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Jobs and Skills Outlook 2026

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Government
of South Australia

Department of
State Development



Acknowledgement of country

We acknowledge that the Jobs and Skills Outlook 2026 was developed on the traditional lands of South Australia's First Peoples, and we respect their spiritual relationship with their country.

In delivering skills in South Australia, we acknowledge the importance of understanding Aboriginal knowledge, languages, cultures, and voices which provide important contributions and value across our workplaces, training providers, partnerships, and communities.

We respect and appreciate the important input, including the feedback, advice and experiences provided from a broad range of Aboriginal learners, training providers, industry, and supporters.



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A message from the Chief Executive



South Australia is entering a period of significant economic opportunity, with strong potential to create higher paying jobs for more South Australians. Major projects are underway across the state in copper, defence, infrastructure, housing and education, underpinned by emerging technologies driving capability and growth.

Significant opportunities are also emerging across other priority sectors including manufacturing, clean energy, technology and artificial intelligence, requiring a highly skilled workforce to support future growth.

Sustained economic growth, increasing workforce participation and low unemployment has also increased demand for skilled workers across many sectors, with shortages persisting in key occupations.

This *Jobs and Skills Outlook* provides an assessment of our state's current and emerging workforce needs, ensuring our training system remains responsive and future focused.

Encouragingly, continued investment in the skills system is supporting more South Australians to access secure, well paid jobs.

Under the National Skills Agreement, the Australian and South Australian Governments have committed \$2.3 billion over five years (2024–2028). This investment will strengthen training, boost foundation skills, increase VET completions, support Closing the Gap targets, establish National Security and Early Childhood Education and Care TAFE Centres of Excellence and uplift the VET workforce.

The South Australian Government is also investing \$27 million to support more than 1,000 university scholarships, apprenticeships and pathways aligned to SSN AUKUS and other critical defence projects, alongside a further \$29 million to deliver over 1,000 training opportunities in construction.

These investments position South Australia strongly, with job growth expected to increase demand for skilled workers over the next five years.

Government modelling indicates 169,900 qualifications will be needed by 2030, split almost evenly between vocational education and higher education. The *Jobs and Skills Outlook* maps key drivers of this demand, including major projects, housing supply, climate transition, the rise of artificial intelligence and geopolitical change.

These insights are helping shape South Australia's Skills Policy Direction and Investment Blueprint, guiding how we invest in training delivery through TAFE SA and non government providers under the National Skills Agreement. Together, we all have a role to play in building a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy.

This *Outlook* supports learners, job seekers, industry and educators to identify and seize the opportunities ahead.

Adam Reid
Chief Executive
Department of State Development

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"This *Outlook* supports learners, job seekers, industry and educators to identify and seize the opportunities ahead."

