

The TAFE

Value  **and**

Perception 

Challenge

Unpacking TAFE to attract the
next generation of learners

Contents

TAFE in Victoria: The bridge to the future	06
The TAFE perception challenge	10
Backboneand futureof the economy	22
Industry leading experience	28
Entrepreneurial foundation for a future generation	30
Providing educational accessibility	32
Future proofing through skills development	36
Addressing the perception challenge	44
Research methodology	46
References	46
Demographics	47

INTRODUCTION BY

Mark McCrindle

A skilled and engaged workforce is the backbone of a robust economy, driving innovation, productivity, and growth. A commitment to workforce expertise will empower advancements and future proof industry, while an engaged workforce boosts productivity and reduces turnover, fostering economic stability and resilience.

This report highlights the value of TAFE to the wider Victorian economy, with courses tailored to meet industry needs and an education that equips students with the relevant skills to navigate their career opportunities and enable Victoria to meet the skilling demands of the future workforce.

While the future is never certain, emerging trends are observable and with foresight, can be responded to proactively. It is only through analysing change, responding strategically and appropriately upskilling the workforce that disruptions are transformed into innovations and crises into opportunities.

This report provides insight into the perception challenges facing TAFE in Victoria, the present opportunities to build on its rich history and its significant impacts in equipping the Victorian workforce.





While the future is never certain, emerging trends are observable and with foresight, can be responded to proactively. It is only through analysing change, responding strategically and appropriately upskilling the workforce that disruptions are transformed into innovations and crises into opportunities.

TAFE IN VICTORIA

The bridge to the future

OLD WAY



NEW WAY



THE TAFE PERCEPTION CHALLENGE

PERCEPTION	REALITY
<p>Outdated</p>	<p>High quality facilities in priority and emerging areas:</p> <div> Cyber security workplace simulator Wind turbine training tower </div> <div> Healthcare Advanced manufacturing </div>
<p>Lower employment outcomes</p>	<p>TAFE employment outcomes (78%) match university graduates' (79%)</p>
<p>Limited earning power</p>	<p>Median full time earning power after graduating</p> <div> <p>TAFE (Cert IV and above) \$71,650</p> <p>University (Bachelor degree) \$68,000</p> </div>
<p>Specialised knowledge limited to trades</p>	<p>More than 150 courses available in areas beyond trades including business and finance, ICT, nursing and more</p> <div> </div>

TAFES ARE DYNAMIC AND DIVERSE LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Adult learners (20+ years old)

118,805

Females

69,515

School leavers (15-19 years old)

57,035

Students who speak a language other than English

28,030

Students with disability

10,810

First Nations students

3,910

HIGH VALUE, AFFORDABLE EDUCATION INCREASING ACCESS TO ALL

Free TAFE attracted **33,600** enrolments across areas of high demand in 2023



SINCE 2019

152,000 students engaging with Free TAFE



Collectively saving **\$384 million** in tuition fees

CLOSING THE SKILL GAPS IN AREAS OF NEED



67% of Victoria's 364 occupations in shortage can be fulfilled via a TAFE education

Growing jobs towards 2026 attainable via a TAFE education:



Aged and Disability Carers



Software and Applications Programmers



Management and Organisation Analysts



Accountants



Human Resource Managers



Clean economy workforce

TAFE SUPPLIES THE ESSENTIAL WORKFORCE SKILLS FOR VICTORIA'S NEEDS⁷

(The table below represents a sample of the essential skills and qualifications TAFE provides, it is not exhaustive of the full range of qualifications TAFE provided in Victoria)

NEEDS

Housing

95%
Carpenters and Joiners

95%
Electricians

69%
Architectural, Building and Surveying Technicians

Food

76%
Chefs

71%
Livestock farmers

Care

74%
Aged and Disabled carers

58%
Child carers

Health

89%
Nurses (Enrolled and Mothercraft)

77%
Dental assistants

60%
Medical technicians

59%
Fitness instructors

Finances

56%
Bookkeepers

50%
Payroll Clerks

Safety

65%
Security officers and guards

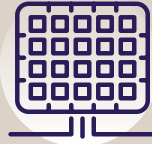
WORKFORCE
% of workforce VET trained

INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE BY DELIVERING THE WORKFORCE TO HELP VICTORIA ACHIEVE ITS CLEAN ENERGY GOALS

Clean energy roles that are VET trained



Wind



Solar



Hydro

Blade technician	Solar farm technician – electrical	Hydropower – electrical technician
Wind technician – mechanical	Electrical superintendent	Hydrographer
Electrical superintendent	Electrician – solar rooftop accredited	Electrical power systems technician



EMPOWERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

52% of Victorian business owners with post-school qualifications hold VET qualifications

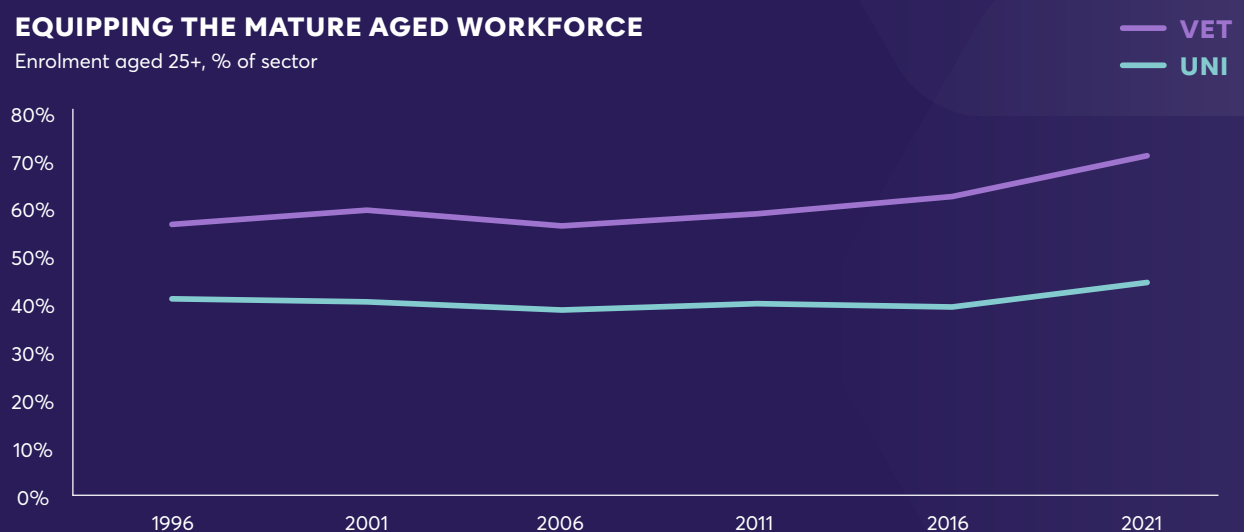


PAVING THE WAY FOR WOMEN RETURNING TO WORK

71% of female students in Victoria's TAFE and VET institutions are aged 25 and above

EQUIPPING THE MATURE AGED WORKFORCE

Enrolment aged 25+, % of sector





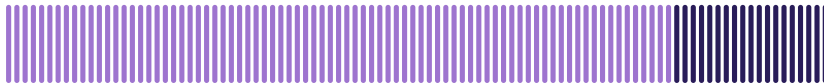
TAFE UNLOCKS OPPORTUNITIES



By 2026, **9 in 10** new jobs will require a post-school education¹



80% of future jobs are attainable via a TAFE education¹¹



81 out of the top 100 largest growing occupations in Victoria are attainable via a TAFE education¹⁰

KEY OPPORTUNITIES



Invest in positioning TAFE as a compelling option



Empower industry influencers to become advocates



Emphasise TAFE as the definitive solution for future proofing Victoria



Future proof through early engagement with Gen Z & Gen Alpha

The TAFE perception challenge

The world of work is changing and so too is the educational pathway to equip today's graduates for success. School leavers today are expected to have 18 jobs across six careers in their lifetime. Today, post-school qualifications are more important than ever, with it projected that by 2026, nine out of ten new job openings will demand post-school qualifications.¹

This highlights the need for an education and training offering that is adapting to the changing needs of today's students. TAFE in Victoria is innovating and responding, providing courses to enable students to contribute to the workforce faster, partnering with industry to provide practical training that is reflecting changing industry demands and ensuring its education offering is accessible to all Victorians.

Despite TAFE in Victoria's responsiveness to evolving workforce requirements, there are enduring negative perceptions around the TAFE offering and experience. This report explores Victorians perceptions of TAFE and communicates the value of TAFE in Victoria for individuals, employers, and the broader community. The insights in this study are based on a survey of 1,000 Victorians, with a key focus on the perceptions of Generation Z, parents of Generation Z and people managers. Alongside the survey, interviews were conducted with careers advisors, to give greater insight into the factors driving perceptions.



9 in 10

**BY 2026, 9 IN 10 NEW JOBS
WILL REQUIRE A POST-
SCHOOL EDUCATION**

University continues to be the preferred education pathway for parents

A national survey of Australians in 2017 found that four in five parents (79%) would prefer their children go to university after leaving school rather than undertake a vocational training pathway.² This perception continues today, with 66% of Victorian parents extremely or very likely to encourage their child to explore a university pathway, compared to 56% of parents who would encourage their child to explore a TAFE pathway. TAFE does, however, have a stronger reputation with parents than Private Registered Training Organisations (RTO), with just 29% of parents extremely or very likely to encourage their child to explore a pathway with an RTO.

