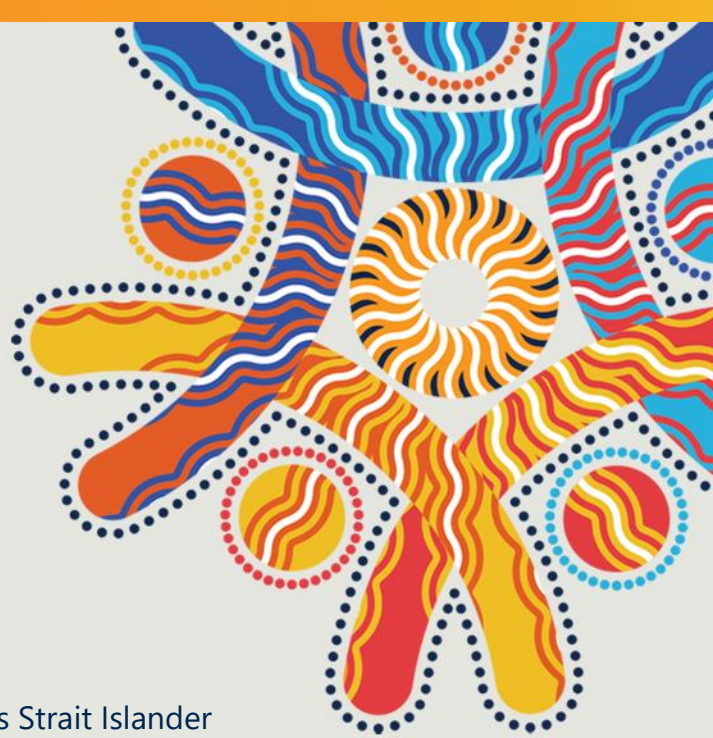




Employment outcomes for Victorian TAFE learners

The Victorian TAFE Association

15 April 2026



Nous Group acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, who maintain their culture, Country and spiritual connection to the land, sea and community.

This artwork was developed by Marcus Lee Design to reflect Nous Group's Reconciliation Action Plan and our aspirations for respectful and productive engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities

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Foreword

Victoria will need an additional 1.4 million workers by 2034. Meeting this demand will require large-scale reskilling and upskilling of the existing workforce to sustain economic growth. The speed and scale of this transition place productivity at the centre of Victoria's future prosperity.

Productivity growth will depend on a skilled workforce across existing and emerging industries, supported by a strong vocational education and training (VET) system. Victorian TAFEs play a critical role in this system, delivering flexible, industry-aligned pathways that enable people to enter the workforce, progress in their careers, or re-enter employment.

To keep pace with these demands and an evolving economic landscape, the way we assess the performance of VET must change. Traditional measures, particularly qualification completions, no longer reflect how learners and employers engage with the system or how skills translate into employment outcomes.

This report responds to that challenge. It recalibrates how success is defined and evaluates the Victorian TAFE system through the outcomes that matter most to learners, employers and policy makers - meaningful employment. Viewed through this lens, the evidence is clear. Four out of five TAFE students undertake training for employment-related reasons, and 91 per cent of those students are achieving or partly achieving their employment goals.

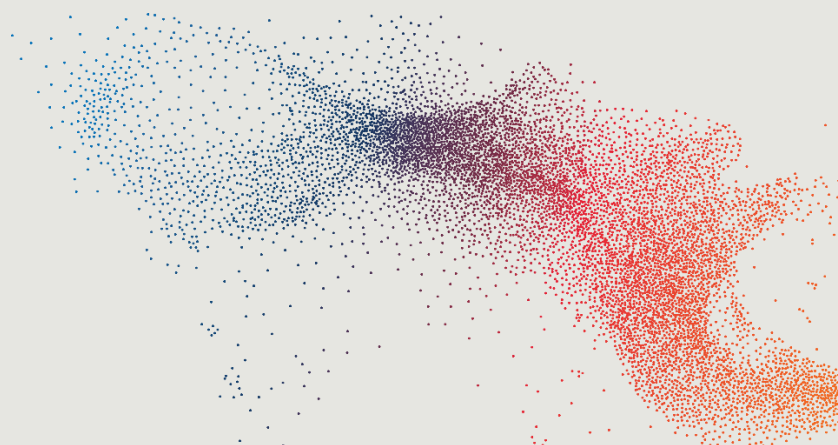
The findings demonstrate that Victorian TAFEs do deliver real value for entry-level and working learners, employers and the broader economy. Importantly, strong employment outcomes are evident even where students do not complete full qualifications. This reflects the growing importance employers place on practical capability and applied experience.

