

MANUFACTURING TRAINING, SKILLS AND WORKFORCE UPDATE

| SEPTEMBER QUARTER, 2025



HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Queensland manufacturing workforce averaged 172,300 employees over the past year, remaining stable but down 6,700 compared to August 2024.**
- 2. Mackay recorded the strongest regional workforce growth (up 40%) over the last 12 months, while Cairns and Gold Coast experienced the largest declines.**
- 3. Printing and Beverage manufacturing led sub-industry growth, increasing 39% and 55% respectively since August 2024.**
- 4. Female participation sits at 27.6%, remaining below the national manufacturing average of 29.4%.**
- 5. Completion gaps persist across priority cohorts, with higher rates of commencement than completion.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As of August 2025, Queensland's manufacturing workforce was 172,900 – 19.8% of the national total. Over the past year, the workforce has remained steady, averaging 172,300 employees, though this represents a 6,700-person decline since August 2024. Growth is uneven across the state, with strong gains in Mackay (up 40%) and contractions in Cairns and the Gold Coast. Sub-industry performance also varies, with Printing and Beverage manufacturing showing the highest year-on-year increases, offset by declines in Primary Metal and Wood manufacturing.

Queensland's manufacturing skills pipeline continues to be dominated by Technician and Trades Worker occupations, which account for over three-quarters of all apprenticeships and traineeships. Labourer occupations represent a further 22%, while less than 2% of training activity supports Manager or Professional roles. This pattern highlights the central role of VET pathways in supplying the core technical workforce but also signals a need to strengthen higher-level and leadership training to meet emerging industry demands.

Queensland continues to play a significant role in Australia's manufacturing landscape, contributing to a national value-add exceeding \$150 billion in 2024/25. Building resilience across regions and sub-industries, while supporting a broader and more inclusive skills pipeline, remains key to ensuring future growth and competitiveness.

WORKFORCE SUMMARY



Jobs

- There were **172,900** employees in the Queensland manufacturing workforce in August 2025—a decrease of **6,700** compared to this time last year.
- Queensland's workforce is **19.8%** of the total Australian manufacturing workforce, and **83.2%** are full-time.
- The average size of the workforce over the 12 months to August 2025, has been 172,300. In the last 12 months:
 - Strongest workforce growth has been in the Printing (up 39%) and Beverage (up 55%) sub-industries.
 - Primary Metal and Metal (down 45%) and Wood (down 36%) sub-industries have experienced the most significant workforce decline
- Compared to August 2024, there has been strong workforce growth in Mackay (up 40%), while Cairns (down 43%) and Gold Coast (down 32%) have decreased in size.



Job Vacancies

- In Queensland, there are **4,900** unemployed persons in which their last job was in the manufacturing industry (August 2025).
- Over the last 12 months, the average duration of job search for a Queenslander who last worked in the manufacturing industry was 20.1 weeks, a value that has been decreasing in the last year.
- In August, manufacturing has **21,500** job vacancies across Australia (6.6% of Australia's vacant jobs). Based on indicative modelling, this means approximately **3,920** vacancies are in Queensland manufacturing, a job vacancy rate of **2.2%**.



Female Participation

- In August 2025, Queensland manufacturing had **47,800** female employees, representing 27.6% of the workforce. These quarterly values are representative of the trend over the last 12 months.
- The national manufacturing workforce has **255,600** female employees, representing 29.4% of the workforce. Over the last two years, Queensland female percentage, has consistently been 2-4% lower than the national average.



Value added to the economy

- In 2024/25, Australian manufacturing added more than \$150 billion in value to the economy. This represents **5.8%** of all value-added from the 19 industries.
- The final two quarters were the highest on record, and the total is \$3.8 billion greater than 2023/24. However, manufacturing's share of the nation value-add is down 0.07 percentage points.

TRAINING AND SKILLS SUMMARY

Diversity

When a decrease in percentage is present between the percentage of a cohort during commencement compared to completed, it demonstrates a weakness in completion rates. For example, 21.6% of commencements in manufacturing training packages in the last 12 months were females, but only 18.2% of completions were female. Closing the gap between these values is a challenge in all priority cohorts.

Cohort	Commencements		Completions	
	Manufacturing	Queensland	Manufacturing	Queensland
Females	21.6%	36.0%	18.2%	35.0%
First Nation people	8.2%	10.5%	6.2%	8.1%
People with a Disability	3.8%	4.9%	3.0%	4.1%

Skills Pipeline (by Region)

The national manufacturing workforce is dominated by employees in Technician and Trade occupations (27%). 17% of the workforce are Managers, 16% are Labourers and 12% are Professionals. Data below is based on apprenticeship and traineeship totals for the 12 months to 31 March 2025. Commencements are individuals started an apprenticeship/traineeship within the time period, and completions are individuals who completed a qualification within the time period.

- 76.4% of manufacturing apprentices are in Technician and Trades Worker occupations. Most likely – Sheetmetal workers, Butchers or Mechanical engineering trades workers
- 22.0% of manufacturing apprentices are Labourers. Most likely – Meat process workers or metal engineering process workers
- Less than 2% of apprenticeships and traineeships cover training for Manager or Professional occupations, and this trend is reflected within manufacturing qualifications at all levels. The VET system overwhelmingly training the next generation of Technician and Trades Workers and Labourers.

Region	Qualification with highest completions	Commencements	Completions
Brisbane – East	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	225	140
Brisbane – North	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	135	105
Brisbane – South	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Food Services)	305	125
Brisbane – West	Certificate III in Engineering - Mechanical Trade	65	45
Brisbane – Inner City	Certificate III in Engineering - Mechanical Trade	115	70
Cairns	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	315	180
Central Queensland	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)	735	495
Darling Downs-Maranoa	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)	400	275
Gold Coast	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	465	290
Ipswich	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Food Services)	980	350
Logan-Beaudesert	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)	840	415
Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	515	350
Moreton Bay – North	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Food Services)	285	175
Moreton Bay – South	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	180	125
Queensland – Outback	Certificate III in Engineering - Fixed and Mobile Plant Mechanic	130	95
Sunshine Coast	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	295	185
Toowoomba	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Food Services)	445	270
Townsville	Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade	405	225
Wide Bay	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Abattoirs)	435	380
Queensland Total		7,285	4,285

** 975 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	180	100
Australian Meat Processing (AMP)	Butchers and Smallgoods Makers	2,285	1,115
Chemical, Hydrocarbons and Refining (PMA)	Plant Operators	170	85
Food, Beverage and Pharmaceutical (FBP)	Bakers and Pastrycooks	355	240
Furnishing (MSF)	Cabinet and Furniture Makers	685	365
Laboratory Operations (MSL)	Technicians	535	235
Manufacturing (MSM)	Motor Mechanics	60	30
Metal and Engineering (MEM)	Sheetmetal Workers	2,635	1,900
Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking (PMB)	Machine Operators	90	55
Printing and Graphic Arts (ICP)	Printers	40	20
Sustainability (MSS)	Trades Workers	245	140
Textiles, Clothing and Footwear (MST)	Canvas and Leather Goods Makers	5	5
Queensland Total		7,285	4,285

** 975 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 7 November 2025 10:00am AEST. Notes: Workforce Summary data is based on August 2025 data, unless stated. Training and Skills Summary data is based on totals for the 12 months to 31 March 2025 and utilises the 12 training packages associated with manufacturing and the usual residence of individuals, unless stated.