TAFE exceeds university in 10 out of 15 comparisons with education providers

Despite parental preference for university, TAFE has strong associations with Victorians. TAFE surpasses universities and other Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in 10 out of the 15 options evaluated. It is acknowledged for its accessibility, affordability, on the job learning, earning while learning and job readiness. The association areas where universities exceed TAFE, however, are high academic achievement, high wages upon graduating, quality facilities, quality staff and reputation. These areas may be pivotal in reframing perceptions of TAFE. These associations are explored more deeply throughout the report highlighting enduring perceptions around the outcome and experience of TAFE and present key opportunities.

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO EXPLORE THE FOLLOWING PATHWAYS?

Extremely/very likely

University

66%

TAFE

56%

Apprenticeships

51%

Traineeships

48%

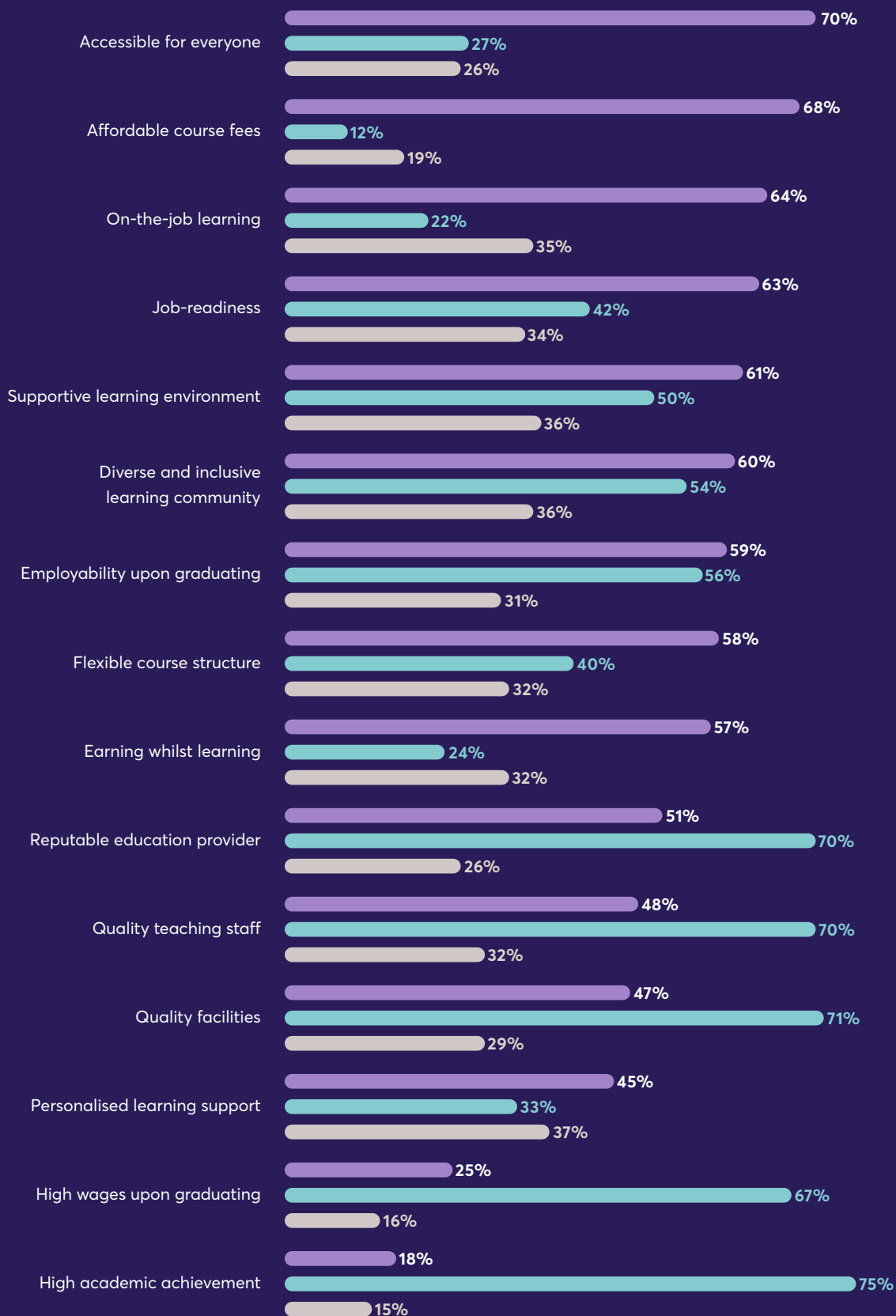
Private Registered Training Organisation

29%

Associations with TAFE, Universities and Private RTO's

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU ASSOCIATE WITH THESE EDUCATION PROVIDERS?

■ TAFE
■ University
■ Private RTOs





Reframing the narrative on TAFE outcomes



Perception: TAFE graduates are less employable and earn less than university graduates

Interviews with careers advisors reveal that many students have a limited understanding of TAFE offerings and the possible job prospects upon graduating. This lack of awareness may influence the belief that TAFE graduates are not as employable as university graduates. Just 35% of Gen Z agree (strongly/somewhat) that TAFE graduates are more employable than university graduates. Parents of Gen Z (41%) and people managers (43%) are similar in their perspective.

Currently, 71% of Victorians believe TAFE graduates earn less than university graduates. Influencers of prospective students, like parents of Gen Z and people managers, also lean towards this belief (73% and 71% respectively, compared to 68% of Gen Z).



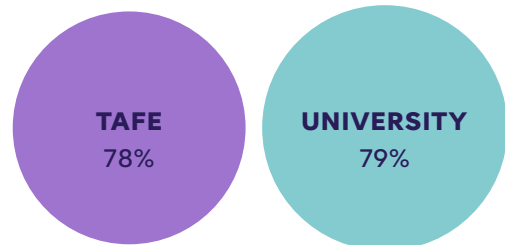
Opportunity: Empower satisfied graduates to be TAFE ambassadors

The reality differs: TAFE employment outcomes (78%)³ match that of university graduates (79%)⁴, with four in five finding employment after training.

A TAFE education opens doors to in-demand and well-paid career paths. For instance, a Certificate IV in Building and Construction leads to roles like construction manager, commanding an average annual salary of up to \$181,000. Similarly, a Certificate IV in Financial Services paves the way for careers like financial investment manager, with an average salary reaching \$177,100 per annum.⁵

TAFE has a chance to amplify its graduates' success stories and their potential. Leveraging high student satisfaction, empower these graduates as TAFE ambassadors.

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES



TAFE employment outcomes (78%) match that of university graduates (79%)



Perception: Key influencers think TAFE is an inferior choice

There is a perception that TAFE lacks the prestige of universities among potential students. Seven in ten Victorians (70%) associate universities with being a reputable education provider compared to 51% with TAFE. Interestingly parents of Gen Z (59%) are more likely to associate TAFE with being a reputable education provider than Gen Z (49%) or people managers (49%).

This is important because for students choosing post-school education, family (35%) holds significant sway, following practical aspects like availability (53%), location (48%), and reputation (43%).⁶

While parents of Gen Z have a more favourable view of TAFE's reputation, parental preference for university over TAFE is impacting education choices. Careers advisors reveal that parental preference for university is driven by perceived social status or the belief that a university degree opens greater opportunities. Additionally, schools, aiming to differentiate themselves in a competitive landscape, often use high ATAR scores and university attendance rates as marketing tactics, further promoting this trend.

"I don't think it's the career practitioners [that have a bias], it's the schools. They tell you what you need to promote to students, and it depends which school you are at as to what the expectation is. If you're from a high performing school, parents even expect you to push university even if it's not what the student needs. When we finally get the student's results and they haven't got what they need, then TAFE sort of becomes their best friend because they can use it as a pathway."

- careers advisor



Opportunity: Educate key influencers about today's TAFE experience

Educating key influencers about TAFE today is key to shifting perceptions. Showcasing TAFE's diverse offerings, high-class facilities, and broad career paths beyond trades can better equip these influencers—parents, teachers, and careers advisors—to guide students effectively. Providing updated information on TAFE's contemporary curriculum, clear study-outcome links, and adaptability to workforce needs will expand students' view of TAFE as a quality choice for education and career prospects.

There is return on the investment with a careers advisor revealing that the TAFE narrative is starting to shift in Bendigo due to the marketing and positioning investment.

In Bendigo, TAFE isn't seen as a second or last option. It's worked hard to promote itself as a legitimate option for students, and they've seen the real benefits of that.

- careers advisor



Perception: TAFEs and private RTOs are the same

Victorians lack clarity about TAFE, with only 28% extremely or very aware of its offerings. Combined with this, only 41% of Victorians have a clear understating of the difference between TAFE and Private RTOs (strongly/somewhat agree). Gen Z (36%) are the least clear, while parents of Gen Z (45%) and people managers (47%) are slightly more informed.



