

PROPOSED
NSW Primary Industries
Workforce Strategy 2025-2030





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.

Proposed NSW Primary Industries Workforce Strategy 2025-2030

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What is the purpose of this Strategy?

The proposed Strategy aims to generate outcomes that supports and builds the workforce necessary for delivering profitable, sustainable, and innovative agriculture, forestry and fishing industries in NSW now and into the future.

The proposed Strategy is intended to be high level to enable all key stakeholders to deliver against its outcomes and work together for the benefit of NSW primary industries. It is designed to complement and build upon the current activities of industry, governments, and key stakeholders to address workforce challenges and pursue opportunities. And it identifies where the focus should be for action at the state-level, noting the complexity and interdependencies of workforce issues with what is happening nationally, regionally and in relation to other industry sectors.

To achieve momentum and change government, industry and key stakeholders, such as the education, training and research, business and employment sectors, must work together. The proposed Strategy is designed to be a fixture to which government and stakeholders can develop plans, actions, initiatives and programs that contribute to and deliver the shared vision and outcomes.

To help contextualise the NSW primary industries workforce issues, the proposed Strategy provides key data and insights, providing a baseline from which to monitor some workforce outcomes and evidence to inform outcomes and priorities.

At the conclusion of the proposed Strategy is the 'Plan on a Page' and a series of questions to guide your feedback.



Submit your feedback on the proposed Strategy via the Have Your Say portal or by emailing agri.policy@dpird.nsw.gov.au



The proposed Strategy recommends:

1. a shared vision for government, industry and stakeholders to work toward
2. three key priority areas for Government and industry to concentrate their actions:
 - Improving business management, adaptability and innovation
 - Fostering a diverse workforce accessible across NSW
 - Careers and capabilities in primary industries
3. a pathway to delivering NSW primary industries workforce outcomes by clearly articulating key actions to guide prioritisation, decision-making and investment by government and stakeholders.

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Context

Workforce is a priority issue across all levels of government and for primary industry sectors. It has been an ongoing issue for some time and is impacted by a wide range of supply and demand complexities. To bring about meaningful change for the benefit of primary industries employers and employees, coordinated action by both industry and government is needed to drive solutions to ensure a thriving and available workforce.

The importance of NSW's primary industries to both society and the economy cannot be understated. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries have been significant contributors to the development of communities and regions across the state. In 2023-2024, these three industries contributed a gross value of production of \$20 billion in NSW, and the products of each industry not only benefit Australians but also contribute to international trade.

The profile of the primary industries workforce has changed over time. The need for skilled and low skilled labour that responds to seasonal demands is an ongoing trend, but the needs of industry and businesses are evolving in response to challenges and opportunities. The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted a significant issue in the availability of, and attracting and retaining, a domestic workforce. Workforce resilience is increasingly important considering the disruptions that arise from biosecurity and climate events.

There is a need to highlight the diverse and rewarding careers available in primary industries, to overcome perceptions that primary industries are limited to low skilled, highly physical work with limited progression pathways. The development of new technologies presents opportunities for businesses but requires different skillsets to maximise utilisation on farm. Other factors impact the capacity to attract and retain new workers to regional locations, including the availability of accommodation and other key services and infrastructure.

In recent times there has been a concerted effort to understand and better address primary industries workforce challenges and opportunities, including (but not limited to):

- In 2020, the Australian Government released the *National Agricultural Workforce Strategy: learning to excel*, developed by the National Agricultural Labour Advisory Committee. It made 37 recommendations on the agricultural and agrifoods workforce and has driven Commonwealth priorities to support several workforce initiatives.
- In 2019, the CSIRO published its report, *The future of Australia's agricultural workforce*, which identifies trends driving agricultural workforce change and labour use and describes the supply and demand of the future.
- AgriFutures has a range of recent reports and studies relevant to the primary industries workforce, including:
 - *The intersection of agriculture and regional development* (2021)
 - *Community Trust in Rural Industries research program* (2022)
 - *Community Perceptions and Worker Experiences Program* (2022)
 - *Horizon Scan for the Australian agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector* (2023)
- Australian Farm Institute, Farm Policy Journal (Winter 2022 edition), *Securing Agriculture's future workforce* looks at several workforce challenges including careers in primary industries and the demographics of the workforce.
- The Skills Insight 2024 *Workforce Plan* describes current and emerging workforce challenges and opportunities for agribusiness, fibre, furnishing, food, animal and environment care industries, and strategies and activities that respond to these issues.

- The Queensland Government has partnered with Queensland Farmers Federation, Jobs Queensland and the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance to develop the *Queensland Agriculture Industry Workforce Plan 2022-2027*. The Plan draws on research and consultation to prioritise workforce issues and identify actions.
- In September 2023, the NSW Government held the NSW Agriculture Workforce Roundtable to discuss some of the key issues with industry, including labour market trends and workforce data limitations, education and training, work health and safety, and workforce availability and suitability.
- Short-medium term workforce issues need to be addressed while simultaneously planning for the long-term needs, particularly the role technology and innovation will have in businesses of the future.
- Regional and local solutions are important to address nuances in workforce supply and demand across the state.
- There are improvements needed to collect and make available timely and relevant data to support government and industry in managing supply and demand pressures to support workforce planning.