ASC engineer, Techport
Credit: Simon Casson



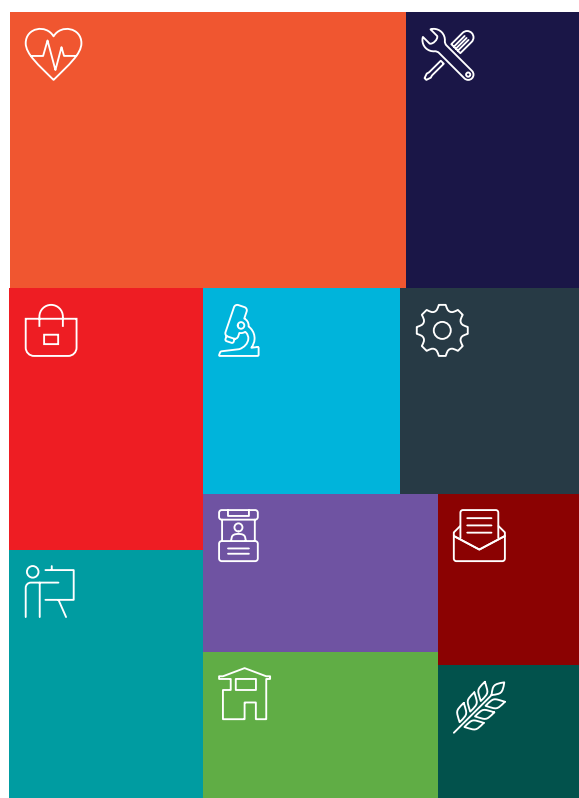
Where we are now

South Australia's economic and labour market overview

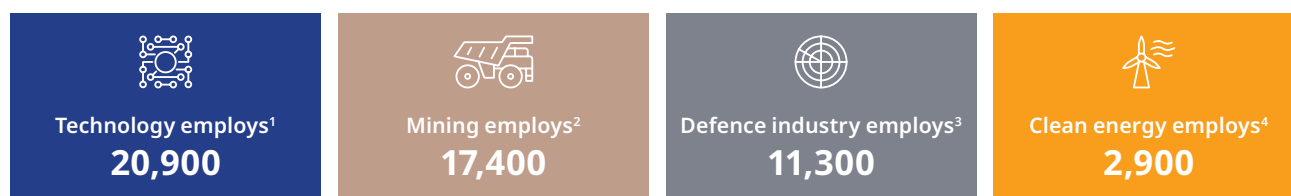
South Australia has a strong labour market with around one million people employed in recent months.

Top 10 employment sectors*

Health care and social assistance employs	190,300
Construction employs	87,900
Retail trade employs	87,900
Education and training employs	86,400
Professional, scientific and technical services employs	69,700
Manufacturing employs	67,300
Public administration and safety employs	63,900
Accommodation and food services employs	63,200
Transport, postal and warehousing employs	45,500
Agriculture, forestry and fishing employs	37,600



Other employment sectors driving economic growth**



*Top 10 based on Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, February 2026, Australian Bureau of Statistics (presented rounded to the nearest 100).

**Technology, Defence industry, and Clean energy include employment which draws from multiple employment sectors listed above.

1 [ACS Digital Pulse 2025](#)

2 [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, February 2026, Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

3 [Australian Defence Industry Account, experimental estimates, 2024-25 financial year | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) (this figure does not include Australian Defence Force or Department of Defence personnel)

4 [Employment in Renewable Energy Activities, Australia, 2018-19 financial year | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) (scaled by Department of State Development to current employment levels)

South Australia's growth forecast

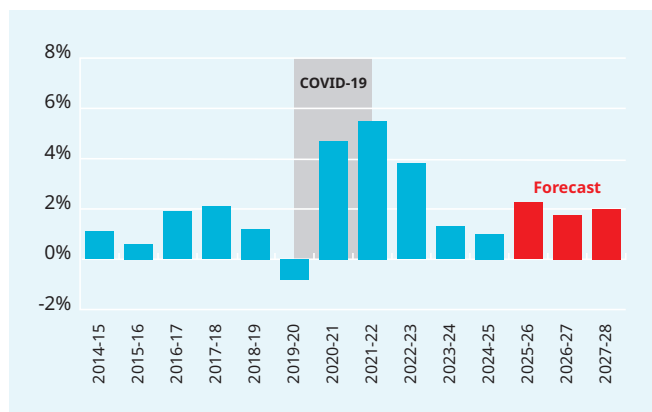


Figure 1

Gross State Product, annual growth

Source: Australian National Accounts: State Accounts, 2024-25 financial year | Australian Bureau of Statistics, Forecast from South Australia's State Budget 2026-27, *Budget Paper 1: Budget Overview* (Page 39)

A strong labour market, high employment rates and unemployment below the national average

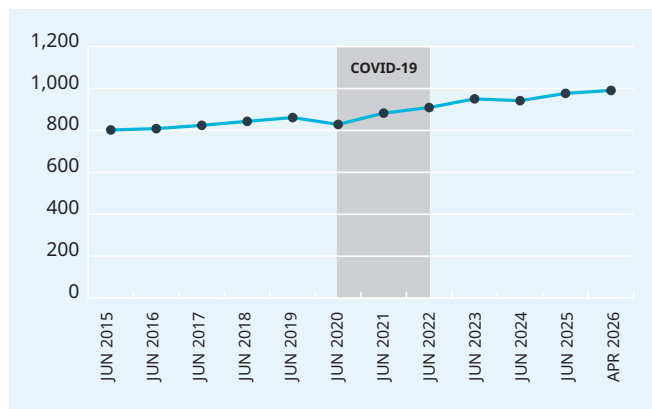


Figure 2

South Australia's employment rate ('000s trend terms)

