

# Building a skilled and adaptable workforce

Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025

## Introduction

The Australian Logistics Council (ALC) is the national peak body representing the end-to-end freight logistics supply chain. Our members include Australia’s largest freight transport and logistics operators, infrastructure owners, retailers, ports, technology companies, and energy providers. Collectively, ALC members are responsible for the movement of the majority of Australia’s domestic and export freight across road, rail, sea, and air.

The freight and logistics sector is indispensable to Australia’s economy, contributing approximately 9% of national GDP and underpinning every major industry—from agriculture and manufacturing to construction, retail, and healthcare. The sector’s performance has a direct impact on national productivity, cost-of-living pressures, inflation, and resilience to disruption.

workforce shortages and structural barriers in skills, training, and regulation are constraining the sector’s ability to deliver efficient, sustainable, and reliable freight services. The 2024 *Occupation Shortage List* and *Occupation Shortage Drivers* reports by Jobs and Skills Australia<sup>12</sup> freight and logistics as among the most severely affected sectors, with more than 26,000 truck driving vacancies and significant shortfalls in other critical logistics roles.

### Truck Driver (General)

ANZSCO code 733111  
Skill level 4

Year	AUS	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
2024	S	S	NS	S	S	S	S	S	S
Previous years									
2023	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
2022	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
2021	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	S	NS

The Australian Bureau of Statistics confirms vacancy rates in freight transport have grown by nearly 50% (48.7%) in the past 5 years.<sup>3</sup> These workforce gaps are not only operational in nature—they represent a broader economic vulnerability. A constrained freight sector reduces network throughput, delays supply chains, increases business costs, and ultimately raises prices for Australian consumers. With an ageing workforce, persistent skills mismatches, declining enrolments in vocational education and training, and limited public awareness of career pathways, the sector faces both immediate and long-term challenges in securing a skilled and adaptable workforce.

Unlike many other sectors, inefficiencies in logistics and freight transport have cascading impacts across the entire economy. Addressing workforce constraints is therefore critical not only to the logistics industry but to achieving national objectives in productivity growth, emissions reduction, sovereign capability, and economic resilience.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024\\_occupation\\_shortage\\_drivers\\_report.pdf](https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024_occupation_shortage_drivers_report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-shortages-analysis/occupation-shortage-list>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/jobs/job-vacancies-australia/feb-2025>

The ALC welcomes the opportunity to support the Productivity Commission’s inquiry into workforce development. This submission sets out targeted recommendations to improve the secondary and tertiary education and training system, modernise occupational regulation, and support long-term workforce planning for the freight and logistics sector.

## Supporting the Workforce Through a Flexible Secondary, Tertiary Education and Training Sector

Australia's freight and logistics sector urgently requires a responsive post-secondary education and training system to meet escalating workforce demands and technological change. ALC calls for a national response to ensure the sector can train and retain a workforce that is both technically competent and adaptive. Our key recommendations are as follows:

### 1. Modernised Qualifications and Delivery Models

Many logistics qualifications are outdated and overly theoretical. There is a clear need to co-design industry-aligned credentials—especially in automation, robotics, decarbonisation, and data analytics—through partnerships between government, industry, and education providers. Modular micro credentials, embedded work placements, and simulation-based learning should be scaled nationally.

ALC collaborates closely with research partners, such as Swinburne university, demonstrating the value of co-designed qualifications, real-time curriculum updates, and applied research. These partnerships should be formally supported and replicated across jurisdictions as a national model.

The sector also requires short-form, stackable qualifications tailored to roles like automation technician, supply chain analyst, and hydrogen fleet mechanic.

### 2. National Logistics Skills Hub

ALC supports the immediate establishment of a National Logistics Skills Hub to coordinate curriculum modernisation, real-time workforce planning, and delivery in high-need regions. The hub should operate as the implementation backbone of a broader National Workforce Strategy, akin to successful models such as the Digital Skills Organisation (DSO) pilot<sup>4</sup>.

### 3. Expanded Apprenticeships

The current Australian Apprenticeship Priority List<sup>5</sup> omits several critical logistics roles, including supply chain analysts and automation technicians. The only available certification in automation is a Certificate IV in Industrial Automation and Control. Including these roles on the list would ensure government support and incentivise uptake. ALC also calls for the national rollout of the Heavy Vehicle Driver Apprenticeship. ALC considers on-the-job learning models—such as apprenticeships, traineeships, and cadetships—to be particularly effective in capital-intensive sectors with limited public visibility, such as freight and logistics. This is strongly supported by the experience of ALC members, many of whom have seen measurable workforce benefits through structured workplace-based training.

### 4. Inclusive and Accessible Training

To expand workforce participation, training programs must be accessible to under-represented groups, including women, First Nations people, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Australians. National training infrastructure investment should include funding for safe truck stops, female-friendly rest areas, and regional facilities. ALC emphasises that lack of visible career pathways are major deterrents to female participation in non-traditional sectors.

