

Minister for Skills
Question Time Briefs
February 2021

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CM2021/260

Portfolio: Skills

ISSUE: JOBTRAINER FUND

Talking points:

- JobTrainer represents a \$16.75 million joint investment with the Australian Government to deliver approximately 3,500 training places to job seekers and young people (aged 17 to 24, who have left school) in the ACT.
- This is a significant initiative to deliver skills development and achieve our ambitious target of growing Canberra's employment base to more than 250,000 local jobs by 2025.
- To date, 22 registered training organisations have enrolled students in 37 different courses in areas such as hospitality, security, environmental management and sustainability, community services, and construction.
- As at 28 January, approximately 456 students have enrolled in JobTrainer training places, with 244 of these students identifying as job seekers.
- The Canberra Institute of Technology will deliver up to 2,500 of the training places, including full qualifications across a range of industry sectors, pre-apprenticeship programs and online short courses.
- The Ginninderry SPARK program is being expanded to provide accredited training options and wraparound support for young people and cohorts who experience barriers to education, training and employment.
- Other training places are being delivered by private training organisations under the existing Skilled Capital program.

Key Information

- The ACT's share of JobTrainer Fund is \$16.75 million (including an \$8.375 million ACT Government contribution).
- The ACT's JobTrainer program includes three streams to allow for speed to market and training options that meet target cohort needs. The first ACT JobTrainer training places were released on 5 November 2020 and the ACT is on track to meet the February 2021 enrolment targets.

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Background Information

- JobTrainer targets young people, aged 17 to 24, and job seekers.
- The intent is to provide these learners access to a range of quality learning opportunities in current and emerging skills needs areas; and employers with access to a skilled and adaptive workforce with a broad range of capabilities.
- JobTrainer courses include full qualifications, pre-apprenticeships and online short courses in key industries and occupations, including community services, healthcare, renewable energy and sustainability, digital and cyber security, construction and hospitality.

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CM2021/260

Portfolio: Skills

ISSUE: Infection Control Training

Talking points:

- The ACT signed the Project Agreement for the National Infection Control Training Fund in May 2020.
- The ACT's share of the Fund is \$1.34 million, based on a 50:50 co-contribution by the Australian and ACT governments.
- The Fund provides 3,800 fee-free infection control training places to ACT customer-facing workers. Funding is prioritised for those working in the retail, tourism, transport and logistics, hospitality, cleaning, security service, aged and disability sectors.
- This training will accelerate the uptake of new accredited skill sets in infection control to support the confident and safe conduct of business in the COVID-19 environment.
- 22 registered training organisations that hold an ACT training initiative funding agreement have nominated to deliver the training places in the ACT.
- As at 28 January 2021, 1,291 learners had enrolled, with 569 completions reported.
- Training places will be available until 30 June 2021, or until the total funding allocation has been exhausted.

Key Information

- In May 2020, the Australian Government established a joint Commonwealth-State fund to deliver infection control training, prioritising customer-facing workers.
- The objective of the fund is to encourage the accelerated uptake of new nationally accredited infection prevention and control training skill sets or equivalent nationally accredited training to support businesses to re-open safely as COVID 19 restrictions allow.

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- The Australian Government has committed \$40 million, which states and territories are required to match, providing a national pool of \$80 million to deliver at least 80,000 training places. Australian Government funding has been distributed to states and territories on an equal per-capita basis.
- The ACT is required to match funding up to \$670,000 once the Australian Government contribution is exhausted by making an equivalent number of training places available to meet demand until 30 June 2021.
- There is no penalty to the ACT if demand does not see the ACT contribute an equal share of funding.
- The fee-free infection control training places are available to customer-facing employees (including business owners and supervisors) in any industry, with funding prioritised for workers in retail, tourism, transport and logistics, hospitality, cleaning and security services, and to increase infection control skill levels in sectors such as aged and disability care.