This work provides a rich source of information, evidence and learnings that have informed the key priority areas and actions, including:

- Supporting the primary industries workforce requires action and collaboration by government, industry and individual businesses, who each have a role to play to ensure the long-term sustainability of the industries involved.
- Primary industries are competing with other industries for the same workforce and are subject to pressures felt by much of regional NSW, particularly around accommodation shortages and other liveability factors that impact attracting and retaining people in the regions.
- Workforce issues are prevalent in careers and occupations that support primary industries. This includes research and development, veterinary services, biosecurity services, climate advisory services, engineers, and more.



Workforce data insights

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), Job and Skills Australia (JSA), and other key sources have been drawn upon to provide evidence and data-driven insights into the NSW primary industries workforce in NSW.

There are known limitations in relation to primary industries workforce data availability and its representation of the industry. These limitations are well documented, and include (but are not limited to):

- the frequency at which the data is collected impacting currency.
- the exclusion of certain groups of workers from workforce data, which means that the number of people employed in primary industries is not accurately captured.

- the classification of industries and occupations (ANZSIC and ANZSCO) do not reflect current sectors, skill levels or occupations.
- the level of granularity and specificity (i.e., regional or industry) at which it can be interrogated.

There is also an issue with the collection of data regarding Aboriginal businesses and employees, resulting in a 'lack of representative data to reflect the current contributions of the Indigenous sector to contemporary agriculture'.ⁱⁱ

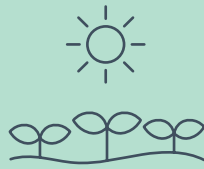
Whilst recognising these limitations, the data insights provided in this Strategy provide a useful point in time, broad reflection of the industry, and provides key indicators from which government and industry can monitor progress in delivering workforce outcomes.



In 2023-2024, NSW primary industries contributed

\$20 billion

in gross value of production to the NSW economy.²



**Agriculture
gross value**

\$19.4 billion



**Forestry
gross value**

\$389 million



**Fisheries
gross value**

\$205 million



In 2023, there were **78,300**⁴ people employed in agriculture, fisheries and forestry (AFF) across NSW. This represents nearly 2% of NSW workforce.



**Future
workforce needs
2000
workers**

– projected annual employment growth in AFF between 2026 and 2066.⁵

² NSW Department of Primary Industries (2024). DPI financial year estimate of commodity value, production or price, [Performance Data and Insights 2024](#)





³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021-2022), [Agricultural Commodities, Australia-2021-22](#)

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](#)

⁵ Dixon, J (2022), [Employment projections for NSW 2016-2066](#), Center of Policy Studies, Victoria University, p.12.

Businesses⁶

Number of businesses in NSW:

	Agriculture	46,273
	Fishing, Hunting and Trapping	866
	Forestry and Logging	934
	Aquaculture	327

24% of AFF businesses have between 1 and 19 employees



Employment by occupation in primary industries⁷

54% employed as managers.

23% employed as labourers.

22% employed in areas such as technicians and trades, machinery operators and drivers, clerical and administrative, professionals, sales and community and personal service.

The remaining 1% could not be classified.

Top occupations of employment in NSW Primary Industries⁸

(by people employed full-time, part-time)

Agriculture⁹

- Livestock Farmers
- Crop Farmers
- Mixed Crop and Livestock Farmers
- Livestock Farm Workers
- Crop Farm Workers
- Farmers and Farm Managers
- Agricultural, Forestry and Horticultural Plant Operators
- Garden and Nursery Labourers



Forestry

- Forestry and Logging Workers
- Agricultural, Forestry and Horticultural Plant Operators
- Truck Drivers
- Agricultural and Forestry Scientists
- Production Managers



Fishing

- Aquaculture Farmers
- Deck and Fishing Hands
- Aquaculture Workers



⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), *Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, July 2019 - June 2024*

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Census of Population and Housing, 2021 [Census TableBuilder]*

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Census of Population and Housing, 2021 [Census TableBuilder - Employment in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing by ANZSCO occupation (includes employed full-time, employed part-time and employed away from work)]*

⁹ This includes Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing nfd.