Source: Labour Force, Australia, April 2026 | Australian Bureau of Statistics

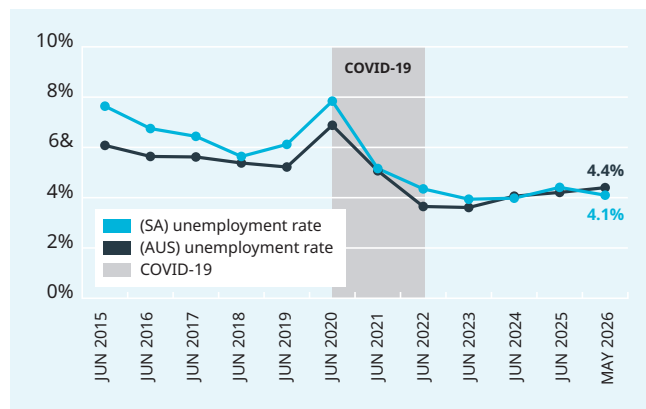


Figure 3

Unemployment rate (trend terms)

Source: Labour Force, Australia, May 2026 | Australian Bureau of Statistics



18,800
vacant jobs⁵
(May 2026)



Vacant jobs
up 87%
on the pre COVID-19
5-year average⁶

⁵ Job Vacancies, Australia | Australian Bureau of Statistics accessed 6 July 2026

⁶ Job Vacancies, Australia | Australian Bureau of Statistics accessed 6 July 2026

Top 10 industry sectors in skills shortage

Industry	Occupations in shortage
 Construction	23
 Manufacturing	22
 Health care and social assistance	20
 Energy, gas, water and waste services	18
 Arts and recreation	17
 Other services*	16
 Agriculture, forestry and fishing	15
 Public administration	14
 Mining	13
 Transportation and postal services	13

*Other services, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, includes repair and maintenance services (eg automotive) and personal and other services (eg hairdressing), and private households employing staff.

Note: occupations in shortage according to *Jobs and Skills Australia's Occupation Shortage List 2025*. Industry allocation is Department of State Development analysis.

Proportion of the working age population with a post-school qualification

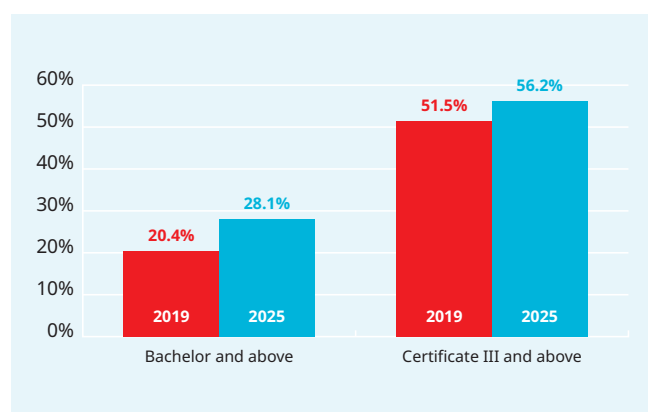


Figure 4
Highest educational attainment, South Australia working age population (15-64)
Source: Survey of Education and Work. Table Builder, Australian Bureau of Statistics

Proportion of young people (aged 15-24) not fully engaged in education, employment or training

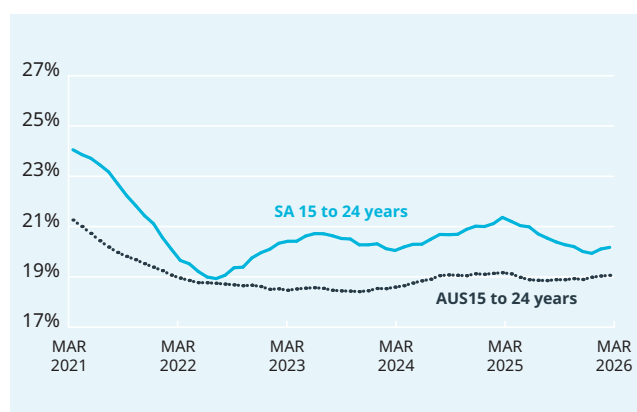


Figure 5
Proportion of Young People at Risk.
Source: Labour Force, Australia, April 2026, Australian Bureau of Statistics
Note: Young people at risk includes individuals employed part-time and not studying; unemployed and not studying full time; not in the labour force and not studying full time.

