

MANUFACTURING TRAINING, SKILLS AND WORKFORCE UPDATE

| DECEMBER QUARTER, 2025



HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Queensland manufacturing workforce average 171,100 across 2025, a decline of 9,500 from the 2024 average.**
- 2. Beverage and non-metallic mineral sub-industries had significant growth, increasing 81% and 61% respectively, in 2025.**
- 3. Completion gaps persist across priority cohorts, with higher rates of commencement than completion.**
- 4. Individuals who are existing workers in a manufacturing business, at the time of apprenticeship commencement, are more likely to complete their apprenticeship.**
- 5. Although there were 1,455 less manufacturing apprenticeship commencements in the year to June 2025 compared to June 2024, the Sustainability (MSS) training package saw a significant increase in enrolments.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Queensland manufacturing workforce has remained stable across the last five quarters. This reflects a clear stabilisation off the back of the post-pandemic fluctuations. The average size of the workforce across 2025 was 171,100, with beverage, non-metallic mineral and textile sub-industries strengthening. Metal, fabrication and machinery sub-industries have decreased in size, but across the industry value-added to the economy remains strong - \$29 billion across the 2024/2025 financial year.

Estimated job vacancy rates in Queensland manufacturing remain elevated but are returning to patterns seen five to ten years ago of approximately 1.0% to 1.5%. Data in unemployment and skills training shows there is an available workforce, but linking these individuals with job opportunities remains a challenge, along with the changing skill requirements for the industry.

The number of enrolments and completions in qualifications will ebb and flow, but new insights into completion rates provide a deeper understanding of factors that lead to completion. In Queensland manufacturing, apprentices who are existing workers in the business before enrolling are more likely to complete their apprenticeship, than those who start a new job and apprenticeship at the same time. Two other identified factors are the size of the business and location of the apprentices. Those who work in regional areas or larger companies (or both) have increased rates of completion.

While completion rates provide important insight, they are not an endpoint. Workforce strength is ultimately determined by how skills are applied to improve productivity, innovation and resilience. Queensland manufacturing is best served when businesses actively build and utilise a workforce with diverse, future-focused capabilities. The opportunity ahead lies in converting training investment into measurable performance gains, ensuring the sector remains competitive in an evolving economic and technological landscape.

WORKFORCE SUMMARY



Jobs

- The average size of the workforce over the 12 months to November 2025, has been 171,100, a decrease of 9,500 compared to the average across 2024.
- Queensland's workforce is 19.8% of the total Australian manufacturing workforce, and 82.6% are full-time.
- In the last 12 months:
 - Strongest workforce growth has been in the Beverage (up 81%) and Non-metallic mineral (up 61%) sub-industries.
 - Primary Metal and Metal (down 44%) and Wood (down 41%) sub-industries have experienced the most significant workforce decline.



Job Vacancies

- In Queensland, there are approximately 5,250 unemployed persons in which their last job was in the manufacturing industry (value is a 12-month average).
- Over the last 12 months, the average duration of job search for a Queenslanders who last worked in the manufacturing industry was 15.0 weeks, a value that has been decreasing over the last two years.
- In November, manufacturing has 19,700 job vacancies across Australia. Based on indicative modelling, this means approximately 3,960 vacancies are in Queensland manufacturing, a job vacancy rate of 2.3%.



Value added to the economy

- In 2024/25, manufacturing added \$29 billion in value to the state's economy. This represents 5.8% of all value added from the 19 industries.

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, 20.6% of commencements in manufacturing training packages were females, but only 17.6% 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	20.7%	35.7%	17.6%	34.2%
First Nation people	8.6%	11.3%	6.5%	8.3%
People with a Disability	4.2%	5.2%	2.8%	4.0%

Completion rates

New data is available from the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) on the completion rates of apprentices and trainees. The following are insights regarding Queensland manufacturing apprentices:

- Completion rates are higher amongst individuals who are existing workers at the time of apprenticeship commencement, compared to a newly commencing worker.
- Generally, individuals in regional areas have higher completion rates than those in major cities or remote areas.
- There is a correlation between business size and completion rates. The larger the business (from an employee perspective) the higher the completion rate.

Skills pipeline

Data below is based on apprenticeship and traineeship totals for the 12 months to 30 June 2025. Commencements are individuals started an apprenticeship/traineeship within the time period, and completions are individuals who completed a qualification within the time period.

Region of residence	Commencements (June 2025)	Difference to June 2024	Completions (June 2025)	Difference to June 2024
Brisbane – East	195	-45	165	+55
Brisbane – North	120	-35	105	-15
Brisbane – South	230	-45	145	0
Brisbane – West	60	-30	45	+10
Brisbane – Inner City	95	-5	70	+10
Cairns	295	-10	180	-15
Central Queensland	630	-135	470	-75
Darling Downs-Maranoa	395	+10	260	-15
Gold Coast	450	-155	295	0
Ipswich	500	-600	320	-65
Logan-Beaudesert	790	-80	425	+45
Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday	475	-100	355	+30
Moreton Bay – North	265	-40	145	-80
Moreton Bay – South	170	-15	120	0
Queensland – Outback	115	-40	90	0
Sunshine Coast	305	-30	180	0
Toowoomba	375	-25	195	-150
Townsville	325	-80	215	-45
Wide Bay	465	+10	310	-45
Queensland Total	6,255	-1,455	4,085	-340

**** 1000 students commenced and completed in the 12-month period.**

Training Package	Commencements (June 2025)	Difference to June 2024	Completions (June 2025)	Difference to June 2024
Aeroskills (MEA)	195	-45	165	+55
Australian Meat Processing (AMP)	120	-35	105	-15
Chemical, Hydrocarbons and Refining (PMA)	230	-45	145	0
Food, Beverage and Pharmaceutical (FBP)	60	-30	45	+10
Furnishing (MSF)	95	-5	70	+10
Laboratory Operations (MSL)	295	-10	180	-15
Manufacturing (MSM)	630	-135	470	-75
Metal and Engineering (MEM)	395	+10	260	-15
Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking (PMB)	450	-155	295	0
Printing and Graphic Arts (ICP)	500	-600	320	-65
Sustainability (MSS)	790	-80	425	+45
Textiles, Clothing and Footwear (MST)	475	-100	355	+30
Queensland Total	6,255	-1,455	4,085	-340

**** 1000 students commenced and completed in the 12-month period.**

Sources: ABS (Labour Force, Australia, detailed, Job Vacancies, Australian National Accounts: State Accounts) and NCVER (Apprentices & Trainees and Apprentice and trainee completion rates), released 30 January 2026 10:00am AEST. Notes: Workforce Summary data is based on November 2025 data, unless stated. Training and Skills Summary data is based on totals for the 12 months to 30 June 2025 and utilises the 12 training packages associated with manufacturing and the usual residence of individuals, unless stated.