



**National Australian
Apprenticeship Association**

An Apprentice First Strategy for Australia

Press Release

As part of Jobs and Skills Month, today we publish An Apprentice First Strategy for Australia. A future focused policy paper exploring the role apprenticeships and traineeships should play over the next five years.

The core workforce challenge is that Australia will need more workers in practical, technical, care and infrastructure occupations at the same time as employers face uncertainty, training pipelines weaken, migration becomes more contested, misinformation erodes trust, cyber risk expands and AI reshapes entry-level pathways.

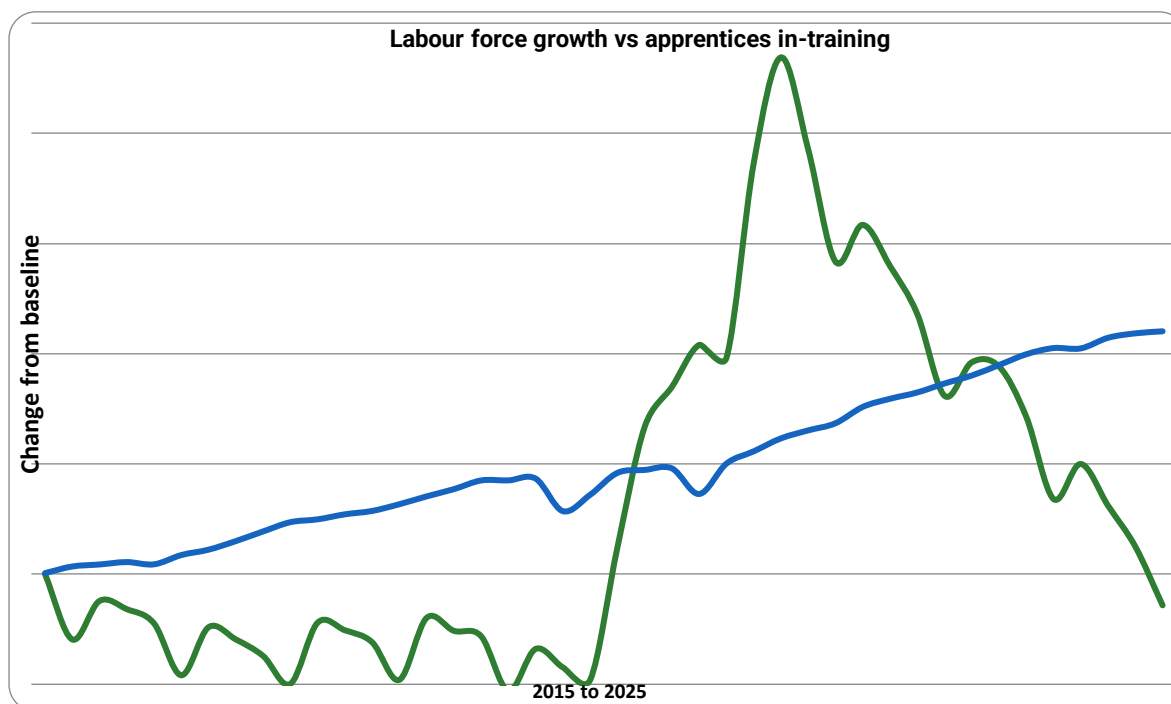
If the apprenticeship system does not adapt, workforce shortages will constrain housing delivery, energy transition, climate resilience, care services, digital infrastructure and national productivity.

The paper explores three scenarios:

- **Constrained stability** – where apprenticeships help defend baseline growth
- **Industrial acceleration** – where apprenticeships help capture productivity gains
- **Compound disruption** – where apprenticeships help maintain social cohesion and avoid an austerity trap.

Apprenticeships are learning models designed for the economy that is coming: an economy where people must learn continuously, use technology intelligently, build real things, care for real people, manage real risks and keep improving through work.

But current policy settings are not sufficient to narrow the gap between the growth in the labour force and the raw number of apprentices and trainees we need. Or supply the optimal mix of trade and technical skills Australia will require over the next five years.



Planned changes to incentive levels mean that financial supports for apprentices, trainees and their employers will be further reduced by 24% next financial year. Apprenticeship In-training levels are already lower than in 2015 whilst the labour force has grown 22% since then.

The Association is calling on the government to reverse the decline by:

- Recognising that falling employer engagement in the apprenticeship system is a threat to national economic resilience and trust infrastructure.
- Pausing the planned step down to incentives due to take effect on January 1st, 2027
- Returning the Skilling Australians Fund to its original purpose as a permanent mechanism to support additional apprenticeships and traineeships, enabling them to keep pace with the growth in the labour force.
- Rebalance apprentice and employer supports around the quality of the apprenticeship experience.
- Develop a national apprentice strategy around the 10 recommendations in our report.

End.

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