

Appendix D:

Data analysis approach and limitations

Included data We analyse government-funded students because Free TAFE is only offered to students eligible for government funding.

We use course commencements rather than enrolments to analyse participation. A student may be enrolled for multiple years with the same course commencement date. Commencements are more useful for assessing trends.

Some courses are available as multiple enrolment types. We include normal enrolment types and traineeships but exclude apprenticeships which are not available under Free TAFE.

We analysed data for calendar years from 2016 to 2024.

Comparison years

We use data from 2018 as a pre-Free TAFE baseline to compare with because:

- it is the most recent non-Free TAFE year
- survey data prior to 2018 had differences that make it incomparable with following years
- our analysis of commencements data indicated this is a typical pre-Free TAFE year.

We use data from 2023 as a comparison year after the introduction of Free TAFE because:

- 2019 is atypical as it was the first year Free TAFE was offered, fewer courses were eligible and there was a one-off spike in commencements
 - 2020 and 2021 are atypical due to the impact of COVID-19 on employment and the economy
 - 2024 satisfaction survey data was not yet available for our analysis, and completion rate analysis for 2024 could not be conducted for a period of longer than one year
 - 2023 was preferred over 2022 because:
 - it was more recent
 - more courses were eligible for Free TAFE
 - students became eligible to participate in multiple Free TAFE courses
 - more time had passed for providers and students to adapt to Free TAFE as business as usual.
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Student-reported outcomes

Analysis approach and limitations

To reduce bias in the 2018 results by including students who take a longer time to complete training, we only included survey responses for students surveyed within 2 years of commencing.

There were 154,158 students in VET during 2023 who were eligible to be surveyed in 2024. The response rate for the 2024 survey was 43.8 per cent.

Data collected from this survey has the following limitations:

- Students enrolled in multiple courses are surveyed for one course only.
- The response rate for individual questions is lower than the overall response rate.
- Survey questions change over time as part of process refinement by the skills authority.
- Students may be surveyed over multiple years if they were incorrectly identified as completing or discontinuing their course in an earlier survey year.

Surveys, by their nature, include an incomplete and limited sample of all student results. We weighted survey responses to make aggregate data more representative of the entire population. Weights for survey responses used age group, gender, course level and completion status.

Broader economic factors will have an impact on 'improved employment status'. Metrics 'achieved main reason for study' and 'improve outcome' are also influenced by employment status. These results should be interpreted within the broader context of selecting courses to add to Free TAFE based on the need for skilled people.
