

AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework Guidance Manual

Wellbeing and Support



Wellbeing and Support



This section is part of theme 2: Wellbeing and Support.

This section applies across all 4 career stages. Wellbeing needs and risks shift significantly at each stage, from the acute compounding pressures of entry at the new entrant stage, through the accumulating informal load at the establishing and advanced stages, to the contribution and recognition challenges at the expert stage. The career stages table in this document describes these shifts in detail.

The consultation undertaken identified a need for more targeted consultation and analysis of the impact of inclusion, diversity, and wellbeing on trainer and assessor attraction and retention. This particularly relates to women in male-dominated trade environments, First Nations trainers and assessors, and others from underrepresented backgrounds.

Sustaining yourself and your team in the role.

What is it

Wellbeing and support refers to the conditions, relationships, and structures that enable trainers and assessors to sustain their work throughout their careers.

It encompasses:

- psychosocial safety
- workload design
- mentoring and peer connection
- access to employee assistance
- an organisational culture that treats trainer wellbeing as a genuine priority.

The provision of wellbeing support in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) workforce is not primarily a personal resilience factor but rather a workforce design requirement.

The conditions in which trainers and assessors work (including workload, administrative burden, pastoral care obligations, access to support and the culture of the organisation) shape whether capable and motivated people stay in the sector or leave.



This section covers the main wellbeing pressures identified in consultation. It includes what supports wellbeing at each career stage and what organisations can do to build sustainable working conditions from induction onwards.

For detailed guidance on inclusion, diversity and support for specific workforce cohorts, refer to the Wellbeing and Support theme of the AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework.

Why it matters

Trainers and assessors who are not well supported do not sustain their capability, do not maintain their industry engagement and do not remain in the sector long enough to contribute to career pathways and succession.

Consultation described the VET workforce as largely motivated and values-driven.

Most trainers and assessors in automotive and mining VET entered the sector to share genuine expertise and contribute to workforce outcomes in their industry. The evidence also shows that the conditions in which this workforce operates frequently work against sustaining that commitment over time.

Wellbeing needs and risks are not uniform across a career. The acute pressures of entry differ from the compounding load that builds at the establishing and advanced stages, and again from the contribution and recognition challenges that characterise the expert stage.

What we found

Workload, administrative burden and emotional labour

Administrative and compliance burden is the most consistently raised concern

- Administrative and compliance burden was the most consistently raised wellbeing concern across the consultation. Identified as the primary challenge in the role by a significant proportion of both individual trainers and assessors and training leaders.
- Many trainers and assessors, particularly those from trade and operational backgrounds, were not aware of the administrative dimensions of the role before entering it.
- The volume of documentation, recording and evidence management was described as a persistent source of stress that, over time, diminishes the sense of purpose that brought people into teaching.
- Training package change creates a distinct and recurring workload burden. When packages are updated, registered training organisations (RTOs) are required to redesign programs, redevelop resources and rebuild assessment tools. Work that often falls on staff without additional resourcing or lead time.
- In automotive training, the pace of change driven by the electric vehicle transition has intensified this pressure. In mining, changes to safety-critical units require particular attention to the practical and operational contexts in which competency must be demonstrated.
- Capable and committed trainers and assessors gradually absorb responsibilities beyond their formal role. This includes covering for colleagues, taking on mentoring and managing complex student needs, without corresponding workload adjustment or recognition. As a result, the people most valued by their organisations often absorb the greatest additional load.

Trainers carry an emotional labour load that is largely invisible

- Student cohorts in automotive and mining frequently include apprentices experiencing significant personal challenges (for example, financial stress, family difficulty, mental health issues and language or literacy needs) alongside their trade qualifications.
- The term ‘accidental counsellor’ was used across the consultation to describe the informal support role that trainers and assessors find themselves in.
- Trainers and assessors described managing these situations largely through personal initiative, without formal preparation, clear referral pathways or allocated time.
- Where trainers and assessors were equipped through targeted preparation, given access to student support staff and provided with clear referral mechanisms, the load became more manageable.
- Pastoral care is most sustainable when treated as a collective organisational responsibility. Not something individual trainers carry alone.
- In several organisations, student wellbeing received sustained attention with dedicated support roles and funded resources. In contrast, trainer and assessor wellbeing had not received equivalent attention.