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Portfolio: Skills

ISSUE: ASSISTANCE FOR APPRENTICES AND TRAINEES

Talking points:

- The ACT Government is committed to supporting apprentices and trainees through the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic recovery.
- Existing support measures include:
 - training subsidies available through the Australian Apprenticeships (User Choice) program
 - Additional Support Funding so training organisations can assist apprentices and trainees to complete their qualification
 - training subsidy loadings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with a disability
 - completion payments for eligible apprentices and trainees
 - travel allowances to assist ACT apprentices who need to travel interstate for structured (off-the-job) training
 - Payroll Tax exemption for eligible employers
 - the field officer program, which facilitates engagement between apprentices and trainees, training organisations, industry and other stakeholders
 - the ACT Wage Entitlement Information Service, delivered under contract by the Canberra Business Chamber, to provide employers and apprentices and trainees with access to expert advice and information on workers' entitlements and industrial agreements
 - ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority funding to assist training existing workers and to incentivise employers to take on an apprentice or trainee.

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Key Information

- **Australian Apprenticeships (User Choice) program** - subsidises the cost of an Australian Apprenticeship (apprenticeship or traineeship). Subsidies are paid directly to the registered training organisation (RTO), reducing the cost to the apprentice or trainee. The program covers a range of industries with nationally recognised qualifications from Certificate II through to Advanced Diploma.
- **Additional Support Funding** - RTOs may apply for this funding for apprentices and trainees who would not otherwise be successful in completing their course, and where there will be additional costs associated with training.
- **Completion payments** - \$300 payments made to eligible students, on completion. To attract the payment the student must complete a survey which collects data on training and employment outcomes.
- **Travel Allowance** –is available to ACT apprentices and trainees to travel interstate if their qualification is not delivered by an ACT RTO.
- **Payroll Tax Exemption for Australian Apprentices** - Payroll Tax exemption is available to employers with new starters where the employee is employed in the industry or occupation for the first time and is receiving eligible training for work.
- **The ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority (TFA)** -
 - Up to \$6,000 in employer incentives for employers of a first-year apprentice in designated qualifications.
 - Financial support for group training organisations (GTOs) and funding for employers (including GTOs) that employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; women in non-traditional vocations; people with a disability; people from a Non-English-speaking Background, and for Language, Literacy and Numeracy Training.
 - Grants available to Individuals and/or organisations where the worker: works for a company that is substantially engaged in carrying out work in the ACT; undertakes training that meets the requirements in an approved RTO/course; or does not meet standard eligibility requirements but may have special circumstances.

Background

- From March to December 2020, compared with the same period in 2019, there has been a:
 - a. 6 percent reduction in the number of commencements
 - b. 8 percent reduction in the number of approvals
 - c. 27 percent increase in the number of suspensions
 - d. 31 percent reduction in the number of cancellations.

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Portfolio: Skills

ISSUE: Assistance for Registered Training Organisations

Talking points:

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACT Government implemented the following measures to support registered training organisations (RTOs):
 - reinstated 2019 qualification subsidy amounts for the Australian Apprenticeships (User Choice) and Skilled Capital programs
 - provided eligible RTOs with access to a 50 per cent unit payment, where a student's assessment was unable to be finalised due to workplace access and social distancing policies
 - reduced compliance burden for RTOs, where possible
 - extended existing Skilled Capital contracts for six months, allowing learners additional time to complete their qualification
 - released an additional 1,965 Skilled Capital training places to address emerging workforce needs and provide learning options for out-of-trade Australian Apprentices
 - released an additional 3,800 fully funded (fee-free) Skilled Capital places in accredited infection control and food handling training
 - released an additional 3,500 training places to job seekers and young people (aged 17 to 24, who have left school), under the JobTrainer program.
- With restrictions having eased, RTOs can finalise students' assessments. In cases where workplace access limitations and social distancing policies remain, RTOs can continue to engage with students through other methods such as online delivery and workplace simulation.

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Key Information

- As at 28 January 2021, there are 89 Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) with a Training Initiative Funding Agreement, including CIT. Of these RTOs, 40 per cent have a head office based in the ACT and the remaining 60 per cent are based interstate.
- The ACT Government administers payments to RTOs as a contribution towards the cost of training. The subsidy is divided by the minimum number of units applicable for the training place and RTOs are normally paid upon reporting the successful completion of each unit. Some units may require employer endorsement or mandatory workplace assessment to successfully complete. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the payment arrangements were amended to provide 50 per cent of the eligible unit amount to be paid to the RTO where the student cannot finalise assessment.
- 1,965 additional Skilled Capital training places were released on 27 May 2020. Over 1,000 people enrolled in courses during the first three days.
- For Infection Control training, 22 RTOs with an ACT training initiative funding agreement have nominated to deliver the training places in the ACT. As at 16 November 2020, 1072 learners had enrolled with 484 completions reported.
- For JobTrainer, to date, 22 registered training organisations have commenced enrolling students in 37 different courses.
- Skills Canberra has published a set of COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), including information on RTO viability measures, and flexible arrangements for Skilled Capital students, employers, and their Australian Apprentices.