By focusing on employment goals and moving beyond completions as a proxy for success, we can see a more accurate assessment of system performance. This report presents a clearer and more relevant picture of how TAFEs contribute to jobs, career progression and economic participation in Victoria today.



Zac Ashkanasy

Principal, Western Australia



Executive Summary

The Victorian TAFE system plays a pivotal role in enabling students to achieve meaningful skills, employment and life outcomes. Government relies on TAFEs to help people get into the workforce and progress through skilling, upskilling and reskilling, especially in priority areas that support the state’s workforce goals. This is aligned to the TAFE objectives outlined by Victorian government in the Education and Training Reform Amendment Bill 2026 (Free TAFE Guarantee Bill). These include the objectives to “deliver critical skills required by Victorian industries and employers and local communities”, “support lifelong learning”, and provide “access to high quality support services” and “increase equity of access... for persons who face social and economic barriers”.

Public debate often reduces this goal to a narrow focus on course completions. Completions are an important marker of skill development that provide significant value to a student, but are not critical to all employment outcomes. Many students still achieve their goals through part-completions and never intended to complete a full qualification. TAFEs must be assessed by a metric that is better targeted to system objectives, and more reflective of their performance.

TAFEs can be more meaningfully assessed by considering the achievement of students’ employment goals. This places employment outcomes at the centre and engages with the nuance of individual prosperity. This aligns more closely with the Victorian government’s objectives for TAFEs. It is also a fair reflection of the TAFE cohort, with four out of five TAFE students citing employment-related reasons for study (regardless of whether they intend to complete their qualification).

Using a better targeted metric, Victorian TAFEs are performing strongly.

- TAFEs are boosting productivity by delivering strong economic outcomes, with most students seeking and achieving employment outcomes.
- TAFEs are delivering on state and national priorities by achieving even stronger results in priority sectors.
- TAFE delivers on individual student goals for all learners, including very strong results for disadvantaged students.

TAFEs’ successful employment outcomes

- 79%** Of TAFE students are there for employment-related reasons.
- 91%** Of students’ employment goals are achieved
- 90%** Of students in priority industries achieve employment goals
- 90%** Of students in disadvantaged cohorts achieve their employment goals

TAFEs deliver on Victoria’s priority to build a skilled workforce, meeting TAFE objectives outlined by Victorian government, and supporting Victorians to upskill, reskill and transition through the labour market. Achieving students’ employment goals is the most meaningful method for understanding this contribution.

1 91% of TAFE students' employment goals are achieved

The public narrative surrounding TAFE performance often overlooks the simple evidence that TAFEs are delivering on their core responsibility: enabling people to enter, remain in, and progress through the workforce. As one of the most powerful drivers of individual wellbeing and collective prosperity, TAFEs' contributions to employment outcomes are central to a successful Victoria. By shifting to more employment-focused metrics, we can see that TAFEs are successful and efficient in delivering the Victorian government's objectives.

Four in five TAFE students are there to improve their position in the labour market, and a further 10 per cent have goals related to further study.¹ This shows that while TAFEs are a full-service education provider that meet a range of student goals including pathways into higher education, the primary focus of TAFEs is employment and career progression, and that students understand and engage with that focus.

As shown in Figure 1, TAFE students with employment-focused goals are overwhelmingly likely to achieve them, with success reported by 91 per cent of these students. Achievement rates are similar regardless of whether students complete their full qualification (91 per cent of completers compared with 88 per cent of part-completers). This demonstrates that TAFEs deliver value by enabling the employment outcomes that students seek, and these outcomes are often realised through, targeted or time-limited training that responds to learner and labour-market needs.