Mentoring as a wellbeing mechanism

Mentoring is one of the most significant wellbeing and retention factor

- Mentoring was identified across consultation and career stages as one of the most significant wellbeing and retention factor in the VET workforce.
- Mentoring matters for wellbeing because it formalises a designated support relationship. Providing someone to raise concerns with, ask basic questions of and process difficult experiences alongside.

- It normalises the challenges of VET work. Hearing from an experienced colleague that the difficulties being experienced are normal, expected and navigable makes a noticeable difference to new entrants in particular.
- Mentoring also reduces isolation. Particularly for those in regional settings or navigating the identity shift of moving from industry into VET.
- Mentoring is most effective when it is ongoing rather than limited to the induction period. When mentors have protected time for the relationship, and when the culture of the organisation makes seeking support a normal part of professional practice.
- The absence of mentoring at entry was associated with a higher early departure risk and an increased feeling of isolation and stress.

Psychosocial safety and organisational responsibility

Psychosocial safety is a leadership responsibility

- Consultation identified psychosocial hazards in the VET workplace as organisational conditions rather than personal vulnerabilities.
- Where leaders actively managed the conditions shaping wellbeing, role design, workload and team culture, working conditions were described as more sustainable.
- Where this did not happen, attrition was higher and commitment among motivated trainers and assessors was harder to sustain.
- Regular structured check-ins that create space for honest conversation, clear referral pathways for staff managing complex student situations and explicit acknowledgement of informal contributions were identified as effective practices.

Regional and remote contexts

Regional and remote contexts carry distinct wellbeing pressures

- Isolation was described as a distinct risk factor for trainers and assessors in regional and remote contexts. Where staff may deliver training alone and away from peer networks.
- Regional trainers and assessors often carry a broader task profile, covering functions that in larger organisations are distributed across multiple staff.
- Access to professional development (PD), employee assistance programs, and peer networks is more constrained in regional and remote areas.
- Compounding factors include transient populations that increase staff turnover, housing shortages, high cost of living and environmental conditions that may affect working and training outdoors.
- Organisations that invested in structured remote check-ins, virtual peer communities and deliberate connection to broader networks described better retention and lower reported isolation.

Managing burnout risk

Burnout signals are visible before departure

- Burnout was raised as a present and growing reality and described as a more significant driver of attrition than retirement in some contexts.
- A consistent pattern was identified. A capable, committed trainer and assessor gradually absorbs responsibility beyond their formal role and their load increases without relief. This then becomes a structural risk, not a failure of individual resilience.
- Early signals are often visible before departure. For example, declining engagement with PD, reduced enthusiasm in team interactions, increased absence and the quiet withdrawal of effort.

- Where leaders recognised and responded to these signals through workload review, role adjustment or a direct and supportive conversation, outcomes were different from contexts where signals were missed.
- Advanced trainers and assessors carry a specific burnout risk. As they can take on mentoring, validation and quality assurance work on top of full teaching loads, without formal recognition or workload adjustment.

Wellbeing support required from induction onwards

Structured support and wellbeing are critical to new trainer retention

- Wellbeing support is most effective when embedded from induction and ongoing practice rather than introduced only after problems arise.
- Organisations that include structured check-ins, mentoring and accessible support services may achieve better retention and fewer early departures.
- New entrants face multiple simultaneous pressures. Including learning to teach, completing qualifications and adapting to systems and culture.
- Without staged support, these pressures may lead to stress, reduced confidence and early exit.
- New trainers and assessors placed into full roles without induction or mentoring reported higher levels of stress and perceived risk of early departure.
- Structured entry approaches, such as staged responsibilities, mentoring and regular check-ins, can improve outcomes.
- Well-designed support can help to reduce strain on both new entrants and experienced staff.