Demographics

Median age of workforce¹⁰

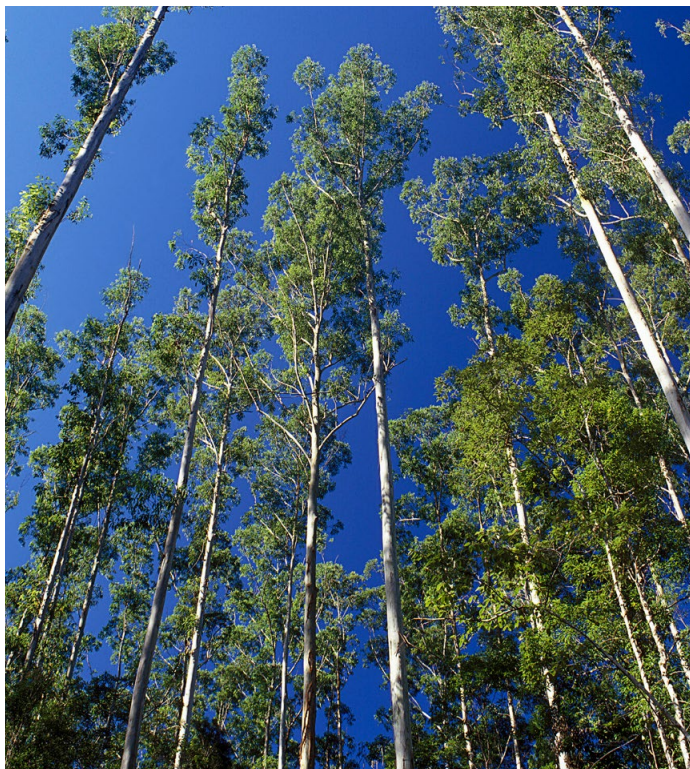
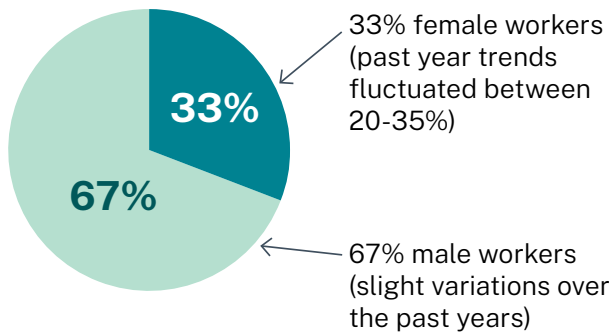


The median age of the AFF workforce is **51 years**

15-16 years older than the median ages of the NSW workforce at 39 and the Australian workforce at 40.

Young people (aged 15 to 34 years old) account for 24.4% of the overall AFF workforce.

Gender¹¹



Other representation

2.7% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.¹²



Of these:

- 29% are managers.
- 40% are labourers.
- 13% technicians and trade workers.

11% Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people.¹³



Of these:

- 42% are women.
- 38% are managers.
- 40% are labourers.

1.7% Workers with a need for assistance for core activities.¹⁴



Of these:

- 31% are women.
- 51% are employed within sheep, beef cattle, and grain farming.

Unpaid care and assistance

Approximately **17% of women and 11% of men** employed in AFF in NSW provide **unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, health condition, or due to old age.**¹⁵

Approximately **30% of people** employed in AFF in NSW provided **unpaid care to a child under 15** (either their own, someone else's, or both).¹⁶

10 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Census of Population and Housing, 2021* [Census TableBuilder]
 11 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed*. Note that data related to gender is limited. For example, whether a person identifies as non-binary is not collected. *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed*
 12 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Census of Population and Housing, 2021* [Census TableBuilder - 2021 Census - employment, income and education, 1-digit level INDP Industry of Employment by STATE (UR) and INGP Indigenous Status] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), State (UR), INDP Industry of Employment, OCCP Occupation and INGP Indigenous Status. [Census TableBuilder]
 13 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), State (UR) INDP Industry of Employment, OCCP Occupation, SEXP Sex and LANP Language Used at Home [Census TableBuilder]
 14 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), State (UR) INDP Industry of Employment, ASSNP Core Activity Need for Assistance and SEXP Sex [Census TableBuilder]
 15 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), SEXP Sex and 1-digit level INDP Industry of Employment by UNCAREP Unpaid Assistance to a Person with a Disability, Health Condition, or due to Old Age by STATE (UR) [Census TableBuilder]
 16 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), SEXP Sex and 1-digit level INDP Industry of Employment by CHCAREP Unpaid Child Care by STATE (UR) [Census TableBuilder]

Factors impacting the primary industries workforce¹⁷

Climate change implications for production and workforce



Biosecurity risks and need for increased capability



Environmental regulations and compliance requirements



Workplace health and safety within high-risk industries



Utilisation of technology and data



Diversification of business activity and production processes



Social license and community expectations



Farm size and consolidation



Markets and trade driving production trends and demand



Legal and regulatory requirements relating to production



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



Skills Shortages

15 – the estimated number of primary industry related occupations on the Skills Priority List where NSW is expected to experience a statewide or regional shortage of workers.¹⁸

Migration

In NSW, the number of Temporary Skilled Visa holders within AFF has increased since COVID to 894 in September 2024.¹⁹

In Australia, approximately 56% of Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme workers participate in the agriculture industry, and 36% in the meat processing industry. As at December 2024, there were 5,130 PALM Scheme workers in NSW.²⁰

Qualification levels in primary industries workforce in NSW²¹

37.2% completed Secondary Education - Year 10 and above (highest compared to other qualification levels)

21.6% completed Certificate III & IV

12.9% completed a bachelor degree

9.5% completed advanced Diploma and Diploma level

8.4% completed secondary education – years 9 and below

2.5% completed a postgraduate degree

1.2% completed a graduate diploma and graduate certificate level

0.1% completed Certificate I and II level

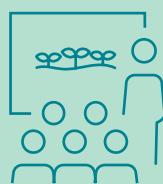
The remaining **6.7%** were either not stated or supplementary codes

Primary and secondary education in NSW primary industries²²

1,675

(roughly 7 out of 10)

schools offer agriculture-related programs



VET

Commencement numbers for relevant VET qualifications⁺ in NSW have been consistent, with **an average of 10,198 students enrolled yearly** between 2019-2023.