## Balancing Service Availability and Quality Through Fit-for-Purpose Occupational Entry Regulations

Regulatory barriers remain one of the key impediments to workforce growth in freight and logistics. Current frameworks are fragmented, outdated, and not reflective of the operational reality of modern supply chains. The result is reduced labour mobility, delayed onboarding, and constrained service capacity.

### 5. Harmonised Licensing and Accreditation

<sup>4</sup> [https://digiworkforce.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/DSO\\_Evaluation\\_-\\_Summary-of-Findings\\_17July202371.pdf](https://digiworkforce.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/DSO_Evaluation_-_Summary-of-Findings_17July202371.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-support-individuals/resources/australian-apprenticeships-priority-list-1-january-2025>

Licensing fragmentation remains a key constraint on workforce mobility and productivity. ALC urges the development of a national licensing and accreditation framework, with mutual recognition across states and digital credentialing. This reform alone could significantly increase workforce flexibility, especially in high-demand sectors like interstate trucking, temperature-controlled logistics, and e-commerce fulfilment.

## **6. Modernised Industrial Instruments**

Industrial frameworks in logistics are often outdated, inflexible, and misaligned with technology-enabled operations. Enterprise agreements can limit productivity through rigid rostering, outdated role definitions, and inefficient legacy practices. A sector-specific industrial relations review should be commissioned to support the adoption of modern, flexible work models that balance productivity with workforce wellbeing, and align industrial instruments with current freight practices.

## **7. Skilled Migration Reform**

Migration settings must reflect real workforce gaps. Logistics roles such as warehouse managers, transport planners, and mid-skill maintenance technicians are not adequately recognised in current skilled occupation lists. A Logistics Fast-Track Visa Program and mid-skill migration stream should be considered, along with accelerated processing for employer-sponsored visas.

## **8. Targeted Regulatory Reform**

ALC supports regulatory pilots that enable new training models—such as the heavy vehicle driver apprenticeship—to proceed outside rigid accreditation frameworks. In several cases, employers have offered to co-invest in training infrastructure, only to be blocked by outdated regulation. Government policy must shift from gatekeeping to enabling innovation.

# **Building a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce**

A resilient, well-trained workforce is the cornerstone of national supply chain performance. The ABS reports vacancy growth in freight transport of over 50% between 2022 and 2024<sup>6</sup>.

## **9. National Freight and Logistics Workforce Strategy**

ALC reiterates its call for a National Freight and Logistics Workforce Strategy, governed by a joint taskforce with a 12-month delivery timeframe and portfolio-wide accountability. Examples of success in other sectors, including the aged care reform roadmap, show the value of coordinated action.

## **10. Career Awareness and Branding**

Despite its centrality to the economy, logistics remains low-profile among jobseekers. Public perception lags behind sector transformation. National awareness campaigns and school-based outreach—especially targeting STEM-aligned and sustainability-focused roles—are essential to building long-term workforce supply. Programs like *Wayfinder: Supply Chain Careers for Women* must be scaled and embedded nationally.

## **11. Industry Co-Investment and Program Scaling**

Industry is willing to invest in workforce solutions, but needs enabling policy frameworks. Existing initiatives must be scaled, not sidelined. ALC members have shown strong results through in-house academies, public-private pilots, and community partnerships. Programs such as Wayfinder<sup>7</sup> (Supply Chain Careers for Women), Qube cadetships<sup>8</sup>, and the Linfox Warehouse Academy<sup>9</sup> must be scaled through matched public-private funding and formally integrated into training and employment strategies. ALC's partnership with Swinburne university is another example for an initiative that build industry-relevant, future-facing logistics skills.

## **12. Workforce Intelligence and Planning**

Centralised, real-time labour market data is essential. A revitalised workforce intelligence platform—replacing decommissioned tools such as the Labour Market Information Portal—should inform training investment, regional delivery, and occupational forecasting.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/jobs/job-vacancies-australia>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.wayfinder.org.au/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://qube.com.au/careers/cadet-program/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.linfox.com/growing-our-own/>

# Conclusion

Freight and logistics are not just essential services—they are strategic assets. Without urgent, coordinated action to build a skilled and adaptable workforce, Australia will face rising costs, diminished resilience, and eroded national productivity.

ALC urges the Productivity Commission to prioritise reforms that:

- Modernise training systems.
- Streamline occupational regulations.
- Empower industry-government partnerships.
- Deliver an inclusive, skilled, and adaptive workforce.

By recognising the logistics workforce as a national economic priority—and not just a sectoral issue—Australia can unlock significant productivity gains and build a more resilient, equitable, and future-ready economy.