

2019

TECHNICIANS SUPPORT SERVICES

INDUSTRY REFERENCE COMMITTEE
INDUSTRY SKILLS FORECAST



SKILLSIQ

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Executive Summary

Technicians Support Services operate in an array of health care and social assistance sectors, including anaesthetic technology, audiometry, cardiac technology, hospital pharmacies, pathology, sterilisation services, optometry, and health administration. The job roles supported by the Training Package Products are varied and can involve undertaking administrative, assistant and/or operational (i.e. technician) activities.

The Technicians Support Services Training Package Products are packaged within the HLT Health Training Package and consist of 16 qualifications that support pathways to employment in technician and support roles across the health sector. Overall, the health care and social assistance industry workforce is expected to grow significantly over the next five years, with forecasts indicating it will reach 1.9 million workers in 2023. This growth will undoubtedly include many job roles supported by these Training Package Products.

Over the years health care and clinical practices have evolved significantly. The sector overall has been experiencing several challenges which are impacting workforce skills requirements, including:

- An ageing workforce
- New and emerging technologies
- Skills shortages
- Low retention of staff
- Government legislation changes, and
- Lack of career progression opportunities.

The anaesthesia sector in particular has been experiencing constant change, with refinements to established standards and procedures and ground-breaking changes as a result of the introduction of new protocols and techniques.

Key challenges regarding the implementation of new technologies, technical standards and practices, as well as the need to adapt to changes in government legislation, have resulted in skills and knowledge gaps within the current Training Package Products. To address the immediate workforce skills issues, it is proposed that the Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology, and seven associated Units of Competency, be updated in 2019–20 to align with contemporary industry requirements.

Note: The National Schedule details the Training Package update and development work commissioned by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC). The National Schedule is informed by this Industry Skills Forecast, which outlines the proposed timing for the update of existing Training Package Products. This Forecast has been compiled using a number of information sources, including academic literature, statistical data, IRC member input and expertise, feedback received via public consultation, SkillsIQ's 2019 Future Skills Survey, and an industry analysis of both new and emerging workforce skills needs overseen by the Technicians Support Services Industry Reference Committee (IRC).

Administrative Information

Industry Reference Committee (IRC)

Technicians Support Services

The Technicians Support Services Industry Reference Committee (IRC) is responsible for ensuring that nationally recognised qualifications deliver the skills and knowledge required to equip the sectors under its remit with a highly skilled workforce. The sectors represent those involved in providing human health care and social assistance.

Skills Service Organisation (SSO)

SkillsIQ Limited

SkillsIQ supports 19 IRCs representing diverse 'people-facing' sectors. These sectors provide services to people in a variety of contexts such as customer, patient or client. The IRCs are collectively responsible for overseeing the development and review of Training Package Products, including qualifications, serving the skills needs of sectors comprising almost 50 per cent of the Australian workforce.

SkillsIQ's Industry Reference Committees (IRCs)

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker
- Aged Services
- Ambulance and Paramedic
- Children's Education and Care
- Client Services
- Community Sector and Development
- Complementary Health
- Dental
- Direct Client Care and Support
- Disability Support
- Enrolled Nursing
- First Aid
- Local Government
- Personal Services
- Public Sector
- Sport and Recreation
- Technicians Support Services
- Tourism, Travel and Hospitality
- Wholesale and Retail Services.

“ It takes skill to make a difference. We will only get skilled, valued and rounded workers when training provider, employee and employer are connected in their views on continuous learning. ”

SkillsIQ's Cross-sector Skills Committee

IRC Sign-off

Sign-off of this Industry Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work has been confirmed by the Technicians Support Services Industry Reference Committee.

Tony Badrick,
Chair

A. Skills Forecast

A.1 Sector Overview

Introduction

Workers in the roles under the remit of the Technicians Support Services IRC operate in an array of health care and social assistance sectors, and subsequently include a range of multi-levelled and multi-skilled job roles. These job roles may be involved in undertaking administrative, supportive, operational (i.e. technician) and/or supervisory activities in sectors including:

- Anaesthetic Technology
- Audiometry
- Cardiac Technology
- Health Administration
- Hospital Pharmacies
- Medical Practice Assisting
- Operating Theatre Support
- Optometry
- Pathology, and
- Sterilisation Services.

Businesses Involved

Businesses operating in the service areas outlined above include a range of public and private small, medium and large enterprises, spread across the country. Some examples and counts of relevant business types involved in hiring workers supported by the Technicians Support Services Training Package across Australia include (2017):¹

- 695 public hospitals (2016–17) and 630 private hospitals (2015–16)²
- 42,057 general practice medical services
- 16,490 specialist medical services
- 2,331 pathology and diagnostic imaging services
- 3,193 optometry and optical dispensing
- 6,263 physiotherapy services
- 5,196 chiropractic and osteopathic services.

Stakeholders

Key stakeholders represent a range of organisations that perform a variety of strategic, regulative and operational roles in the Technicians Support Services sectors within the wider health and social assistance industry. Stakeholders play an important role during Training Package reviews by supplying industry insights to ensure updates are

in line with industry needs. Examples of stakeholder organisations include:

- Government departments and agencies (Commonwealth and state/territory-based)
- Peak bodies and industry associations (i.e. across the sectors listed earlier)
- Employee associations
- Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) both public and private, and their representative bodies
- Small, medium and large private and public employers across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas, including for-profit and not-for-profit organisations.

Challenges and Opportunities

Note: These findings are based on desk research and SkillsIQ's 2019 Future Skills Survey (conducted between November 2018 and January 2019) which has been filtered to include stakeholders from the Technicians Support Services industries only. Insights and advice from IRC members and feedback from public consultation have also been used to compile and validate the information provided.

Ageing workforce

The ageing workforce is a potential challenge to employers, who may need to adopt workplace arrangements that will encourage a substantial number of mature-age workers to remain in work. The Treasury expects the labour force participation rate for people aged 65 or over to increase from 12.9% to 17.3% over the period 2014–2054,³ while participation rate for young people, particularly those aged 19–24, is expected to keep on falling. Advantages of retaining mature-age workers include their extensive work experience, maturity levels/professionalism, strong work ethic and reliability.⁴ Strategies to retain mature-age workers, such as job redesign to accommodate constraints stemming from the ageing process, are necessary.