Figure 1 | 91% of TAFE students achieve their employment-related study goals²

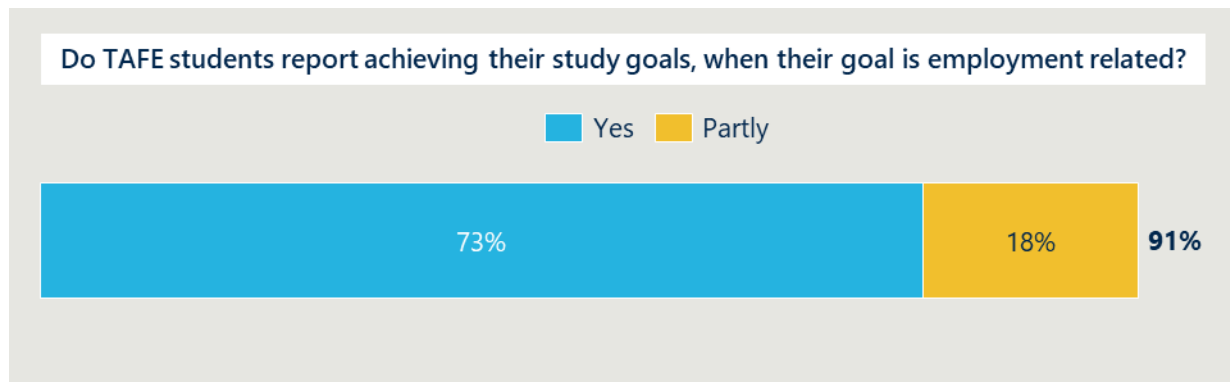


Table 1 below outlines the full breadth of reasons for study, reflecting the varied and legitimate ways students use the TAFE system. It shows that there are a range of employment-related reasons for training, from acquiring a new job to changing careers to upskilling in their current job. These three reasons account for the motivations of more than half of all students at TAFE. Engaging with this breadth of reasons is critical to ensuring the success of each student. Achievement of employment goals is an ideal metric because it captures the nuance of students who have switched jobs, sought promotion, or moved closer to employment, rather than just being in a job.

¹ NCVER, *National Student Outcomes Survey, 2022-2024*. 'Not stated', 'NA' and 'Don't know' results are excluded.

² Ibid.

Table 1 | Reasons for study at TAFE³

Student goal	Specific reason	Proportion of students	Proportion that achieved main reason for study ⁴
Work	Get a job	26%	86%
	Try for a different career	16%	87%
	Requirement of job	13%	98%
	Gain extra skills for current job	12%	97%
	Develop or start own business	6%	93%
	Get a better job or promotion	6%	89%
	Work total	79%	91%
Stepping stone	Gain advanced entry to a higher qualification or university	4%	96%
	Get into another course of study	4%	95%
	Obtain credit points towards senior secondary schooling	2%	93%
	Stepping stone total	10%	95%
Personal growth	Improve general education skills	7%	96%
	Get skills for community/voluntary work	2%	96%
	Increase my self-esteem	2%	96%
	Recreational reasons	0.5%	95%
	Other	0.5%	83%
	Personal growth total	12%	96%

TAFEs deliver these successful outcomes partly through strong provision of wraparound support services, including employability skills development, wellbeing support, career guidance, and work-integrated learning. These contribute to employment outcomes for all learners and show the value of TAFE delivery.

Achieving students' employment goals is the right way to understand TAFE contributions. It aligns to Victorian government objectives for TAFEs by focusing on productivity and individual prosperity. It also better reflects TAFE performance by recognising the different ways students want to engage with training and the variety of positive outcomes they can achieve.

³ NCVER, *National Student Outcomes Survey*, 2022-2024. 'Not stated', 'NA' and 'Don't know' results are excluded. Note that some figures sum to over 100% as individual values have been rounded, which results in a small discrepancy in the total.

⁴ Note: This includes students who responded "yes" and "partly" when asked whether they achieved their main reason for study.

2 TAFE delivers strong results in priority sectors

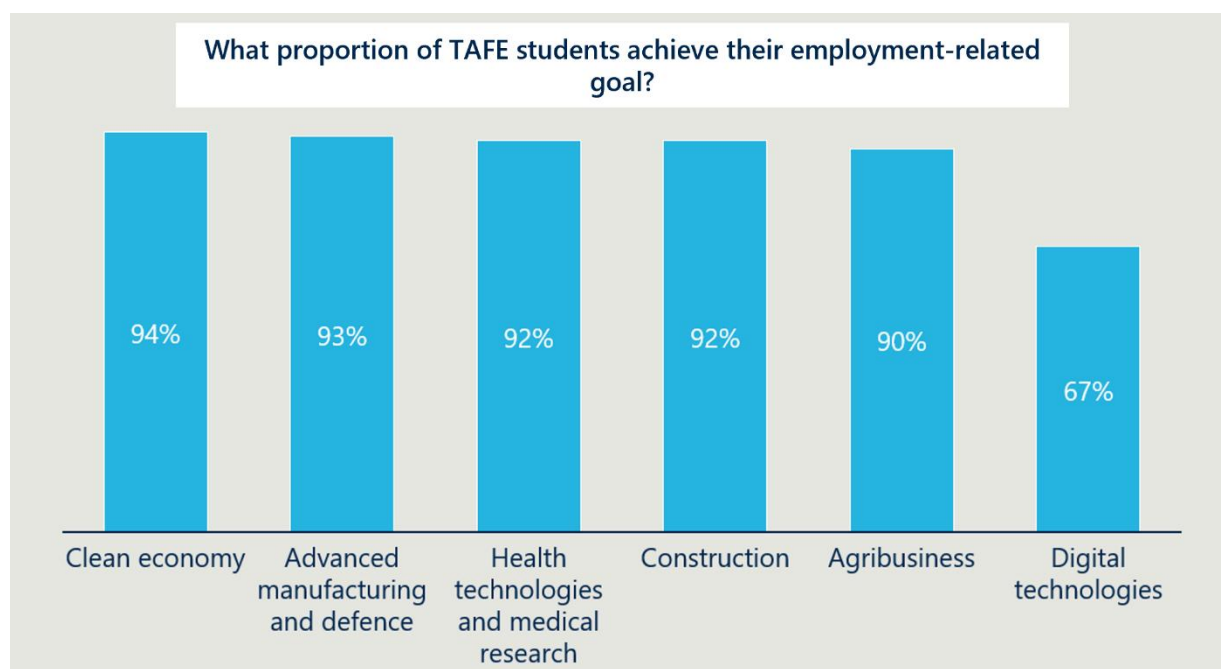
Victorian TAFEs balance their role as a full-service education provider meeting the needs of their communities with a responsibility to drive economic priorities through skills development. Looking ahead, the *Victorian Skills Plan for 2025 into 2026*⁵ outlines how the training system will support the State’s housing agenda and broader economic growth. It identifies six priority sectors:

