



Australian Government



ATEC

Australian Tertiary
Education Commission

May 2026

Interim Statement of Strategic Priorities





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Preface

In July 2025, the Australian Government established the interim Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) to enable the Commission's work as system steward prior to the passage of its enabling legislation. With the passage and the commencement of legislation in early 2026, the statutory ATEC is now beginning its work. The ATEC has developed this interim Statement of Strategic Priorities (SSP) to provide an initial view of its areas of focus, and to guide the development of foundation mission based compacts for 2027 with eligible higher education providers. To assist providers, the ATEC will also release accompanying guidance material explaining how the priorities of this Statement could be translated into individual compacts in line with a provider's mission and strategic objectives.

A connecting thread throughout these priorities is the goal of lifting educational attainment and expanding lifelong learning opportunities, which are central to meeting Australia's long-term skills needs and enabling the personal and societal benefits of tertiary education. This aligns with the Government's target of 80% of the working-age population with a Certificate III or above by 2050, and the vision of the Australian Universities Accord for a tertiary system that supports learners to upskill and reskill across their lives.

As the system grows to meet national skills and workforce needs, the Accord emphasises the importance that growth occurs in a planned and sustainable way. The ATEC will focus on stewarding growth in student numbers so it is consistent with the priorities outlined in this Statement, including funding arrangements that support quality provision and reduce the prevalence of marginally funded places.

In developing this interim SSP, the ATEC has considered the National Tertiary Education Objective, the objects of the [*Universities Accord \(Australian Tertiary Education Commission\) Act 2026*](#) (the ATEC Act) and the letter of expectations issued to us by the Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP on 4 March 2026. The ATEC has also consulted with state and territory ministers responsible for higher education and vocational education and training (VET), Jobs and Skills Australia and Universities Australia. The ATEC is grateful for the input it has received throughout the consultation process.

Later in 2026, the ATEC intends to develop a more detailed SSP with broad community consultation as required by its legislation. The statutory SSP will inform stakeholders in the tertiary system and the general community about the ATEC's view of current challenges and opportunities in the system, and guide negotiations for future mission based compacts. Subject to decisions of Government and the passage of legislation, future SSPs and compacts may incorporate additional priorities and performance domains, such as international education.

Professor Barney Glover AO

The Hon Fiona Nash

Professor Tom Calma AO

Interim Chief Commissioner

Interim Commissioner

Interim First Nations Commissioner

ATEC Priorities

The ATEC has identified the following six broad priorities that are areas of focus for its work in 2026. The priorities align with the six performance domains that will provide a framework for provider activities and assessment in the foundation mission based compacts for 2027.

1. National, state/territory and regional priorities

Australia is fortunate in possessing higher and vocational education institutions that build long-term capability for the nation, their local communities and their students. Together with state and territory governments, the ATEC will work with these institutions to ensure they reach their full potential in contributing towards the National Tertiary Education Objective (NTEO). The NTEO encompasses the promotion through tertiary education of a strong, equitable and resilient democracy together with national, economic and social development and environmental sustainability.

Importantly within this context and as outlined explicitly in the ATEC Act, the ATEC recognises the public-focused mission of higher education, the importance of academic freedom and the crucial role of higher education in developing knowledge and critical inquiry for the benefit of society. Equally important in this regard is a focus on Indigenous knowledges, culture and languages. These are fundamental and enduring national priorities.

The contribution of tertiary education providers to meeting Australia's current and future skills needs is a key aspect of the NTEO and a national priority for the ATEC. Analysis by Jobs and Skills Australia shows that strong labour-market demand is concentrated in service industries, while evolving economic, geostrategic and environmental conditions also influence skills priorities.

The ATEC considers skills and workforce needs in the following fields as a priority:

- health, aged care and disability support
- education, including early childhood education and care
- sovereign capability and food security, including advanced manufacturing and critical minerals
- digital and technology
- housing and construction
- climate change and Net Zero transformation.

Many of these priorities also feature in the National Skills Plan developed under the National Skills Agreement.¹ Higher education providers will by their nature develop different but complementary responses to vocational education providers in addressing these needs, and both are crucial in meeting current and future skills challenges. Where applicable, providers should consider national skills and workforce priorities as part of their mission based compacts and requests for additional growth in 2027.

The rapid development of artificial intelligence offers immense opportunities but also poses profound challenges to current models of tertiary education teaching, learning and research. Ensuring graduates are equipped with the digital, human-centric and applied skills required for a changing economy and society is critical, regardless of field. As the influence of AI continues to expand, the humanities, social sciences and the arts will continue to play an important role in shaping ethical judgement, critical thinking and social understanding.