What helps

Organisational practices that strengthen trainer wellbeing, workload sustainability and retention.

Manage workload as an ongoing organisational responsibility

- Regularly review the scope of trainer and assessor responsibilities. Administrative, compliance and resource development obligations shift over time and require active prioritisation rather than accumulation.
- Monitor who is absorbing the informal workload and act before it becomes unsustainable.
- Automate marking and recording processes where possible.

Build pastoral care support into the role

- Establish clear referral pathways and access to student support staff so trainers and assessors are not managing complex student needs alone.
- Provide targeted preparation for the pastoral care dimensions of the role. Accidental Counsellor training and Mental Health First Aid were described as practical and valued investments.
- Give trainer and assessor wellbeing the same structured attention as student wellbeing. Including access to support programs and explicit inclusion in leadership conversations.

Embed mentoring and peer support from day one

- Assign a mentor or buddy from day one of induction. Include protected time for the relationship.
- Build team cultures where raising difficulty is normal. Through regular check-ins and sessions where concerns can be named without professional consequence.

- Make peer networks and structured check-ins available for regionally based and geographically dispersed trainers and assessors. Virtual connection reduces isolation where physical proximity is not possible.

Treat psychosocial safety as a leadership responsibility

- Role ambiguity, excessive workload and lack of support are organisational conditions, not individual problems. Address them through role design and active leadership.
- Respond to early signs of burnout, such as declining engagement, increased absences and reduced discretionary effort, with a direct conversation and genuine workload review.
- Formally recognise and resource the contribution of advanced and expert trainers and assessors carrying mentoring, curriculum and advisory responsibilities beyond their teaching roles.

Start wellbeing support at induction and maintain it

- Introduce employee assistance services at induction before they are needed, rather than after a problem becomes visible.
- Stage responsibilities for new entrants. Pair them with a mentor, provide a reduced delivery load in early weeks and include regular wellbeing check-ins.
- Maintain wellbeing support across career stages, not only at entry. The nature of what is needed changes, but the need does not go away.

Industry impacts

Automotive contexts

Automotive industry impacts

- The EV transition has intensified the training package change burden. Resource redevelopment and assessment tool updates are required more frequently and with limited additional resourcing.
- Physical demands of workshop environments create a genuine motivation for VET transition. Trainers and assessors who enter primarily to reduce physical load and find the administrative and pastoral demands equally draining are at higher early departure risk.
- Apprentice cohort complexity is increasing. Trainers and assessors are managing a wider range of language, literacy and numeracy levels, learning differences and personal circumstances than in previous years, with limited preparation for this dimension of the role.

Wellbeing and support strategies

- Provide workload relief, shared resources and clear prioritisation to support frequent curriculum and assessment updates.
- Support new trainers and assessors with staged entry, realistic expectations, targeted training and ongoing wellbeing check-ins.
- Equip trainers and assessors with PD, access to specialist support and time to manage diverse learner needs effectively.

Mining contexts

Mining industry impacts

- Fly-in-and-fly-out (FIFO) and remote delivery contexts create distinct isolation risks. Trainers and assessors operating across dispersed sites without peer networks are particularly vulnerable.
- Changes to safety-critical units carry particular weight given the direct link between assessment quality and worker safety in high hazard environments.
- Enterprise RTOs in mining can offer stronger embedded support structures than external providers. Trainers and assessors in these settings sometimes carry broader operational responsibilities alongside their training role.
- Transient workforce populations in regional mining contexts affect the stability of peer relationships and mentoring arrangements.

Wellbeing and support strategies

- Provide structured peer networks, regular check-ins and opportunities for connection to reduce isolation in FIFO and remote delivery contexts.
- Allocate dedicated time, specialist support and clear guidance to manage the high workload and compliance demands of safety-critical unit updates.
- Clarify role boundaries, balance operational and training responsibilities and ensure access to embedded support structures.
- Strengthen mentoring and peer support systems with flexible, consistent approaches to account for workforce turnover in regional contexts.