Background Information

- RTOs accessing a government subsidy for delivering training in the ACT (for the Australian Apprenticeships program and Skilled Capital) must have a Training Initiative Funding Agreement (TIFA). The TIFA is the contractual arrangement between the ACT Government and RTOs for the delivery of government subsidised training in the ACT. The TIFA sets out the terms and conditions under which the ACT Government may make funds available to RTOs for the delivery of training and assessment for a range of training initiatives including the Infection Control Skill Set training and JobTrainer.

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Portfolio: Skills

ISSUE: Skilled Migration

Talking points:

- The Australian Migration Program enables the ACT Government to address skill shortages and labour market needs in the Territory.
- The Program allows the ACT to attract and retain appropriate and sustainable levels of skilled and business migrants to contribute to Canberra's economy and society, and to support strategic industry growth in the region
- The Australian Government allocates the ACT a fixed number of nomination places each financial year. The 2020-21 allocation is 1,430 nomination places.
- ACT nomination does not guarantee a migration outcome. Rather, it triggers a formal visa invitation by the Department of Home Affairs.
- On 7 August 2020, the Australian Government directed that state and territory nominations focus on applicant profiles critical to Australia's economic post-pandemic recovery, as well as applicants residing in Australia.
- As a result, the ACT Government implemented an *ACT Critical Skills List* and tightened the eligibility criteria for ACT nomination.

Key Information

- 31 October 2020 – the ACT Migration Program was suspended as the interim allocation of nomination places (299) had been met.
- 5 December 2020 - the final nomination allocations for the 2020-21 Migration program were announced. The ACT received an additional 1,131 places, bringing the total 2020-21 allocation to 1430 nomination places.
- The 1,400 allocation of skilled 490/491 places was retained while the Business Innovation and Investment Program (BIIP) places doubled to 30.
- 15 January 2021 – The ACT Skilled Migration program reopened.

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Background Information

- Skilled Migration in the ACT occurs under the *Territory Migration Agreement*, which allows the ACT to access the following visa pathways:
 - Skilled Nominated (permanent) (subclass 190) visa (*802 nomination places*)
 - Skilled Work Regional (provisional) subclass 491 visa program - may transition to permanent residence after three years of living and working in regional Australia if they meet Home Affairs eligibility criteria. (*598 nomination places*)
 - BIIP provides an avenue for ACT to nominate successful overseas businesspeople to conduct business or investment activity or undertake entrepreneurial activity in Canberra (*30 nomination places*).
 - Home Affairs data shows that over the last three years, approximately **10,500 skilled migrants** (main applicant and dependents) settled permanently in Canberra.

ACT Critical Skills List

- The ACT Occupation List was replaced by the *ACT Critical Skills List (for migration purposes)* in line with the directive from the Australian Government.
- The List identifies current and future critical skills essential to support the ACT's post pandemic recovery. It calculates a score based on vacancy rate trends, vacancy rate growth, employment level, projected employment growth, predicted retirement, and latest number of program graduates.
- In January 2021, the List was updated to ensure that the ACT Migration Program eligibility criteria adapts and responds to the evolving critical skills needs.

Key dates

- 30 June 2020 - the Australian Migration Program was suspended pending the Australian Government Budget announcement (October 2020) of the Migration program settings for 2020-21. As a result, the ACT Migration Program also was suspended.
- 18 August 2020 - the ACT migration program reopened with an interim allocation of 299 nomination places and new 'critical skill' eligibility criteria.
- 6 October 2020 - the Australian Government Budget maintained the Migration Program 2020-21 planning levels at 160,000 places. However:
 - national skilled stream places decreased by 26.8 per cent; within this stream, state/territory nominated places decreased by 55.2 per cent
 - national family stream places increased by 81 per cent, which is expected to help clear a large partner/spouse case backlog.

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