





**Annual Report**  
2021/22

The Land Works Crew have been working with Peabody's Wilpinjong Mine to revegetate and restore their biodiversity offset areas.



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## Acknowledgement of Country

Skillset would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work and live. We pay respect to the Elders past and present, and to the younger generation of the community who will be future leaders in years to come.

Skillset Workforce Consultant, Patrick Hoolihan providing group training support for apprentices hosted at Thales Australia - Lithgow Arms.



## About Skillset

### Our Vision

To create life-changing opportunities for people and communities in regional NSW.

### Our Purpose

Creating and sustaining innovative and effective partnerships to generate employment opportunities through education and skills development for people across regional NSW.

### Our Values

- Respect
- Collaboration
- Professionalism
- Integrity
- Helping Others
- Community

# Services

## Recruitment

Skillset offers end-to-end recruitment services which are tailored to the workforce requirements and goals of each client. Our recruitment services include:

- Permanent recruitment
- Labour hire
- Apprentices and trainees.

## Group Training

Skillset is the largest employer of apprentices and trainees in Western NSW. Our services include:

- Specialist mentoring
- Training support
- Performance management
- Ensuring compliance with legislation
- Insurance
- Payroll administration
- WH&S support.

## Career Development

Skillset's Career Development Consultants provide career support for individuals of all ages in the Central West and Orana regions. We offer a range of programs aimed at providing career guidance and developing the skills of the future including:

- CareerLink
- Land Works
- Youth Connect
- TradeUp
- Skills4Trade
- School2Trade
- Workforce Australia Local Jobs Program.

## Senior Secondary School

Skillset owns and operates an independent senior secondary Special Assistance school, Skillset Senior College. Its mission is to partner with young people who may be experiencing barriers to their education. The College is registered and accredited by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) to deliver Years 10, 11 and 12 in Bathurst and Dubbo.

### Skillset acknowledges our funding partners:

**Australian Government:**  
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

**NSW Government:**  
Department of Education  
Department of Regional NSW



Skillset partners with UGL Limited to deliver their Indigenous School-Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship Community Program. High school students are hosted across multiple businesses in Dubbo NSW.



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## Chairman's Report

David Cooke

**“There is an old saying that life begins at 40. Reflecting on the amazing journey Skillset has been on, and what it has achieved in its first 40 years, we have some very exciting times ahead!”**

Skillset started its life as Central West Group Apprentices and was incorporated on 20 April 1982. Back then, Skillset was established to address a shortage of skilled tradespeople in our region. Ironically, 40 years later, this shortage is now national and even more acute. The good news is we are starting to see apprenticeships and traineeships in our region increasing!

Skillset's achievements over the past 40 years have been many - we built an amazing low energy use building, we have been a Registered Training Organisation, and at one time, Skillset covered the entire Australian east coast with the Green Army. Throughout this time, Skillset has been a Group Training Organisation with an enduring focus and commitment to skills and trades in regional NSW.

And now, 40 years since Skillset employed its first apprentice in 1982, Skillset is the leading recruitment and labour hire company in the region; we are providing careers advice to people aged 15 to 75; we are connecting young people to education, training and jobs; we have Skills4Trade and School2Trade, and we currently work with more than 150 young people every year to obtain their HSC via Skillset Senior College.

Looking back, there are many people to thank. There are the Directors, the staff, the hosts, and the apprentices and trainees. I also want to thank our CEOs, Ron LeBrocq, Ben Bardon, and our current CEO, Craig Randazzo. In particular, I want to acknowledge Craig for his transformational leadership over the last eight years. Since he joined, we have redefined Skillset's Mission: To create life changing opportunities for people and communities in regional NSW.

So congratulations to everyone who has helped us achieve 40 years. We look forward to the next 40!

## Board of Directors



David Cooke



Alan Ward



Craig Hort



Cr Graeme Hanger OAM



Ian Tooke



Jacqueline Woods



Cr Maree Statham



Reg Kidd



Simone Townsend

### Member Organisations

Bathurst Business Chamber  
Bathurst Regional Council  
Blayney Shire Council  
Lithgow City Council  
Orange Business Chamber  
Orange City Council  
Parkes Shire Council



## Chief Executive Officer's Report

Craig Randazzo

**"We can be very proud of our organisation and what it has achieved in the last four decades."**

This year marks Skillset's 40th year in business. Achieving this remarkable milestone provides us with an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on the magnitude of Skillset's positive impact over those 40 years.

Skillset's service delivery now spans across 20 local government areas, serving a population of more than 270,000 people. Our annual contribution to gross regional product is \$48 million, and in the last 12 months over 5,000 people have participated in a Skillset program or service.

