

Accelerating Workforce Readiness: How Western Australia's VET Sector is Equipping the Defence Industry for AUKUS and Beyond

Western Australia's defence industry is poised for transformative growth, driven by the continuous naval shipbuilding strategy and the strategic imperatives of the AUKUS partnership. This presentation will explore how the state's Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, anchored in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), is meeting these emerging demands through adaptive, flexible, and scalable training solutions.

Focusing on key areas such as workforce development, education pathways, training mechanisms, and skills recognition, the presentation will detail how the VET sector can and is actively implementing and scaling micro-credentials, skill sets, customised programs, and full qualifications across five strategic pillars:

1. **School Engagement (K–12):** Early exposure through Try-A-Trade, VETDSS, and school-based traineeships.
2. **Entry-Level Pipelines:** Structured entry points for school leavers and job seekers via foundational and pre-apprenticeship training.
3. **Existing Workforce:** Tailored upskilling and cross-skilling programs for those in or entering from adjacent industries.
4. **Defence Personnel:** Recognition of prior learning and AQF-aligned upskilling through Joint Technical Trade Training Services.
5. **Emerging Skills:** Development of higher apprenticeships and vocational degrees to build next-gen capability.

The presentation will also examine the tri-partite partnership between the learner, TAFE, and employer, highlighting evidence from across the VET sector that shows programs are most impactful when employers are actively engaged and co-invest in the training ecosystem. These partnerships convert training from a transactional experience into a transformational pipeline of skilled talent.

The presentation will also highlight the role of the Defence Industry Skills Centre of Excellence in advancing nuclear-readiness and driving collaborative delivery models across the VET-university-industry nexus.

Through this framework, the VET sector in Western Australia is not just responding to change, it is shaping the defence industry workforce of the future.