New technologies

Digital health technologies enable individuals to track, manage and improve their health and care. Digital health technologies include the use of mobile phones, 'wearables', Telehealth, telemedicine/telecare,

personalised medicine and health information technology.⁵ The Australian Digital Health Agency's *National Digital Health Strategy* aims to implement digital technologies by 2020 to offer 'seamless, safe, secure digital health services and technologies that provide a range of innovative, easy to use tools for both patients and providers'.⁶ The transition towards a national digital health care platform will require health care professionals to be educated about digital health and the use of the My Health Record. Digital skills and knowledge areas are becoming increasingly important for job roles within the Technicians Support Services sector.

Skills shortages

Skills shortages are reported predominantly within the pathology service area. Skills gaps are linked to insufficient qualification assessments and a lack of basic skills; increased technical skills requirements; and an undersupply of training and education, including workplace training. In effect, there has been a lack of pathology workers, particularly in rural regions, where the job role 'pathology collector' has been listed in the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) visa list since March 2018.⁷ As such, there is a growing need to improve the quality of education and training for prospective pathology students to fill this skills shortage.

The role of the Anaesthetic Technician is also changing and has been impacted by the introduction of new techniques and new technology which is continually evolving. Where these roles were once heavily focused on the operation of equipment, there is now a much greater focus on patient-centric services. Invasive and non-invasive patient monitoring using technology, as well as equipment to conduct patient checks at the point of care and the use of physiological computers, has broadened the range of skills and knowledge required to undertake these job roles.

One of the key documents relating to the standards for practice for Anaesthetic Technicians is the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists' *PS08 Statement on the Assistant for the Anaesthetist*. This document provides guidance on standards of anaesthetic practice which underpin the safety and quality of patient care. This standard was updated in 2016, shortly after the last

update to the Training Package Products for anaesthetic technicians was released on training.gov.au. It is imperative that the Training Package Products be updated to ensure alignment with this standard, now that it has been in place for some time and is established in practice.

The Training Package needs to address these changes to ensure the workforce supporting the anaesthetic technicians sector continues to be equipped with the right skills and knowledge to meet current and future industry needs.

Other fields of relevance where skill shortages have been registered include audiology, and specifically Audiologist job roles, where the Department of Jobs and Small Business has registered this role in its skills shortage list.⁸

Retention of staff

Retaining health support workers is widely known to be an issue strongly experienced in rural locations.⁹ In 2015, administrative/support worker vacancies in government-funded Indigenous primary health care organisations were highest in very remote areas.¹⁰ Furthermore, retention of staff in the sector may be challenging due to high levels of fixed term contracts and casual employment. In the beginning of 2018, health care services had the third-highest number of casual workers, behind accommodation & food services and retail trade.¹¹ Workplace stress and bullying can also have a negative impact on staff retention among health administration workers. A Victorian Public Sector Commission survey in 2016 showed a quarter (25%) of staff in health agencies experienced bullying.¹² Efforts to retain staff in the health sector are beneficial, as retention enhances the quality of patient safety and outcomes and reduces staff turnover costs.

Government / legislation changes

The 457 visa governing the temporary employment of overseas workers in Australia was replaced by the Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS)/482 visa in April 2017. The 457 to 482 visa change has increased the complexity and cost of the application process for overseas workers.¹³ Relative to the Technicians Support Services industry, the role of Medical Technician is included under the TSS visa list of eligible occupations. Soon after the visa change,



between July and September of 2017, the number of visas granted had decreased by 35.7% compared to the same quarter of the previous year.¹⁴ In effect, the 457 to 482 visa change may have a negative impact on the supply of medical technicians to the Australian workforce.

Lack of career progression

A lack of career progression is a significant problem in the hospital and health services pharmacy support, health administration and pathology sectors. The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia's (SHPA's) paper, *Exploring the role of hospital pharmacy technicians and assistants to enhance the delivery of patient centred care*, reported that there are limited career advancement opportunities for pharmacy technicians and assistants.¹⁵ At present, most hospital pharmacy technicians/assistants work within a flat career structure. One of the barriers to expanding

the structure to senior-level positions is that certain Australian states insist upon academic requisites that are not covered by the Australian medical technician/assistant curriculum. For example, in New South Wales a Level 4 technician advancing to a senior-level role requires a management qualification. As a result, gaps are filled by highly trained technicians from the United Kingdom or overseas-trained pharmacists. To build a career structure for local medical technicians and assistants, education and training should incorporate foundations that consider senior-level job roles and other possible future career paths.

A project is currently being undertaken to address skills gaps in hospital pharmacy qualifications to ensure a suitably skilled local talent pool on which industry can draw.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) Qualifications Supporting Industry

The nationally recognised VET qualifications that cater to this sector are:

Sterilisation Services

- HLT37015 Certificate III in Sterilisation Services
- HLT47015 Certificate IV in Sterilisation Services

Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support

- HLT37115 Certificate III in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support
- HLT47115 Certificate IV in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support

Pathology

- HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Collection
- HLT37415 Certificate III in Pathology Assistance

Health Administration

- HLT37315 Certificate III in Health Administration
- HLT47315 Certificate IV in Health Administration

Audiometry

- HLT47415 Certificate IV in Audiometry
- HLT57415 Diploma of Audiometry

Operating Theatre Technical Support

- HLT47515 Certificate IV in Operating Theatre Technical Support

Cardiac Technology

- HLT47615 Certificate IV in Cardiac Technology

Medical Practice Assisting

- HLT47715 Certificate IV in Medical Practice Assisting

Optical Dispensing

- HLT47815 Certificate IV in Optical Dispensing

Practice Management

- HLT57715 Diploma of Practice Management

Anaesthetic Technology

- HLT57915 Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology.

