

MANUFACTURING TRAINING, SKILLS AND WORKFORCE UPDATE

| JUNE QUARTER, 2025



HIGHLIGHTS

1. In May 2025, there was 57,700 female employees in Queensland manufacturing – the highest value ever recorded.
2. The total workforce remains steady at around 175,000 to 180,000 employees.
3. Printing and Fabricated Metal sub-industries have shown the greatest workforce growth in the last 12 months.
4. Ipswich has the highest level of apprenticeship and traineeship commencement, while Central Queensland has the highest level of completions.
5. In 2024, 29.5% of commencements in manufacturing apprenticeships and traineeships were individuals aged 25 to 39 years.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As of May 2025, female participation in Queensland manufacturing reached a record quarterly high of 57,700. Much of this recent growth is attributed to Food Product manufacturing, which contributed 11,000 of the 15,200-person increase since February - 8,000 of which were in Bakery Product manufacturing. While overall growth is evident, it is not uniform across the industry. Compared to February 2022 averages, female participation has risen by over 20% in Petroleum and Coal, Non-Metallic Mineral, Printing, and Machinery and Equipment. However, declines of more than 30% have occurred in Beverage, Textile, Wood, and Transport Equipment. These trends highlight the need for a more balanced and inclusive approach across all manufacturing sub-industries.

Regionalisation of the workforce remains strong in Queensland. 52% or 90,900 employees are located outside of Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast. Stronger still is regional Queensland's engagement in apprenticeships and traineeships – with 72% of the 2024 commencements in manufacturing training packages.

Apprenticeship and traineeship uptake across the state is healthy. 29.5% of the 2024 commencements were individuals aged 25 to 39 indicating a significant portion of the cohort who are starting this phase of their learning journey at a mature age. Ipswich and Logan-Beaudesert regions display high levels of enrolments of individuals in their 30s and 40s. Greater access to qualifications or alignment with local industry could be key reasons for this trend.

Queensland's skilling pipeline highlights the critical role of the meat processing and metal and engineering sub-industries, with qualifications from these training packages accounting for 69% of all apprenticeship and traineeship commencements. To build a strong and resilient workforce, we must continue to support all sub-industries and engage a broad and diverse range of learners.

WORKFORCE SUMMARY



Jobs

- There were **175,700** employees in the Queensland manufacturing workforce in May 2025—a decrease of **14,800** compared to this time last year.
- Queensland's workforce is **19.9%** of the total Australian manufacturing workforce, and **84.4%** are full-time.
- **41%** of all part-time employees in Queensland manufacturing are in the Food product sub-industry.
- The average size of the workforce over the 12 months to May 2025, has been **174,000**. In the last 12 months:
 - Strongest workforce growth has been in the Printing (up 62%) and Fabricated Metal (up 14%) sub-industries.
 - Primary Metal and Metal (down 28%) and Transport Equipment (down 21%) sub-industries have experienced the most significant workforce decline.
- Compared to May 2024, there has been strong workforce growth in Mackay (up 73%) and Central Queensland (up 41%), while Cairns (down 44%) and Townsville (down 32%) have decreased in size.



Job Vacancies

- In Queensland, there are **3,700** unemployed persons in which their last job was in the manufacturing industry (May 2025), the lowest value since August 2023.
- Over the last 12 months, the average duration of job search for a Queenslander who last worked in the manufacturing industry was **22.1 weeks**.
- In February, manufacturing has **19,600** job vacancies across Australia (5.9% of Australia's vacant jobs). Based on indicative modelling, this means approximately **3,750** vacancies are in Queensland manufacturing, a job vacancy rate of **2.1%**.



Female Participation

- In May 2025, Queensland manufacturing had 57,700 female employees, representing 32.8% of the workforce. This is the highest one-quarter value in the 40 years of available data. The average over the last 12 months is **46,500 or 26.7%** of the workforce.
- In the last three years, the female workforce has grown in the Petroleum and Coal, Non-metallic Mineral, Printing and Machinery and Equipment sub-industries.
- In the last three years, the female workforce has fallen in Textiles, Primary Metal and Metal Product, Wood and Transport Equipment sub-industries.
- 54% (14,601 individuals) of the part-time workforce in Queensland manufacturing are female. 44% of this cohort are in Food Product, 12% in Machinery and Equipment and 11% in Furniture and Other sub-industries.

