



| NSW Department of Education

# Women in Trades Strategy

NSW Trade Pathways Program 2021 -2024

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# Background

The NSW Government announced on 11 November 2020 the State's first trade recognition and pathways initiative, The Trade Skills Pathways Centre (Trade Pathways Program). This was done in response to the NSW Productivity Commission's 2020 Green Paper.

This program establishes the framework for a robust trades workforce and sustainable skills development to drive job growth and economic prosperity post COVID-19.

**The Trade Pathways Program focuses on two target areas:**

1. Advancement of experienced but unqualified workers through an RPL and Gap Training skills assessment process
2. A Women in Trades Strategy which will pioneer new and innovative ways to increase participation of women in trades.

The Women's Strategy and associated initiatives will be informed by industry, research, and data and supported by behavioural interventions to increase the appeal of trades to women, improve career pathways in workplaces and maximise vocational outcomes.

The Women's Strategy addresses key actions necessary to increase the representation of women in non-traditional trades. It will strengthen relationships between industry, employers, and women's networks to ensure the best outcomes are delivered for women seeking a career in trades.



# Rationale

## A Trade of her own: Women's share of the industry

Fluctuating apprenticeships and traineeships, have led to widespread industry reports of shortages in skills and trade-trained labour.

Women continue to be underrepresented in the trades sector. Participation of women in male dominated trades remains persistently low in Australia despite a suite of government and non-government initiatives since the 1980s.

In key Australian industries with major skills shortages such as construction, electrotechnology and automotive industries, women make up only 2% of qualified trade workers.<sup>1</sup> This is a world wide trend. In Canada and New Zealand, women represent between 3% to 5% of the trade's workforce.<sup>2</sup>

Women face a range of barriers which inhibit their choice to participate in trades. The Productivity Commission White Paper highlights the serious economic issues these barriers present in addressing skills shortages in NSW.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence shows that there are deeply embedded cultural attitudes and perceptions about what roles are 'suitable' for women.

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring women have full access to opportunity and choice; are valued for their diversity; recognised for their contributions and are able to participate in all aspects of life freely and safely. The Trade Pathways Strategy builds on this commitment to drive social, economic and cultural change in trade industries in NSW.

Women's participation in the trade workforce is crucial to the economic prosperity of NSW. Women play a vital role in addressing skills shortages in key industry areas and occupations in NSW.

Training Services NSW will work with key industry stakeholders, employers and women's advocacy groups to enhance trade training opportunities for women.

**The Strategy will redress the gender imbalance in trades by:**

- leading the way in increasing trade appeal,
- facilitating cultural and societal change
- and supporting women's learning to increase career opportunities.

Jessica, 19, was bound for a gap year travelling overseas and then onto university. But COVID 19 put a stop to her plans. Then she did a stint of work experience and realised that a VET pathway was what she wanted. With the support of her family, Jessica is now an apprentice plumber earning, learning and helping to change perceptions about the work women do. Her advice is not to underestimate yourself and to find out what different jobs are really like. Jessica is undertaking a Certificate III in Plumbing at St Leonards TAFE NSW. She enjoys her apprenticeship and the industry she's joined.



1 Productivity Commission Green Paper. Continuing the Productivity Conversation. Page 78  
2 Making Strides in Attracting Women to Construction. Jobsite Article. Accessed June 2021 [Link](#)  
3 Women in Construction: Diversifying the Workforce in a Post COVID-19 World. Accessed July 2021 [Link](#)  
4 Productivity Commission White Paper 2021. Rebooting the Economy. Page 101 [Link](#)



# Pillars of action

## Inspiring gender diversity in trades

The Trade Pathways Program focuses on three pillars of action based on research and consultation with industry stakeholders and women's advocacy groups.