However, yearly **completion rates are low with an average of 35%** of students completing their qualifications over the same period.²³



Safety in the workplace

Nationally, **farming accounts for one in every five worker deaths** while making up just **2.6 per cent** of the Australian workforce²⁴



¹⁸ Jobs and Skills Australia (2023), *Skills Priority List*.

¹⁹ Department of Home Affairs (2024), *Temporary Work (Skilled) visa program*, Sponsor Industry Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry [Table builder]

²⁰ Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (2024), *PALM scheme data*.

²¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), *Census of Population and Housing, 2021* [Census TableBuilder]

²² National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) (2023)

²³ NCVER (2024), Total VET students and courses 2023: program enrollment and program completions DataBuilder, Filters applied: State of residence: New South Wales; FOE 2-digit: 05 - Agriculture, environmental and related studies

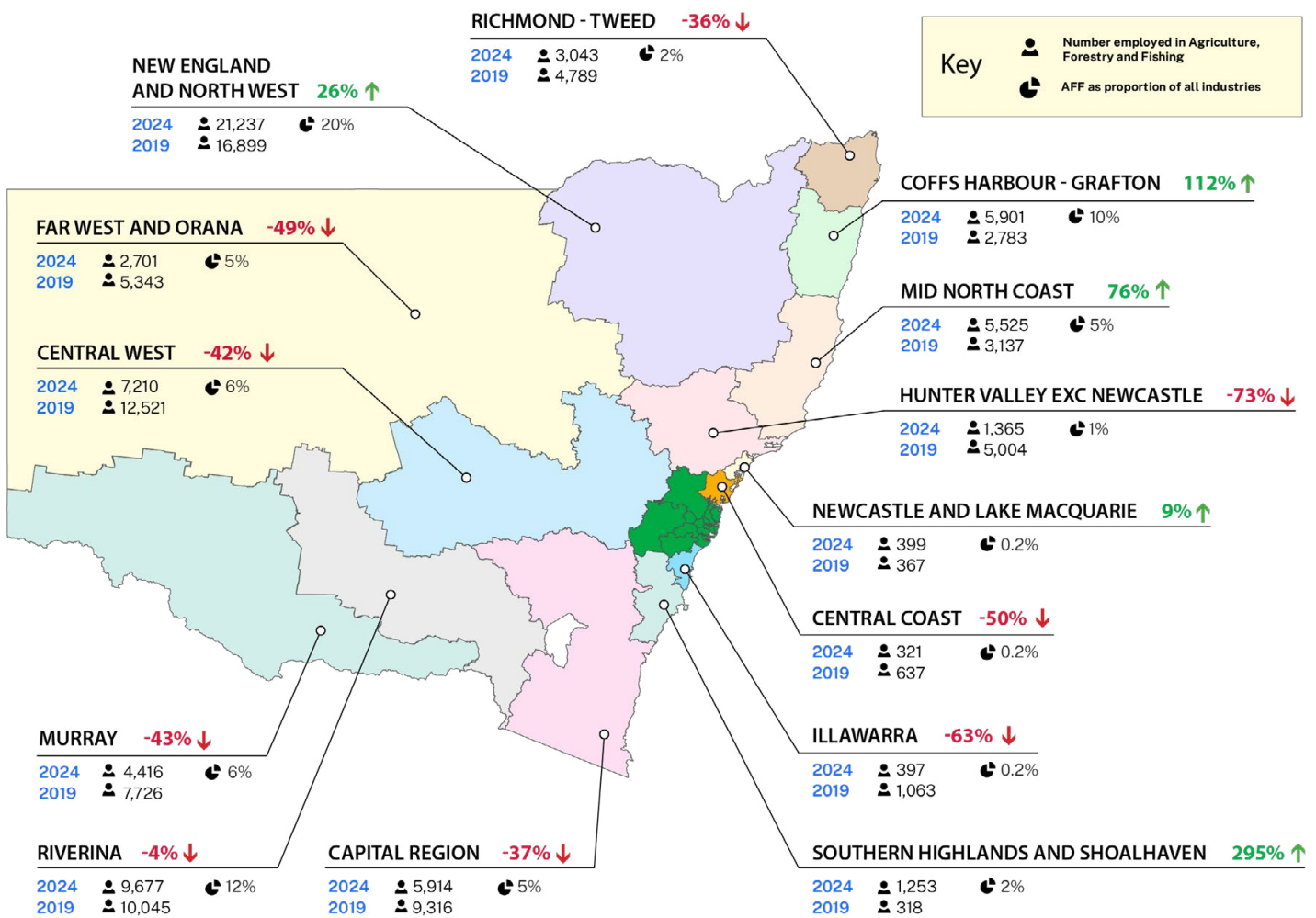
²⁴ SafeWork NSW (2017), *Agriculture Work Health and Safety Sector Plan*, p3

+ Includes Vocational Education and Training (VET) in 'Agriculture, Environmental, and Related Programs'

Regional employment in Primary Industries

This map¹ shows the change in total Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (AFF) employment in NSW SA4 regions between August 2019 and August 2024. Note that this data represents a point in time. Employment is subject to change and fluctuation over time, impacted by a range of factors such as seasonality and production conditions.