Opportunity: Differentiate and tell the success story of TAFE

TAFE has an unequalled legacy as a quality education and training provider. Proudly tell the story of TAFE, how it has adapted and changed across the decades to equip Victorians with the skills they need to live, work, and play. Continue to highlight the strengths of TAFE and how it differentiates from other RTOs as currently Victorians are more likely to consider going to a TAFE rather than a private RTO (58%), alongside believing that TAFE has more industry opportunities than private RTOs (56%). Communicating the strengths of TAFE and educating Victorians on the history of TAFE, is vital to building trust for the future.

BELIEFS ABOUT TAFES AND REGISTERED TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

Strongly/somewhat agree

I am more likely to consider going to a TAFE than a private RTO

58%

TAFE has greater access to funding support than private RTOs

58%

TAFE has more industry opportunities than private RTOs

56%

TAFE has more flexible study options than private RTOs

53%

TAFE is more specialised than private RTOs

46%

I have a clear understanding of the difference between TAFE and private RTOs

41%

TAFE and private RTO graduates have the same outcomes

34%



Reframing the narrative on the TAFE experience



Perception: People who are smarter go to university

Victorians are more than four times as likely to associate universities with high academic achievement than TAFE (75% cf. 18%). Careers advisor interviews reveal that school leavers believe TAFE is for less academically inclined students, or a backup option if they miss the needed ATAR for university. There remains limited awareness of TAFE's diverse subject options beyond its trade history. Interestingly, TAFE is more respected amongst Victorians who only use English at home than it is amongst linguistically diverse Victorians (71% cf. 59% strongly/somewhat agree).

The dual sector approach (providing both VET and University courses) adopted by some universities, including Federation, Swinburne, RMIT, and Victoria University, resonates positively. This approach allows students to have a sense of pride in the institution, which is seen as a university, whilst completing a VET qualification.

"Students see it as an easy option and can feel like they have failed if they take the TAFE option."

– careers advisor

"This perception comes from 'oh well you go to TAFE to do a trade, because you can't do anything else'. Well, this isn't true, TAFE isn't just for trades, but also trades are hard and are important."

– careers advisor



Opportunity: Spread student success stories across diverse industries

To shift this prevailing view, emphasise students' career achievements. Share these stories through emerging and traditional media channels, showcasing success across unexpected industries and courses to break down vocational biases. Moreover, consider engagement strategies with linguistically diverse Victorians to convey these success stories effectively amidst growing cultural diversity.



4.2x

Victorians are 4.2 times as likely to associate universities with high academic achievement than TAFE (75% cf. 18%)



Perception: TAFE has inferior facilities and teaching

Victorians perceive universities to have high-quality facilities (71%) and teaching staff (70%) more so than TAFE (47% and 48%, respectively).



Opportunity: Highlight cutting-edge facilities

TAFEs boast top-tier, commercial-grade facilities and workshops. These institutions offer more than traditional classrooms; they provide authentic workplace environments, offering firsthand experiences within industries. For example, students in agricultural science at TAFE can gain real world experience working on and off farm or in research and technology in 'smart farm' facilities that are creating the future of agriculture through high tech automation, computer-controlled systems, and food and bio-security research. Emphasise these advancements and share the story of TAFE's high-class facilities that reflect the industries of today.





Perception: Enrolling in TAFE is harder and takes too long

The experience for prospective students varies—some find websites user-friendly while others consider them cumbersome. The shift in the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) application negatively impacts TAFEs. With students required to submit a direct application for many certificate courses, it reduces the number of options many apply for. Particularly for those who may be including TAFE as a backup option. The pre training review and literacy and numeracy test required to enrol in TAFE has scheduling challenges, making it difficult to find available time slots. Additionally, there's confusion regarding the necessity of these tests for students who have completed the VCE. Clarity on funding options, including free TAFE, concessions, and full fees, remains a challenge for both careers' advisors and students.

“Some of them are really easy to navigate and some of them are terrible. I think it says a lot about an institution if their website is a bit of a nightmare, some also have too much information.”

– careers advisor

“They’ve also taken off the VTAC applications. So now students have to apply separately for courses. I used to be able to encourage them just put that one at the bottom of your preferences on VTAC. Now if they have to take the extra step to apply separately, go and do the literacy numeracy tests, maybe attend an interview. It’s all extra steps when it’s usually a backup option for them. And they usually won’t bother because it’s not a first preference. So, if it was part of VTAC, I think that’s very helpful.”

– careers advisor



Opportunity: Curate a seamless engagement experience

A seamless, straightforward engagement process is vital for future growth. With many looking to further their learning through a TAFE education, it is important to streamline and simplify the engagement experience. Providing the right amount of information is crucial for students to make informed decisions without feeling overwhelmed. Alongside simplifying communication and removing administration burdens to greatly benefit user experience and remove barriers to students enrolling in TAFE.



TAFE is seen as a beneficial education pathway for the broader community rather than for themselves

Victorians see TAFE in Victoria as a valuable route for gaining skills, upskilling and reskilling. While 91% acknowledge its benefits for the broader community, a slightly lower percentage, 86%, of parents perceive it as an advantageous learning path for their children. While still strong, to a lesser degree Victorians see TAFE as a beneficial education pathway for themselves (75%).

Despite the evident successes—such as student outcomes, earning potential, top-notch facilities, and a diverse community—there remains a crucial need to amplify the value of TAFE in Victoria.

DO YOU SEE TAFE AS A BENEFICIAL EDUCATION PATHWAY FOR...



Yourself

75% Yes

25% No



Your Child

86% Yes

14% No



Any member of the Victorian Community

91% Yes

9% No



Backbone and future of the economy

TAFE stands as a cornerstone and key driving force behind the future prosperity of the Victorian economy, shaping a skilled workforce equipped to navigate and excel in dynamic industries. TAFE ensures a steady supply of adaptable professionals, vital for sustaining growth and innovation across various sectors that paves the way for Victoria's future.



Addressing skill shortages for Victoria's growth

Victoria is home to 6.6 million people, set to grow to 8.43 million by 2036. Addressing existing skill shortages is vital for harnessing the potential of this rapid growth. As highlighted in the Victoria Skills Plan, numerous sectors have labour

demands that outstrip supply.⁸ Presently, 364 occupations face a shortage of skilled individuals. TAFE stands poised to bridge this gap, as 67% of these shortages can be fulfilled via a TAFE education.⁹

Training the foundation of Victoria's economy

TAFE, the largest provider of VET, powers Victoria's economy by training the workforce for everyday needs.

TAFE SUPPLIES THE ESSENTIAL WORKFORCE SKILLS FOR VICTORIA'S NEEDS⁷

(The table below represents a sample of the essential skills and qualifications TAFE provides, it is not exhaustive of the full range of qualifications TAFE provided in Victoria)

NEEDS



Housing

95%
Carpenters
and Joiners

95%
Electricians

69%
Architectural,
Building and
Surveying
Technicians



Food

76%
Chefs

71%
Livestock
farmers



Care

74%
Aged and
Disabled
carers

58%
Child carers



Health

89%
Nurses
(Enrolled and
Mothercraft)

77%
Dental
assistants

60%
Medical
technicians

59%
Fitness
instructors



Finances

56%
Bookkeepers

50%
Payroll
Clerks



Safety

65%
Security
officers and
guards

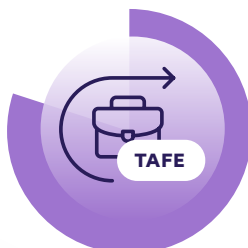
WORKFORCE
% of workforce VET trained

Four in five future jobs are attainable via a TAFE education

By 2026, the Victorian labour force will need to replace 215,570 retiring workers and bring on 136,600 new workers to meet the economic demand of the state, equating to more than 352,000 new jobs over the next 3 years.¹⁰ The majority of new jobs (80%) are accessible by VET qualification and pathways¹¹. In fact, by 2026, only 15% of Victoria's 3.67 million jobs will be obtainable through university only, while 85% are accessible by VET or informal/on the job training.¹¹



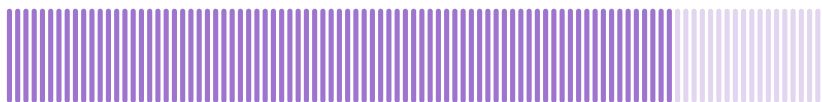
More than **352,000** new jobs over the next 3 years



80% of future jobs are attainable via a TAFE education



TAFE is also offering access to 81 out of the top 100 fastest-growing occupations in Victoria. Over the upcoming years, Aged and Disabled Carers are expected to experience the most significant growth (+17,600 positions), followed by General Clerks (+13,700) and Software and Applications Programmers (+6,400) and Registered Nurses (+10,200).¹⁰



81 out of the top 100 largest growing occupations are attainable via a TAFE education



LEGEND

- Projected job growth
- Vocational Education and Training (VET)
- Informal or on-the-job
- University

