Industry engagement: outcomes report
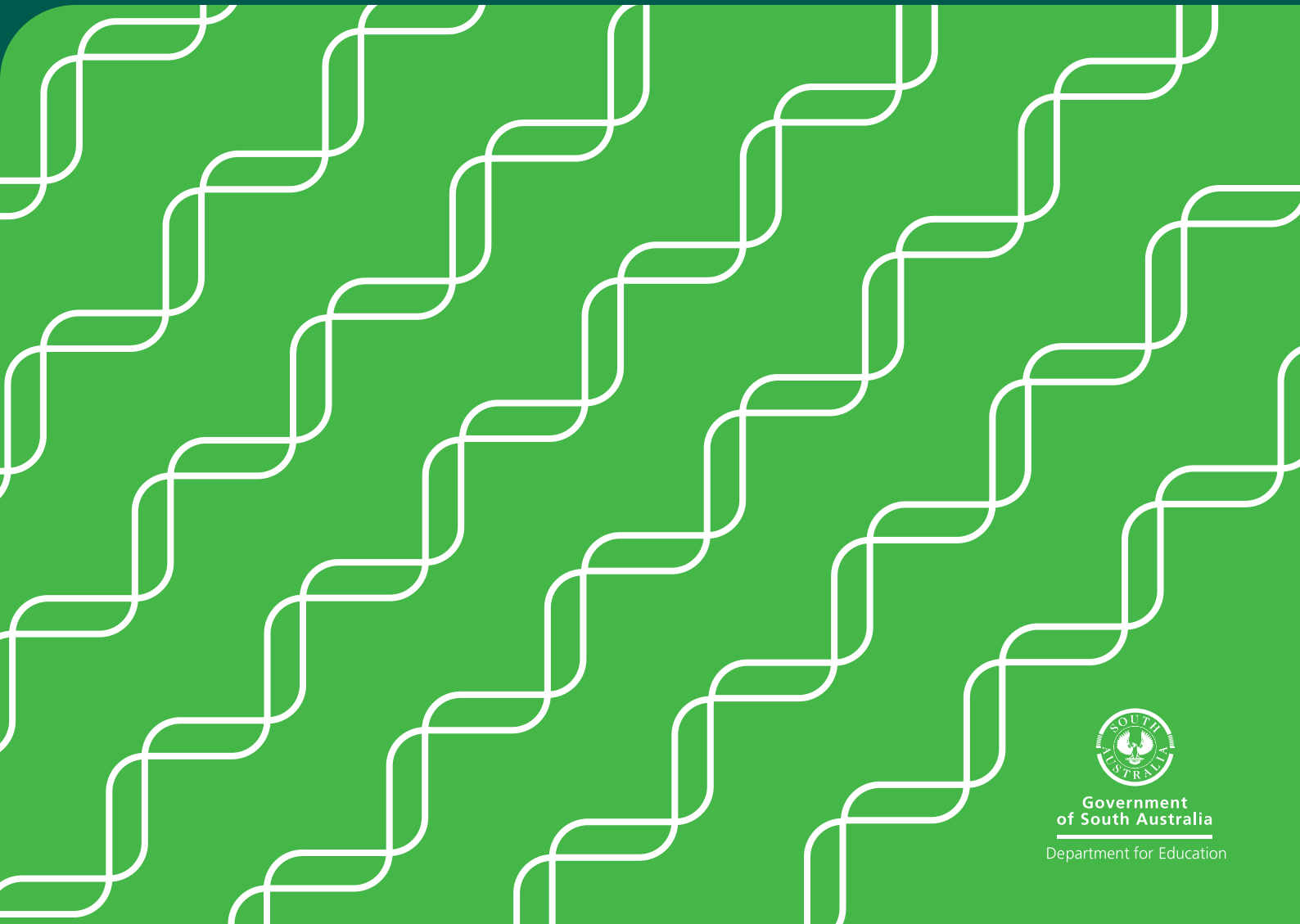
Technical Colleges

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional owners throughout South Australia where engagement took place, and we pay respect to the custodians of the land on which we live and learn. We respect their spiritual relationship with Country and acknowledge that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to those living today.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and we acknowledge the cultural authority of Aboriginal people from all areas of South Australia and Australia.

Foreword

Every young South Australian has the right to expect that they will complete school ready to become self-sufficient adults, equipped with the skills and knowledge they need for further study and employment.

