

THRIVE 2030 Workforce and Skills Technical Working Group

Twelve-month status report

June 2023



## Context

The [Workforce and Skills Technical Working Group](https://www.austrade.gov.au/about/visitor-economy/thrive-workforce-and-skills-working-group/thrive-workforce-and-skills-working-group) (the Working Group) was established in
May 2022 as part of the implementation of Australia’s national visitor economy strategy, THRIVE 2030. Its membership reflects a cross-section of industry, Australian Government (the Government), and state and territory government representatives from the visitor economy. This 12-month status report is a requirement of the Working Group’s [Terms of Reference](https://www.austrade.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/10837/workforce-and-skills-technical-working-group-terms-of-reference-2022.docx.aspx).

## Latest tourism jobs statistics[[1]](#footnote-2)

Pre-pandemic, tourism jobs peaked at 757,500 in the December quarter 2019. During the pandemic, they dropped as low as 364,300 jobs in the June quarter 2020. They have now recovered to 676,400 jobs in the December quarter 2022. Despite the gains, there were still 81,100 fewer filled jobs (‑10.7 per cent) in tourism in the December quarter 2022 than the December 2019 peak. There is still work to do to rebuild the tourism workforce and finding people with the right skills is an ongoing challenge for tourism businesses.

## Outcomes

### Working group engagement

As at May 2023, the Working Group has conducted two meetings on 19 May 2022 and
17 November 2022. On 5 August 2022, the Working Group provided feedback to Treasury to inform the Jobs and Skills Summit and the Employment White Paper. At the Tourism Jobs Summit, held on 30 August 2022, members facilitated discussions. Summaries of the [meetings](https://www.austrade.gov.au/about/consultation/thrive-workforce-and-skills-working-group#:~:text=The%20THRIVE%202030%20Workforce%20and,of%20domestic%20and%20international%20visitors.) and the [Tourism Jobs Summit](https://www.austrade.gov.au/news/publications/tourism-jobs-summit-outcomes) are available on Austrade’s website.

### The Tourism Jobs Summit

The Tourism Jobs Summit was hosted by Minister for Trade and Tourism, Senator the Hon Don Farrell on 30 August 2022, and brought together over 70 representatives from tourism industry associations, unions, business, academia and Australian and state and territory governments. The objective was to collaborate on innovative ways to address workforce challenges.

Working Group members led discussions to capture key workforce priorities for the visitor economy. Participants suggested ideas to address workforce challenges under priority themes including structural issues, domestic and international workforce, skills capability, and promoting the visitor economy as a career of choice. [Outcomes from the Summit](https://www.austrade.gov.au/news/publications/tourism-jobs-summit-outcomes) have been published on Austrade’s website.

Key priority actions from the Summit have directly informed the development of the Visitor Economy Workforce and Skills Interim Action Plan (the Action Plan), the Government’s [Jobs and Skills Summit](https://treasury.gov.au/employment-whitepaper/jobs-summit), and Austrade’s input to the Government’s Employment White Paper (led by Treasury) and [Migration Review](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-publications/reviews-and-inquiries/departmental-reviews/migration-system-for-australias-future) (led by the Department of Home Affairs).

### Engagement with Government Employment White Paper

On 5 August 2022, members of the Working Group participated in a briefing provided by Treasury to hear directly about the development of the Government’s [Employment White Paper](https://treasury.gov.au/review/employment-whitepaper). Members actively contributed ideas and key issues from the perspective of the visitor economy to the Employment White Paper Taskforce.

### Research

The Working Group set a research agenda to better understand the workforce and skills issues facing the visitor economy.

Based on members’ indicated priorities, a literature review report was developed by Swinburne University that investigated ways to promote [the visitor economy as a career of choice](https://www.austrade.gov.au/news/publications/the-visitor-economy-making-it-a-career-of-choice), while building competitiveness and resilience for businesses. Further, Austrade has assisted in fostering a relationship between the Working Group and the Council for Australasian Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE). CAUTHE provided Austrade and the Working Group with a list of ongoing and completed research into visitor economy workforce issues, to further help understand workforce challenges.

### Visitor Economy Workforce and Skills Interim Action Plan

Overseeing the development of the Action Plan was the main priority for the Working Group. The Action Plan is an interim document, pending the development of the *Visitor Economy Workforce and Skills Long-Term Strategy* – a key action from THRIVE 2030. The Action Plan has five key themes that align with industry priorities. It sets out objectives, funded actions, future opportunities, and potential measurements to support the recovery and development of the visitor economy workforce. The actions reflect work underway across Australian, state and territory governments and industry. They have been informed by consultation among these stakeholder groups as well as the outcomes generated from the Tourism Jobs Summit. The Action Plan will be published on Austrade’s website and will be in place for 12-18 months.

## Looking forward

### the Visitor Economy Workforce and skills Long-Term Strategy

The Working Group agreed at its first meeting that development of the long-term strategy would be a core focus for the group. The strategy will focus on measures that increase workplace productivity, increase labour supply and build workforce capability. It is due to be delivered within two years of convening the Working Group. It was also agreed that the outcomes of the Employment White Paper and Migration Review were both relevant to the strategy and that those outcomes would be taken into account when developing the strategy.

The Employment White Paper will develop a framework for building a better trained and more productive workforce. This framework is expected to include policy approaches relevant to building tourism workforce capability that can be leveraged in the development of the long-term strategy. The White Paper is expected to be released in September 2023.

The Review of Australia’s Migration System will inform the development of the Government’s future Migration Strategy: *A Migration System for a more prosperous and secure Australia.* One of the aims of the Strategy is to ensure Australia’s migration system facilitates the entry of skilled migrants to complement the national workforce. The Review report and Outline of the Government’s Migration Strategy were released in April 2023. The national Migration Strategy is expected to be released in late 2023.

### Future Opportunities

The Working Group will hold its next meeting in June 2023 to determine the group’s priorities over the next 12 months. As part of its future agenda, the following work will continue:

#### Workforce data

Austrade is working with the THRIVE 2030 Industry Data and Expert Analysis Working Group to better understand the tourism workforce data needs. The Working Group is currently considering the available data and research to identify gaps and consider the next steps in data and research.

#### Ongoing collaboration

Austrade is working with the individual members of the Working Group as appropriate to identify practical examples of how issues with cross-border qualification recognition are being managed by industry. There is also scope for the Working Group to facilitate collaboration between industry and Government to reduce ongoing workforce barriers.

#### Case studies

Austrade and Working Group members are looking at Australian based workforce case studies, to further highlight the work being undertaken across on the industry on building a capable and resilient workforce in the visitor economy.

#### Diversification strategy

Austrade is currently undertaking consultation on a tourism and international education diversification strategy, which is an action required under THRIVE 2030. Workforce and skills issues will need to be understood and incorporated into any findings related to the strategy and be part of the recommendations under the strategy. Stakeholders have emphasised the importance of building workforce capability, particularly around language and cultural skills, to support expansion into new markets and address workforce shortages.

1. Source: Tourism Research Australia [↑](#footnote-ref-2)