

10 December 2025

Skills Commission enforces trade training requirements to protect learners and industry

The South Australian Skills Commission (the Commission), the state's independent regulator responsible for overseeing apprenticeships and traineeships, today affirmed its renewed commitment to ensuring the integrity of trade training across the state.

Based on numbers submitted by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), the Commission understands that in 2024, over 4,000 qualifications declared as trades in South Australia were commenced institutionally, outside of formal apprenticeship arrangements. These activities are in breach of Section 45A of the South Australian Skills Act 2008, which states *"A person must not undertake to train a person in a trade except under a training contract"*.

Institutional-based trade training does not provide the safeguards offered under a formal training contract. Individuals in trades are exposed to high-risk work environments, requiring technical training and higher levels of supervision. The formal apprenticeship model ensures apprentices are safe on the job, are paid for their work, have a structured training plan, and are appropriately supervised on the worksite by an employer registered with the Commission.

The Commission has applied an amnesty until 30 January 2026 for new institutional enrolments in South Australia. Any RTO that issues a new enrolment from 31 January 2026, that is:

- in a qualification that has been declared a trade in accordance with the Act; and
- delivered in South Australia outside of a training contract

will be subject to a \$315 expiation fee per case and where applicable, penalties of up to \$5,000.

This action will ensure individuals enter the workforce from the commencement of their training through the proven 'earn and learn' apprenticeship pathway. From 31 January 2026, affected learners may be able to complete their qualification and apply to the Commission for a skills assessment under the Occupational Recognition Service. Where they meet the required standards, the Commission will issue an Occupational Certificate, which is recognised by industry.

The Commission is working closely with industry partners and RTOs to enforce strict compliance and ensure learners are certified and protected through recognised apprenticeship pathways.

Further information regarding the enforcement action, recommended steps for affected learners, and declared trade occupations are published on the South Australian Skills Commission website: <https://skillscommission.sa.gov.au/trade-enforcement>.
For enquiries, call 1800 673 097

Quotes attributable to Commissioner Cameron Baker, Chair of the South Australian Skills Commission

“The South Australian Skills Act exists to ensure that every South Australian undertaking a qualification aligned to a trade receives training that meets consistent and regulated standards required under a training contract, ensuring learners are safe and become productive workers in critical trade sectors.

We recognise that many learners may have entered these courses with institutional delivery in good faith, unaware that the training fell outside the regulated apprenticeship and traineeship system. The Commission is implementing a transition approach to ensure learners and RTOs will be supported while we uphold the integrity of the state’s training system.”

Quotes attributable to Darrell Jacobs, CEO, Motor Trade Association SA/NT

“Training providers delivering automotive qualifications outside of an apprenticeship are sending learners on a road to nowhere.

This practice is not just burning learners. It is cheating the industry out of the sorely needed skills it needs for technicians to perform safely and competently in the workforce.

Automotive trades involve complex, high-risk tasks, and the formal apprenticeship model is the only pathway that gives learners the supervision, structure and workplace exposure they need to become safe and competent technicians.

Today’s action will help ensure our future workforce is qualified, job-ready and meets the expectations of South Australian motorists.”

Quotes attributable to Andrew Clarke, CEO, Master Plumbers Association of South Australia

“In plumbing and gas fitting, there is no margin for error. Our trades protect community health and safety that requires a properly trained, properly supervised workforce. The formal apprenticeship pathway is the proven way to achieve this. The Master Plumbers Association fully supports the Commission’s enforcement approach, which ensures learners receive quality training and the public can trust the skills of those working in our essential services. This is an important step in safeguarding the integrity of our trade.”

Quotes attributable to Will Frogley, CEO, Master Builders SA

“Compliance is critical to upholding safety and quality in the construction sector. Our worksites demand rigorous, hands-on training, and apprenticeships provide the safeguards and professional standards our industry expects. Master Builders SA supports the Commission’s renewed focus on ensuring all trade training is delivered through apprenticeships. This will help build a stronger, safer pipeline of skilled workers for South Australia’s growing construction needs.”

Quotes attributable to Merrill Gratton, Co-President, South Australian Hair and Beauty Association

“In the hair and beauty sector, professional standards and client safety are paramount. Apprenticeships give learners the real-world experience, mentorship and structure they need to build lasting careers in our industry. We stand with the Commission, committed to ensuring all trade training meets the requirements of the Skills Act. This renewed enforcement not only protects learners but also strengthens the confidence of businesses and clients in the qualifications held by future professionals.”