand driven by climate impacts and the growth of green sectors. In addition, there are opportunities for jobs and skills growth for nurses, midwives and carers responding to the impacts of climate change. The National Climate Risk Assessment (2025) highlights that health and social support organisations currently lack strong governance arrangements for responding to climate risks and for monitoring the effectiveness of actions. This weakness is particularly pronounced in rural and regional areas, where smaller services have fewer resources, limited staffing, and less access to dedicated sustainability expertise. Without targeted investment, rural health organisations will remain ill-prepared to manage escalating climate risks. To address this gap, new climate-focused roles may (in the future) be embedded within rural primary health services. Examples of such roles might include federally funded “Primary Health Network Climate Change Leads” who would serve to coordinate local preparedness and response. Other examples include “Heat Nurses/ Midwives” who could proactively monitor and support vulnerable patients during extreme heat events, and “Disaster Preparedness Nurses” who would conduct health vulnerability assessments and assist with care coordination before and during emergencies.
12. While the Roadmap does not specifically focus on healthcare, workforce shortages in this sector severely limit access to essential services in regional areas, undermining community health and



workforce participation in other sectors. To address this, the Roadmap should include targeted and detailed insights on the healthcare sector, such as regional training pipelines and incentives for retention and relocation. A new 'Health and Care Access Vision Principle' should be added to explicitly acknowledge the centrality of health and care services to regional economies. While the Roadmap acknowledges access to social services, schools, and childcare as important determinates of workforce engagement, access to essential health services such as healthcare, maternity care, disability care, aged care, and mental health care should also be included. Access to health services is fundamental to enabling people to live and work in regional areas as it directly affects their health, wellbeing, and therefore workforce participation. Embedding this principle, alongside actionable strategies such as regional scholarship programs and rural training pathways to grow the health workforce, would significantly increase the Roadmap's impact in addressing critical workforce challenges and ensuring equitable access to essential services.

**Do the evaluative metrics included in the Roadmap sufficiently reflect the jobs and skills system in Regional Australia? Do the ratings included in the Roadmap reflect your current experience or perspective of the jobs and skills system in Regional Australia?**

13. Throughout the report metrics are frequently benchmarked against those from major cities. While such comparisons are useful in highlighting disparities and identifying areas where regional Australia may be lagging behind, they do not fully capture and convey the unique circumstances of regional communities. Achieving parity with, or even surpassing, major city benchmarks does not necessarily equate to meaningful success in a regional context. Regional Australia faces a distinct set of demographic, geographic, and economic challenges that require tailored approaches to measuring progress. Metrics should therefore be developed based on a nuanced gap analysis that accounts for these regional characteristics and assesses how effectively the jobs and skills system responds to the specific needs of regional people, industries, and communities.
14. The inclusion of cohort-specific metrics is also essential to ensure that reforms are equitably designed and implemented across regional Australia. Groups such as women, people living with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and older workers often experience barriers in accessing education, training, and employment. Without disaggregated data and indicators, there is a risk that these gaps will be obscured within aggregate measures, leading to reforms that do not adequately address inequities and even perpetuate disadvantages. Incorporating cohort-specific metrics would enable more precise monitoring of outcomes, highlight



where targeted interventions are required, and ensure accountability for delivering on the Roadmap's commitment to equity and inclusion.

15. Alongside quantitative metrics, the JSA should incorporate qualitative measures to provide a deeper understanding of performance. Such measures are essential for uncovering the underlying causes of improvements, stagnation, or decline. By drawing on measures such as stakeholder feedback, case studies, and lived experiences, qualitative measures would enable the Roadmap to better identify what is driving outcomes and where targeted interventions are needed.
16. Key points for consideration in terms of the key indicators described in relation to the evaluative metrics include an absence of metrics related to older people's participation in education and training, and lack of focus on flexibility and inclusivity in terms of work (i.e., the consultation paper's sole focus in terms of key indicators is on generic job satisfaction – especially as only 'total satisfaction' is indicated which is limited, and 'gender wage gaps').
17. In terms of incorporating climate change and environmental disasters and crises in the evaluative metrics as per recommendations to include these in the vision principles above, new metrics or modifications to existing ones could be introduced to gauge progress related to climate change resilience and adaptation. For example, tracking the growth of green jobs, the uptake of climate-related skills training and inclusion in scope of practice (e.g., for nurses and midwives and the health workforce more broadly), or the impact of environmental events on regional employment, demand, and business creation rates.

How relevant and useful are the 10 policy design principles? Are the other emerging policy priorities to enhance the jobs and skills system in Regional Australia consistent with your perspective of priority needs and actions for your region/sector?