What this looks like across the career stages

Wellbeing needs are not static. They evolve as careers develop and the risks and supports that matter most shift considerably across the four career stages of the framework.

Career stage	Focus	What helps
New entrant – getting started and finding your feet	Supported transition into the trainer role	• Provide structured induction and mentoring to support the transition into the trainer role. • Phase teaching responsibilities gradually to avoid overwhelming new trainers. • Conduct regular wellbeing check-ins and ensure a psychologically safe learning environment. • Provide cultural awareness training and access to First Nations mentoring to support inclusive practice
Establishing – building confidence and consistency	Sustaining practice through peer support and workload balance	• Monitor and manage workload growth to prevent unsustainable responsibilities. • Encourage peer collaboration and professional networking to strengthen support systems. • Create safe spaces for reflective practice and discussion of challenges. • Continue mentoring and PD opportunities.
Advanced – handling complexity and informal responsibility	Recognising and managing expanded professional responsibilities	• Recognise and formally support mentoring and leadership responsibilities. • Adjust workloads to account for additional responsibilities such as mentoring and quality assurance. • Provide support for navigating organisational responsibilities and team leadership. • Enable experienced trainers and assessors to influence workload design and role expectations.
Expert – drawing on deep experience and perspective	Leading wellbeing culture and workforce sustainability	• Support expert trainers and assessors to lead wellbeing and psychosocial safety initiatives. • Involve experienced trainers in shaping workplace culture and workforce practices. • Embed succession planning and knowledge transfer processes. • Formally recognise and support expert contributions to organisational wellbeing

When it is working

- New trainers and assessors are assigned a mentor or buddy from day one, with protected time for the relationship.
- Employee assistance services are introduced at induction, before they are needed.
- Trainer and assessor wellbeing receives the same structured attention as student wellbeing in leadership conversations and planning.
- Workload is actively monitored. Informal absorption of responsibilities is identified and addressed before it becomes unsustainable.
- Training package changes and resource redevelopment obligations are acknowledged as workload events and resourced accordingly.
- Trainers and assessors managing complex student needs have clear referral pathways and access to student support staff.
- Regular check-ins create space for honest conversation before difficulties develop.
- Advanced trainers and assessors carrying mentoring, curriculum and quality assurance responsibilities beyond their teaching roles are formally recognised and workload adjusted.
- Regional and remote trainers and assessors are connected to peer networks and included in check-in processes.
- Early signs of burnout are responded to with a direct conversation and genuine workload review, not ignored.

Success stories

Structured onboarding and mentoring – staged support from day one

A structured onboarding and mentoring program that moved new trainers and assessors progressively through observation, assisted delivery and independent delivery stages before full autonomy.

A buddy system was embedded for all new starters, peer coaching was made available and regular check-ins were built into the ongoing support structure.

Participants noted that the arrangement gave new trainers and assessors a safe relationship through which to raise concerns and questions. The staged approach to independent delivery reduced the experience of being placed into an unfamiliar role without support.

Success stories

Virtual peer connection for regional trainers

A private RTO operating across regional areas where geographically dispersed trainers and assessors participated in regular structured check-ins and shared reflective practice sessions conducted virtually.

Participants described the sessions as providing collegial connection and a sense of being part of a team despite working independently across different sites.

The same organisation held regular sessions where trainers and assessors shared and worked through real student and delivery challenges together. Participants described this as more useful than formal PD for addressing problems as they arose.

Recognising workload accumulation before departure

A young and committed trainer at a regional organisation became the default recipient of work that others were unwilling or unable to take on. For example, resource development, assessment tool updates, compliance tasks, audit responses.

Management directed this work to him because he could be relied on to do it. Not because it was his role.

The load accumulated alongside full teaching commitments without sufficient adjustment. He eventually became frustrated and returned to industry.

Earlier workload monitoring and a direct conversation about sustainability may have produced a different outcome.

Continue exploring

You'll find additional tools, resources and related guidance in the **Wellbeing and Support** section of the AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework, including practical self-assessment tools, supporting guidance and links to related topics.





**Mining and
Automotive**
Skills Alliance

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