This map does not capture the movement of workforce across state borders, and therefore may not represent the total employment in AFF within cross border communities.



Aggregated Regions			
NSW	-10% ↓	REGIONAL NSW*	-13% ↓
2024: 80,176	2019: 89,160	2024: 69,039	2019: 79,311
2%		5%	
SYDNEY	17% ↑	GREATER SYDNEY*	13% ↑
2024: 10,815	2019: 9,212	2024: 11,137	2019: 9,849
0.4%		0.4%	

*ABS definitions: Regional NSW = NSW other than Greater Sydney. Greater Sydney = Sydney + Central Coast

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, released 24/10/2024

Vision for the NSW primary industries workforce

Vision:

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

Workforce outcomes can be delivered by government and industry working together towards a shared vision.

The role of government is to ensure 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 should also consider 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.

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

Both government and industry have the responsibility and ability to implement programs and projects to deliver workforce outcomes.



Priority Area 1: Improving business management, adaptability and innovation

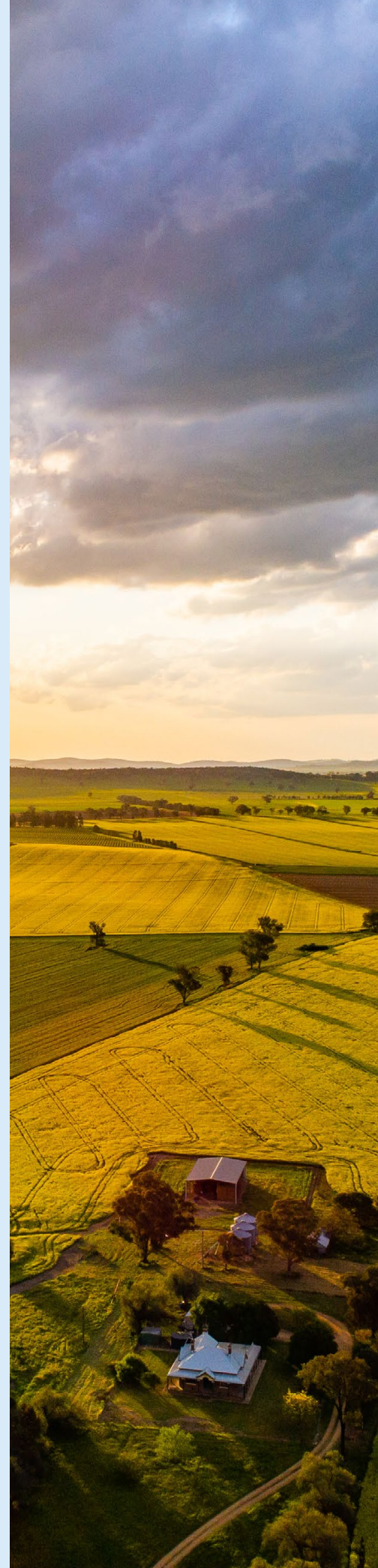


Primary industry workplaces are continuously evolving to keep pace with legislation and policy, technology, best practice and the expectations of employees and the community.

Primary producers need access to information to ensure their business operates appropriately on matters relating to people management, industrial relations and employment conditions. People management and workplace conditions have a direct correlation to the attraction and retention of employees.ⁱⁱⁱ By creating positive and safe workplaces, individual businesses are contributing to the reputation of primary industries as a best practice industry and increasing their own local or regional competitiveness in the job market.

There are a range of employment incentives that can be implemented to ensure worker satisfaction and retention – flexible work arrangements, professional development opportunities, or secure jobs just to name a few. While remuneration will always be a primary factor for employees, increasingly wellbeing and work-life balance are emerging as strong secondary preferences.^{iv} But this is not a one size fits all approach, as different employment incentives will appeal to different people based on their individual circumstances and the needs of the business. The key to implementing these effectively is for employers to understand what they can offer to make their workplaces more supportive and attractive to employees, beyond the minimum pay and conditions. Different workplace conditions may also attract different categories of workers, opening up the market to a wider talent pool – for example, flexible hours are important for people with caring responsibilities.

Businesses that innovate and adopt new technology may see a change in their workforce needs – either through efficiencies in labour use or by requiring employees to have different skill sets to operate and maintain new systems. There are known opportunities for primary industries in the technology and innovation space, including automated monitoring and decision-making systems, autonomous robotics and tractors, and autonomous precision systems, all of which have implications for the primary industries workforce.^v It is crucial to support workplaces as these technologies are taken up and new technologies emerge, to ensure there is an available workforce to support both the development and implementation.



Outcomes and Actions

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:

- Build capability in business planning and management practices through targeted training, resources and tools to support employers in matters relating to human resource management, digital capabilities and industrial relations.
- Explore innovative ways to raise the profile of safety in primary industries, as well as inspiring practical ways to implement safety controls to reduce serious incident rates.