GROWING JOBS TOWARDS 2026 ATTAINABLE VIA A TAFE EDUCATION¹⁰

Occupation

Aged and Disability Carers



Pathway



General Clerks



Software and Applications Programmers



Management and Organisation Analysts



Human Resource Managers



Accountants



Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers



Advertising, Public Relations and Sales Managers



Child Carers

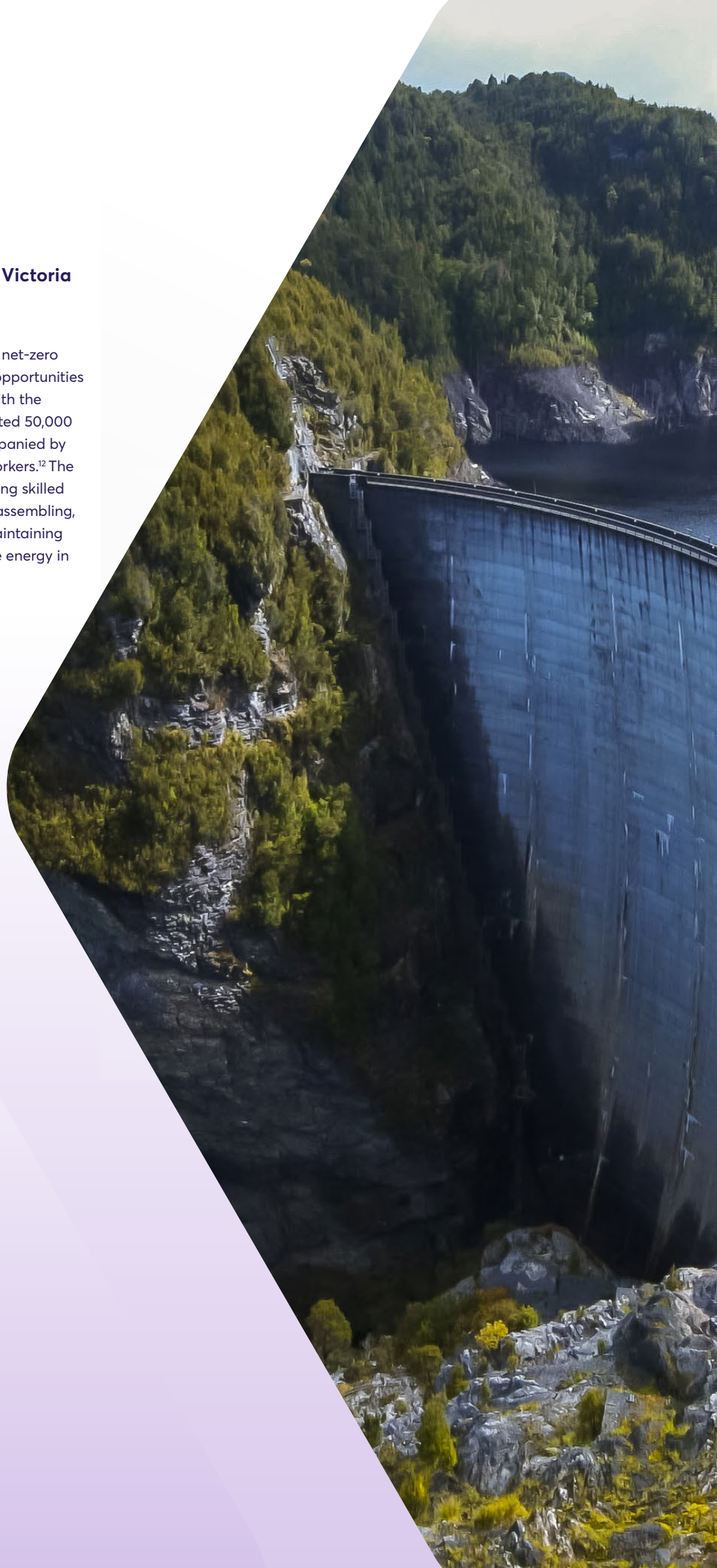


Construction Managers



Delivering the workforce to help Victoria achieve clean energy

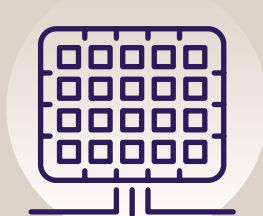
The Victorian Government's aim to attain net-zero emissions by 2045 creates a surge in job opportunities and substantial chances for reskilling.¹² With the transition to renewable energy, an estimated 50,000 more jobs are forecasted by 2030, accompanied by upskilling initiatives for nearly 500,000 workers.¹² The VET system plays a pivotal role by supplying skilled tradespeople and technicians crucial for assembling, constructing, installing, operating, and maintaining the infrastructure necessary for renewable energy in Australia.



CLEAN ENERGY ROLES THAT ARE VET TRAINED¹³



Wind



Solar



Hydro

Blade technician	Solar farm technician - electrical	Hydropower – electrical technician
Wind technician - mechanical	Electrical superintendent	Hydrographer
Electrical superintendent	Electrician – solar rooftop accredited	Electrical power systems technician
Control room operator	Control room operator	Control room operator
Site manager	Site manager	Site manager

Industry leading experience

Many TAFE graduates stand out with their unparalleled industry experience, honed through hands-on learning and practical training. Equipped with skills directly relevant to their field, they enter the workforce with a deep understanding and proficiency that often surpasses conventional academic knowledge. Employers highly value TAFE graduates for their readiness to contribute effectively from day one, attributing their success to the immersive and industry-aligned education they receive.

1.9x

Victorians are 1.9 times as likely to associate TAFE with producing job ready graduates than other RTOs (63% cf. 34%)

Cutting edge facilities reflect modern industry

Government investment and industry partnerships are positioning TAFE in Victoria with state-of-the-art facilities to provide a high-quality immersive learning experience. This strategic investment ensures TAFE stays ahead of the curve for in-demand areas. Take, for instance, the Cyber Security Operations Centre at Box Hill Institute—an environment mirroring actual workplaces, enabling students to hone skills in a practical setting. This prepares them to seamlessly transition into the workforce, delivering immediate value.¹⁴ TAFE in Victoria is also responding to a world focused on renewable energy, for example through a wind turbine training tower built in partnership with Federation TAFE and the renewable energy industry. This allows companies to train workers locally in Ballarat, driving a major windfarm project across the state and supporting the rising demand for workers in the renewable energy sector.¹⁵

Not only are the facilities world class but students are satisfied with the teaching they receive (83%), the facilities they have access to (81%) and the learning resources provided (78%).³

HIGH QUALITY FACILITIES IN EMERGING AREAS



Cyber security workplace simulator



Wind turbine training tower



Healthcare



Advanced manufacturing

Graduates are more work ready with strong earning potential

Graduating from TAFE equips individuals with practical, industry-relevant skills highly valued by employers. Recognised for producing job-ready graduates (63%), TAFE surpasses universities (42%) and other training institutions (34%) in this aspect. These skills translate into considerable earning potential, with median full-time incomes after TAFE training averaging \$71,650 (Cert IV and above), slightly surpassing the median graduate salary of Bachelor's degree holders at \$68,000.⁴

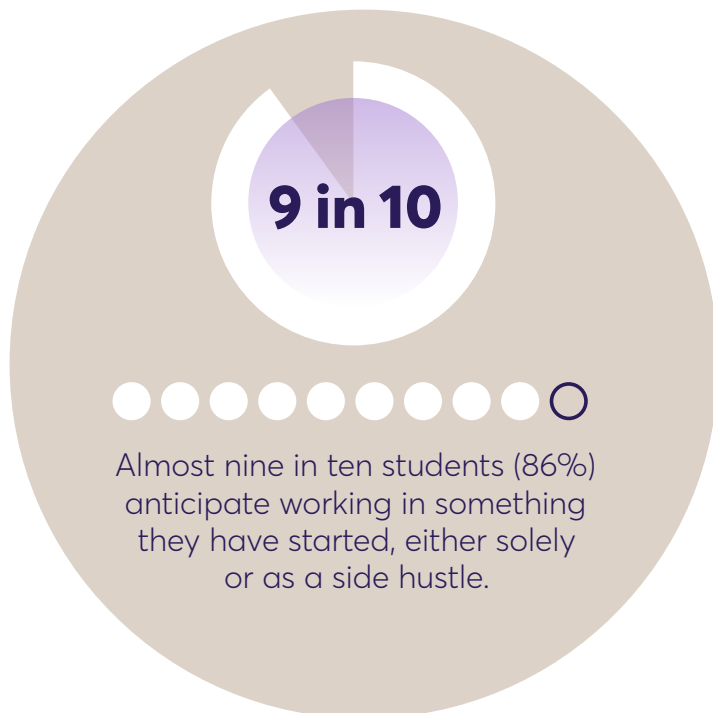
This educational investment is proving effective, with almost four in five TAFE students (78%) securing employment post-training, a rate directly comparable to university graduates (79%). Notably, graduates from apprenticeships/traineeships exhibit higher employability, with 94% employed after TAFE training.³ Offering concise courses and equivalent employability to university counterparts, TAFE emerges as an accessible avenue for skill enhancement, catering to diverse individuals seeking advancement opportunities.

94%

of TAFE students completing an apprenticeship/traineeship are employed after training

Entrepreneurial foundation for a future generation

The emerging workforce has a strong entrepreneurial inclination. Almost nine in ten students (86%) anticipate working in something they have started on the side.¹⁶ This shift in the workforce signifies a transformative change, suggesting organisations and educational institutes should prepare for workers introducing fresh paradigms and perspectives to the future of work.