To support this, the South Australian Government has committed $208.8 million to establish five new Technical Colleges, enabling secondary students to complete their South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) while obtaining vocational qualifications and a pathway to employment.

The intention is to open the first technical college in 2024, with the remainder to open by 2026.

Technical Colleges will play an important role for many students who are interested in pursuing opportunities in vocational careers, and for industries who are facing skills shortages - and it is exciting to be part of this initiative.

Strong industry engagement is critical in ensuring the new Technical Colleges deliver the skills most needed in South Australia's labour market, and that students are connected to job opportunities both during and beyond school.

Technical Colleges will have direct connection with local industry and businesses to help maximise the potential for young people to choose their future pathway through a modern skilled educational facility. This approach will provide a great foundation for industry to engage with students, provide early hands-on exposure to new industrial technologies, and support career connections.

As Assistant Minister to the Deputy Premier, it was my pleasure to lead the industry engagement on the new Technical Colleges.

Our government looks forward to continuing to engage with industry to make sure that the new Technical Colleges meet workforce needs, reflect and support diversity, and rapid changes in workplace technology.

Now is the time to work together to build a future-ready workforce. Together we can prepare South Australia's young people to be successful, both today and into the future.

Ms Rhiannon Pearce MP
Assistant Minister to the Deputy Premier

Executive Summary

There was overwhelming industry support for the concept of the new Technical Colleges as part of the senior secondary education and training eco-system in South Australia.

On the whole, industry stakeholders commended the Government for the initiative and engaged in constructive discussion on how the investment could be optimised to contribute to meeting the industry workforce skills needs in South Australia.

The insights provided by stakeholders are invaluable in shaping the design and operations of the Technical Colleges to ensure they are an ongoing success, driven by industry and tailored to meet industry needs.

Stakeholders demonstrated an enthusiasm and commitment to continue to be engaged as the Technical Colleges are developed and rolled out. Arrangements will be put in place to ensure continued engagement and involvement in the implementation of the Technical Colleges initiative.

The feedback from the industry engagement has been consolidated and summarised into key themes as outlined below:

- **Addressing industry skills shortages:** Technical Colleges must attract a pipeline of fit for purpose workers into the industry and support them to stay in the industry long-term, helping to address the workforce crisis.

  "…we have traditionally struggled for exposure and to engage young people in manner that allows them to see a clear path into the workforce… technical colleges are an integral mechanism to address this. Having a feeder base or filtering in system would have a significant impact on addressing workforce shortages. Once the individual is in the workforce there is exceptional scope for opportunity".

- **Industry training programs –** Technical Colleges must provide an industry training program that supports students to complete their education, gain technical skills and connect with employers, while receiving strong mentoring and support from the school.

- **Developing employability skills, including literacy and numeracy:** Technical Colleges must support young people to develop good literacy, numeracy and employability skills so they are job ready.

  "…emphasis on curriculum that supports the development of employability skills is welcomed. Technical skills are easier to teach, embedding employability skills as early as possible will support student transition into employment".

- **Trainers must have contemporary industry standard skills:** Trainers in Technical Colleges should have extensive and up to date industry skills and knowledge, as well as access to professional development to ensure continued connection to industry standards to maintain quality of training.

- **Use of technology:** Technical Colleges would benefit from a strong focus on digital skills and technology where relevant, recognising that a number of industries need to have higher level digital skills and capabilities in line with technological advancements.

- **Replicating the workplace environment:** Technical Colleges should include equipment and techniques that meet current industry standards, providing students with a fit for purpose experience to prepare them for the workplace.

- **Establishing pathways to employment, further and higher education:** Industry training programs must provide students with a clear pathway into employment, apprenticeships and traineeships, as well as flexibility to pursue university pathways – career education and awareness is a key aspect of this.

- **Including micro credentials:** Technical Colleges should include micro-credentials and skills clusters, as well as Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications to enhance opportunities for students and support further skills development.

"Non-VET activity in the industry training program could include certification etc. – these offer something more to students in addition to SACE and VET and are recognised by industry as relevant"

- **Raising perception of Vocational Education and Training:** Targeted awareness building and marketing effort is required to change the perception of VET as a pathway, particularly with teachers, parents/guardians, and the wider community. Stakeholders also see value in having a physical presence in Technical Colleges.

"The attention that the colleges will bring is a great opportunity for business to demonstrate commitment to the development of the future workforce".