Construction (Big Build)	Health technologies and medical research	Agribusiness
Digital technologies	Advanced manufacturing and defence	Clean economy

TAFEs play a critical role in supporting employment outcomes in these priority sectors by providing high-quality, industry-aligned training that equips learners with the skills employers need. By preparing people for work in areas of greatest labour-market demand, TAFEs contribute significantly to workforce participation and productivity.

TAFEs maintain strong results in supporting students to achieve their employment goals in these priority industries. Figure 2 shows that five of the six industries have comparable or better results to TAFEs overall performance, with an average of 90 per cent of students across all priority industries. Clean economy and advanced manufacturing and defence show the strongest results.

Figure 2 | TAFE students undertaking training in priority sectors are highly likely to achieve their employee related goals^{6,7}



⁵ Victorian Government, *Victorian Skills Plan for 2025 into 2026*, 2026 (accessed 13 March 2026).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Note: Fields of education were mapped to priority sectors based on high-level judgement of their relevancy to each.

This pattern reinforces the value of TAFE in equipping students for meaningful employment, particularly in sectors critical to Victoria's future economy. This means VET students are filling in-demand roles in these priority sectors, including roles such as disability support or aged care workers, wind turbine technicians, industrial electricians, cyber security engineers and agricultural technicians.

These results show how TAFEs deliver across the board, including where it matters most. TAFE delivery is even more successful in priority sectors, showing their ability to deliver on state and national priorities. This further aligns with Victorian government's objectives to deliver critical skills required by Victorian industries and employers and local communities

