An Agreement Between the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Tech Council of Australia

Australian Jobs
SUMMIT

Canberra, September 2022

Background

Aims and purpose

The Australian Jobs Summit provides a unique opportunity for the representatives of employers and employees in the technology sector to come together and collaborate for the betterment of the sector.

In this agreement, the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Tech Council of Australia outline our plan to reform the skills, training and immigration systems to the mutual benefit of employers and employees in the technology sector.

We offer practical and achievable changes that can be implemented by the Australian Government as part of its mandate to deliver for all Australians.

Statement of principles

- Building and investing in the skills and capacity of our national labour market is critical to creating greater economic and social opportunity in Australia.

- The voice of Industry (unions and employers) is essential in our national skills and training systems' success, and needs to be involved at every level.

- Tech sector activity is worth $167bn to Australia's economy, and helps every industry to lift productivity, solve national challenges and grow Australia's wealth. However, Australia is experiencing short and long-term skills and workforce pressures related to tech jobs.

- Tech jobs are generally well-paid, fast-growing, secure and flexible. Affordable and accessible pathways into these jobs need to be open to all Australians. This will help Australian workers continue to find good jobs into the future. It will help Australian companies expand and create more jobs in Australia. It will allow Australia to navigate economic transitions and shocks with fewer negative impacts on wages, unemployment and equity.

- VET is a major foundation of our skills systems and should be re-established as a core part of our workforce development strategy and properly integrated into our overall education systems.

- Technology skills sets are critical to our economic development and future and should be included at a foundational level across our education and training systems.

Background

- Our immigration system has a key role and purpose supporting and developing our labour market now and into the future, with a clear preference for supporting pathways to permanent migration. Working in compact with workers and industry and providing pathways to permanency for highly skilled and experienced migrants enables companies to employ and develop more Australian workers.

- Ensuring our immigration system is fit for our national purpose and that skilled migrants are properly paid, supported and placed on a pathway to permanent residency is critical.

- Streamlining skilled migration for independently verified highly-skilled, highly-paid roles will significantly assist dealing with immediate and genuine skills shortages in the technology sector. It will ensure that compliance resources are dedicated to higher risk cohorts.

- Australia's apprenticeship system is world-leading and needs to be adapted and reinvigorated across industry, including the technology sector, to play a key role in our national workforce development strategy.

- Efforts to increase the diversity of the workforce, particularly gender diversity, in rapidly growing sectors such as technology will be critical to overcoming longer-term labour market shortages and supporting a fair society.

- Trade unions are a critical feature of a successful and effective modern economy and they have an important role to play with employers and government ensuring the voice and interests of working Australian's are properly considered in our national future.

- Nothing in this agreement limits or represents either party's views on any matters not covered by this agreement.

The Parties to the Agreement and Who We Represent

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)

The ACTU is the peak national representative body of the union movement in Australia. The ACTU provides a singular voice for our 43 affiliated unions and state-based trades and labour councils, which represent more than 1.7 million union members in industries and regions across the country.

We believe in cooperation and collaboration to build a strong, growing, productive economy for the twenty-first century which helps all Australians achieve their aspirations. This economy can only be built if working people have a strong representative voice in the debates that will shape Australia's future.

The Tech Council of Australia

The Tech Council of Australia (TCA) is the peak industry body for Australia's tech sector. Providing a trusted voice for Australia's technology industry, with over 160 members, the TCA comprises the full spectrum of tech companies.

We aim to advise and engage with Australian governments, businesses, and the wider community to help support the ongoing creation, development, and adoption of technology across industries.

Our vision is for a prosperous Australia that thrives by harnessing the power of technology.

Practical reform suggestions

Practical Reform Suggestions to implement these principles

1. **Establish a new Australian Digital Apprenticeship**

We recommend establishing a new Australian Digital Apprenticeship, which would be a one year program of study and work integrated learning, delivered through Australia's VET system. It would focus on key entry level tech jobs such as cybersecurity analyst, business analyst and data analyst. Government would subsidise course costs and provide a wage subsidy to incentivise employer take-up. Industry would commit to employing a specific number of apprentices with guaranteed diversity quotas This program would be developed by industry and could be funded through the approximately $40m in contributions that the tech sector makes towards training Australians through the Skilling Australians Fund levy.

2. **Ensure all tech jobs have a pathway to permanent migration, and commit to expediated processing for highly skilled, highly paid tech jobs**

The government should ensure that there are clear pathways to permanent residency for all tech jobs. We recommend the Australian Government commit to expediated processing times for high-skilled, high-wage tech occupations independently verified as suffering a skill shortage, as an immediate pressure-relief valve to support Australian tech companies to attract global talent and build capability within entry level and mid-level domestic technical talent.

3. **Improve access to tech jobs for women, people with a disability and indigenous Australians**

The previous Government committed $3.9 million over two years to assist women to transition into tech jobs. This initial commitment is not sufficient to develop a program that is of the scale required to help women to transition into these jobs.

We recommend that this initial funding be used to conduct market research into women's attitudes towards careers in tech, and to understand how they think about the possibility of transitioning into a career in the industry.

Following this initial research, The Australian Government should support a dedicated program to enable more women to make the switch to deliver 1.2m tech jobs by 2030.

Similar initiatives should also be adopted for other groups such as Australians with a disability and Indigenous Australians.

Signatories

For the Australian Council of Trade Unions

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus

For the Tech Council of Australia

Tech Council of Australia CEO Kate Pounder