- **Establishing sound governance:** Establishing sound governance arrangements would ensure Technical Colleges remain viable, sustainable, and relevant. Stakeholders want ongoing engagement to build strong partnerships and ensure Technical Colleges continue to meet the needs of industry.

"Ongoing and regular industry engagement is critical… training/industry engagement should not be determined by the school alone but in partnership with industry"

- **Equity of access for students:** Technical Colleges are an opportunity to support underrepresented and minority groups to bring more diversity into the workforce. Technical Colleges can encourage diversity by providing a wider range of opportunities for certain cohorts, such as women, Aboriginal people, and people with a disability.

"Opportunity to present career pathways to students at early ages to engage a more diverse workforce and promote diverse opportunities within industry that are difficult to find young people for"

- **Complementary to existing programs:** Technical Colleges should complement existing programs and address gaps in the market, not duplicate or replicate existing programs or infrastructure within the local area.

- **Mentoring and support:** Technical Colleges should provide access to mentoring and support for students to ensure they are given the best chance to succeed. This is particularly important for students in work placement and in apprenticeships or traineeships in the workplace.

- **Partnership Opportunities:** Stakeholders can see the value in partnerships with the Technical Colleges and many expressed a strong desire to partner with Technical Colleges, contribute to what students learn and help students transition into employment in their industry.

Engagement process

The industry engagement process was open from June to October 2022 to stakeholders across industry including employers, peak bodies and unions representing a broad range of sectors including:

- Agribusiness, Food & Wine/Beverages
- Building & Construction
- Mining, Resources & Energy
- Creative Industries, Business, ICT & Cybersecurity
- Defence & Aerospace
- Health, Disability, Aged Care, Community Services & Early Childhood
- Tourism, Retail, Hospitality & Services
- Transport & Manufacturing

The purpose of the engagement was to seek feedback on the opportunities and issues associated with the establishment of the Technical Colleges, inform the planning and design stages, and to influence the operating model and the industry specialisations.

Engagement included briefings, forums, attendance at events, as well as various meetings and information sessions. Industry engagement forums were held in Port Augusta, Mount Gambier, Lightsview, Glenelg, and the Adelaide CBD.

Industry stakeholders were asked to provide comment on the key elements, features and specialisations for the new Technical Colleges (see Appendix A) and given opportunities to share industry insights and perspectives.

Engagement opportunities were promoted through email, Eventbrite and social media. Invitations were also distributed by industry stakeholders throughout their networks, reaching a wide range of stakeholders.

More than 500 industry stakeholders participated in the engagement process.

Meetings with Industry Skills Councils

Roundtables and forums

Regional and Metro

Attendance at the Global Maintenance Upper Spencer Gulf Conference and Trade Expo

Engagement with more than 500 key players from across business and industry

Appendix A –
Key elements

Key features of Technical Colleges

- Connected to careers and industry
- Brand new buildings with the latest equipment
- For students in years 10 to year 12
- Delivered through quality RTO training
- Designed for every student to succeed
- Run in conjunction with nearby secondary schools
- Work closely with TAFE SA and RTOs

Potential specialisations for Port Augusta

- Building & Construction
- Sustainable Technologies
- Civil Construction, Resources & Infrastructure
- Health & Social Support
- Hospitality
- Early Childhood & Education
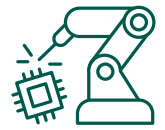
Potential specialisations for Metropolitan Technical Colleges

- Building & Construction
- Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering
- Health & Social Support
- Early Childhood & Education
- Information Technology

Potential specialisations for Mt Gambier

- Building & Construction
- Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering
- Forestry, Fisheries, Farming
- Health & Social Support
- Early Childhood & Education

Industry training programs in a Technical College

	Technical Skills	Core skills and capabilities	Workplace learning	Employability skills	Career	Wellbeing and mentoring
Year 1	Technical Skills	Core skills and capabilities	Workplace learning	Employability skills	Career awareness and planning	Wellbeing and mentoring
Year 2	Technical Skills	Core skills and capabilities	Workplace learning	Employability skills	Career preparation	Wellbeing and mentoring
Year 3	Technical Skills	Workplace learning		Employability skills	Career readiness	Wellbeing and mentoring

Appendix A –
Key elements

Industry Partnership Model

Career awareness	Industry immersion	Senior secondary pathways	Technical Colleges
Help students explore careers	**Engage students in the work of your industry**	**Contribute to what students learn**	**Sponsor students into the workforce**
Industry partners bring their expertise and experiences into schools to help students explore all their future career prospects.	Industry partners support student experiences in the work of their industry helping students make informed career decisions.	Industry partner with a school to deliver a Flexible Industry Pathway, bringing expertise and experience to the students and reinforcing the industry training programs.	Industry partner with a Technical College, extending the workplace into the learning environment creating fit for purpose learning, ensuring students have the required skills, capabilities and experience for employment.