TRAINING AND SKILLS SUMMARY

Diversity

- Apprenticeship data for First Nations people and people with a disability shows that engagement with manufacturing qualifications is about 25-30% lower than the state average. Within females, engagement in manufacturing apprenticeships is 45% lower than the state average.

Cohort	Commencements		Completions	
	Manufacturing	Queensland	Manufacturing	Queensland
Females	20.7%	36.5%	19.4%	36.1%
First Nation people	7.9%	10.4%	6.1%	8.2%
People with a Disability	3.2%	4.7%	3.0%	4.0%

Skills Pipeline (by Region)

Data is based on apprenticeship and traineeship totals for the 12 months to 30 December 2024. Commencements are individuals started an apprenticeship/traineeship within the time period, and completions are individuals who completed a qualification within the time period.

- 52.1% (3,820) commencements were employed in the manufacturing industry. Construction (9.4%) and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (6.0%) industries have the next largest engagements with manufacturing apprenticeships.
- 41.2% (3,015) commencements were employed within small and medium businesses with less than 100 employees.
- 29.5% (2,160) commencements were aged between 25 and 39 years. Ipswich and Logan-Beaudesert regions have significant enrolments for individuals aged in their 30s and 40s.

Region	Qualification with highest completions	Commencements	Completions
Brisbane – East	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	235	135
Brisbane – North	Certificate III in Food Processing	130	115
Brisbane – South	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Food Services)	295	145
Brisbane – West	Certificate III in Engineering - Mechanical Trade	85	45
Brisbane – Inner City	Certificate III in Engineering - Mechanical Trade	105	65
Cairns	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	275	185
Central Queensland	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)	720	515
Darling Downs-Maranoa	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)	390	305
Gold Coast	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	470	270
Ipswich	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Food Services)	1080	420
Logan-Beaudesert	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)	815	440
Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	525	340
Moreton Bay – North	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Food Services)	270	180
Moreton Bay – South	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	160	120
Queensland – Outback	Certificate III in Engineering - Fixed and Mobile Plant Mechanic	160	95
Sunshine Coast	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	320	175
Toowoomba	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Food Services)	425	295
Townsville	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	415	210
Wide Bay	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)	450	360
Queensland Total		7,325	4,415

**905 students commenced and completed in the 12-month period.

Skills Pipeline (by Training Package)

Training Package	Occupation with the highest completions	Commencements	Completions
Aeroskills (MEA)	Aircraft Maintenance Engineers	170	105
Australian Meat Processing (AMP)	Butchers and Smallgoods Makers	2,400	1,305
Chemical, Hydrocarbons and Refining (PMA)	Plant Operators	160	85
Food, Beverage and Pharmaceutical (FBP)	Food and Drink Factory Workers	290	270
Furnishing (MSF)	Cabinet and Furniture Makers	715	325
Laboratory Operations (MSL)	Technicians	500	260
Manufacturing (MSM)	Motor Mechanics	55	40
Metal and Engineering (MEM)	Sheetmetal Workers	2,670	1,840
Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking (PMB)	Machine Operators	105	70
Printing and Graphic Arts (ICP)	Printers	40	15
Sustainability (MSS)	Trades Workers	210	95
Textiles, Clothing and Footwear (MST)	Trades Workers	10	5
Queensland Total		7,325	4,415

** 905 students commenced and completed in the 12-month period.

Sources: ABS (Labour Force, Australia, detailed, Job Vacancies, Australian National Accounts: State Accounts) and NCVET (Apprentices & Trainees and Student Outcomes), released 18 July 2025 10:00am AEST. Notes: Workforce Summary data is based on May 2025 data, unless stated. Training and Skills Summary data is based on totals for the 12 months to 30 December 2024 and utilises the 12 training packages associated with manufacturing and the usual residence of individuals, unless stated.