Tertiary education providers are important contributors to their local, regional and state economies through direct employment, workforce training, innovation, regional development and community engagement. Providers eligible for mission based compacts with the ATEC will be able to identify priorities for their local and regional areas and their institution within their compact. Following consultation, priorities for states and territories are listed in the Appendix. As with national skills priorities, providers should consider relevant state

¹ Available at <<https://www.dewr.gov.au/national-skills-agreement/national-skills-plan>>

and territory skills priorities as part of their mission based compacts and requests for additional growth in 2027.

2. First Nations

The Australian Universities Accord identified a significant opportunity – and obligation – to strengthen First Nations access to, participation in, and success in higher education. Central to this reform agenda is a whole-of-system commitment to improved outcomes across the student lifecycle, underpinned by embedding Indigenous Knowledges, leadership and self-determination within tertiary education.

Achieving sustained improvement in First Nations outcomes requires that First Nations peoples are recognised not only as participants in the system, but as leaders and decision-makers in the governance, strategy and accountability frameworks that shape how the system operates. First Nations leadership is therefore foundational to effective system stewardship and reform.

The ATEC recognises the central role of First Nations peoples in shaping related policies and decisions in higher education. Through the work of its interim First Nations Commissioner and the establishment of a First Nations Working Group, the ATEC will embed First Nations leadership at the heart of system-level deliberations. This will inform the setting of expectations for providers, system oversight, and the monitoring of performance in relation to First Nations access, participation and attainment.

Consistent with the Accord, higher education providers will be expected to demonstrate sustained improvement in First Nations outcomes, supported by evidence of genuine First Nations leadership and self-determination by institutional governance, and within strategic planning, resource allocation and delivery.

Through this approach, the ATEC will support meaningful and enduring system-wide change, ensuring that First Nations leadership drives improved outcomes for First Nations learners and contributes to a more equitable and effective tertiary education system.

3. Equity

Increasing the access, participation and attainment of under-represented groups and priority cohorts in tertiary education is not only a matter of social justice but an economic necessity. The Accord found that increased participation of under-represented groups will be crucial in meeting the Government's 80% tertiary attainment target by 2050. The Government began the implementation of Needs-based Funding in 2026 to support providers in enrolling and retaining students from under-represented backgrounds. The Government has also expanded Regional and Suburban University Study Hubs to help improve access to higher education.

In 2026, the ATEC is focusing on how higher education system settings and funding supports participation and success for students from under-represented groups and priority cohorts, including First Nations students, students from regional, rural and remote backgrounds, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students with disability. This is in line with the Accord's emphasis on equity, access and student success as core measures of system performance.

To grow the participation of under-represented groups, and move in the longer term towards population parity, universities will be expected to expand outreach, strengthen alternative and community-based pathways, collaborate and share best practice, and continue a focus on their preparatory programs. Closer links with VET are also an important enabler of participation. The ATEC will expect providers to define clear actions and outcomes for their equity initiatives to enhance system-wide accountability.

4. Quality teaching

Raising the quality and recognition of higher education teaching is central to sustaining the value of higher education and promoting the success of students who need additional support. The Accord Final Report found that teaching is under growing pressure from increasing student diversity and support needs and the

rapid pace of technological change, including the expansion of online learning and the emergence of artificial intelligence. An overreliance on casual and fixed term working arrangements for teaching staff also poses risks for the quality of teaching and the student experience.

Generic skills, such as communication, teamwork, creativity and problem solving will become increasingly important in curriculum design, both for the personal development of students and to meet evolving employer expectations for higher education graduates. Collaboration in teaching and learning, both within the sector and with external stakeholders has the potential to deliver shared infrastructure, expanded regional provision, co-designed curricula and quicker responses to emerging skills needs.

In December 2025 and February 2026, the ATEC held two Enhancing Professional Practice in Higher Education workshops looking at how to increase professionalism in learning and teaching across the higher education sector. In 2026, the ATEC is considering potential reform pathways to promote high quality, student-centred teaching that supports Australia's long term economic and social goals. In developing their mission based compacts, providers are expected to be working towards improving the professional recognition of quality teaching within their institutions.

5. A joined-up tertiary system

Strengthening collaboration and coordination between VET and higher education is a central structural reform identified by the Accord as necessary to meet Australia's long-term skills, equity and productivity goals. The Accord found that a more unified, coherent tertiary system is essential to promote student mobility in both directions between VET and higher education, support lifelong learning, and ensure that both sectors reach their full potential to meet national skills needs.