Role of industry

Provide opportunities for students to discover and explore South Australia's industries • Attendance at career expos • Career information resources • Speaking to students	Provide opportunities for industry immersion so students can gain first hand experience of working the industry. • Work experience placements • Site tours • Come and try days • Industry challenges/ competitions	• Support a school in the delivery of the industry training program within the Flexible Industry Pathway • Provide mentoring and support to students and trainers • Facilitate workplace learning opportunities • Provide school-based apprenticeships and traineeships • Project based learning	• Contribute to design and delivery of Technical College industry training program/s (option to provide industry trainers) • Commitment to annual employment numbers • Work placements for students • Donation of equipment and ongoing maintenance • Included in governance arrangements

Benefits for industry

• Raise student awareness of industry/employer • Inspire and engage a pipeline of future talent • Address a lack of awareness of careers in the industry	• Inspire students to work in the industry • Connect to a pipeline of future talent • Address misconceptions about working in the industry	• Access to a pipeline for the future workplace • Assess students in the workplace prior to employment • Influence the delivery of the Flexible Industry Pathway industry training programs	• Creation of a fit for purpose and work-ready pipeline • Branding included on marketing (potentially some facilities) • Influence over the designing and delivery of industry training programs • Private use of facilities when available

Appendix B –
Key themes and feedback

1. Do the industry sectors identified for the metropolitan Technical Colleges resonate with your industry?

Stakeholders identified their sectors are not just economically important, but a critical part of society.

Stakeholders identified opportunities for increased levels of partnership and collaboration across the supply chain, and the importance of engaging with big associations.

Generally, stakeholders were broadly supportive however identified that there are already several existing programs, therefore it is essential that the Technical Colleges compliment these programs.

Stakeholders noted capacity will need to be built with RTOs to deliver courses.

Stakeholders identified the opportunities for programs associated with a large industry workforce in the Northern and Southern metropolitan areas.

There was a strong focus on ICT becoming increasingly valued, recognising that a number of industry sectors all need to have higher level ICT/digital capabilities. Consequently, it will be important for ICT to link across, underpin and collaborate with sectors.

While Stakeholders were genuinely excited about raising the profile of these industry sectors, it was noted that industry can change rapidly, therefore the Technical Colleges will need to be adaptable to remain relevant.

Additionally, while there is an increased demand for skilled professionals in each industry, they are currently experiencing a skills shortage

Stakeholders identified that these industries are all growth areas within the economy.

Challenges raised, including:

- narrow pipeline of new recruits entering the sector and understaffing
- inadequacy of wages leading to workers moving onto higher paying industries
- heightened competition for talent with adjacent sectors

In the long-term Technical Colleges will provide impetus to retain a more high-quality workforce, which will stabilise the current workforce crisis and help ensure that the supply will be there to meet growing industry demands.

Need to consider mature aged students who haven't finished SACE. Some sectors identified as having 25-year-old plus workforce and opportunities to engage with this cohort.

Technical colleges will be an important vehicle to raise the awareness of educational pathways into VET and tertiary education.

Stakeholders agreed that Findon is a suitable site for manufacturing and engineering.

Stakeholders agreed that each industry should have access to students across each sector.

The emphasis on curriculum that supports the development of employability skills was welcomed. Technical skills are easier to teach, embedding employability skills as early as possible will support student transition into employment (apprenticeship/traineeship).

Appendix B –
Key themes and feedback

2. What do you see as the opportunities for your industry partnering with a Technical College?

Opportunities for micro-credentials helping develop soft skills, like communication, teamwork, time management, critical thinking, enabling students to build a good career and effectively grow as a professional, support students move between industries, ultimately improving their employability and career outcomes.

Opportunities to engage students on a deeper, personalised level, and to demonstrate that career and study can both be academic and VET pathway.