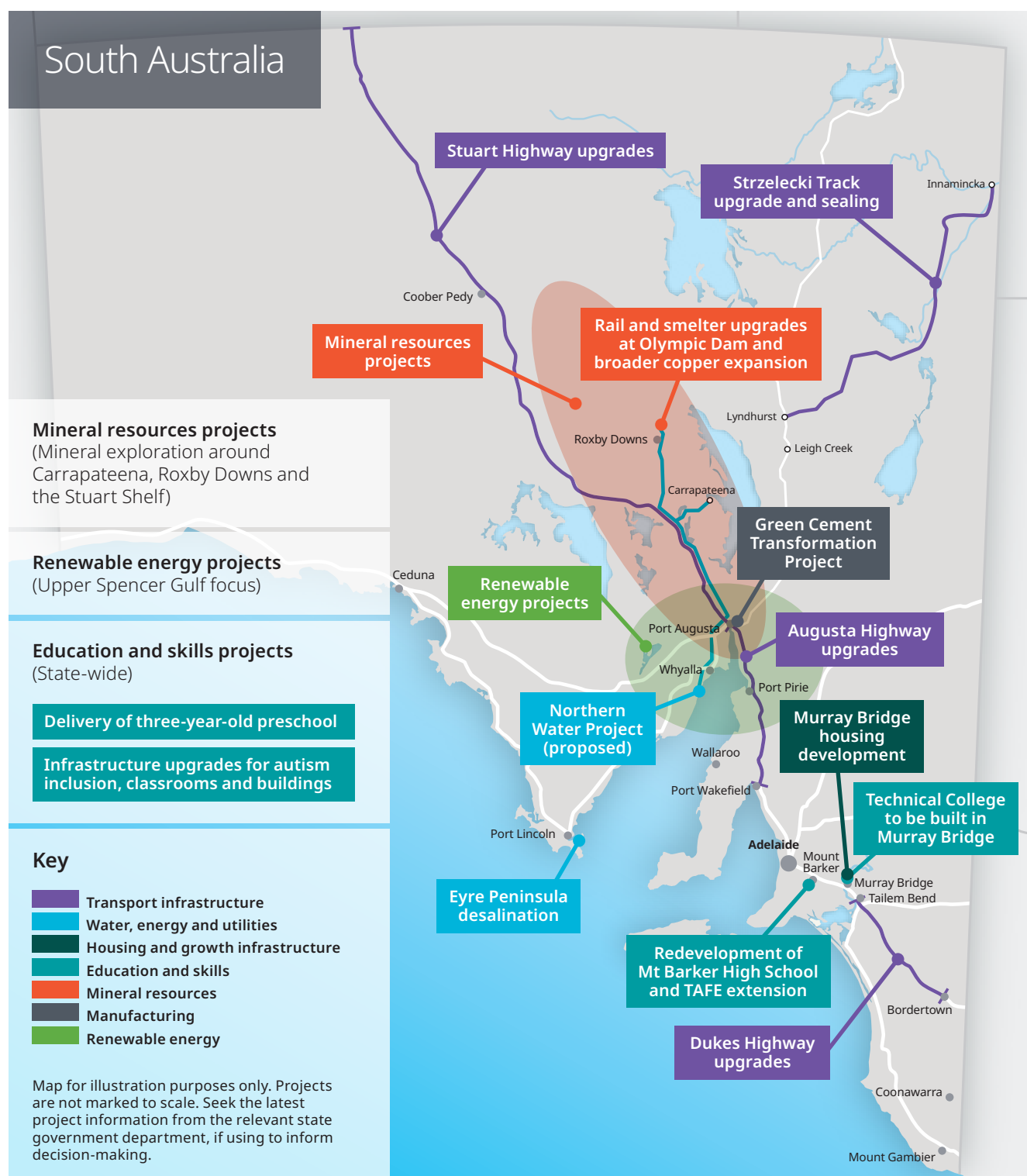
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