Increase the appeal of trades to raise women's level of participation



Facilitate change to remove cultural and societal barriers



Support women's learning to maximise vocational outcomes

## Key messages

**Women are vital to addressing trade skill shortages**

**Trade careers are rewarding and positively impact on the economic security of women**

**Innovative marketing will reimagine the image of women in trades**

**Strong relationships between the NSW Government and industry will help redress the gender imbalance in trades**

### What we will do

1. Establish the Trade Pathways Program as a champion for women in trades and ensure trade pathways for women are informed, accessible and supported from beginning to end
2. Implement strategies to increase awareness of gender discrimination in trades workplaces to assist workplace supervisors to manage conscious and unconscious bias
3. Improve access and opportunities to support women to take the first step and transition into a career in trades.

# Implementation Plan

**Vision: NSW Government to be the exemplar State in transformative change for women working in trades**

## Pillars of action



**Increase the appeal of trades to raise women's level of participation**

### Desired outcomes

- Boost awareness of the social and economic benefits of a career in trades
- Improved exposure of trade pathways for women
- Greater visibility of female trade ambassadors

### Actions

- Develop a marketing campaign in collaboration with peak industry stakeholders aimed at increasing women in trades
- Build resources that debunk myths about women's suitability to work in trades
- Work with NSW Government agencies, communities, VET Providers and women's advocacy groups to maximise promotion of women in trades.



**Facilitate change to remove cultural and societal barriers**

### Desired outcomes

- Greater numbers of women taking part and completing vocational education training
- Development of skills that lead to a career in trades
- Increased awareness of gender discrimination across workplaces in all trades sectors

### Actions

- Advance pathways for women to complete a trade qualification
- Develop customised tools to equip supervisors to better support women in the workplace and align workplace culture
- Support and promote the contributions of women in trades throughout NSW
- Leverage off existing TS NSW training programs to maximise uptake and completion of women in training.



**Support women's learning to maximise vocational outcomes**

### Desired outcomes

- Confidence to enter training and employment in trades
- Stronger career networks between industry, employers and women in NSW
- Reduced financial barriers that deter women from entering trades

### Actions

- Support reskilling and upskilling of women in NSW.
- Work in partnership to ensure women have financial freedom and access to a career in trades
- Develop a support network to maximise vocational outcomes for women in NSW
- Foster a collaborative TS NSW-wide approach to help students to transition to apprenticeships.

## Key enablers

Ensure the stability and sustainability of the trades workforce in NSW

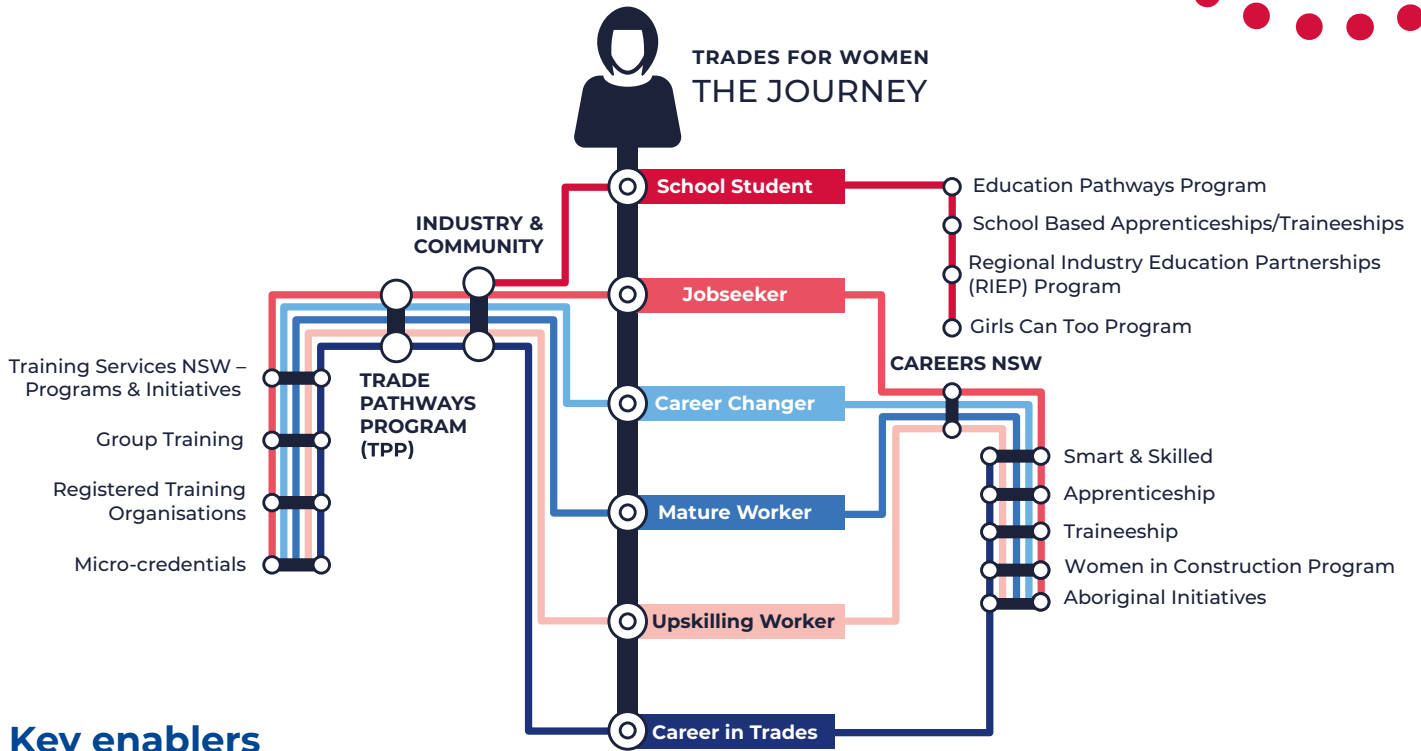
High quality training providers offering alternative and flexible delivery models