Opportunity for improvement in the knowledge and understanding of school based apprenticeships and traineeships.

Partnering with a Technical College would provide opportunity to influence the quality of training, delivery of industry relevant training programs, and support schools that are already delivering construction programs to align to best practice. Need to ensure specialised skills needs are delivered by niche quality providers.

Opportunities to also increase the diversity in the workforce - female and Aboriginal people participation – leading to better awareness/recognition, a pipeline of skilled people to meet rapidly growing labour demand across a broad range of high-tech sectors.

Technical Colleges will be an important element in helping to grow the retention/completion rate among school-based apprentices and trainees, from their non-school peers.

Opportunities to increase the diversity in the workforce – particularly female students - leading to brand awareness/recognition, a pipeline of skilled people in the industry, and workforce growth/retention.

Opportunity for industries to engage with schools, VET and university pathways, and a chance to bring industry skills and knowledge into the training space – helping to supplement the learning and build capacity of industry teachers.

Added value in bridging the gap and complementing Lot Fourteen.

Consider different levels of engagement with industry in the operation of the Technical Colleges.

Technical colleges provide a unique opportunity for industries to work with sectors (not-for-profits and corporates) and interface with schools and VET, and have a voice in the industry training program.

Technical Colleges will support students to be more job/industry ready, develop life skills, and raise brand awareness – leading to a pipeline of skilled people in the industry and workforce growth/retention.

Opportunity for students to be exposed to industry sectors, engage with Technical Colleges so that students are more job/industry ready, and raise brand awareness – leading to a pipeline of skilled people in the industry and workforce growth/retention.

Opportunities to connect with industry associations to allow both small and large industry employers to partner with the Technical College.

Appendix B –
Key themes and feedback

3. How do we ensure Technical Colleges remain relevant to the needs of industry?

Stakeholders recognised the importance of continued connection/communication between education and industry to understand industry expectations. Ongoing industry immersive focus and built-in collaboration with industry leaders will ensure college programs are agile and continuously evolving to reflect industry needs.

Interest in different approaches to course delivery – not same operating model as school system. International models of industry engagement/ connections.

Collaboration with employers (at the site level) would be helpful.

Establish a governance structure, and reference groups comprising representatives from industry and Education.

Consider industrial matters/ risk assessments when developing training programs and sending students on work placements - need to set standards for participating employers.

Ensuring training infrastructure (facilities and equipment), RTOs and Technical Colleges keep up to date (currency) with industry trends.

Dedicated career counsellors to help students align skills/interest to industry needs.

To keep costs down, suppliers could contribute materials and supplies to help deliver training.

Ensure diversity of employers.

Stakeholders recognised the importance of having teachers/ instructors who are actively employed in the industry to ensure skills and knowledge are current, competency based and regularly assessed.

Continuous engagement with industry to make sure industry's voice is heard – inform opportunities, trends, advise on training packages, how RTOs are engaged, supply of equipment and infrastructure and ensure qualifications are relevant to industry requirements.

Establish a governance structure, and reference / industry advisory groups made up of people with relevant industry experience, knowledge and skills. These could be leaders from big business and small enterprise. A good governance structure will also provide feedback loop to ensure relevance.

Industry to put skin in the game and physically attend the facilities and have a regular presence at the location and raise the profile of some vocations.

Establish ongoing reference group made up of leaders from industry sectors across big business and small enterprise and peak bodies, who understand the skills needs of their sector. This will ensure needs of industry are relevant and heard.

Make sure qualifications, training, funding is relevant, current/ adapted to changing needs.

Make sure technical colleges are connected to the SA Skills Commission.

Should be differing levels of compulsory work experience depending on where students are with the career pathway. Multiple opportunities with a range of employers for structured work experience, and to make it more engaging for students. Make work experience more streamlined.

Teaching staff need to have high level skills and a range of experience which enables them to ensure positive student outcomes, strong links with industry and best practice in delivery of education and training. Teachers to have a good understanding of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships and incorporate sound trade and industry relevant content into their courses. Teachers and trainers should be provided with professional development and work experience opportunities.

Ensure RTOs have regular engagement with industry and businesses to make sure course content is relevant to industry trends and requirements.

Good quality marketing to target junior secondary students to encourage academic students to consider a VET pathway into an industry.

Apprenticeships and traineeships should be marketed as the first step to many and varied career pathways within an industry.