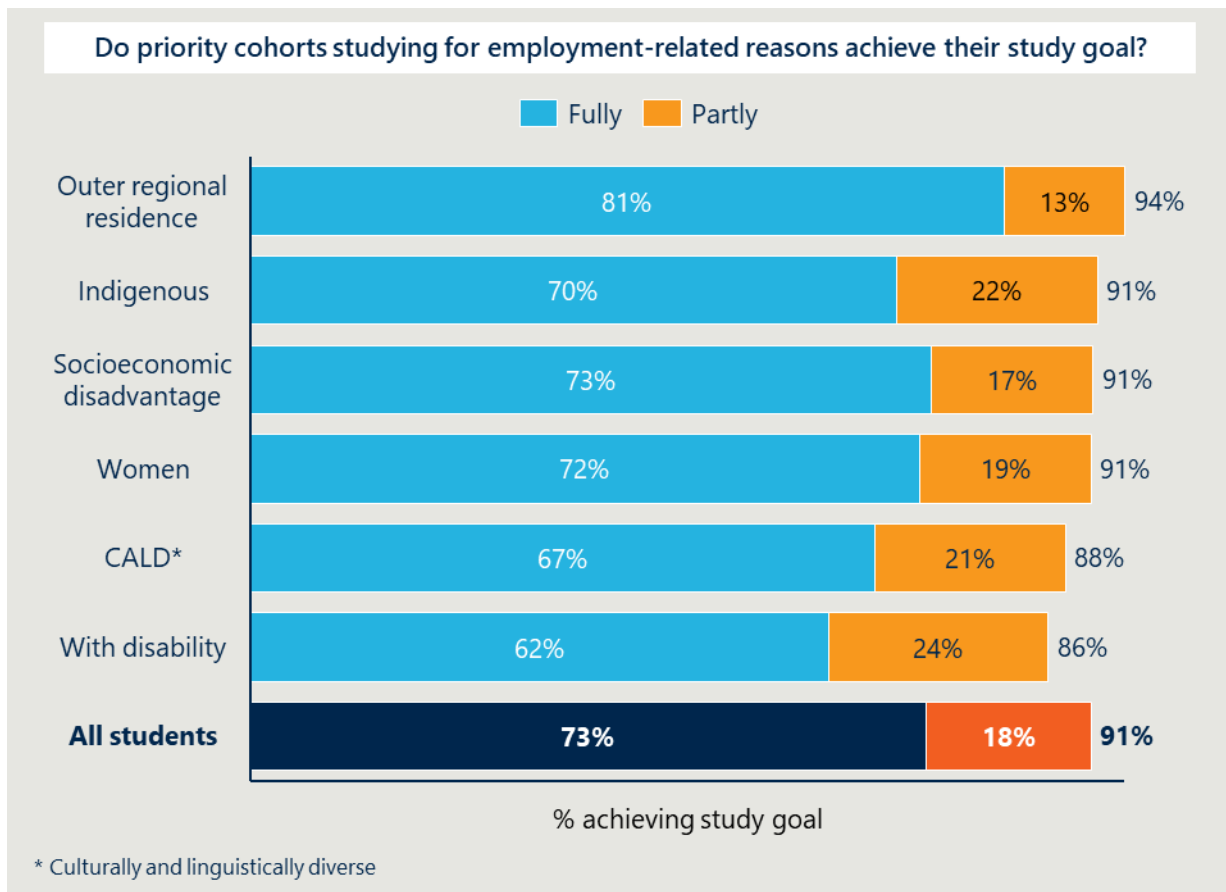
3 TAFEs improve economic equity

TAFEs are effective in reaching the cohorts for whom skill development delivers the greatest economic and social return, and in supporting them to achieve their employment goals. TAFEs (often disproportionately) serve learners experiencing disadvantage. This includes students who are more likely to face disrupted study pathways or challenges undertaking training, but who are also likely to benefit significantly from job-relevant skill acquisition.

This is directly aligned with the Victorian government’s objectives, which commit TAFEs to “[increasing] equity of access to vocational education and training for persons who face social and economic barriers when accessing education and employment opportunities” and “[supporting] Aboriginal self-determination”.⁸ TAFEs’ student profile – and their outcomes – demonstrate this commitment in practice.

TAFE providers deliver strong employment outcomes for students in priority cohorts. Figure 3 highlights the outcomes for TAFE students from six different cohorts that regularly experience disadvantage.

Figure 3 | TAFE students from priority cohorts are supported to achieve their employment-related study goals⁹



⁸ Parliament of Victoria, *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Free TAFE Guarantee) Bill 2026*, 2026 (accessed 8 April 2026).

⁹ NCVET, *National Student Outcomes Survey, 2022-2024*. 'Not stated', 'NA' and 'Don't know' results are excluded.

TAFE students from these cohorts who are undertaking training for employment-related reasons are highly likely to achieve their goal. Their success rates are comparable to those of TAFE students overall, demonstrating that TAFEs are not only reaching disadvantaged learners but are effectively supporting them to overcome structural barriers and participate in the workforce.

It is also true that TAFEs serve a disproportionately high share of students from priority cohorts. Indigenous students are enrolled at rates 36 per cent higher than would be expected based on population share. Students with a disability are similarly over-represented, by 17 per cent, while students experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage are over-represented by 6 per cent.

The participation of these cohorts can lower aggregate completion rates, the metric by which TAFEs are often judged, because students with complex barriers are more likely to study intermittently and exit early. This should be viewed not as a system failure, but as a predictable and desirable outcome of an accessible TAFE system that encourages participation, risk-taking and skill development among those who stand to gain the most. It also demonstrates that TAFEs' significant success with these students would not be shown through assessment of completion rates, but can be highlighted through the achievement of students' employment goals.

By accommodating priority cohorts, TAFEs improve productivity where it counts even more than usual: by enabling the people who may face greater hurdles to move into work, sustain employment, upskill and progress their careers, and contribute to the economy. This is productivity measured not by completions alone, but by outcomes that align squarely with national skills policy and TAFEs' mission.

TAFEs' success in delivering outcomes for students experiencing disadvantage shows their alignment with Victorian government objectives. They are supporting Australians to obtain the skills and capabilities they need to prosper, making training more accessible, and enabling inclusion and economic equality.