The ATEC, together with Jobs and Skills Australia, the Department of Education, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and other stakeholders is advancing work in 2026 to improve system alignment and coordination. This includes the development of a Tertiary Roadmap, supported by a Tertiary System Advisory Council, to provide a shared, long-term framework for reform across the tertiary education system.

Ensuring that students can move easily in both directions between VET and higher education with appropriate credit for pre-existing knowledge and skills is a key enabler of a joined-up system. In 2026, the ATEC is developing a national credit recognition framework to establish a more transparent and student-centred approach to recognising prior learning. The framework aims to address the consistency of how credit is granted, improve the clarity of information available to students, and ensure decisions are timely, evidence-based and aligned with national skills needs.

Some providers already have arrangements in place that support a more joined up tertiary education system, including dual sector providers that offer both VET and higher education courses, and institutions with existing cross-sector partnerships involving credit or qualification design. As providers work towards a more joined up system, maximising credit recognition for students will be a key focus for mission based compacts where it is consistent with provider missions.

6. Research

Research is a vital function of universities, delivering public value through the creation of new knowledge and underpinning Australia's long term economic, social and environmental progress. The Accord reaffirmed the central role of university research and research training in sustaining national capability and supporting innovation in the economy. In recognition of this role, the ATEC's legislation includes the delivery of internationally competitive research and research training as one of its objects, and the Commission may provide advice and recommendations to the Minister for Education on research and research training.

Consistent with the Accord's emphasis on coherence across the tertiary, research and innovation systems, the ATEC will work collaboratively with the Department of Education, the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, Australian Research Council, National Health and Medical Research Council, Medical

Research Future Fund and other stakeholders to ensure its priorities align with broader objectives for Australia's research and development system.

Postgraduate research programs are the main pipeline for the academic workforce and a critical element in developing sovereign capability. Research training, particularly for domestic students, is an area of interest for the ATEC. Through mission based compacts, the ATEC will seek to understand providers' experience with building their postgraduate research cohorts and increasing Australia's research training capacity.

Appendix: State and Territory Priorities

New South Wales

NSW is firmly committed to working with the ATEC, Australian Government and other states and territories on reforms which focus on the needs of students and the wider community in the tertiary education sector.

Priorities for 2026 in the Interim SSP strongly align with NSW's strategic priorities, particularly as it relates to NSW's significant determination to achieve consistent credit recognition and tertiary harmonisation. Noting the short-term horizon for the initial SSP, NSW's priorities are focused on the most pressing issues in the sector, particularly in the areas of equity, pathways, and public benefit. The ATEC should aim to make the tertiary system fairer and easier for students to navigate. It should also promote and strengthen the social and economic benefits of the system for the wider community, including through the facilitation of world-class research and innovation.

One of the most important issues facing the sector is how the cost of higher education is distributed between students and government. This remains a priority for NSW as we look at ways to improve equitable outcomes for students. NSW is also focused on the pathways students take through tertiary education, from school, between sectors, and into the workforce.

It was encouraging to see the Australian Government's recent announcement regarding the ATEC's work on a credit recognition framework. Tertiary harmonisation is a key component of NSW's *Higher Education Strategy* and *Skills Plan*, and we welcome national efforts to build a better-connected tertiary education system. A priority for NSW in this space is that credit recognition pathways work well for students who want to move between sectors in both directions, recognising that vocational education and training is an attractive option for students. Establishing consistent credit recognition pathways in areas that meet state and regional workforce needs must be a focus as we work to address critical skills shortages.

The governance of universities has been topical in NSW. This issue is being observed across Australia, and calls for a coordinated national response. It is important to NSW the correct balance is struck to ensure a strong value is placed on the independence of universities.

Finally, the SSP presents an opportunity to promote the important social role universities play in our communities. Under NSW legislation, the object of public universities includes not only the provision of teaching and research, but also the participation in public discourse and the dissemination and advancement of knowledge informed by free inquiry. Universities bring together diverse cohorts of students and staff in the pursuit of education and learning. It is vital that university campuses are places that encourage understanding, foster social cohesion, and strengthen Australia's democratic systems.