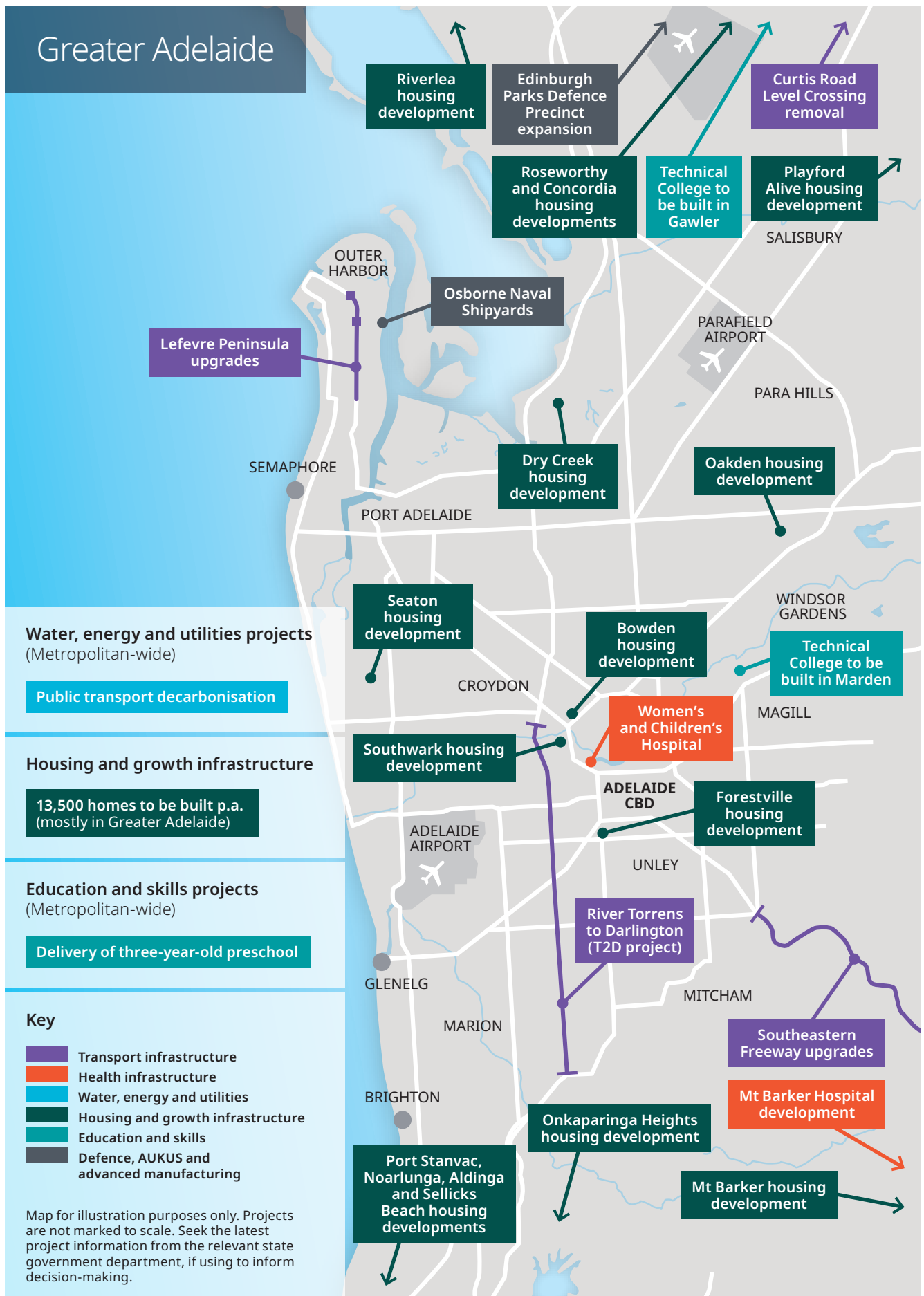