Advocacy groups that promote and support women in vocational education and training

Industry, employers, associations, stakeholders and unions

NSW Government infrastructure investment

Measure and report on progress towards the Strategy's desired outcomes



## Key enablers

### School Student

#### Educational Pathways Program

Designed to offer greater flexibility and pathway options for year 11 students to a school based apprenticeship as part of their HSC

#### Girls Can Too Program

Designed for female school students and aimed to increase participation of young women in trade related vocational education, training and employment across NSW

Participants will gain exposure and experience in trade skills through 10 Trade Readiness programs delivered by Smart and Skilled RTOs under the branding 'Girls Can Too'. The Program is a joint initiative of ISLP, RIEP and TPP

#### Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP) Program

Creates connections between industry and secondary schools to plan their future career pathways with businesses while at school

#### School-Based Apprenticeships/Traineeships

School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships allow year 10, 11 and 12 high school students to commence an apprenticeship or complete a traineeship

#### Job Seeker, Career Changer, Mature Worker, Upskilling Worker

### Careers NSW

A free service that will provide NSW residents with access to high quality, personalised career advice and resources

### Aboriginal Initiatives

Suite of initiatives specifically for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people including fee-free training, mentorship, and career and business development

### Apprenticeship

Combines work-based training with an employer and formal training from a training organisation with a trade outcome generally taking 3-4 years depending on the industry and qualification

### Traineeships

Combines work-based training with an employer and formal training from a training organisation leading to a vocational outcome generally taking 1-3 years depending on the industry and qualification

### Women in Construction Program

Aims to increase women's participation in trade and non-traditional roles within the construction sector. The NSW Government is delivering this program in partnership with Industry.

### Smart and Skilled

Provides eligible students with an entitlement to government-subsidised training up to and including Certificate III

### Industry & Community

Employers, businesses and organisations that offer employment, training, support and opportunities for people across NSW

### Trade Pathways Program (TPP)

Aims to address skills shortages by recognising trade skills and establishing new trade pathways, especially for mature aged workers and women

### Group Training Organisation

Provides apprentice and trainee employment, and responsible for quality and continuity of training

### Micro-credentials

Short and targeted training products that provide entry level skills delivered by training organisations

### Registered Training Organisation

Registered to deliver nationally recognised quality vocational education and training

### Training Services NSW

Responsible for regulation of government-funded vocational education and training (VET) in NSW and the implementation of funded programs.