1.2 Employment incentives

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

Actions:

- Build and share initiatives and approaches for attracting and retaining employees and facilitating seasonal workforce mobility, such as professional development training, career growth, secure jobs, flexible working arrangements.
- Strengthen and promote the primary industries as a sector with good employment conditions and benefits.

1.3 Technology and innovation

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

Actions:

- Support the development and adoption of technology by primary industry businesses that will improve business management including increasing on the job safety, supporting innovation, diversification and value adding.
- Ensure there is essential planning for the future of the workforce with relevant technology-based skills and training.



Priority Area 2: Fostering a diverse workforce accessible across NSW



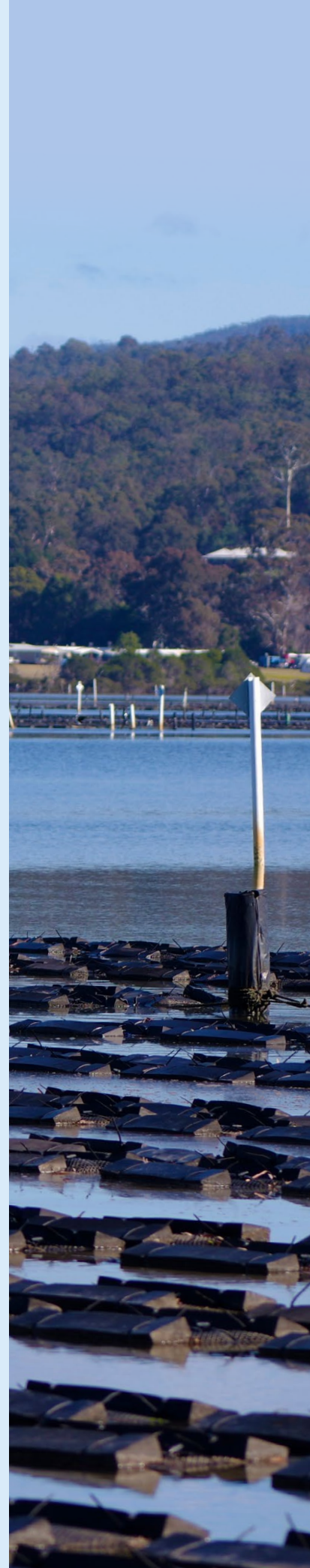
A diverse workforce, one that is inclusive of people from a range of backgrounds and experiences, contributes to the innovation and opportunity of the sector and availability of labour. A diverse workforce is achieved by lifting barriers to participation and becoming a workplace of choice for people of diverse ages, genders and cultural backgrounds, people with disability, as well as from a variety of locations - rural, regional, metro or international. It is important to showcase the diverse roles and career paths in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, so that people can see and access the opportunities.

While the primary industries sector reports a shortage of workers, the rates of participation of key sectors of society in primary industries, particularly women and Aboriginal People are low. Removing barriers is crucial to increasing the rates of participation and creating a larger and more diverse labour market. These barriers are different for different sectors of society. For women, barriers to participation include availability of childcare and flexible work arrangements.^{vi} For Aboriginal People, there are accessibility, financial and sociocultural barriers to participating in agricultural education and training.^{vii} Cultural awareness and cultural competency within the sector, everyday industry settings, and training and education forums has also been identified as a key barrier to attracting and retaining Aboriginal People.^{viii}

NSW primary industries also faces a challenge with an aging workforce. The median age of the NSW primary workforce is 51 years – 15-16 years older than the median age of the general NSW and Australian workforce. This suggests there is more to do in attracting younger workers to the industry.

Primary industries are in competition with other key regional industries for the same workforce. This may be further impacted by region-specific conditions such as the size of the local and regional labour markets, demographics of the area, movement of workers across state borders and other major industries in operation in the region. Therefore, solutions need to be regional to be effective, taking into consideration the broader regional profile and labour market.^{ix} It also is important to note that many sectors within primary industries employ a seasonal workforce for all or part of their annual harvest, and it will continue to be an important labour category. Temporary migrant workers are currently a significant part of this workforce; however, a sustainable and accessible labour supply is needed to ensure ongoing productivity of industries that rely on this surge workforce for their peak harvest times.

Attracting and retaining the primary industries workforce within the regions is complicated by challenges that all NSW industries face – the liveability of the regions themselves, including access to key services and community networks, and the availability of necessities such as health care, childcare, accommodation, education and connectivity. Difficulties with these elements impact the ability for workforce participants to take up jobs in the regions and perpetuate worker shortages, they also limit mobility within the regions. By alleviating some of these logistical pressures, it will make it easier for businesses to attract and retain workers to their businesses and communities.



Outcomes and Actions

2.1 An innovative, inclusive and diverse workforce

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

Actions:

- Foster a diverse workforce, including creating innovative solutions, addressing barriers and increasing participation in the workforce of women, young people, Aboriginal People, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people with disabilities.
- Work with communities and peak organisations to support and enhance business, and leadership and career pathways for Aboriginal People in primary industries.