Our services have always been developed in response to the needs of our regional communities, and our Group Training program, started 40 years ago, still provides a highly effective way for businesses in our region to take on apprentices and trainees.

In addition to our loyal commercial client base, Skillset has proven to be a trusted provider of state and Commonwealth government-funded programs. This has seen us contracted to deliver more than 20 funded programs and initiatives over the last decade.

The Skillset Board and leadership team reviewed our strategic direction this year resulting in 5 key areas of focus:

- Increasing our service impact
- Developing new, and maintaining existing business partnerships
- Investing in infrastructure to support growth
- Renewing the technology that underpins our service delivery
- Implementing initiatives that attract and retain the best people.

At Skillset, what drives us all to try harder is seeing the positive impact we bring to individuals, their families and communities through the life-changing services we deliver. At Skillset our business is all about people, and through evolving our offerings and adapting to the constant challenges of our operating environment, our vision of changing lives in regional NSW remains strong.

**"I have enjoyed everything about my traineeship including the variety of work I get to complete. It has been good to show people that a female can become a mechanic in a male-dominated trade."**

Amy Verrall **”**



**Amy is a school-based trainee completing a Certificate II in Automotive Servicing Technology with host employer, UGL Limited and Dubbo City Toyota.**

“Hort Enterprises has partnered with Skillset to host more than 150 apprentices and trainees over 27 years. Training and skills are a critically important element contributing to the success of our business.

Craig Hort 

Craig is Managing Director of Hort Enterprises and a Skillset Director.



## Chief Financial Officer's Report

Emma Thomas

**“Seeing the business diversify its programs and services to help more people achieve their education and career goals has been a highlight for me.”**

As Skillset moves into its 40th year, it is a chance to reflect on the past and look to the future with optimism. Skillset's business model and its guiding philosophy of flexibility have been a key driver of its continued success and has assisted the organisation to adapt to an ever-changing economic environment, especially during the past two years.

Skillset has maintained its excellent financial position in 2021/22 with strong financial indicators. Despite a number of economic and environmental challenges during the past two years, Skillset continues to achieve an annual operating surplus and positive cash flows from operating activities.

In October 2020, the Australian Government introduced the Boosting Apprenticeships Commencements (BAC) program to assist businesses and Group Training Organisations to take on new apprentices and trainees during the economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19.

Under this incentive, Skillset employed 322 apprentices and trainees - an increase of 128% on the previous year - hosted at 164 organisations between 1st July 2021 and 30th June 2022. As a result, \$2,445,377 of support was passed on to host businesses for the financial year. Skillset has passed on a total of \$3,230,279 for this program since it was established in 2020.

Overall, our solid financial position will ensure that Skillset can continue to adapt and diversify its activities in response to the needs of our region, as well as any potential changes in Australia's economic conditions over the next 12 months.



## General Manager's Report

Jane McWilliam

**"As we celebrate our 40th year, Skillset's ability to support every stage of the career lifecycle through a variety of programs and services is one of our key achievements."**


The unprecedented times of the past year have continued into 2021/22. We have experienced many new and interesting challenges which had not been anticipated. These have included record low unemployment, ever increasing skills shortages, rising inflation, climbing interest rates and surges in the cost of living against a backdrop of little or no wage growth; especially, the national training wage. An apt description for 2021/22 is 'the perfect storm!'

We have felt the pressures of this storm from clients who are desperate to find staff to fulfil their business requirements, and candidates who are struggling to support themselves and/or their families on a training wage. Sadly, in a number of situations, skills development has been abandoned by our apprentices and trainees for higher paying, relatively unskilled roles.

Despite these challenges, Skillset has observed the success of the Boosting Apprentice Commencements (BAC) Incentive which increased the number of new apprentices and trainees starting during the year. Given the average duration of an apprenticeship, it is expected we will experience the benefits of these extra skills in our community in the next two to four years.

At Skillset we know that employment, skills development and training significantly enhances the lives and wellbeing of people in our local communities. In these unusual times, Skillset has proudly supported more than 5,000 people (a record number!) on their career journey in 2021/22 through the scope and reach of services we provide.

"Skillset has been with me through thick and thin. They have assisted me to develop skills I needed to gain employment. I'll always be grateful to the Skillset team."

Bowen Hyde 



**Skillset programs and recruitment services have supported Bowen at numerous stages of his career journey.**

In 2021/22, Skillset changed the lives of over 5,000 individuals through employment, education and career support contributing to the prosperity of our regional communities.



“Attending Skillset Senior College has given me a special school experience. The teachers treat me as an equal which has made me feel accepted, encouraged and supported.

Stanley Dench ”

Year 12 Student at Skillset Senior College, Bathurst Campus.