Victoria

Priority industry sectors and areas of workforce demand

- Victoria's universities have a critical role to play in meeting the State's future workforce needs to meet the economic and social challenges ahead.
- *Victoria's Economic Growth Statement* highlights 5 priority industry sectors and, alongside delivering to their core strengths consistent with their own strategic priorities, Victorian universities are encouraged to align teaching, learning and research programs to support these:
 - Advanced manufacturing and defence
 - Health technologies and medical research
 - Circular economy
 - Digital technologies
 - Agribusiness.

- Consistent with the Victorian Government's [AI Mission Statement](#), Victorian universities are encouraged to develop and expand course offerings that build applied AI capabilities across disciplines, supporting Victoria's ambition to become a national leader in AI development and adoption.
- The [Victorian Skills Plan](#), the [Victorian Skills Plan for 2025 into 2026](#) and the [Employment Projections Dashboard](#) should guide Victorian universities' planning for course delivery and be used to support students as they plan their careers after graduation.
- Victorian universities should also contribute to meeting regional workforce challenges, forming local partnerships with TAFEs and industries to support a pipeline of skilled graduates in future growth areas.

A joined-up tertiary system that puts the needs of learners at the centre

- A more joined-up tertiary system will progress productivity, participation and social inclusion.
- Credit recognition can create significant economic benefits if it enables non-traditional learners to progress to higher-level qualifications, supporting faster entry into skilled occupations and addressing workforce shortages at lower cost to individuals.
- To drive strong workforce outcomes, credit transfer should preference qualifications to support specific occupational progression and in areas with strong labour market demand.

First Nations

- [Victoria's Statewide Treaty](#) and the report of the [Yoorrook Justice Commission](#) are critical milestones in Victoria's pathway to truth, justice and reconciliation with First Peoples and provide important context for Victorian universities as they develop their compacts.
- It is critical that Aboriginal Victorians' perspectives are reflected in compacts.

International Education

- Supporting the sustainable growth of international education and maintaining Victoria's position as a leading jurisdiction for international students are key priorities.
- Victorian universities should continue to pursue and deepen transnational education opportunities that position the state as an education provider of choice for students as well as overseas governments and industry.
- Student satisfaction and employment outcomes in Australia or overseas will continue to be central to Victorian universities remaining competitive in a global market.

A safe environment for students and staff in Victorian universities

- Victorian universities have a critical responsibility to ensure a safe, inclusive and respectful environment for all students and staff and must take meaningful steps to eliminate sexual violence and racism and foster positive cultural change.

Queensland

The Queensland Government's objectives for the community reflect its vision for Queensland and the need to plan and prepare Queenslanders for the future.

The Queensland Government recognises that higher education providers play a crucial role in delivering on this, including through economic stability and participation, labour force participation, societal and cultural development, innovation and providing individuals the skills and knowledge they need for personal growth.

Queensland's key priorities for the higher education system include:

- Ensuring universities meet their legislative responsibilities under their establishing Acts.
- Strengthening ties between schools and higher education to build clear pipelines for students.

- Supporting universities to deliver ongoing improvements in the quality of higher education delivery while continuing to strengthen their financial positions.
- Ensuring the higher education system accounts for geographical differences, regional needs and demographic diversity.
- Contributing to the skills and knowledge that the Queensland workforce needs now and in the future.
- Fostering statewide economic growth and innovation.

Western Australia

Western Australia's (WA's) priority areas are aligned to [WA Government Priorities 2025-2029](#) as well as other frameworks and strategic plans guiding workforce development and diversification in the state.

Jobs, skills and workforce

WA notes that the National Tertiary Education Objective will enshrine that Australia's tertiary education system 'promote a strong, equitable and resilient democracy; and drive national, economic and social development and environmental sustainability'. Acknowledging the importance of a university system that addresses all knowledge areas, WA notes the following skills and workforce priority areas to develop the future workforce and enable broad community participation in daily life:

- Health
- Housing
- Clean energy
- Defence
- Tourism
- Hospitality

Further to this, the [STEM skills: Future state, future skills – Accelerating STEM skills for Western Australia](#) identifies that STEM skills are in demand in all industries and that WA will need access to a locally skilled science, technology, engineering, and mathematics workforce. Universities have an opportunity to be more explicit in embedding STEM literacy and digital skills as crosscutting priorities, and to support practical, deployable capability to unblock workforce delivery risks. Developing these areas involve supporting research in these priority areas.