2.2 Regional workforce solutions

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

Actions:

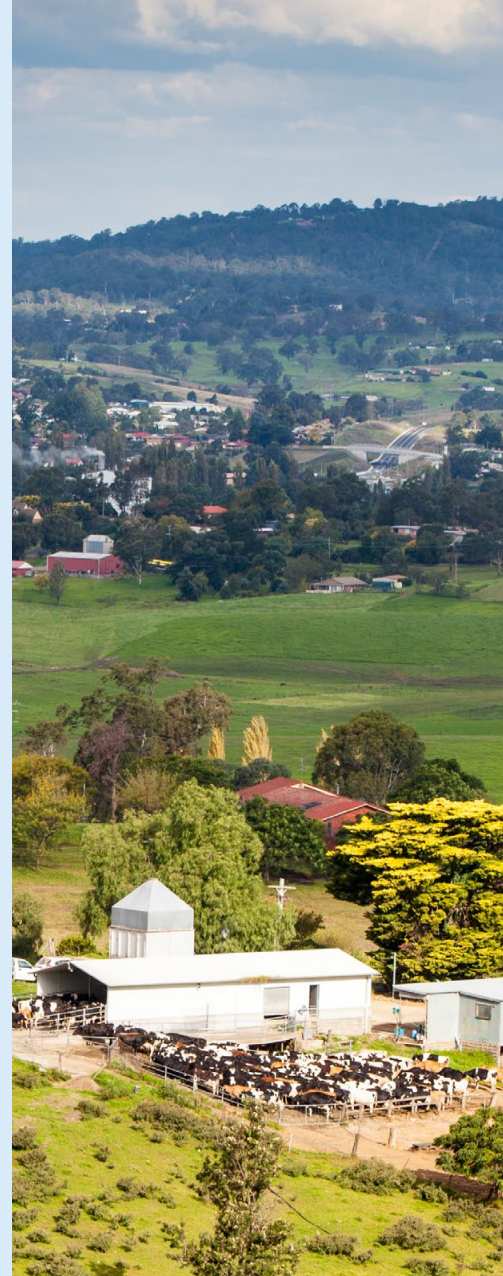
- Improve the availability of data and information to build understanding of and develop solutions to address local and regional workforce challenges.
- Develop regional initiatives, approaches, and partnerships to attract and retain a local and regional workforce, including one that responds to seasonal demands and workforce mobility, facilitates career change opportunities, and utilises people from within primary industries as well as other industries with transferable skills.

2.3 Regional attraction, liveability and resilience

Attract participation in primary industries by establishing community networks and addressing existing challenges to improve regional liveability.

Actions:

- Promote and build awareness of the opportunities of a career in primary industries and the lifestyle of living, working and doing business in the regions.
- Represent primary industries workforce needs in policy and decision making, particularly in relation cost of living, accommodation and housing, childcare, health care, transport, education, and migration.



Priority Area 3: Careers and capabilities in primary industries



The roles and careers available in primary industries are changing, with a broad variety of traditional and modern jobs required to support production across the state. To attract and retain people in the primary industries sector, there must be a greater understanding of jobs and career opportunities available in the primary industries sector, as well as increased acknowledgement of the contribution of primary industries to both the economy and society more broadly.

The inclusion of primary industries within primary and secondary school curriculums is crucial to ensure school leavers see a career within the sector as a viable, rewarding and exciting option. This extends further to ensuring that there are opportunities for positive and practical experiences that build confidence in jobs and opportunities, where participants feel they have the necessary interest and skills to do the job.^x

The importance of careers in the primary industries sector cannot be understated – these industries are core contributors to both society and the economy. Community perception of primary industries as a valuable and fulfilling career prospect is important. Educators and career advisers also contribute to perceptions of careers in primary industries and should be empowered to better understand and promote the wide range of opportunities that exist.^{xi}

There are a multitude of career pathways once in the primary industries sector, whether this looks like role progression within the one business or through experiences in different businesses and industries. It is important that workforce participants can see these options both at the outset of their career but also throughout as they gain more experience and consider their future.^{xii} This is achieved through clearly articulated career pathways, showing entry points and progression in not only one business or sector but highlighting transferrable skills that are relevant to multiple industries. It is also important that any promotion of careers in primary industries demonstrates diversity and inclusiveness by representing workforce participants from a range of demographics.

There is a need to ensure education and training pathways for primary industries are thorough and fit for purpose, to meet industry demand for an appropriately skilled workforce. A challenge faced in accessing education and training can be the thin markets for some qualifications when there isn't enough demand to sustain certain courses, meaning either the course isn't offered, or workers must travel to participate. Having diverse training options provides flexibility to both employers and employees to ensure gaining appropriate skills and qualifications can be achieved in a way that meets both individual and business needs.



Outcomes and Actions

3.1 Primary industries in schools

School students see primary industries as a career pathway, offering a diverse range of opportunities.

Actions:

- Continue to grow the opportunities to include primary industries within the school curriculum and experiential learning opportunities for school students to engage with primary industry related activities and businesses.
- Develop and promote resources for educators and careers advisors to grow their understanding of careers in primary industries and connect them to industry practice and opportunities.