Major government and industry projects driving demand for skilled workers

These maps illustrate the location of diverse projects underway across South Australia.

This is not an exhaustive list of all major projects underway across the state. The maps are a visual representation of major drivers of workforce demand where government funding or support is involved, and where work is expected from 2026 to 2030.





Local and global changes driving demand



Workforce demand in South Australia is being driven by intersecting demographic, technological, economic and global forces.

The challenge is not just filling jobs, but building a more adaptive, skilled and inclusive workforce that can respond to sustained structural change and support the state's priority industries.



Geopolitical shifts

Geopolitical shifts are increasing demand for sovereign capability, as global instability and supply chain disruption drive the need for stronger local capacity in manufacturing, defence, logistics and emerging technologies. This is accelerating growth in South Australia's defence sector, with major projects and significant workforce expansion underway.



Decarbonisation, sustainability and the circular economy

The shift to decarbonisation and sustainability is driving strong demand for trades, engineers and technicians, particularly in renewable energy and infrastructure, with South Australia at the forefront of the energy transition and clean industry development.



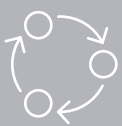
Climate change mitigation and adaptation

Climate change is putting pressure on industries, infrastructure and regional economies, increasing demand for skills in adaptation, resilience and maintaining critical services, while also creating new opportunities in green energy and sustainable industries.



Artificial intelligence, automation and technological innovation

Advances in artificial intelligence, automation and technology are reshaping all jobs, increasing demand for workforce-wide digital capability alongside human skills such as problem solving, communication and adaptability.



Labour market transitions

Labour market transitions mean jobs are changing faster than workers can adapt, with key sectors, including defence industry, construction, care and energy—facing persistent skills shortages and requiring ongoing reskilling and more responsive training systems.



Societal shifts

Societal shifts are changing expectations of work, increasing the importance of inclusion, flexibility and participation, and highlighting underutilised groups as a critical source of talent.



Ageing population

An ageing population is placing further pressure on workforce supply while increasing demand for health and care services, reinforcing the need to attract, retain and upskill workers across all stages of their careers.

Where we need to be

Top occupations in demand across priority industries (2026-2030)*

The South Australian Government – in partnership with the Australian Government – is focused on building critical skills in the following sectors, tied to demand and economic growth opportunities.

Department of State Development modelling has been used to determine the occupations in highest demand, across these sectors.

Construction and infrastructure



- Electricians
- Construction Managers
- Carpenters and Joiners
- Structural Steel and Welding Trades workers
- Civil Engineering professionals

Defence and manufacturing



- Electricians
- Purchasing and Supply Logistics Clerks
- Structural Steel and Welding Trades workers
- Software and Applications Programmers
- Metal Fitters and Machinists

Health and care



- Aged and Disability Carers
- Registered Nurses
- Welfare Support Workers (disability services officer, family support worker, youth worker)
- Generalist Medical Practitioners
- Nursing Support and Personal Care workers

Clean energy



- Electricians
- Construction Managers
- Motor Mechanics
- Structural Steel and Welding Trades workers
- Civil Engineering professionals

Education



- Primary School Teachers
- Secondary School Teachers
- Education Aides
- Early Childhood Educators
- University Lecturers and Tutors

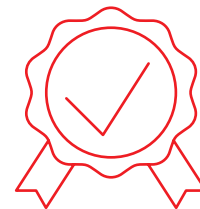
Technology and AI



- Software and Applications Programmers
- ICT Managers
- ICT Support Technicians
- Database and Systems Administrators, and ICT Security Specialists
- Electrical Engineers

*For a more detailed forecast of occupations in strong demand, visit: statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/jobs-and-skills-outlook

Qualifications needed to meet workforce requirements



169,900 qualifications needed (2026-2030)



49.5% of these are **higher education qualifications**



50.5% of these are **VET qualifications**

New learners, people broadening their skills and people upskilling can meet the demand

By 2030, it is expected South Australia will have a demand for 33,700 qualification attainments annually⁷. Demand is distributed across new learners, people broadening their skills and people upskilling.