Table 1: Number of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) by nationally recognised **Technicians Support Services** qualifications on scope – Technicians Support Services Training Package Products

Qualification Code	Qualification Title	No. of RTOs with Qualification on Scope
Sterilisation Services		
HLT37015	Certificate III in Sterilisation Services	14
HLT47015	Certificate IV in Sterilisation Services	4
Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support		
HLT37115	Certificate III in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support	4
HLT47115	Certificate IV in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support	5
Pathology		
HLT37215	Certificate III in Pathology Collection	35*
HLT37415	Certificate III in Pathology Assistance	7
Health Administration		
HLT37315	Certificate III in Health Administration	31
HLT47315	Certificate IV in Health Administration	29

Qualification Code	Qualification Title	No. of RTOs with Qualification on Scope
Audiometry		
HLT47415	Certificate IV in Audiometry	1
HLT57415	Diploma of Audiometry	1
Operating Theatre Technical Support		
HLT47515	Certificate IV in Operating Theatre Technical Support	5
Cardiac Technology		
HLT47615	Certificate IV in Cardiac Technology	0
Medical Practice Assisting		
HLT47715	Certificate IV in Medical Practice Assisting	5
Optical Dispensing		
HLT47815	Certificate IV in Optical Dispensing	5
Practice Management		
HLT57715	Diploma of Practice Management	25
Anaesthetic Technology		
HLT57915	Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology	4

Source: Training.gov.au. RTOs approved to deliver this qualification. Accessed 14 January 2019.

*The national register lists 35 RTOs with this qualification on scope. However, it is noted that one RTO is listed twice.

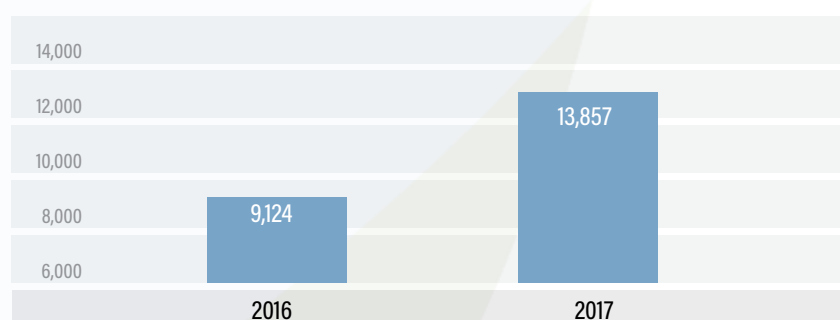
Enrolments and Completions

In 2017, there were just over **13,800 enrolments** across all VET qualifications catered for by the Technicians Support Services Training Package Products. This represents an increase of 52% (equivalent to 4,733 enrolments) from the previous year (see Figure 1).

The most popular qualifications in 2017 were:

- HLT37215 - Certificate III in Pathology Collection (4,709 enrolments)
- HLT57715 - Diploma of Practice Management (2,137 enrolments).

Figure 1: Total number of enrolments (Total VET Activity [TVA]) by nationally recognised qualifications on scope – Technicians Support Services Training Package Products, 2016-2017



Source: NCVET VOCSTATS, Program enrolments 2016-2017

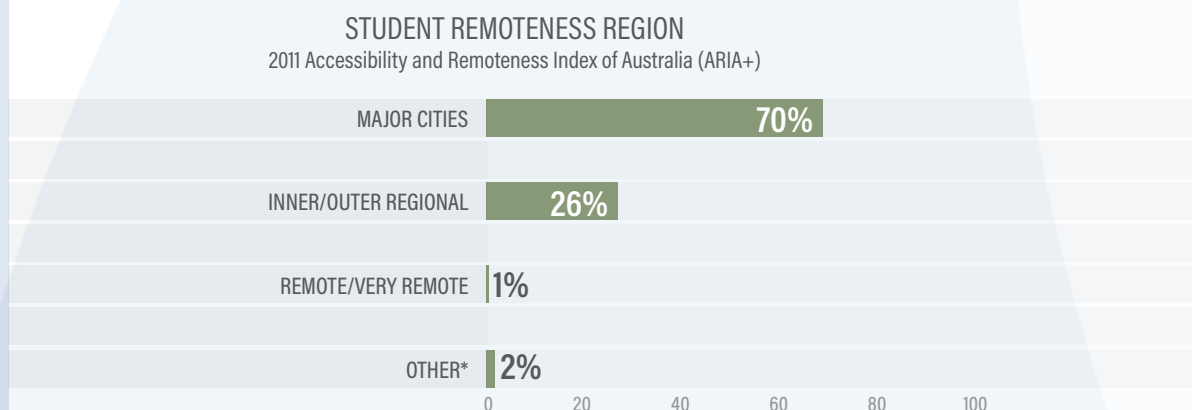
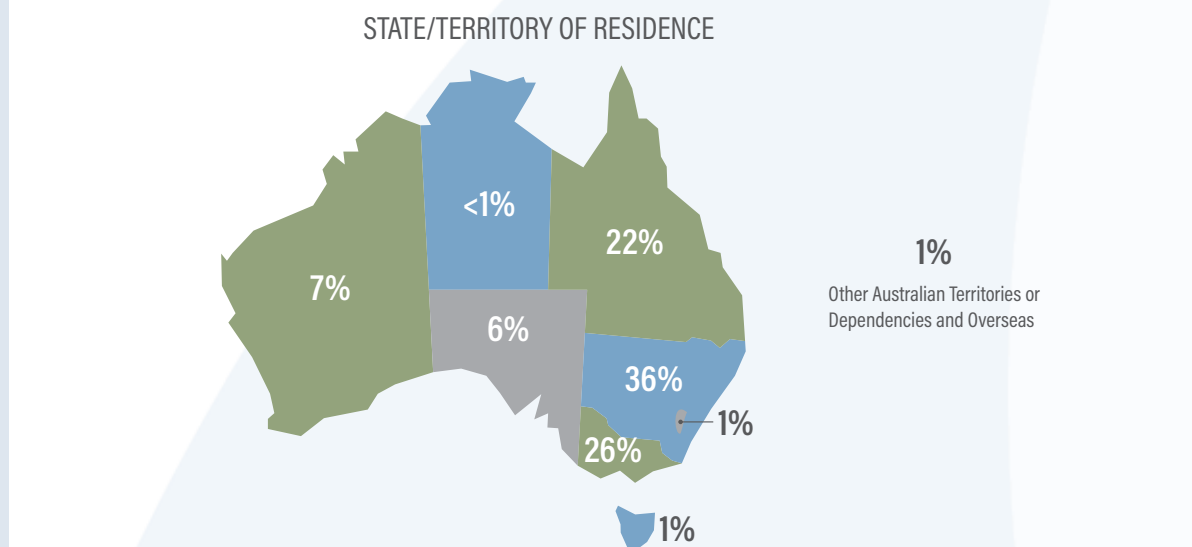
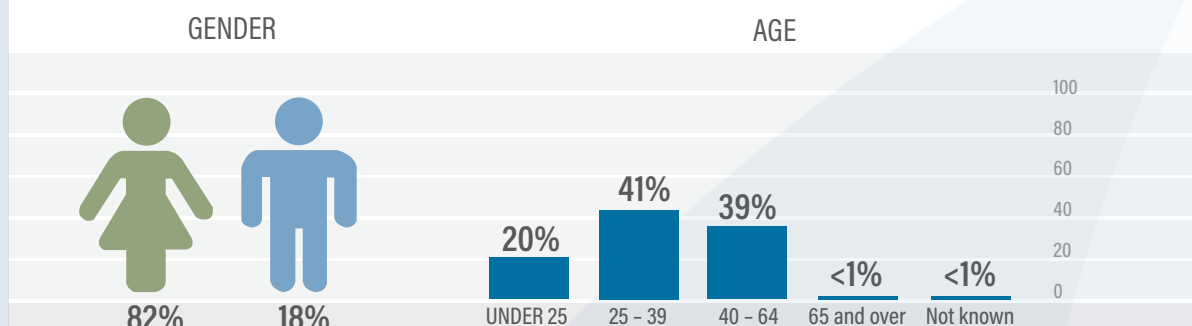
A snapshot of key traits of the *HLT Training Package - Technicians Support Services* enrolments for 2017 is provided below, followed by a breakdown of enrolments and completions for individual qualifications (see Table 2 and Table 3).