TAFE empowering entrepreneurship

For decades TAFE has been empowering entrepreneurship. Out of Australia's 2.6 million businesses, a striking 97% fall into the small business category with zero to 19 employees. Victoria's small business landscape surpasses the national average, constituting 98% of the 726,840 businesses in the state.¹⁷

Nearly half a million Victorians (447,046) are business owners, making a substantial impact on the state's economy—the second largest community of its kind in Australia, following New South Wales (516,715). These entrepreneurs are predominantly VET educated, with 52% of Victorian business owners with post-school qualifications holding VET qualifications (Diploma and Certificate), often acquired through TAFE.¹⁷





Providing educational accessibility

Victorians recognise TAFEs as diverse and inclusive learning communities (60%) and supportive learning environments (61%).

A DIVERSE STUDENT COHORT³

Students



Adult learners (20+ years old)



Females



School leavers (15-19 years old)



Students who speak a language other than English



Students with disability

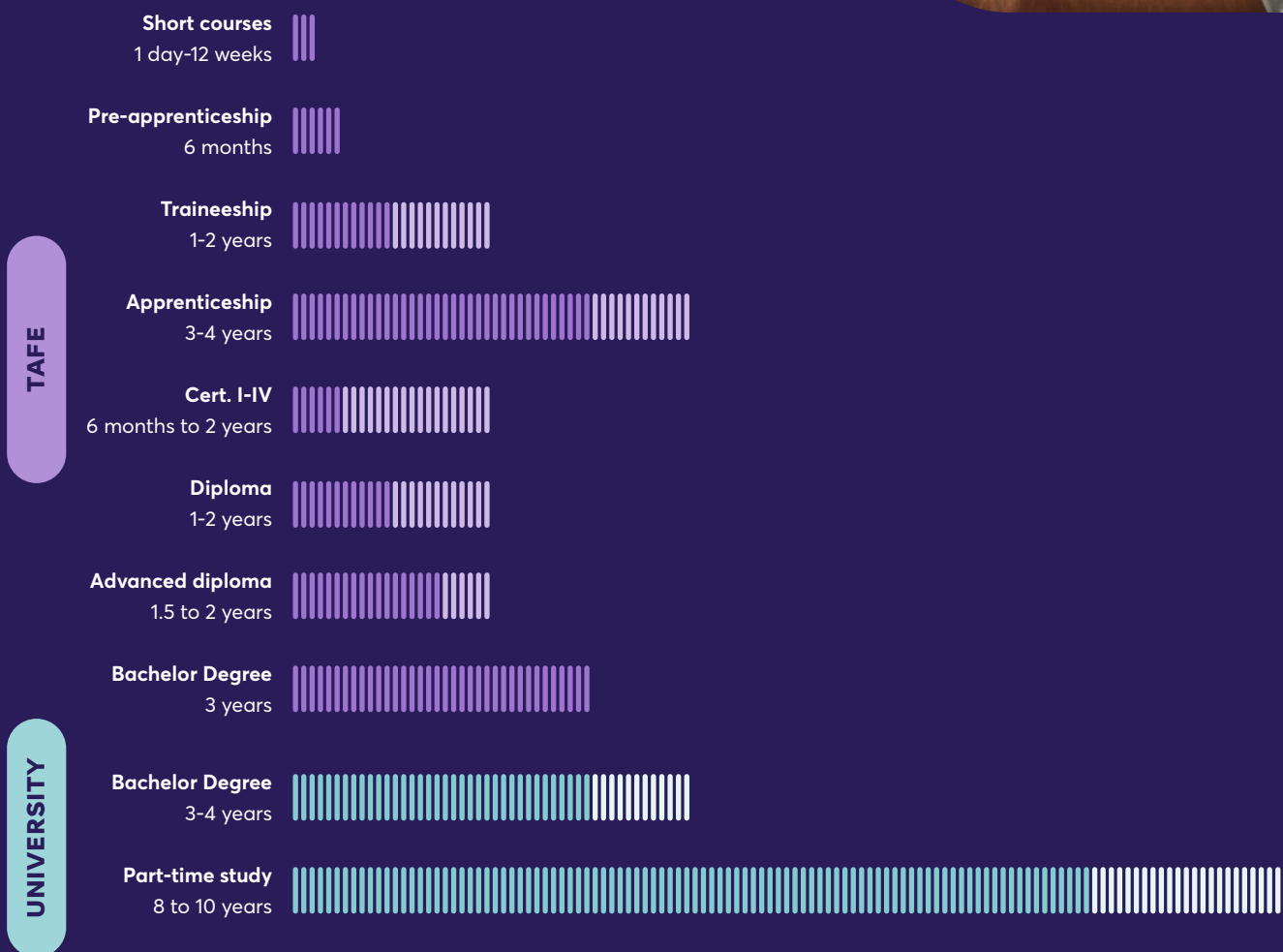


First Nations students



Bridging the gap between earning and learning

TAFEs adaptable and flexible training model ensures an accessible learning pathway for today's students. During uncertain economic periods, the necessity for quick, relevant, and flexible qualifications becomes imperative. Education offerings requiring prolonged full-time dedication could lag behind rapid workforce changes, leaving individuals unprepared for job market shifts. Additionally, students need to account for a longer period before they see a return on their education and training investment. In this environment TAFE, prioritising practical, industry-oriented skills, and courses requiring a reduced time investment are positioned to drive Victoria's economic success.



High value and affordable education allows access to all

According to research, the financial burden of education costs often lingers, shaping the lives of many Australians well into their thirties, particularly for university attendees with HECS-HELP debts (72%).¹⁸ This debt significantly impacts crucial aspects of life for Australian students, for example affecting home ownership (50%) and purchasing a car (41%).¹⁸



The Free TAFE initiative is breaking down education and training barriers by eliminating financial hurdles. Offering 80 priority qualifications and short courses, the program has attracted 33,600 enrolments in high-demand areas since the beginning of 2023.

Since its launch in 2019, Free TAFE has fostered increased participation in training, empowering more individuals to access education:⁸



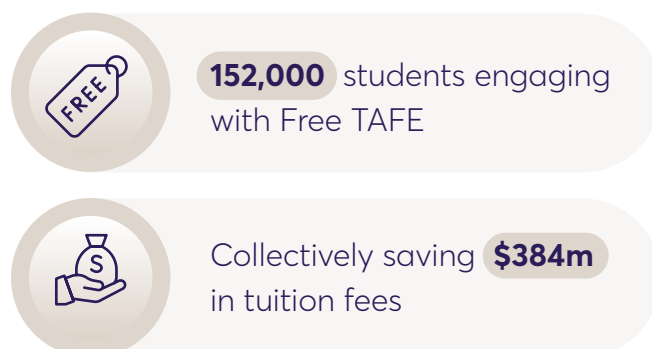
Collectively, over \$384 million in tuition fees has been saved by the 152,000 students benefiting from this initiative since its launch.¹⁹

Beyond Free TAFE, there's a recognition that TAFEs provide equal opportunities for access to education and training (73% strongly/somewhat agree). TAFEs are also strongly associated with being accessible for everyone surpassing associations of other providers (70% cf. 27% university and 26% private RTOs).