As WA transforms its energy future, demand for highly skilled, job-ready graduates with capabilities spanning engineering, digital technologies, data, project delivery, and sustainability will be required. Universities are uniquely placed to embed these capabilities into curriculum while also investing in research infrastructure and expertise that drives innovation, commercialisation, and new discoveries. By doing so, universities can help accelerate technology deployment and strengthen industry capability, ensuring that local talent and research power the next phase of national prosperity. WA's energy transformation is a key enabler of the [Future Made in Australia](#) strategy, positioning the state as a leader in clean energy and advanced manufacturing.

Tertiary harmonisation

As the labour market continues to evolve, it is vital to support Australians at all stages of their career to access education and training. Tertiary harmonisation plays a crucial role in allowing Australians to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to a strong, equitable, and resilient democracy and to meet the growing skills needs of our state economy. The WA Government aims to decentralise and support economic growth in the regions, and facilitating students' transitions between higher education and VET is key to this goal. A more joined-up tertiary system will also be critical to meeting the skills needs of AUKUS and the transition to renewables to set up our economy for success in a world that is decarbonising.

Equity

Equity of access to university is a critical priority in WA due to the state's vast geography and highly dispersed population, which present unique and persistent challenges for participation in higher education. Students living in regional and remote areas, particularly those in regional cities, often face barriers related to distance, cost, limited local course availability and reduced access to enabling support services.

Ensuring equitable access is also fundamental to driving the participation of Aboriginal peoples, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and students living with disability in higher education. Expanding opportunities for these cohorts not only advances inclusion but strengthens workforce participation and economic resilience across the state by enabling all Western Australians to access the skills, knowledge, and pathways required to contribute meaningfully to their communities and the broader economy. Beyond equity of access, Australian universities also need to ensure equity students are set up to succeed once they are at university.

Research and diversification

WA's *Diversify WA* economic development framework and *Future State: Accelerating Diversify WA* identify nine priority industries for future growth, namely energy, tourism and events, creative industries, international education, defence industries, mining and mining equipment technology and services, space industries, health and medical life sciences, and primary industries. Universities should play a key role in driving diversification and innovation in these priority areas.

In addition, WA's *10-year Science and Technology Plan* lists clean energy and decarbonisation, environment and sustainability, mineral supply and value-adding, health and wellbeing, sustainable and secure food production, and critical and emerging technology as key research priority areas. Western Australia advocates for these key areas to be prioritised and embedded within the research and development initiatives undertaken by our universities, recognising their central role in driving innovation.

South Australia

South Australia recognises the important role universities play in preserving, extending and disseminating knowledge through teaching, research, scholarship, innovation, consultancy and other means. South Australian universities' teaching, research and innovation contribute to the advancement and application of knowledge for community benefit and wellbeing, and for the benefit of industry, business, the professions and government.

Key priorities for South Australia are building a skilled, adaptable workforce aligned with the state's economic and social need; fostering partnerships between education providers and industry; ensuring rural and regional education provision and workforce outcomes for local communities; ensuring access, participation and success for disadvantaged and underrepresented cohorts; and tertiary harmonisation and pathways between VET and higher education. South Australia is committed to international education for attracting talent and contributing to a graduate workforce, creating global linkages, and delivering economic benefits for the state.

South Australia's research priorities are focused on building critical mass and excellence in areas that support the state's priority industries and long-term economic transformation. This includes research that accelerates productivity supports technology adoption, and enables the growth of globally competitive industries in areas such as defence and space; advanced manufacturing; health and medical industries; food, wine and agribusiness; energy; and critical minerals.

The state prioritises research that translates into real world outcomes through collaboration between universities, industry and government, supporting job creation, economic resilience and improved quality of life for South Australians.

Tasmania

The Tasmanian Government considers it a priority that tertiary harmonisation efforts appropriately recognise the critical role of vocational education and training (VET) in supporting strong vocational outcomes in a rapidly evolving economy, alongside the complementary contribution of higher education across all aspects of the reform agenda.

In terms of broad guidance for universities, strengthening teaching quality directly impacts and enhances how education is delivered to Tasmanian learners. It is a priority that Tasmanian learners, particularly those requiring additional support, leave school prepared for success in tertiary education to boost participation, attainment and transition outcomes statewide.

Collaboration between higher education, VET providers, and industry is a priority in Tasmania to support student transitions, regional access and workforce readiness. The role of schools (including VET in Schools) in the harmonisation approach can work to expand learner pathways and create coherent school-to-work or school-to-tertiary transitions. The Tasmanian Government is committed to making further progress in this area.