3.2 Primary industry careers and pathways

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

Actions:

- Promote and showcase the existing and emerging career opportunities and pathways, as well as the rise of 'modern' primary industries and non-traditional careers, with a focus on diversity and inclusion through representation.
- Support the professional development and career progression of students, graduates and new entrants through advisory and guidance resources, and mentorship opportunities.

3.3 Qualifications and skilling


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

Actions:

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



PROPOSED NSW Primary Industries Workforce Strategy 2025-2030

 **VISION:** A strong, productive primary industries underpinned by a diverse, capable and resilient workforce with access to skills development and employment opportunities and supportive, safe work environments.

PRIORITY
AREA

1

Improving business management,
adaptability and innovation



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:

- ✓ Build capability in business planning and management practices through training, resources and tools.
- ✓ Explore practical and innovative ways to raise the profile of safety and reduce serious incident rates.

1.2 Employment incentives

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

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Build and share initiatives and approaches for attracting and retaining employees and facilitating seasonal workforce mobility.
- ✓ Strengthen and promote the primary industries as a sector with good employment conditions and benefits.

1.3 Technology and innovation

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

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Support the development and adoption of technology businesses that will improve business management.
- ✓ Ensure there is essential planning for the future of the workforce with relevant technology-based skills and training.

PRIORITY
AREA

2

Fostering a diverse workforce
accessible across NSW



2.1 An innovative, inclusive and diverse workforce

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

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Foster a diverse workforce, including creating innovative solutions, addressing barriers and increasing participation of key cohorts.
- ✓ Work with communities to support and enhance business, and leadership and career pathways for Aboriginal People in primary industries.

2.2 Regional workforce solutions

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

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Improve the availability of data and information to build understanding of and develop solutions to address local and regional workforce challenges.
- ✓ Develop regional initiatives, approaches, and partnerships to attract and retain a local and regional workforce.

2.3 Regional attraction, liveability and resilience

Attract participation in primary industries by establishing community networks and addressing existing challenges to improve regional liveability.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Promote and build awareness of the opportunities of a career in primary industries and living, working and doing business in the regions.
- ✓ Represent primary industries workforce needs in policy and decision making.

PRIORITY
AREA

3

Careers and capabilities
in primary industries



3.1 Primary Industries in schools

School students see primary industries as a career pathway, offering a diverse range of opportunities.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Continue to grow the opportunities to include primary industries within the school curriculum and experiential learning opportunities.
- ✓ Develop and promote resources for educators and careers advisors.

3.2 Primary industry careers and pathways

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

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Promote and showcase the existing and emerging career opportunities and pathways, as well as the rise of 'modern' primary industries and non-traditional careers.
- ✓ Support the professional development and career progression of students, graduates and new entrants through advisory and guidance resources, and mentorship opportunities.

3.3 Qualifications and skilling

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

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Provide diverse forms of education and training that are accessible and clearly linked to skill development, career progression and specialisation.
- ✓ Maintain relationships between government, training organisations and industry to ensure that the education and training is responsive to industry needs and priorities.

Tell us what you think



The NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is seeking your views on the proposed NSW Primary Industries Workforce Strategy.

Key questions for feedback include:

1. The proposed Strategy includes a vision for industry, government and stakeholders to work toward.
 - a. Are you supportive of the vision statement?
 - b. What changes would you recommend?
2. The proposed Strategy identifies three key priority areas for industry, government and stakeholders to concentrate their actions.
 - a. Are you supportive of these priorities?
 - b. Which of these priorities are most important to you?
3. For each key priority area, 3 outcomes are identified. These outcomes are underpinned by a series of actions to guide prioritisation, decision-making and investment.
 - a. Are you supportive of the outcomes?
 - b. Are you supportive of the actions?
 - c. Which outcomes and/or actions are most important to you?
4. What will be the most challenging part about implementing the proposed Strategy?
5. What opportunities might this proposed Strategy present for you?
6. Do you have any other feedback?

Submit your feedback on the proposed Strategy via the Have Your Say portal or by emailing agri.policy@dpird.nsw.gov.au.



References

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- ^{iv} PWC Australia, 2021, *The Future of Work – what workers want*, p.7 <https://www.pwc.com.au/important-problems/future-of-work/what-workers-want-report.pdf>
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- ^{vii} KPMG, 2023, *Realising the Opportunity: Enhancing and strengthening Indigenous engagement as part of the growth of Australian agriculture*, p.15. https://nff.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/NFF-Realising-the-Opportunity-Final-Report_25.5.2023.pdf
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- ^{ix} Lyons, B and De Daunton, F, 2022, 'Recruitment and retention of a rural and regional workforce: a regional development perspective', *Farm Policy Journal*, vol. 19, no.2, p.58-59
- ^x McDonald, N et al, 2022, 'Career development and agriculture: we don't need a marketing campaign', *Farm Policy Journal*, vol. 19, no.2, p.8
- ^{xi} AgriFutures Australia, 2023, *Cultivating the next generation: The role of school-based educators in promoting agricultural careers* <https://agrifutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/23-133-Cultivating-the-next-generation.pdf>
- ^{xii} Wu W, et al. 2019. *The future of Australia's agricultural workforce*, p 62. CSIRO Data61: Canberra, Australia, p.62