HIGH VALUE, AFFORDABLE EDUCATION INCREASING ACCESS TO ALL

Free TAFE attracted **33,600** enrolments across areas of high demand in 2023

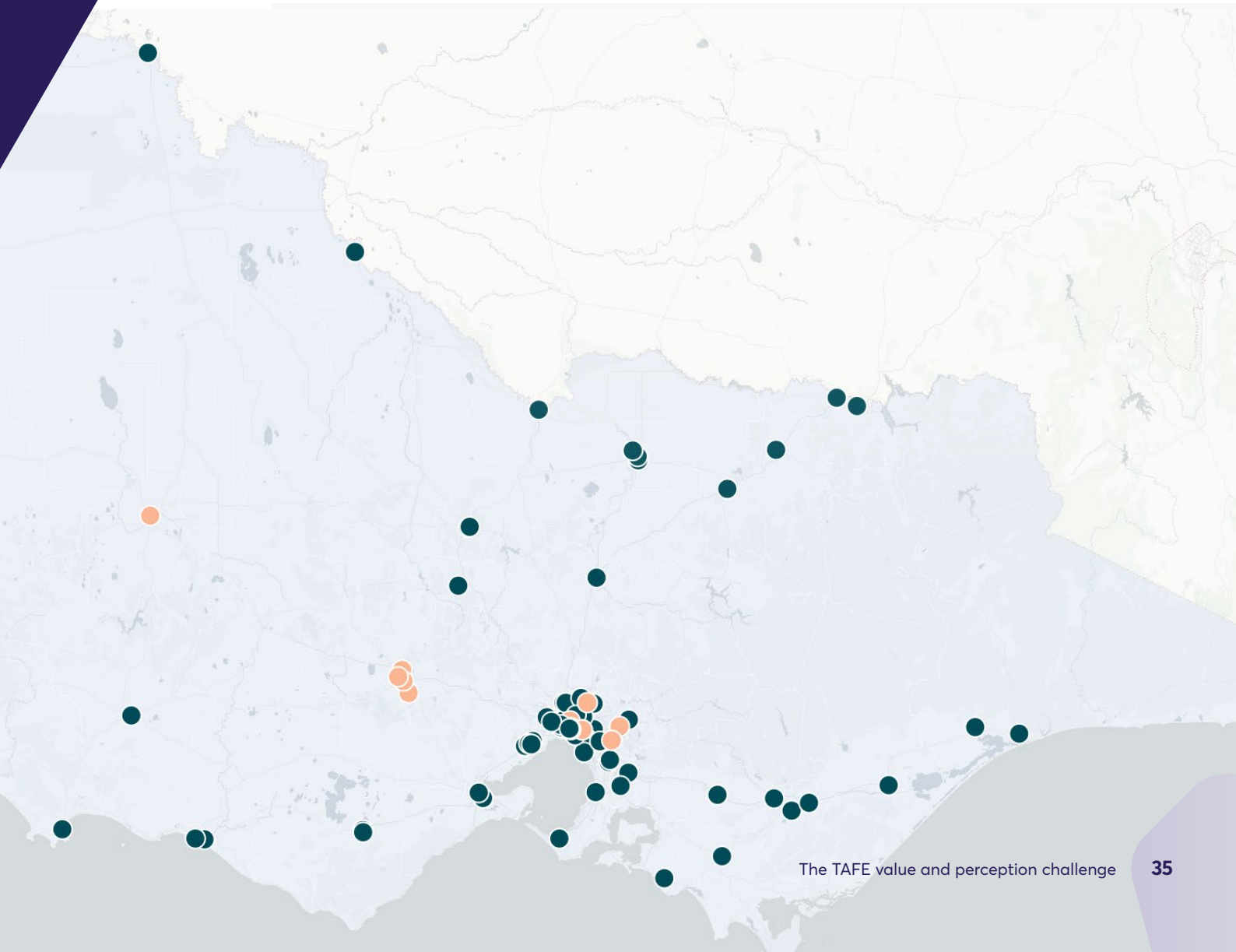
SINCE 2019



TAFE campuses ensure geographical accessibility

TAFE campuses are strategically located for accessibility, catering to local needs and fostering economic growth. Contributing \$85.6 billion in gross regional product to Victoria's economy²⁰, large regional centres across regional Victoria are hubs to access and invest in essential infrastructure, services businesses, and education for local residents and those in surrounding areas.²¹ Based on the latest Victoria Skills Plan, Regional Victoria accounted for 850,000 workers, equivalent to 24% of Victoria's employment.⁸

Situated across Victoria's regional hubs, TAFE institutions collaborate with industries and employers, tailoring education to meet local job demands. By focusing on skill development, TAFE fuels job creation, attracts businesses, and enhances regional economic competitiveness, contributing significantly to job growth and stability in these areas.



Future proofing through skills development

Guaranteeing widespread education and ongoing engagement among individuals of working age is pivotal for a dynamic and prosperous economy. This hinges on a robust investment in skills and continual upskilling, enabling the workforce to innovate, adapt and drive sustained economic growth.

"TAFE is helping close the skills gap"



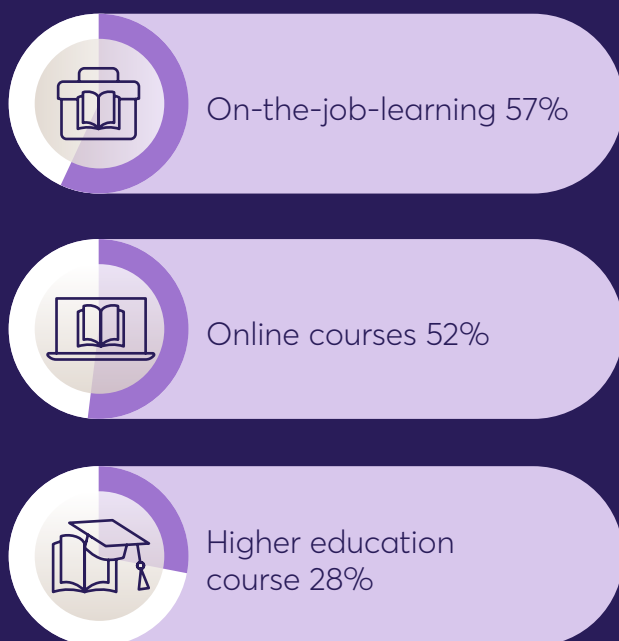
Upskilling the future workforce

As career mobility rises, long periods of retraining in full-time higher education becomes impractical for workers. 'On-the-job-learning' (57%) and online courses (52%) are the top professional development paths, with higher education courses trailing at 28%.²² This calls for shorter accessible and flexible courses to support lifelong learning which TAFE can provide through retraining and upskilling options for people entering new and changing industries.

TAFE is pivotal in supporting future job growth

As worker mobility increases and jobs are changed more frequently, TAFE in Victoria offers an avenue for Victorians to gain skill, reskill and upskill for their next opportunity. Recognising its short courses as valuable for career progression (73% strongly/somewhat agree), TAFE attracts a diverse student body, including 47% mature-aged individuals (aged 25 and above) and a significant female representation seeking to develop, update, or broaden their skills.³

TOP 3 FUTURE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS FOR AUSTRALIAN LEARNERS*



*Australian learners have been defined as those who consider themselves as a life-long learner

"TAFE's strengths include providing industry-based skills and knowledge. Many students do go on to do study elsewhere, but when they do move on, they have the skills to draw on in a career/workplace. These transferrable skills are crucial and it's something that might not be achieved with a university degree."

– careers advisor



Paving the way for women to upskilling and work

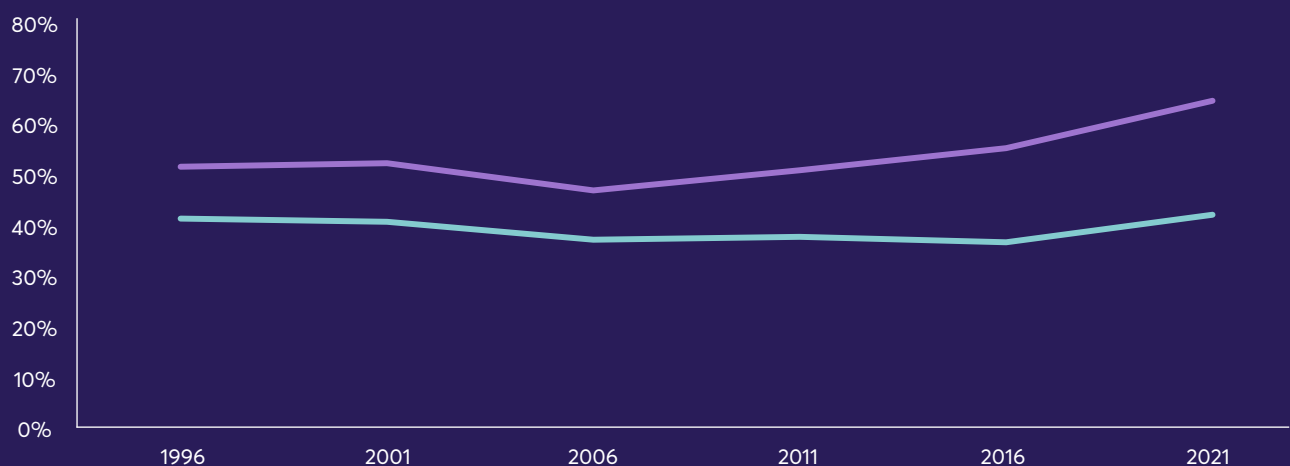
Victoria's VET sector, of which TAFE is the largest provider, is instrumental in upskilling and aiding women's entry into the workforce. The latest data shows that over 71% of female students in Victoria's TAFE and VET institutions are aged 25 and above.⁷ Free TAFE is also supporting women upskilling in areas of demand with 82,682 women engaged in training since its inception in 2019.⁸ TAFE offers a vital avenue for women seeking to establish and grow their career.



FEMALE ENROLMENT

Enrolment aged 25+, % of sector

— VET
— UNIVERSITY





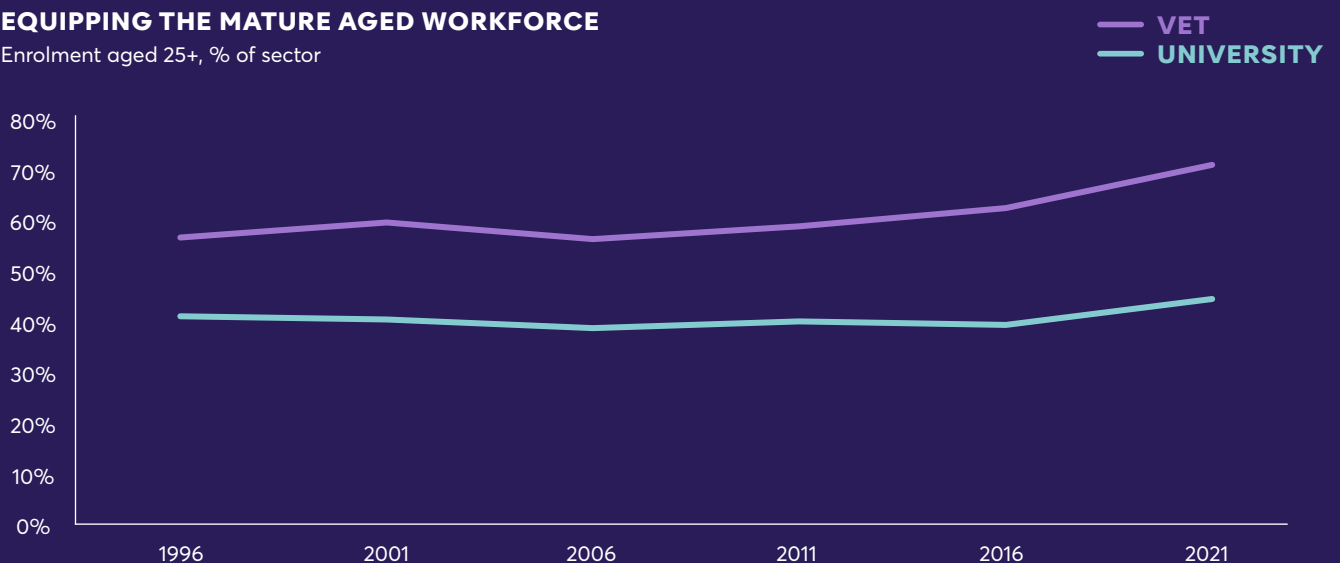
Equipping the mature aged workforce

TAFE plays a pivotal role in nurturing the skills of mature-aged students, tailoring programs to their unique needs and prior experiences. Through flexible learning approaches and targeted curriculum, TAFE enables these individuals to harness new skills, pivot careers, and thrive in diverse industries.