The *Tasmanian Skills Plan* highlights the Tasmanian Government's priorities for training and pathways that support Tasmanians into jobs in priority sectors that align with the *National Skills Plan*. Alignment with the Tasmanian Skills Plan and also the Tasmanian Government's Economic Agenda (both in terms of its course offerings and research program) must be an ongoing priority for any university operating in Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Tertiary Collaboration Reference Group has recently been established to support the Tasmanian Government's engagement in tertiary reform activities through various government officials' channels and ministerial forums for both education and skills. The group brings together Tasmanian Government, TasTAFE and University of Tasmania officials to examine tertiary harmonisation initiatives, work collaboratively to inform a joined up Tasmanian position on national tertiary reforms, and consider opportunities to strengthen tertiary harmonisation at the local level. The inaugural meeting was held in March 2026.

Australian Capital Territory

1. Growth through strategic partnerships

Partnering with industry, universities and enabling institutions to create places that support innovation, business growth and investment. These precincts bring together the right mix of infrastructure, talent and collaboration, making it easier for businesses to test ideas, access support and grow.

2. Research, innovation and commercialisation

Allowing greater equity of access to publicly funded research facilities and key infrastructure to drive industry and economic benefit; and working closely with government to identify shared priorities and opportunities for investment attraction. Canberra has a strong pipeline of ideas and early-stage ventures and is home to a robust innovation ecosystem. Canberra has consistently placed in the top five most innovative cities globally and Canberra is often chosen as a testing ground for new ideas and technologies. Our universities are a cornerstone of our innovation ecosystem.

3. First Nations and Closing the Gap

Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have clear pathways into post-secondary education, enabled by building partnerships between higher education providers and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, and working with the ACT Education Directorate to ensure there is appropriate outreach to local students about post-secondary education and training opportunities.

4. Tertiary harmonisation

Creating partnerships between higher education and vocational education providers to establish education pathways with bi-directional credit recognition; ideally, this will include co-design units of training that embed skills-training in higher education and knowledge-based units in vocational qualifications, and exploring co-delivery or co-location of training.

5. Local workforce priorities

Prioritising education programs and qualifications that relate to Canberra's local workforce needs. These may include, for example, essential care services, education, information technology, and the clean energy transition, as well as co-design of training with vocational education providers in engineering and construction and business management.

6. International engagement and global reach

Supporting the Territory's global outreach through international student attraction at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, research partnerships, and exploration of opportunities to deliver education offshore. This can be enabled through the long-term growth of international student enrolments aligned with the availability of purpose-built student accommodation either on campus or elsewhere in the Territory.

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory is undergoing a strategic pivot underpinned by core priorities of reducing crime, rebuilding the economy, and restoring the Territory lifestyle. The tertiary education sector has an important role to play in supporting these priorities, particularly by aligning with the Territory's natural strengths in tourism, defence, agriculture, gas and mining.

For the 2027 Compact period, the Northern Territory Government (NTG) identifies the following jurisdictional priorities:

Priority 1: Strategic Workforce Alignment (Mining, Energy, and Defence)

- The Northern Territory ranks highly as a prospective jurisdiction globally for mineral resources. Expanding capability in geology, geosciences and mining engineering will be critical to supporting growth in the resources, mining and energy sectors.
- University compacts should align with workforce requirements associated with major developments such as the Beetaloo Sub-basin and the expanding defence industry pipeline, including professional capability in engineering, logistics and advanced manufacturing.

Priority 2: Frontline Professional Workforce (Education and Health)

- Growing and retaining a locally trained frontline workforce is essential to reducing reliance on temporary and interstate recruitment for critical government services.
- Universities should prioritise the growth of a strong domestic teacher pipeline. This includes a back to basics focus on explicit instruction in literacy and numeracy to ensure graduates are ready for the Territory's unique school environments.
- The NTG also seeks to expand pathways for Territorians into medicine, nursing and allied health professions to strengthen the Territory's long-term health workforce capability.

Priority 3: International education and student attraction

- The NTG views higher education as a vital trade export and a mechanism to address skilled workforce shortages.
- Universities should support the Northern Territory's position as a competitive destination for international students, strengthening our position as a regional education hub and contributing to skilled migration pathways aligned with local workforce needs.

Priority 4: Tertiary pathways leading to community safety

- In alignment with the priority of reducing crime, the tertiary sector should play a role in early intervention, offering flexible enabling pathways and higher education options that integrate with Territory rehabilitation and diversion initiatives.
- Universities should incentivise engagement and completions for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Providing culturally supportive pathways to learning for regional centres such as Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine, recognising that professional employment and regional economic participation are key drivers of crime reduction, community safety and the Territory's economic rebuild.