

Public Partnerships for Public Benefit

NSW Higher Education Strategy 2025-29

2025 annual progress report

Priority 1 – Support current and future NSW skills and workforce needs

2025 progress

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of its Engineering 2+2 Critical Industry Skills Model, Charles Sturt University's Bachelor of Engineering has seen a 120% increase in domestic applications and a 160% increase in international applications. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 129 students graduated from the University of Wollongong's accelerated pathway into early childhood education in 2025. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education entered into new partnerships with the University of Wollongong, Charles Sturt University, Western Sydney University and Macquarie University to support more than 400 early childhood educators to turn their diplomas into degrees. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education, in partnership with the University of Canberra, launched the new Professional Certificate in Education (Rural and Regional) for 67 regional, rural and remote teachers. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education launched the Transition to Teaching scholarship, with 35 scholars currently in the program, and expanded the Professional Experience (PEX) Hubs, including 2 new Hubs and more than 200 additional schools, strengthening the quality of graduate teachers. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education awarded 95 Teach and Learn Scholarships to retrain teachers in high-demand subject areas such as Technology and Applied Science and 90 Inclusive Practice in Education Scholarships to complete a postgraduate qualification in inclusive/special education. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the Pre-Teach Outreach program, the Department of Education piloted 5 curriculum support sessions to approximately 120 pre-service teachers across the University of Sydney, University of NSW, Western Sydney University and the Australian College of Physical Education. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education launched a regional skills planning pilot to embed community decision making through the Riverina Murray Regional Skills Alliance. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western Sydney University became the first NSW university to sign the 20% Alternative Pathways Pledge, committing to hire 20% of entry-level digital staff from non-university degree-based pathways, such as VET courses, traineeships, micro-credentials, earn-while-you-learn models, bootcamps and vendor certifications. An initiative under the NSW Digital Skills and Workforce Compact, the pledge will unlock more talent from diverse backgrounds and help the digital sector grow. 	✓

Priority 2 – Build capabilities to navigate post-school and lifelong learning pathways

2025 progress	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education formed the NSW Credit Working Group with TAFE NSW and all NSW universities to achieve consistent credit arrangements in key occupations. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TAFE NSW received accreditation to deliver the Associate Degree in Manufacturing and Applied Digital Technologies and engaged with the University of Newcastle and the University of Wollongong to develop course content for the TAFE NSW Centres of Excellence. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University of Technology Sydney and Macquarie University, together with Microsoft and TAFE NSW, delivered microskills with 400,000 enrolments and microcredentials with 5,600 enrolments at the Institute of Applied Technology – Digital. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education worked with an evaluation partner to deliver the second phase of the Institute of Applied Technology evaluation with a focus on delivery. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TAFE NSW received approval from the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency to self-accredit AQF levels 5-8 across Information Technology, Education, Management and Commerce, and Creative Arts. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2,954 students enrolled in the University of Newcastle's Open Foundation pathways program. 8.4% were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and 50% were first in family. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through its Gateway Admission Pathway and Gateway Program, the University of NSW achieved its 2025 target of 22.6% of domestic undergraduates from a low socio-economic background, a Gateway school, or both. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University of Technology Sydney launched the fee-free UniReady Enabling Program to strengthen access for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and students experiencing financial disadvantage. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through its U@Uni Academy, the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) supported 449 Year 11 and 355 Year 12 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students in 2025 to access an alternate, non-ATAR entry pathway to study at UTS. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MySydney Scholars Program, alongside expanded outreach activities, contributed to a 7% year-on-year increase in low socio-economic student commencements at the University of Sydney in 2025. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education provided a \$12,000 grant and ongoing support to 15 schools to develop and embed career and transition initiatives to support periods of time when an individual moves from one stage of learning, training or employment to another. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education commenced work with 22 central schools across rural, regional and remote NSW to deliver online and face-to-face workshops to upskill career advisers and help schools develop a whole-of-school approach to career education tailored to their unique circumstances. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education expanded its Pathways Universal Resources to 13 resources designed for school leaders and educators to enable the provision of diverse and meaningful pathways for students. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 1,500 early childhood education and care professionals completed one or more of TAFE NSW's 25 professional learning offerings. 	✓