The VET sector has historically carried the load in upskilling and reskilling the Victorian labour force. Many university students in Victoria are under the age of 25, whereas the proportion of mature aged students in the Victorian VET sector has been steadily rising.⁷ Highlighting the critical role TAFE in Victoria plays in mature aged student development and ensuring the workforce is fit for purpose.

EQUIPPING THE MATURE AGED WORKFORCE

Enrolment aged 25+, % of sector



People managers recognise the value of TAFE for their staff

TAFE aligns with the demands of Australian learners and employers, offering affordable, hands-on, and 'earn-while-learning' options. In fact, more than half of people managers

(56%) are extremely or very likely to recommend TAFE to their team members for their continuous learning.

IN YOUR ROLE AS A PEOPLE MANAGER, HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING TO YOUR TEAM MEMBERS FOR THEIR CONTINUED LEARNING?

Extremely/very likely

TAFE

56%

University

53%

Traineeships

45%

Apprenticeships

43%

Private Registered Training Organisation

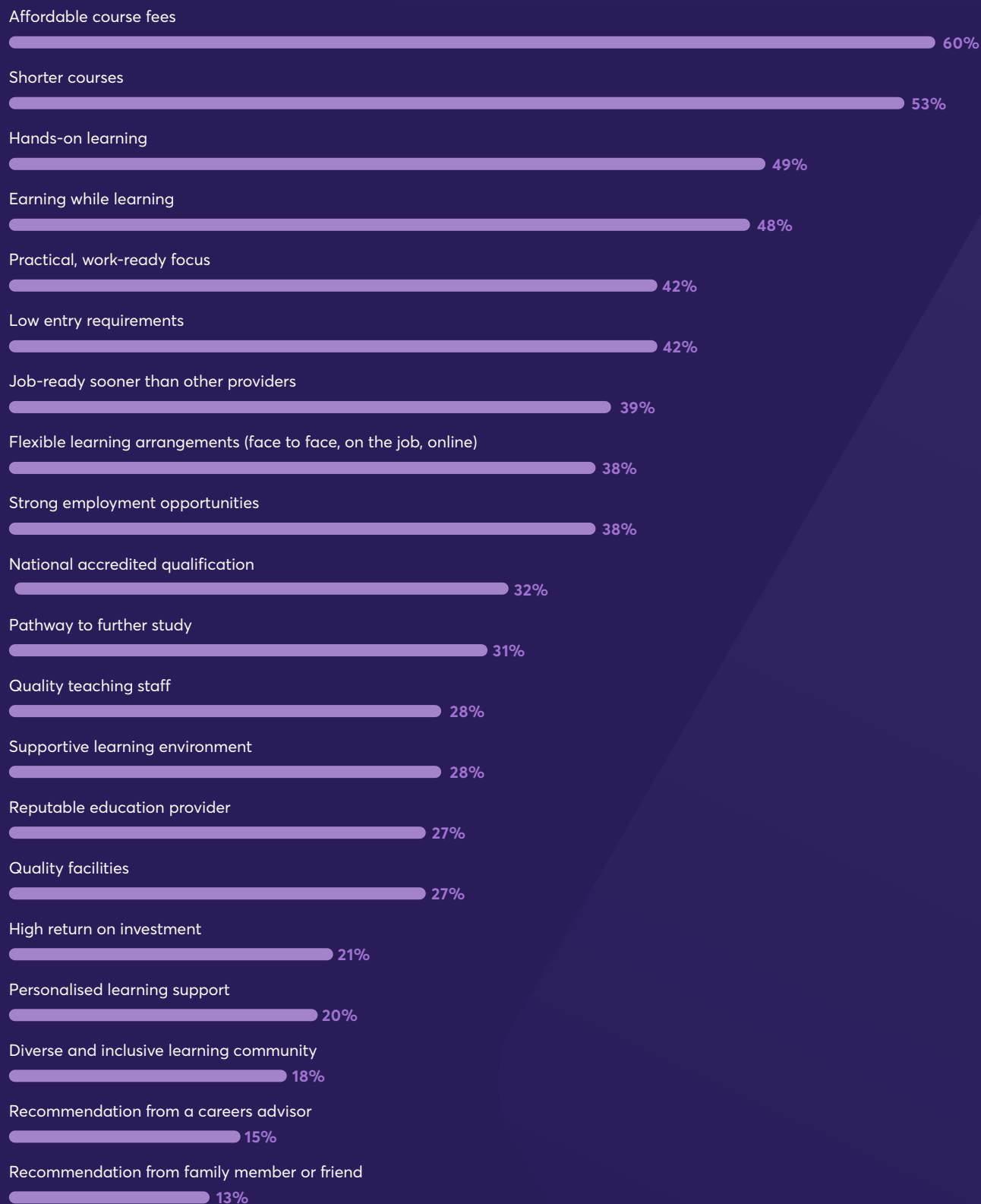
37%



WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING REASONS WOULD BE A MOTIVATOR FOR YOU TO CHOOSE TAFE?

Top motivators for choosing TAFE

Victorians opt for TAFE motivated by affordable fees (60%), shorter courses (53%), and hands-on learning (49%). Earning while learning (48%) and the practical work-ready focus (42%) are also key motivators.