General notes on statistics:

1. Enrolment and completion data is sourced from NCVER VOCSTATS (program enrolments and completions 2016–2017), accessed December 2018.
2. It is important to note that not all training providers were required to submit enrolment and completion data at the time of collection, and some figures presented may therefore under-represent the true count of enrolments and completions for a qualification. From 2018, **all** training providers were required to submit data, and current discrepancies noted in the national NCVER figures versus actual attendance should therefore be minimal in future releases. The data presented in this report is shown for indicative purposes.
3. Figures reflect public and private RTO data.
4. Completion data for 2017 represents preliminary outcomes (i.e. not a full year).
5. Superseded qualifications and their respective enrolment and completion data are not tabled.

2017 ENROLMENT SNAPSHOT

TECHNICIANS SUPPORT SERVICES TRAINING PACKAGE PRODUCTS



Source: NCVER VOCSTATS (Program enrolments 2017 by various breakdowns)

*Includes 'Outside Australia' and 'Not known'.

Table 2: Total number of enrolments (Total VET Activity [TVA]) by nationally recognised qualifications on scope – Technicians Support Services Training Package Products, 2016–2017

Qualification	2016	2017	TOTAL
Sterilisation Services			
HLT37015 - Certificate III in Sterilisation Services	950	1,498	2,448
HLT47015 - Certificate IV in Sterilisation Services	132	370	502
Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support			
HLT37115 - Certificate III in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support	37	127	164
HLT47115 - Certificate IV in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support	200	321	521
Pathology			
HLT37215 - Certificate III in Pathology Collection	2,329	4,709	7,038
HLT37415 - Certificate III in Pathology Assistance	195	231	426
Health Administration			
HLT37315 - Certificate III in Health Administration	1,035	1,731	2,766
HLT47315 - Certificate IV in Health Administration	775	1,269	2,044
Audiometry			
HLT47415 - Certificate IV in Audiometry	39	52	91
HLT57415 - Diploma of Audiometry	134	212	346
Operating Theatre Technical Support			
HLT47515 - Certificate IV in Operating Theatre Technical Support	127	228	355
Medical Practice Assisting			
HLT47715 - Certificate IV in Medical Practice Assisting	132	312	444
Optical Dispensing			
HLT47815 - Certificate IV in Optical Dispensing	258	482	740
Practice Management			
HLT57715 - Diploma of Practice Management	2,610	2,137	4,747
Anaesthetic Technology			
HLT57915 - Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology	171	178	349

Source: NCVET VOCSTATS, accessed December 2018.

Note: HLT47615 - Certificate IV in Cardiac Technology was not listed in the NCVET data at the time of reporting.

Table 3: Total number of completions (Total VET Activity [TVA]) by nationally recognised qualifications on scope – Technicians Support Services Training Package Products, 2016–2017

Qualification	2016	2017	TOTAL
Sterilisation Services			
HLT37015 - Certificate III in Sterilisation Services	271	642	913
HLT47015 - Certificate IV in Sterilisation Services	0	131	131
Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support			
HLT37115 - Certificate III in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support	0	36	36
HLT47115 - Certificate IV in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support	33	81	114
Pathology			
HLT37215 - Certificate III in Pathology Collection	773	1,861	2,634
HLT37415 - Certificate III in Pathology Assistance	89	76	165
Health Administration			
HLT37315 - Certificate III in Health Administration	198	387	585
HLT47315 - Certificate IV in Health Administration	132	189	321
Audiometry			
HLT47415 - Certificate IV in Audiometry	2	8	10
HLT57415 - Diploma of Audiometry	6	21	27
Operating Theatre Technical Support			
HLT47515 - Certificate IV in Operating Theatre Technical Support	0	101	101
Medical Practice Assisting			
HLT47715 - Certificate IV in Medical Practice Assisting	1	22	23
Optical Dispensing			
HLT47815 - Certificate IV in Optical Dispensing	47	178	225
Practice Management			
HLT57715 - Diploma of Practice Management	89	235	324
Anaesthetic Technology			
HLT57915 - Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology	35	74	109

Source: NCVET VOCSTATS, accessed December 2018.

Note: HLT47615 - Certificate IV in Cardiac Technology was not listed in the NCVET data at time of reporting.



A.2 Employment and Skills Outlook Overview

Employment – Current and Projected

Note: The principal data source that provides workforce data and trends regarding roles of relevance to this Training Package at a national level is Census data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Department of Jobs and Small Business. The workforce statistics and projections presented in this section are based on Census collections, and are reported according to prescribed Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) and Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) classifications.

