Smart and Skilled

SMART AND SKILLED UPDATE – NO. 289 22 October 2026

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1. NSW FEE FREE ARRANGEMENTS FROM JANUARY 2027

The Hon. Steve Whan MP, NSW Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education and the Australian Government Minister for Skills and Training, the Hon. Andrew Giles MP, announced on Wednesday, 21 October 2026, NSW's participation in the new 5-year Free TAFE National Agreement worth over $560 million.

Under the new agreement, the Australian Government will provide NSW with $281 million to fund fee-free training places for training that commences from 1 January 2027 to 31 December 3031, building on NSW's existing commitments to provide fee-free training for equity cohorts and apprentices and trainees. NSW will match the Australian Government funding through existing commitments including fee-free training for equity cohorts in Smart and Skilled.

In NSW, the program will continue to be known as NSW Fee Free, recognising that both TAFE NSW and independent Smart and Skilled providers will deliver fee-free training funded through the Agreement. Similar to the current agreement, this agreement is focused on funding student fees for existing subsidised training places under Smart and Skilled.

The opening of NSW Fee Free enrolments for training that commences from 1 January 2027 onwards is planned for early November. Further information on the implementation of NSW Fee Free under this Agreement and the NSW Fee Free waiver details as well as the NSW Fee Free course list will be provided in a Smart and Skilled Update before enrolments open.

Unless otherwise directed in the information above, please refer enquiries regarding specific operational matters such as Financial Caps and programs/initiatives to your Regional Provider Support Manager.

Please contact Training Services Customer Service & Operations at TSCust.Service@det.nsw.edu.au for:

- technical support with issues such as system/information access and functionality and reporting
- further information for students or employers (unless otherwise directed).

Please note that this update is for the information of approved Smart and Skilled Providers only.