SCBC Combined Government and Business Forum
28 November 2025

Taking Advantage of new growth areas

Professor Ross Young
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

Global Trends
(Johnson, Dewar & Young, 2025)

- "Advanced Digital" nations with high levels are of innovation performing best

- Process, system and technological innovation

- AI, quantum computing, internet of things

- More complex, diversified economy

- Better access to global markets

- Increased productivity and sovereign capability

- Stronger investment in innovation

- More adaptive and resilient workforce

- Past decade Australia's least productive in 60 years

UniSC

Cisco 2024 AI Readiness Index Reveals Worrying Signs; Australia is Losing its Early Adopter Edge

Global

Pacesetters 13% Chasers 33% Followers 51% Laggards 3%

Australia

Pacesetters 4% Chasers 26% Followers 63% Laggards 7%

1. https://www.cisco.com/c/m/en_us/solutions/ai/readiness-index.html

See also: +https://www.aigroup.com.au/globalassets/news/reports/2024/research-and-economics/ai_group_technology_adoption_in_australian_industry_2024.pdf

NIIN
National Industry
Innovation Network

Perth
Curtin University
- Innovation Central Perth
- Networking Academy

Adelaide
Flinders University | THE UNIVERSITY of ADELAIDE
- Cyber Range | AUSTRALIAN Cyber Collaboration Centre
- Innovation Central Adelaide
- Digital Health Research Chair
- Cisco-Flinders Digital Health Design Lab
- Networking Academy

Melbourne
RMIT | LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
- Innovation Central Melbourne
- IoT & AI Research Chair
- Centre for AI and IoT
- Cisco-RMIT Health Transformation Lab
- Networking Academy

Sunshine Coast UniSC
- Digital Health and Ageing Research Chair
- UniSC Health Productivity Lab
- Networking Academy

Brisbane QUT | THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA
- Innovation Central Brisbane
- Trust, Retail & Logistics Research Chair
- Securing Future Networks Chair
- UQ Centre for Future Networks
- Networking Academy

Sydney UNSW | UTS
- Innovation Central Sydney
- Next Generation AI Research Chair
- Networking Academy

Canberra UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA
- Innovation Central Canberra
- Critical Infrastructure Research Chair
- Networking Academy

UniSC

[Interim report - Building a skilled and adaptable workforce](#)

Productivity Commission (due December 2025) Building a skilled and adaptable workforce

- National Platform for lesson planning

- Access to Ed Tech and AI

- National System of credit transfer

- Improve SMS training rates

- Remove excessive occupational entry requirements

- Expand entry pathways

- Regular reviews of occupational entry requirements

- Incentives for occupational entry regulation reform

- 90% of jobs over next 10 years will require tertiary qualifications

Our regional focus (Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay, Gympie, Fraser Coast)

- High value industry/advanced manufacturing (SC, MB, G, FC)

- Food and Agribusiness (SC, MB, G, FC)

- Health and Wellbeing (SC, MB, FC)

- Knowledge Industries/innovation (SC,MB, FC)

- Clean Technology/green (SC*, MB, G)

- Education and Research (SC, MB, FC)

- Tourism, Sport and Leisure (SC,MB, G, FC)

- Circular economy (SC*, MB*, G)

- Construction (G, FC)

UniSC

Future jobs growth (Chang & Seo, 2026)

- World Economic Forum, job losses; what of new opportunities ?

- US OI-NET typology and Bureau of Labor Statistics

- Population level data; Mixture of Linear Models + Explainable Prediction-Induced Input Clusters (EPIC).

- Modelling to 2031

- 712 Occupations

- What can humans and AI do together ? (UniSC Centre for Human Factors and Sociotechnical Systems)

Career changes

- Fastest Growth
    - Creatives (20%)
    - Knowledge work managing advanced tech (14%)
    - Applied science in the knowledge-based economy (14%)
    - Supporting work, including recreation, disease prevention (13%)
    - Coaching and creative problem solving (11%)
    - Caring (10%)

- Fastest Decline
    - Technicians (-10%)
    - Administrators (-5%)
    - Operators (-2%)

UniSC

Workforce changes

- Fastest Growth
  - Strategic Tech (23%)
  - Tech/Engineering Design (17%)
  - Tech Driven Leadership (13%)
  - Agile Healthcare (10%)
  - Advanced Tech Service (9%)
  - Social Justice and Change (9%)
  - Business Analytics (9%)

- Fastest Decline
  - Admin Support (mathematical calculations) (-11%)
  - Tech Support (-4%)
  - Production Tech (-1%)
  - Admin (conventional sales) (-1%)

UniSC

In demand competencies

- Knowledge
  - Foreign language, telecommunication, customer service, Engineering/tech

- Skills
  - Active learning, trouble shooting

- Attributes
  - Dynamic, speed of closure, fluency of ideas

- Values
  - Achievement, recognition

UniSC

UniSC's strategic response to growth opportunities

- New offerings
  - Mechatronics engineering; Business Analytics; Sports Management; Mental Health Neuroscience; Physiotherapy; Medicine (proposed) - focus on prevention in health curriculum.

- New ways of learning
  - PACE model – suiting personal needs, trimesters, distinctive blend of place based and online; micro-credentials; short courses; enhanced flexible digital delivery.