The current definitions, and the labelling used for some ANZSIC and ANZSCO codes, as well as the aggregation of roles across codes, can be limited in providing a true picture of some sectors' workforces.

Sectors can host a multitude of job functions, and consequently comprise job titles which go beyond the categories listed in ANZSCO. The statistics in this section are provided as an indicative overview of the sector only.

Job roles covered by the Technicians Support Services Training Package Products are captured across the following ANZSCO category:

- ANZSCO 3112 **Medical Technicians** – representing in aggregate Anaesthetic Technician, Cardiac Technician, Medical Laboratory Technician, Operating Theatre Technician, Pharmacy Technician, Pathology Collector and other Medical Technicians not classified elsewhere.

The health care and social assistance industry employs approximately 1.7 million workers across Australia, making it the largest employing industry in the country.¹⁶ In 2018, there were **26,400** Medical Technicians employed across the industry, noting a fall from the previous year of 4,600 workers (equivalent to a 15% decrease) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Employment level of Medical Technicians - 2008 to 2018



Source: Department of Jobs and Small Business - Job Outlook, Medical Technicians ANZSCO 3112, accessed 17 December 2018

As listed earlier, this occupation classification aggregates a number of different technician role types. The decreasing trend may therefore not be representative of employment changes in the individual role types. We are unable to determine the extent of change within other technician role types with the data available from the Department of Jobs and Small Business. However, statistics regarding actual procedures and hospitalisations, in which technician roles are involved, show that demand instead has been growing in various fields. For example, in 2016–17, there were 11 million episodes of admitted patient care across Australian hospitals, having increased by 4.1% since 2012–13. Admission procedures included childbirth separations, medical separations, surgical separations, mental health care separations and emergency treatments, with nearly all procedures requiring the involvement of an Anaesthetist, Pharmacist, Operating Theatre staff and/or a Pathologist (as well as individuals performing assistant roles). Nearly half (48%) of the recipients of these medical procedures were aged 65 years and over, and as the ageing population trend continues, demand for health care services will therefore certainly continue to rise, as will the demand for key skill areas in anaesthesia, operating theatre support and pathology.¹⁷

Employment forecasts for senior role types of relevance to the Technicians Support Services Training Package are strong, and this demand will reflect equivalent trends for the respective technician and support roles:¹⁸

- Anaesthetists – an additional 800 workers required by 2023
- Pharmacists – an additional 1,900 workers
- Optometrists and Orthoptists – an additional 700 workers
- Medical imaging professionals – an additional 2,300 workers.

For the job roles where specific data is available on technician roles, it shows that **employment growth is forecast to be stable for Medical Technician** roles over the next five years, with estimates indicating employment in 2023 will be **26,500** (representing less than a 1% increase from 2018) (see Figure 3). However, growth is expected in job roles across the **medical services** and **pathology and diagnostic imaging** sectors, with a respective increase of 4.9% to **54,400** workers and 13.6% to **203,000** workers by 2023.¹⁹

Figure 3: Employment levels (May 2018 and May 2023) and forecasted % growth to May 2023 - Medical Technicians



Source: Department of Jobs and Small Business - Job Outlook, Medical Technicians ANZSCO 3112, accessed 17 December 2018

Key traits of the Medical Technicians' workforce are:²⁰

- **Average age** - 40 years (on par with the national job average of 40 years)
- **Gender** – 74% female (significantly higher than the national job average of 47%)
- **Location** – 35.6% in Victoria, 28.5% in New South Wales, 13.2% in Queensland, 11.7% in Western Australia, 7.9% in South Australia, 1.3% in Tasmania, 1.1% in the ACT and less than 1% in the Northern Territory.

Furthermore, in terms of jobs representative of the sector to which the Health Administration qualifications are applicable, in 2016–17 there were **64,858** full-time administrative and clerical staff working in public hospitals (a 51% increase since 2012–13)²¹ and **10,210** working in private hospitals across Australia.²²

Regarding optical dispensing jobs, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) last reported in 2011 that there were **4,481** optical dispensers across Australia.²³ However, the Australian Dispensing Opticians Association (ADOA) estimated in 2015 that there were approximately **2,400** qualified optical dispensers, based on the most current regulated numbers, graduate numbers and registrations to health funds/ industry bodies at that time.²⁴

Overall, the **Health Care and Social Assistance industry workforce is expected to grow significantly** over the next five years, with forecasts indicating it will reach 1.9 million workers in 2023. This growth will undoubtedly include many job roles supported by these Training Package Products.

Future Skills

Note: These findings are based on desk research as well as SkillsIQ's *2019 Future Skills Survey* (conducted between November 2018 and January 2019) which has been filtered to include stakeholders from the Health Care, Social Assistance and Community Services industries only. Insights and advice from IRC members and feedback from public consultation have also been used to compile and validate the information provided.

The work environment across all industries is continuously evolving to adapt to external and internal industry trends. Technology, automation, Artificial Intelligence (AI), globalisation, an ageing population, and shifts in both workforce demographics and industry (i.e. the transition from manufacturing and production to a largely service-based economy)²⁵ are just some of the ongoing trends driving change.

The Technicians Support Services sector, like others, has been impacted by these trends and, as a result, so too have the skills needs of the workforce. Whilst technical skills to perform job tasks are imperative, employers in the short-to-medium future will be looking beyond these, and have indicated that it will be important for workers in their organisations to be **equipped with key soft skills**:



TEAMWORK AND COMMUNICATION



PROBLEM SOLVING



RESILIENCE, STRESS TOLERANCE AND FLEXIBILITY



TECHNICAL / JOB-SPECIFIC SKILLS



SELF MANAGEMENT

These results are in line with wider studies, including the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Survey 2018, which indicates that the top skills in the highest demand in 2022 will include **analytical thinking** and **innovation, creativity, originality** and **initiative, critical thinking, complex problem-solving, leadership** and **emotional intelligence**.²⁶

The VET system plays a pivotal role in supporting employers and employees to adapt to technologies and changes in the workplace. Its role in skilling the workforce with current and emerging skills in demand will only grow more strongly in the future as it continues to support individuals entering the workplace or transitioning into different roles.²⁷

The 12 generic skills listed below, including the descriptors, were provided by the Department of Education and Training for the purpose of being ranked by industry representatives. For the 2019 ranking exercise, an 'Other' generic skill option was included in the list to capture any additional key skills considered important for an industry. Please note that, in this case, no other generic skills were identified.