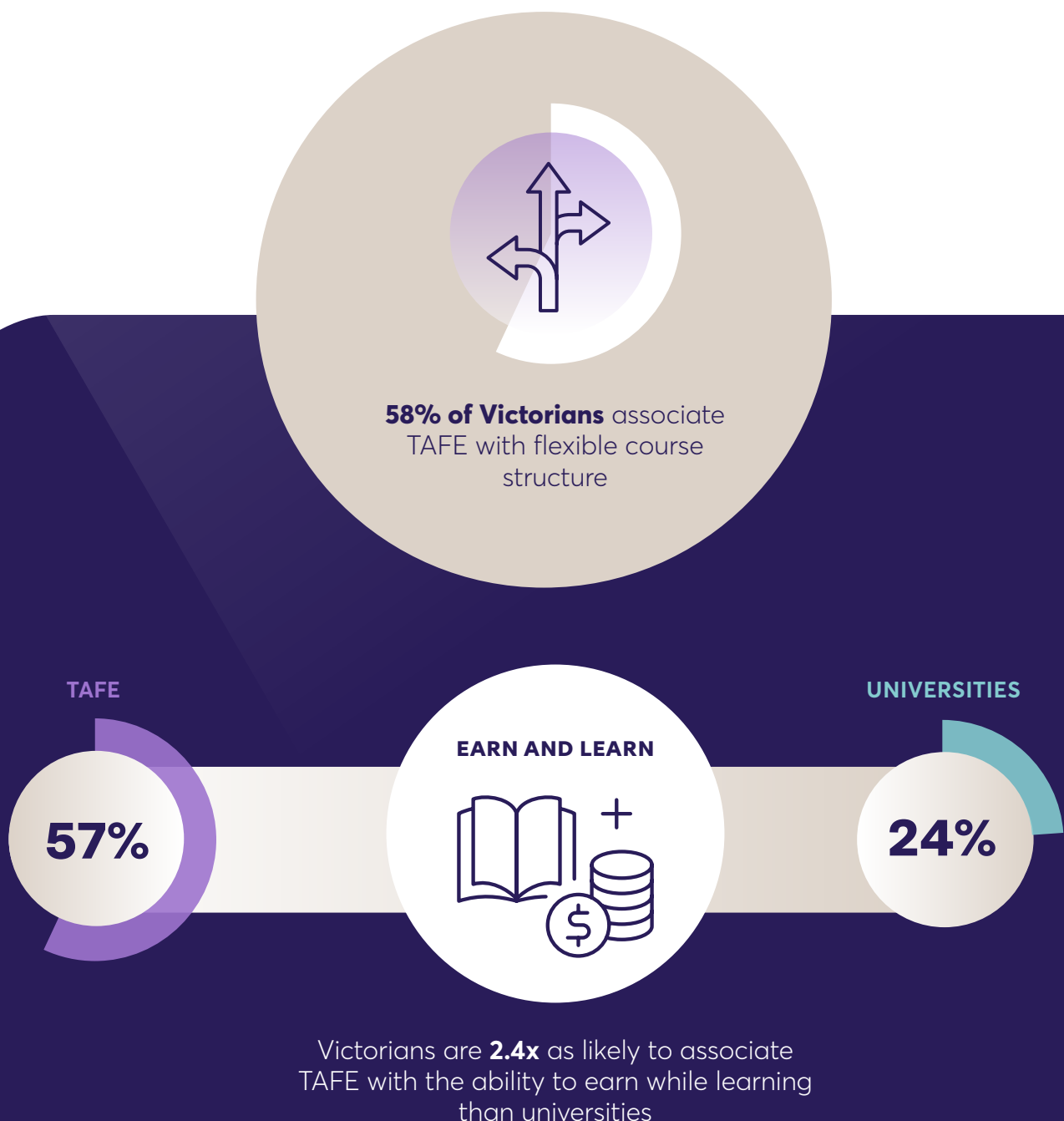


TAFE is high value and affordable

TAFE programs empower students to follow their interests, curating a personalised learning journey without incurring substantial student debt. Amid escalating living expenses, the importance of flexible study choices that facilitate earning while learning cannot be overstated. TAFE stands out among educational institutions in this aspect—Victorians are significantly more inclined to link TAFE with the opportunity to earn while studying compared to universities (57% vs. 24%) and private RTOs (32%). This foundational learning paves the way for advanced studies and qualifications.

“TAFE is very practical; it provides hands on training and is geared towards giving students the skills they need to work in a particular field. It is a great pathway for anyone wanting to work while undertaking further studies.”

– careers advisor²³



The combination of theory and practice sets students up for success

The accessible and flexible training approach signifies TAFE's commitment to providing practical, hands-on education that integrates seamlessly with real-world experiences. TAFE institutes empower students to gain valuable skills, while actively contributing to the workforce. This model not only enhances employability but also cultivates a mindset of continuous growth and adaptation, fostering a workforce equipped to navigate the evolving demands of various industries. By embracing and excelling in this realm, TAFE reinforces its position as a bridge between education and the professional world, offering a unique pathway that blends learning with practical application, shaping well-rounded and job-ready lifelong learners.



Addressing the perception challenge

A well-rounded education is foundational for life's opportunities. TAFE is a catalyst for unlocking potential in individuals. Emphasising practical skills and hands-on learning, TAFE nurtures talent and hones expertise essential for thriving in today's world. It's a journey that doesn't merely educate; it fosters innovation, creativity and resilience, shaping individuals to make significant contributions to their

communities and industries. It is critical that this message is understood and accepted by the Victorian community to ensure that TAFE can continue equipping the workforce of Victoria to thrive.





Invest in positioning TAFE as a compelling option

To bolster TAFE's standing in Victoria, consider a strategic investment in brand repositioning. Actively portraying TAFE as a contemporary, compelling and viable choice for prospective students through targeted marketing and communication efforts. Through this TAFE can enhance its credibility, attracting a wider audience and solidifying its position as an educational destination.



Empower industry influencers to become advocates

To drive widespread recognition and support for TAFE, it's crucial to harness the influence of key industry figures. By empowering these influencers to serve as advocates, it can amplify awareness and bolster credibility within the sector. Their endorsement not only amplifies visibility but also cultivates trust and encourages wider engagement. Leveraging their authority and reach can significantly elevate the profile and impact of TAFE, fostering a stronger and more receptive community response.



Emphasise TAFE as a definitive solution for future proofing Victoria

Actively highlight TAFE as a definitive solution to future-proof Victoria. Its dynamic approach caters to diverse career needs and anticipates tomorrow's demands by equipping individuals with adaptable mindsets and practical skills. By fostering innovation and seamlessly enabling mid-career transitions, TAFE plays a pivotal role in propelling Victoria towards a resilient and prosperous future.



Future proof through early engagement with Gen Z and Gen Alpha

To position TAFE for the future it is crucial to introduce Gen Z and Gen Alpha to TAFE experiences at an early stage. This could be through incorporating TAFE courses within school curricula earlier to ensure these generations have a firsthand positive encounter with TAFE before they reach Year 10. This early exposure not only cultivates a favourable viewpoint but also positions TAFE as a credible and viable option upon graduation. It lays the groundwork for school leavers to recognise TAFE as a valuable pathway, thus influencing their choices positively as they transition into tertiary education or the workforce.



Research methodology

The report is the collation of quantitative data collected in an online survey, 10 in-depth interviews of Victorian careers advisers and desktop research conducted by McCrindle Research.

The online survey was completed by 1,000 Victorians aged 16 to 67. Quotas ensured the sample was representative of the Victorian population by age, gender and location (metropolitan and regional centres). Additional quotas were also included for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Victorians living with a disability and those using a language other than English at home. The survey was in field from the 9th September to 12th October 2023. Throughout this report, these respondents are referred to as Victorian residents or simply, 'Victorians'.

Additional sampling was conducted to top up responses for Generation Z (n=431), parents with Gen Z children (n=491) and respondents in people manager roles (n=484) to achieve at least 400 respondents in total from each of these cohorts of interest.

Parents of Gen Z have been defined as those with children between the ages of 14 to 28 in 2023. Gen Z respondents in the survey are those aged 16-28 in 2023. Gen Zs aged 14-15 were not included in this survey as the survey focused on Victorians of working age.

People managers have been defined as anyone that is currently employed and is managing one or more people.

The in-depth interviews with Victorian Careers Advisers were conducted between 21st September and 4th October 2023.

Graphs and rounding

Data labels on the graphs in this report have been rounded and may, therefore, sum to 99% or 101%. Any calculation where two data points have been added are based on raw data which have then been rounded once combined.

References

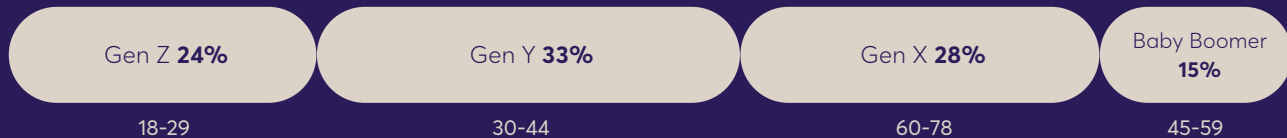
- 1 National Skills Commission, Employment outlook: Industry and occupation trends over the five years to November 2026, October 2022
- 2 Skilling Australia Foundation, Perceptions are not reality: myths, realities & the critical role of vocational education & training in Australia, 2017
- 3 NCVER, VET Students Outcomes 2022: DataBuilder
- 4 Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT), Graduate Outcomes Survey 2022
- 5 Australia Government YourCareer, Occupations - <https://www.yourcareer.gov.au/>
- 6 McCrindle, The future of education: Insights into today's students and their future expectations, 2021
- 7 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census
- 8 VSA, Victoria Skills Plan for 2023 into 2024 Shared prosperity through skills
- 9 Australian Government, National Skills Commission Skills Priority List 2023
- 10 Victoria Skills Authority, Employment Forecast Dashboard, October 2023
- 11 Australian Government, Labour Market Insights, <https://labourmarketinsights.gov.au/>
- 12 Victoria State Government, Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions, Clean Economy Workforce Development Strategy 2023-2033, 2023
- 13 Clean Energy Council, Skilling the energy transition, 2022
- 14 Box Hill Institute, Cyber Security and ICT Snapshot - <https://www.boxhill.edu.au/sector-snapshot/cyber-and-ict/>
- 15 Federation University - <https://federation.edu.au/news/articles/new-tower-to-provide-real-world-training-for-renewable-energy-industry>
- 16 McCrindle, Equipping students to thrive in the new world of work, 2022
- 17 Australian Bureau of Statistics
- 18 Futurity Investment Group, Impact of University Debt Report, 2020.
- 19 Minister's Media Centre Free training for Victorians continues in 2024 under new deal
- 20 Regional Development Victoria 2023 <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/information-portal/regional-snapshot>
- 21 Strengths and Benefits of the Victorian TAFE Model ~Professor Ruth Schubert, Leo Geodegebuure, LH Martin Institute
- 22 McCrindle, Shaping thriving culture in a decentralised environment, 2022.

Demographics

WHAT IS YOUR GENDER



WHAT AGE WILL YOU BE IN 2023?



WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES WHERE YOU LIVE?



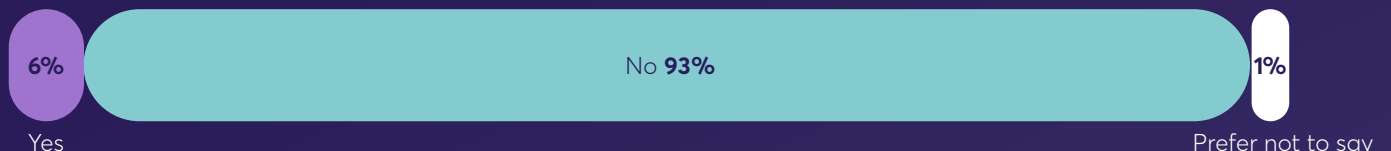
DO YOU USE A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME?



ARE YOU OF ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER DESCENT?



DO YOU IDENTIFY AS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY?



mccrindle