11% of qualifications could be attained by employed people **broadening their skills** by undertaking training at the same or a lower level



20% of qualifications could be attained by employed people **upskilling**, by training at a higher qualification level



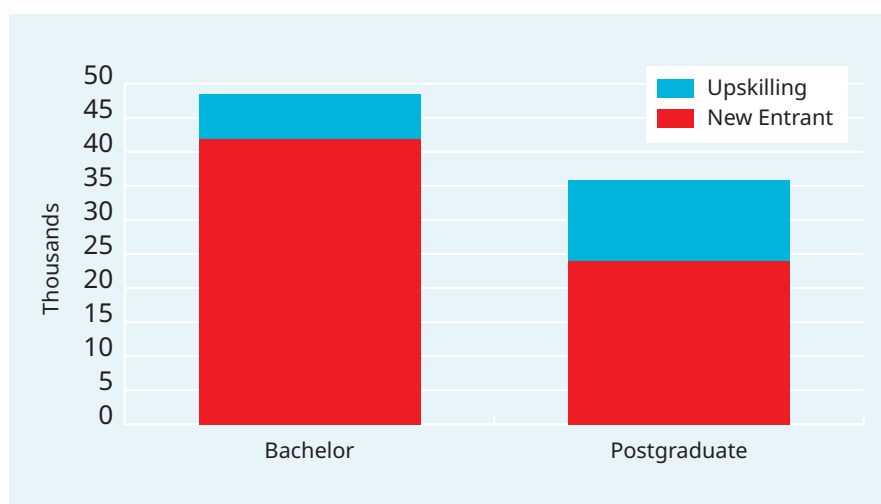
69% of qualifications could be attained by **new entrants**, people entering an occupation for the first time

⁷ Skills SA, Department of State Development modelling.

A range of Higher Education and VET qualifications will be in demand

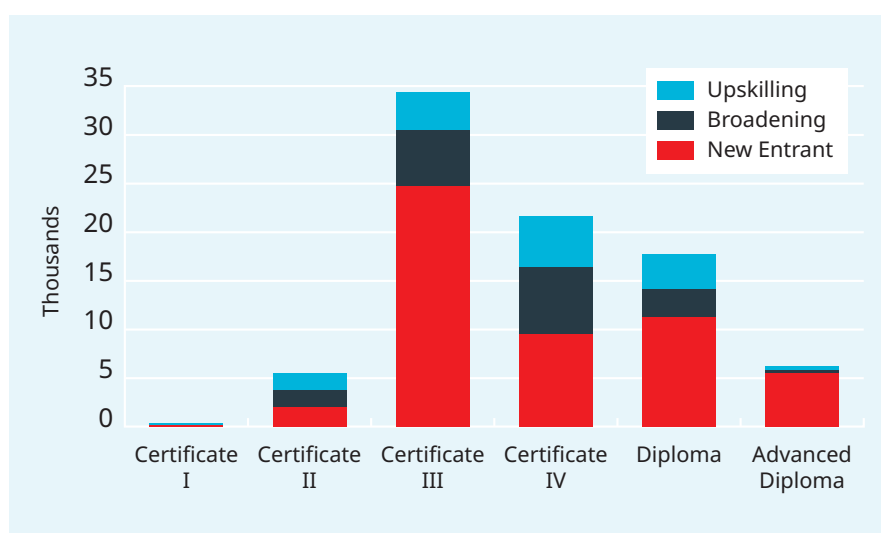
Postgraduate qualification demand is expected to continue growing, while Bachelor qualifications also remain strong. These are particularly needed across health care, education and training, and professional scientific and technical services.

Demand for qualifications by type and higher education level 2026 to 2030



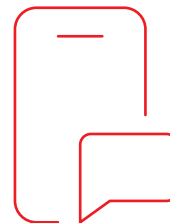
Within the VET sector, Certificate III and IV qualifications will account for a third of total qualification demand by 2030.

Demand for qualifications by type and qualification level 2026 to 2030



For detailed information about workforce and skill demands across South Australia's industry growth sectors, and for information on qualifications, visit the Jobs and Skills Hub:

statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/jobs-and-skills-outlook



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Published July 2026.

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