18. The 10 proposed policy design principles provide a useful overarching framework and serve as a valuable starting point for guiding reform. As acknowledged by JSA, however, these principles should not be viewed as prescriptive or sufficient in themselves. Regional Australia encompasses highly diverse communities, industries, and labour markets, each with distinct challenges and opportunities. A one-size-fits-all approach risks overlooking this diversity. To be effective, the design principles must be adaptable to specific regions and industries and local contexts.
19. Principles such as "flexibility to adapt and respond", "long-term funding", and "higher funding for





remote areas" are highly relevant to climate change adaptation and disaster recovery. Policies should be designed with the long-term, potentially increasing, frequency and intensity of environmental crises in mind.

How likely are you to use the JSA Regional Roadmap as an initial framework to guide the development of a regional roadmap for your specific region or sector? What would make JSA's Roadmap more useful and impactful?

20. While the JSA Regional Roadmap offers a starting point to guide the development of a regional roadmap for the nursing, midwifery, and care sector, there requires significant variation and context-specific insight for the framework to be applicable in all contexts. This includes more granular and specific principles and indicators to focus on specific workforce challenges around recruitment and retention. This also includes support for high quality clinical placements from the perspective of both students and employees, addressing occupational violence and aggression, addressing employer exploitation and misconduct, increasing access to high-quality and relevant professional development and continuing education and training opportunities, real wage growth, consideration of workforce skill mix, and supporting safe and ethical migration of health professionals and workers, to name a few. Further benchmarking for success of the framework requires alignment with the demand for specific health and care workers in regional areas (e.g., nurse practitioners and midwives) and community needs, reducing reliance on short-term or agency staffing, and building long-term sustainability for a safe, well-supported workforce.
21. The influence of employer ownership and priorities does not seem to be well integrated into the report. For example, private hospitals and health and aged care services can have financial priorities that do not always match or support local workforces or indeed consumers. Decisions around employment, staffing, and delivery of services can focus on profitability and occur at a higher level than local services and result in the closure or scale-back of services despite local demand and availability of the workforce.
22. The report has a limited focus on flexible work arrangements including remote employment and population movement trends including metropolitan workers relocating to regional areas. These aspects are increasingly influenced by climate change (e.g., people seeking perceived climate-safe regions or remote work options). Policies addressing these trends should acknowledge this climate-induced mobility and its impact on regional housing, services, and labour markets. By integrating



these considerations, the JSA Roadmap would provide a more holistic and forward-looking framework for the jobs and skills system in Regional Australia, acknowledging the profound and multifaceted impacts of climate change and environmental disasters.

23. While it is understood that the intention of the Roadmap is to remain high-level and adaptable across different regions and sectors, this approach risks being overly vague. A framework that is too general may limit its perceived usefulness and applicability, reducing the likelihood of meaningful adoption by stakeholders who require clearer guidance to translate principles into practice. To enhance its utility, the Roadmap should be supplemented with more concrete examples, sector-specific case studies, and practical tools that demonstrate how the principles can be applied in diverse contexts. Providing illustrative pathways, for example, tailored strategies for essential service industries such as health, education, and agriculture, would ensure the framework retains flexibility while also offering sufficient detail to guide practical action. Without this balance, there is a risk that the Roadmap will be seen as aspirational but not actionable. This could undermine its adoption and impact in regional communities and therefore limit its utility in the long term.

#### How can stakeholders work together and commit to enhancing the jobs and skills system in Regional Australia? How can JSA help facilitate and support this?

24. Enhancing the jobs and skills system in regional Australia will require collaboration across all levels of government, industry, education and training providers, unions, professional associations, and community organisations. Stakeholders must commit to working together through co-design processes that actively involve regional community members, including groups such as women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, older people, and people living with disability. The diverse voices of local community members should be consulted and meaningfully embedded in decision-making to ensure reforms reflect the realities of the regions they are intended to serve. It is important that stakeholders take a holistic approach to the jobs and skills system, which also considers the social and economic scaffolding necessary to drive positive change. This includes an emphasis on the structural and economic barriers to employment referenced in Vision Principle 1, such as access to affordable housing and essential services, which must be addressed by all levels of government in tandem with more specific job and skills strategies.
25. JSA can play a central role in promoting a holistic and collaborative approach and ensuring that the



Roadmap is resourced and funded for sustainability and evaluated. This includes providing high-quality, regionally disaggregated data and cohort-specific metrics, developing practical tools and case studies to guide implementation, and creating mechanisms for ongoing dialogue between stakeholders. JSA should also support the scaling up of successful local and sectoral initiatives through knowledge-sharing across regions and coordinating long-term funding and policy alignment. By ensuring transparency, consistency, and inclusivity in these processes, JSA can help to build the trust and shared commitment needed to deliver an equitable, effective, and sustainable jobs and skills system for regional Australia.