Key Generic Skills – Ranked in Order of Importance

1	Communication / Collaboration including virtual collaboration / Social intelligence - Ability to understand and apply the principles of creating more value for customers with fewer resources (lean manufacturing) and collaborative skills. Ability to critically assess and develop content that uses new media forms and leverage these media for persuasive communications. Ability to connect to others in a deep and direct way, to sense and stimulate reactions and desired interactions.
2	Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) - Foundation skills of literacy and numeracy.
3	Technology use and application skills - Ability to create and/or use technical means, understand their interrelation with life, society, and the environment. Ability to understand and apply scientific or industrial processes, inventions, methods, etc. Ability to deal with increasing mechanisation and automation and computerisation. Ability to do work from mobile devices rather than from paper.
4	Learning agility / Information literacy / Intellectual autonomy and self-management - Ability to identify a need for information. Ability to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use and cite the information. Ability to discriminate and filter information for importance. Ability to do more with less. Ability to quickly develop a working knowledge of new systems to fulfil the expectations of a job.
5	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) - Sciences, mathematics and scientific literacy.
6	Design mindset / Thinking critically / System thinking / Solving problems - Ability to adapt products to rapidly shifting consumer tastes and trends. Ability to determine the deeper meaning or significance of what is being expressed via technology. Ability to understand how things that are regarded as systems influence one another within a complete entity, or larger system. Ability to think holistically.
7	Customer service / Marketing - Ability to interact with other human beings, whether helping them find, choose or buy something. Ability to supply customers' wants and needs both via face-to-face interactions and digital technology. Ability to manage online sales and marketing. Ability to understand and manage digital products.
8	Managerial / Leadership - Ability to effectively communicate with all functional areas in the organisation. Ability to represent and develop tasks and work processes for desired outcomes. Ability to oversee processes, guide initiatives and steer employees toward achievement of goals.
9	Environmental and Sustainability - Ability to focus on problem solving and the development of applied solutions to environmental issues and resource pressures at local, national and international levels.
10	Data analysis skills - Ability to translate vast amounts of data into abstract concepts and understand data-based reasoning. Ability to use data effectively to improve programs, processes and business outcomes. Ability to work with large amounts of data: facts, figures, number crunching, analysing results.
11	Financial - Ability to understand and apply core financial literacy concepts and metrics, streamlining processes such as budgeting, forecasting and reporting, and stepping up compliance. Ability to manage costs and resources, and drive efficiency.
12	Entrepreneurial - Ability to take any idea, whether it be a product and/or service, and turn that concept into reality and not only bring it to market, but make it a viable product and/or service. Ability to focus on the very next step to get closer to the ultimate goal.



A.3 Key Drivers for Change and Proposed Responses Overview

Key Drivers

The health care and social assistance industry is expected to grow significantly over the next five years. With 11 million episodes of admitted patient care registered across Australian hospitals in one year, and nearly half attributed to patients aged 65 years and over, demand for procedures involving anaesthesia, pharmacy and pathology collections is expected to rise significantly. Hundreds of thousands of jobs will need to be filled by skilled workers in these areas. Some examples of forecast employment growth include Anaesthetists where an additional 800 workers will be needed by 2023.²⁸ Note that many of the senior practitioners involved across this workforce (such as Anaesthetists) work closely with Anaesthetic Technicians and other individuals in Medical Technician roles. Employment growth is therefore expected across many of the support role types supported by this Training Package.

The Technicians Support Services industry faces several challenges. The goal for health support workers is an effective, efficient and safe patient management system.

Technicians need to adhere to practical and educational responsibilities in terms of standards and protocols, workplace health and safety, infection control, maintenance, legal responsibilities including maintaining confidentiality, and the use of specialist equipment such as ultrasound.

The health industry is continuously evolving with the ongoing employment of innovative digital technologies. There is a need for health professionals in the sector to take up professional development to advance their knowledge of, and skills in, new ideas and techniques. Scopes of practice to which this applies includes therapeutics, invasive techniques, emergency care, post-operative care and anaesthetic techniques.

There is also an emerging focus on non-technical skills in this sector, given the increasing importance of patient-centric care. These skills include communication, cultural

competence, the ability to work in a team environment and situational awareness.

The Technicians Support Services industry is challenged by the ageing population, skills shortages due to digital transformations, and problems relating to staff retention. Workers are not equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge due to fast-paced changes in the standards and protocols utilised in the health sector. There is therefore a strong need to update qualifications that have a direct impact on the patient journey.

Proposed Responses

The Technicians Support Services IRC has identified that **anaesthetic technology** is an area of concern that has a direct impact on stakeholders and for which there is a strong need for an update of the Training Package Products.

The IRC proposes to therefore update the *HLT57915 Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology* qualification and seven associated Units of Competency relating to anaesthetic technology job roles.

This qualification was released in 2015 and, since then, there have been extensive changes in the scope of practice in terms of standards and protocols, new ideas and techniques, digital technologies and the terminology used within the discipline of anaesthetics. The qualification therefore needs to reflect current industry practice and knowledge to equip existing and new workers with the ability to perform their job roles in an efficient and effective manner, so providing for the safe management of patients in the anaesthetics sub-sector.

As an example, many clinical procedures are based on an algorithm that defines the sequence of clinical decisions and provides standing orders for technicians, enabling them to undertake their duties without the need for direction from the practitioner on every occasion. **It is therefore critical that training incorporating these algorithms is aligned with current practice and terminology to ensure the safety of patients and successful clinical outcomes.**

Several key risks have been identified and are tabled below in the event that the update of the Training Package Products (in line with the articulated needs of industry) is **not** actioned.