Priority 3 – Improve equity outcomes in higher education

2025 progress	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education worked towards having NSW priorities incorporated in Australian Government policy reforms. This includes ongoing engagement in tertiary harmonisation, including the development of the Tertiary Harmonisation Roadmap, system reform through the establishment of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission and advice on the new Managed Growth and Needs-based Funding Models. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Universities Admissions Centre implemented a method to assess multiple disadvantages for 2026 admissions, enabling students experiencing disadvantage to apply for university places fairly. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western Sydney University (WSU) delivered 2 programs designed to raise aspirations and prepare Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander primary and secondary students for higher education. 1,400 students from 30 primary schools participated in the Heartbeat program in 2025, with workshops delivered in school and at a WSU campus. 2,000 students from 60 Western Sydney high schools participated in the Pathways to Dreaming program in 2025. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through its Gadigal Program, the University of Sydney has increased Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student commencements by 2% from 2024 to 2025. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through its Wollotuka Institute, the University of Newcastle delivered cultural capability training to 700 university staff in 2025, bringing the total to 2,641 staff undertaking the program since it started, and expanded delivery to external organisations and businesses. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of its TRACKS Program, the University of New England established a dedicated study group in Tamworth to assist Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander support staff in the education and health sectors in academic skills development and progression into further study. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NSW Government provided 2 letters of support for NSW communities (Hay, Moama) seeking to establish a Country Universities Centre (CUC) in the latest Australian Government Regional University Study Hub funding round. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education provided a submission to influence the development of university governance principles, which were released by the Australian Government in October 2025. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NSW Government endorsed the university governance principles through the Education Ministers Meeting on 17 October 2025 and is working with the Australian Government and universities on implementation. 	✓

Priority 4 – Enable the use of shared assets, expertise and research for the public good

2025 progress

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Secretaries of NSW Government agencies were invited to nominate public servants for the Australian Public Policy Institute’s Policy Fellowships program. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education established University Partnership Lead (UPL) collaboration agreements with Western Sydney University, the University of Sydney, the University of Technology Sydney, Australian Catholic University and the University of Newcastle. The UPL program gives practical support to pre-service teachers by helping them with their professional experience placements, approval to teach applications, scholarship and program advice, and early employment opportunities in the public school system. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the Boosting Business Innovation Program, Investment NSW supported 11 NSW publicly funded research organisations to build collaboration, facilitate R&D commercialisation and enhance SME skills with 22 projects funded through the TechVouchers scheme. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southern Cross University formed the Northern NSW Academic Health Alliance (NAHA) with Bond University, Griffith University and TAFE NSW. NAHA partnered with the Northern NSW Local Health District to advance research and teaching, and train students in real clinical settings at the Learning, Development and Research Building at Tweed Valley Hospital. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southern Cross University confirmed long-term tenancies of Trinity Catholic College and the Living Academy and approved a 50-year lease to the NSW Ambulance Service for construction of a new ambulance station and training facility at the Southern Cross Learning Precinct. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Macquarie University Incubator onboarded 96 new startups and scaleups in 2025, with more than 150 active member companies in health, information technology and other industries in its ecosystem. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NSW Government completed the foundations, structure and utility connections for the Ribonucleic Acid (RNA) Pilot Research and Manufacturing Facility at Macquarie University. The facility will enable clinical trials of new therapeutic treatments for various health issues. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Catholic University has commenced development of a STEM Centre of Education Excellence. In 2025, Strathfield Council approved a development application, and the university engaged specialist consultants to oversee the design process while undertaking extensive community and stakeholder consultation. 	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure consulted the NSW Vice-Chancellors sub-committee on planning on the update to the Greater Sydney Region Plan and the new centres policy. 	✓