## Head of Skillset Senior College Report

Abbey Barrett

**“The outcomes we have achieved at Skillset Senior College demonstrate that when student wellbeing is placed at the heart of our approach, we can overcome any hurdle.”**

The Skillset Senior College employs a model of education which is intentionally solution-focused, student-centred and strengths-based. Overall, 2021/22 has been a year of growth and expansion featuring the establishment of the new Dubbo campus site, an increase in staffing, the construction of sports and agriculture sheds in Bathurst, and further development of team culture.

The highlight of our year was the graduation of 68 students who attained their Record of School Achievement (RoSA) and 45 Year 10 students who articulated into Year 11.

The Skillset Senior College Research Institute remained at the forefront of our program delivery in the last year. Although the study was impacted again in August 2021 by COVID-19, the team managed to complete the study, collecting substantial data on the impact of interventions on student anxiety, depression and cortisol levels. Importantly, results demonstrate that school-based interventions can significantly improve adolescent anxiety and depression within a relatively short timeframe. These findings are extremely noteworthy and if implemented in other schools, could provide considerable benefits for students, parents, families, communities and health care providers. We have already begun to translate our findings into practice at Skillset Senior College and have developed toolkits and resources for other education practitioners so they can apply our learnings as part of our keen interest in knowledge transfer.

We look forward to the coming year with hope, optimism and high expectations as we expand our model of life-changing education with a full wellbeing focus. Thank you to all those involved in our venture.



## Celebrating 40 Years

This year we celebrate 40 years of operation and the ongoing partnerships that have supported our vision and purpose: To create life-changing opportunities for people in regional NSW.



### Servicing a growing and changing community

Skillset has demonstrated its ability to adapt over the last four decades as our region's community and industry sectors become more diverse. We remain committed to working with traditional sectors, such as agriculture, mining and public administration, and also partner with key organisations in emerging industries such as information technology, manufacturing and biomedicine.

### Championing careers at every stage of life

At Skillset we aim to support people at every stage of their career journey. In 1982 we started as Central West Group Apprentices giving young people an entry into a trade. We still offer apprenticeships and traineeships, but also connect young people to education, training and jobs through programs, such as Youth Connect, Skills4Trade, School2Trade and Land Works. In addition to this, we offer career advice and development through our CareerLink program, and provide full time, permanent and temporary work opportunities through Skillset's Recruitment and Labour Hire services.

### Expanding into education

With its focus on kindness, courage and consideration, Skillset Senior College was founded in Bathurst in 2015 with only 34 Year 10 students and a handful of staff. Since then, the school has enrolled 560 students and now delivers a broad curriculum from Years 10 to 12 from its campuses in Bathurst and Dubbo. The school is at the forefront of the alternative school sector in Australia and internationally, and aims to empower its students to achieve their 'best future imaginable'.

## 2022 Skillset Award Winners

Every year, we recognise the talents, skills and extraordinary achievements of Skillset's apprentices, trainees, host businesses and partners. These awards recognise outstanding commitment to employment, skills development and partnership programs in 2022.



**Gordon Hawkes Apprentice of the Year**

Joshua Winter  
Thales Australia – Lithgow Arms



**Joyce Hawkes Trainee of the Year**

Callum Jennings  
Training Services NSW



**School2Trade School-Based Trainee of the Year**

Amy Verrall  
UGL Limited and Dubbo City Toyota



**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Apprentice of the Year**

Jerakye Goolagong  
Dubbo Regional Council



**Woman in a Non-Traditional Trade Apprentice of the Year**

Ashley Leonard  
Yancoal Australia Limited  
Moolarben Coal Operations



**Small Medium Enterprise Host of the Year**

Vivability



**Large Host of the Year**

Yancoal Australia Limited  
Moolarben Coal Operations



**Local Government Award**

Mid-Western Regional Council



**Recruitment Partner of the Year**

Storco



**Mentor Plus Partner of the Year**

Newcrest Mining Limited  
Cadia Valley Operations



**UpSkill Partner of the Year**

Peabody's Wilpinjong Mine



**Jim Todman Safety Award**

Hort Enterprises



**Career Development Partner of the Year**

Denison College of Secondary Education



Since 2009, Skillset and Moolarben Coal Operations have partnered to provide significant benefits in the Mudgee community including over 270 individuals employed as apprentices, trainees, and labour hire. Skillset and Moolarben also organise the annual Mudgee Try-a-Trade Expo to encourage local high school students to consider completing a trade qualification when they finish school.

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2/150 Lords Place  
Orange NSW 2800

Dubbo  
34A Victoria Street  
Dubbo NSW 2830

Mudgee  
48 Market Street  
Mudgee NSW 2850

#### Skillset Senior College

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Bathurst NSW 2795

171 Sheraton Road  
Dubbo NSW 2830

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