Stakeholder	Risk of no change
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heightened risk of patients experiencing poor quality care and/or negative effects of treatment. In an anaesthesia environment, this can result in death. • Cost implications, including time allocated to conduct in-house training with staff. • Staff turnover may be affected by the lack of appropriate training and pathways.
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to conduct all duties of role adequately and/or progress careers. • Increase in patients' health risks due to lack of knowledge or understanding of key clinical algorithms required for undertaking duties. • Receive poor and inadequate training by accessing unsuitable training options for Australian practices, resulting in a decline in the uptake of qualifications.
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate with insufficient skills to undertake job role, thereby reducing employability.
Training Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training offered does not match industry needs, and quality and reputation of course delivery is compromised.

A.4 Consultation Undertaken

A widespread **multichannel consultation** involving the following stakeholders has been conducted to identify and substantiate the key skills gaps and training needs of the sector, and to determine whether or not there is a need to update the respective Training Package Products:

- All Technicians Support Services Industry Reference Committee (IRC) members representing the following key bodies:
 - Australian Anaesthesia Allied Health Practitioners (AAAHP)
 - Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF)
 - Australian Private Hospitals Association
 - NSW Health, Workforce Policy and Development
 - Federation of Sterilizing Research and Advisory Councils of Australia (FSRACA)
 - Fiona Stanley Hospital
 - Health Industry Training
 - Health Services Union (HSU)
 - Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia
 - Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA)
 - Sonic Healthcare
 - TAFE NSW, Sydney.
- Networks of the Technicians Support Services IRC members.
- A national online survey (*2019 Future Skills Survey*) was distributed via the SkillsIQ database between November 2018 and January 2019 which sought to identify top skills needs and priority industry issues
- Public consultation on the draft Industry Skills Forecast took place in early 2019, and notifications of this were distributed by email to over 17,000 stakeholders registered in SkillsIQ's database network
- The Industry Skills Forecast, including the Proposed Schedule of Work, was promoted to stakeholders and made available via SkillsIQ's website.



B. Proposed Schedule of Work

2019–20

YEAR	PROJECT TITLE AND DESCRIPTOR
2019–20	<p>Anaesthetic Technology</p> <p>The IRC proposes to update the following qualification and associated Units of Competency relating to anaesthetic technology job roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLT57915 Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology

2020–21

YEAR	PROJECT TITLE AND DESCRIPTOR
2020–21	<p>Sterilisation Services</p> <p>The IRC proposes to update the following qualifications and any associated skill sets and Units of Competency relating to sterilisation job roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLT37015 Certificate III in Sterilisation Services • HLT47015 Certificate IV in Sterilisation Services
2020–21	<p>Pathology</p> <p>The IRC proposes to update the following qualifications and any associated skill sets and Units of Competency relating to pathology job roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Collection • HLT37415 Certificate III in Pathology Assistance
2020–21	<p>Medical Practice Assisting and Management</p> <p>The IRC proposes to update the following qualifications and any associated skill sets and Units of Competency relating to medical practice management job roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLT47715 Certificate IV in Medical Practice Assisting • HLT57715 Diploma of Practice Management
2020–21	<p>Audiometry</p> <p>The IRC proposes to update the following qualifications and any associated skill sets and Units of Competency relating to audiometry job roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLT47415 Certificate IV in Audiometry • HLT57415 Diploma of Audiometry
2020–21	<p>Operating Theatre Technical Support</p> <p>The IRC proposes to update the following qualification and any associated skill sets and Units of Competency relating to operating theatre technical support job roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLT47515 Certificate IV in Operating Theatre Technical Support
2020–21	<p>Cardiac Technology</p> <p>The IRC proposes to update the following qualification and any associated skill sets and Units of Competency relating to cardiac technology job roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLT47615 Certificate IV in Cardiac Technology
2020–21	<p>Optical Dispensing</p> <p>The IRC proposes to update the following qualification and any associated skill sets and Units of Competency relating to optical dispensing job roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLT47815 Certificate IV in Optical Dispensing