- New skills and competencies
  - New Colombo Plan, language and cultural competency (Business Council of Australia, need for a more sophisticated understanding of our international markets); digital skills, AI; Analytics, Research skills; Interpersonal competencies.

- Enhanced industry engagement
  - New collaborations (e.g., TURBINE, QDSA), Industry advice on curriculum/embedded qualifications, Work Integrated Learning for all students; co-location; Future Skills Labs.

UniSC

UniSC Innovation

Future Skills Labs

Each lab addresses a capability gap in emerging technology areas and sectors of regional and national importance

Specialised labs:

- Digital Automated Assembly Lab
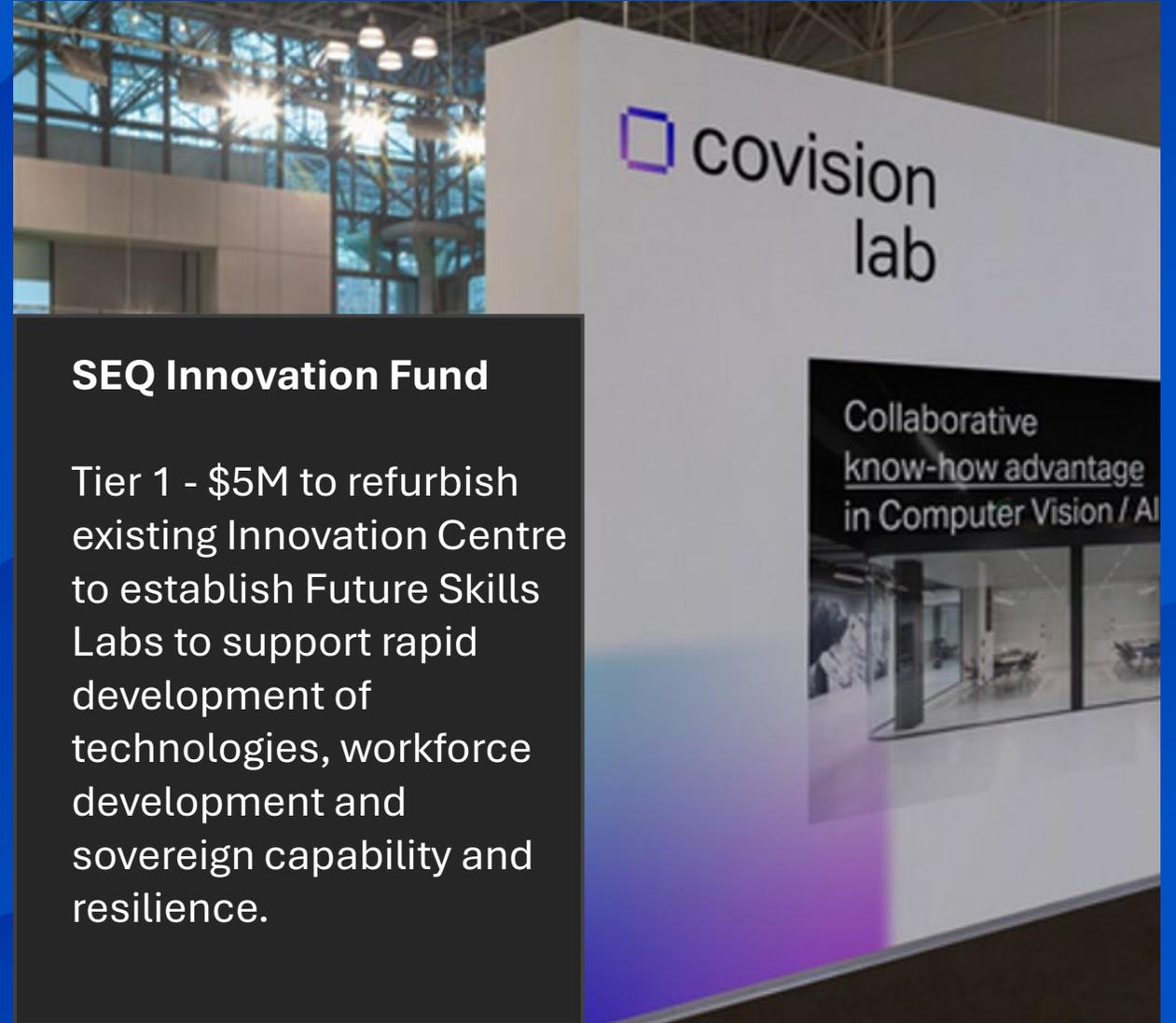- Connected Environments Lab
- AI Computer Vision Lab
- Cyber & Forensics Simulation Lab
- Digital Health Productivity Lab

SEQ Innovation Fund

Tier 1 - $5M to refurbish existing Innovation Centre to establish Future Skills Labs to support rapid development of technologies, workforce development and sovereign capability and resilience.

covision lab

Collaborative know-how advantage in Computer Vision / AI

University of the Sunshine Coast
Australia

Summary

- Digital adoption will be the key to jobs growth in multiple sectors

- Stronger cross-sector and jurisdictional collaboration

- Convergence across our regions re economic priorities (e.g., high value; food and agribusiness; tourism, sport and leisure)

- New opportunities will be driven by AI, shift from manual processes to people

- AI will deliver workforce growth in tech, healthcare & social justice sectors

- Education sector: core digital skills for all, strong industry presence and engagement, lifelong education and career change

UniSC