C. 2019–20 Project Details

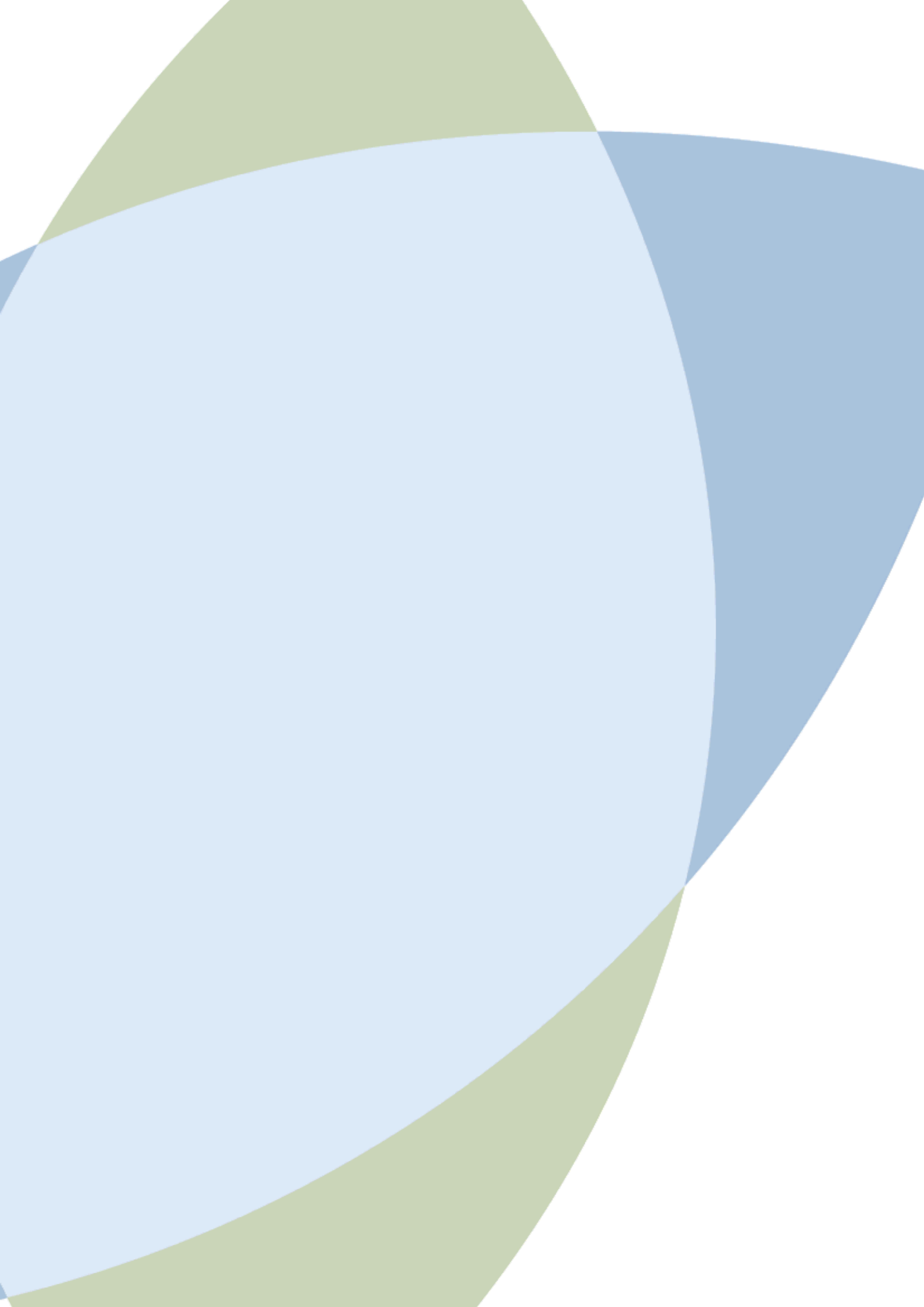
Project 1 – Anaesthetic Technology	
Description:	<p>The IRC proposes to update the following qualification and any Units of Competency relating to anaesthetic technology job roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLT57915 Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology
Rationale:	<p>Consultation with stakeholders indicated that this Diploma plays a critical role in the development of highly trained anaesthetic technicians (i.e. assistants) in terms of their ability to implement frontline patient-centred care. The public expects these workers to be trained to the latest recommended standards due to the high-risk nature of their work. Most of the procedures in which these workers are involved are conducted in hospital settings and involve clinical interventions which carry risks and which require the specialist training of all staff to ensure the administration of anaesthesia is appropriate. The incidence of admitted patient care in Australia's hospitals has been rising over the years, reaching 11 million in 2016–17 and this is expected to continue to increase as trends due to the ageing of our population put further pressures on health care services.</p> <p>From 2014–2018, the number of medical practitioners specialising in anaesthesia has grown by 14%, from 4,485 to 5,114 workers.³⁰ Over the next five years, anaesthetist job roles are expected to grow by a further 17.3% to 6,000 jobs³¹, with anaesthetic assistant job roles that support anaesthetists expected to follow a similar trend.</p> <p>Given that the anaesthetics discipline is a highly specialised sector, the number of enrolments is relatively modest and training is predominantly limited to major public training providers with the facilities to deliver the specialised training required. However, enrolments are steady and on the increase, and this trend is expected to continue as the number of job roles also grows.</p> <p>Health care, and specifically the anaesthesia environment, is continuously evolving. There are constant refinements to established procedures and continuous changes in response to the introduction of new ideas and techniques designed to ensure both safety and the quality of patient care.</p> <p>The qualification was last updated in 2015.</p> <p>One of the primary reference documents underpinning the need for revisions to Training Package Products is <i>ANZCA PS08 – Statement on the Assistant for the Anaesthetist</i>, which was significantly revised shortly after the 2015 version of the <i>HLT57915 Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology</i> was released.</p> <p>The new standards contained in this document have been in place for some time now and are well established. The Training Package Products must be updated to ensure continuing alignment with the professional standards required by industry.</p> <p>New terminology has also been introduced as professional standards evolve. As an example, many clinical procedures are based on an algorithm that defines the sequence of clinical decisions and provides standing orders for technicians, enabling them to undertake their duties without the need for direction from the practitioner on every occasion. It is therefore critical that training incorporating these algorithms be aligned with current practice and terminology. The algorithm for one life-threatening scenario facing anaesthetists has changed from "Can't Intubate, Can't Ventilate" to "Can't Intubate, Can't Oxygenate (CICO)".</p> <p>Whilst this may seem a minor change to the layperson, to a medical professional such as an anaesthetist it is essential that the assistant understands and is able to converse in the appropriate terminology and, more importantly, is familiar with every algorithm. It is imperative that the Training Package Products be updated to reflect contemporary industry practice, including the use of correct and appropriate terminology, to ensure students are not being trained in outdated concepts.</p> <p>In summary, key changes proposed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A thorough update of content, language, and terminology used across the <i>HLT57915 Diploma of Anaesthetic Technology</i> and seven associated Units of Competency → Consideration of the changes as laid out in <i>ANZCA PS08 – Statement on the Assistant for the Anaesthetist</i> and an attendant update of Training Package Products to reflect current professional standards and practice.

Project 1 – Anaesthetic Technology	
Ministers' Priorities Addressed:	<p>This project is an opportunity to support the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) Industry and Skills Council (CISC) to specifically address the following priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry expectations for training delivery and assessment to be identified via the Companion Volume Implementation Guide. • Portability of skills between occupations, such as being employed in public or private hospitals and/or day surgery centres, to be enhanced. • Any unnecessary duplication to be removed from the Training Package, given that industry notes the specialist nature of the role of Anaesthetic Technicians. • Skill sets which have the ability to enhance the flexibility of the Training Package to be identified where applicable.
Consultation Plan:	<p>Stakeholders across the sector as identified in Section A.1 Sector Overview, Stakeholders, will be consulted throughout the course of the project. National industry consultation will be conducted via face-to-face workshops, webinars, surveys and one-on-one interviews, and there will be opportunities for all interested parties to provide comments online via the SkillsIQ Online Feedback Forum.</p>
Scope of Project Overview - Timing:	<p>Estimated duration: 11 months A detailed project plan outlining key dates will be developed and aligned to the Activity Order date once known.</p>
<p>Summary of components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Package/s to be Developed/Updated: One [HLT Health Training Package] • Qualification/s to be Developed/ Updated: One (1) • Skill Set/s to be Developed/ Updated: Nil • Unit/s of Competency to be Developed/Updated: Seven (7) 	



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ADDRESS Level 1, 332 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000

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