

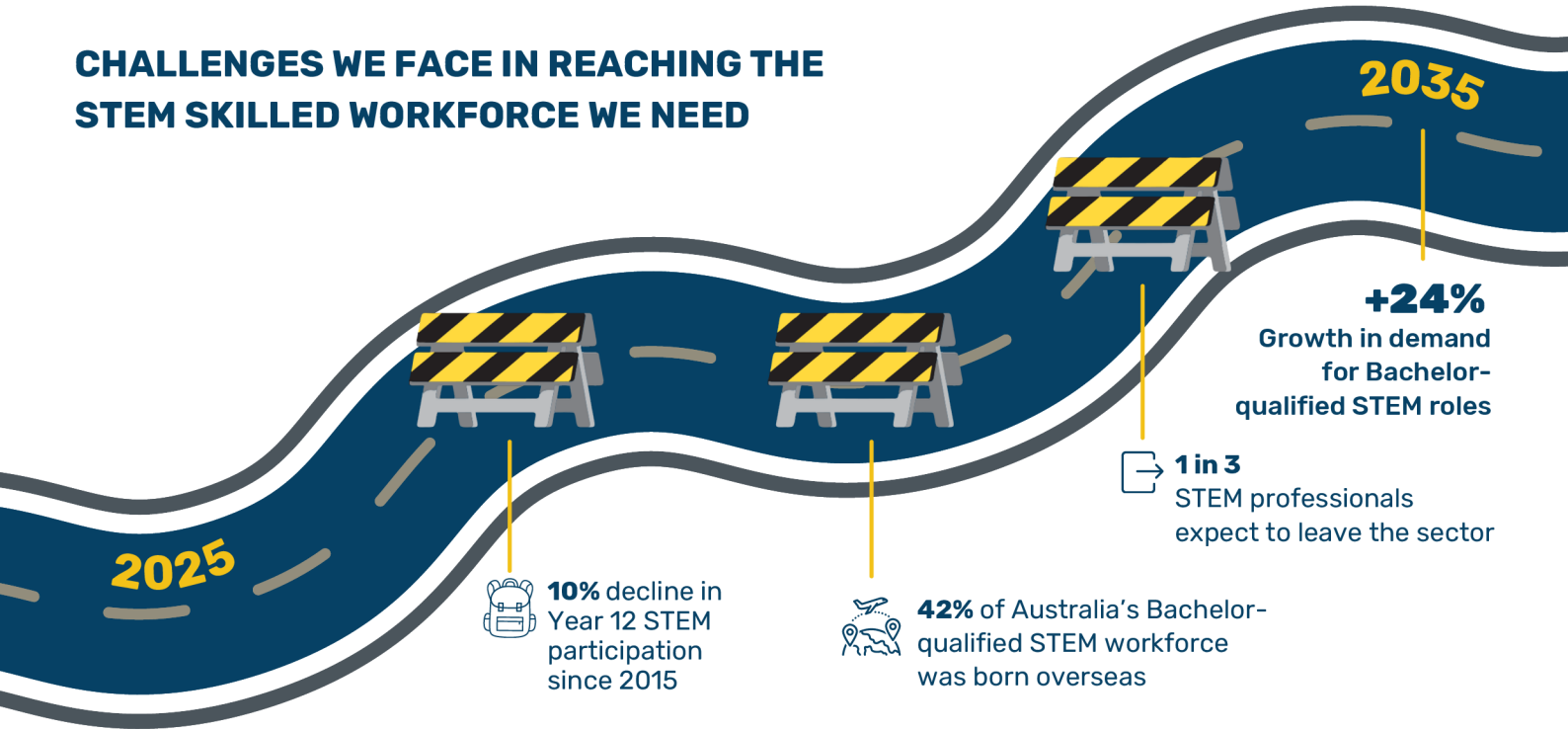
# STEM WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

Australia needs a highly skilled STEM workforce to meet national and global challenges

As the Treasurer noted in his 2025–26 Federal Budget speech, there are five ‘seismic changes’ currently reshaping the world: shifts from globalisation to fragmentation, hydrocarbons to renewables, IT to AI, a young population to an older one and shifts in industrial bases. He noted these challenges put a premium on resilience, which will come only through deep investment in Australia’s STEM capability.

Key Government priorities all depend on a strong STEM skilled workforce. STEM capability underpins the Future Made in Australia initiative, the National AI Plan, AUKUS, meeting net zero targets, and ensuring productivity and sovereign capability in supply chains across critical areas of the economy, including critical minerals, medical technology and advanced manufacturing.

## CHALLENGES WE FACE IN REACHING THE STEM SKILLED WORKFORCE WE NEED



### AUSTRALIA NEEDS MORE STEM PROFESSIONALS

Science & Technology Australia’s analysis of the Jobs and Skills Australia Employment Projections May 2025 to May 2035 data shows the number of jobs requiring at least a Bachelor degree in a STEM area is expected to grow by 24% – an additional 550,000 roles by 2035.

This is higher growth over a decade than any of the industries in this Government modelling. It’s almost twice the growth rate for all skilled professions, which are projected to grow by 13% over the same period.

Meanwhile, in just the next five years alone, the number of Bachelor-qualified STEM jobs is projected to grow by 13%, highlighting that concerted efforts are needed now to develop the STEM workforce.

### AUSTRALIA’S STEM WORKFORCE AND ITS PIPELINE IS UNDER STRAIN

New data collected through Professionals Australia and Science & Technology Australia’s Professional Scientists Remuneration Survey 2025 paints a stark and concerning picture of the state of Australia’s STEM workforce.

When asked about their next career move, 33% of the STEM workforce expect to leave the STEM sector altogether.

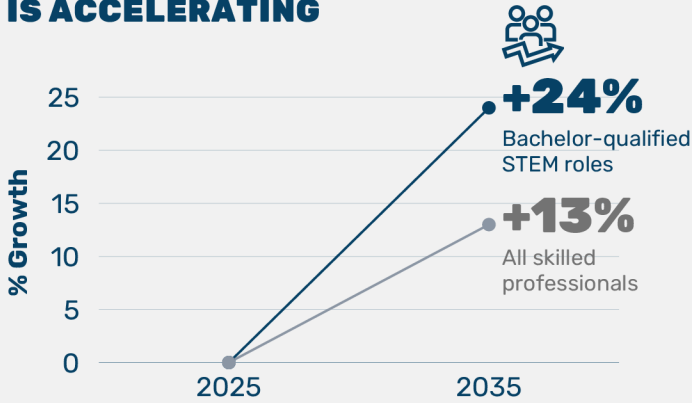
**1 in 3**

STEM professionals plan to leave the sector

**THIS IS A LOSS OF TALENT THE NATION CANNOT AFFORD**



## DEMAND FOR STEM TALENT IS ACCELERATING



## MORALE ACROSS THE STEM WORKFORCE IS LOW

- While nearly 8 out of 10 Australians on average report high job satisfaction, this is not reflected in the science community, with 47% of scientists thinking about leaving their current role.
- Nearly three-quarters of people considering leaving their current role think they will leave in the next 2 years, increasing to 95% in the next 3–5 years.
- The most cited reasons for wanting to leave their role were 'lack of career advancement', 'lack of recognition or opportunities', 'workplace culture issues', 'poor pay' and 'insecure work'.
- 40% of respondents were unhappy with their current workload.
- Around one third of respondents were dissatisfied with their workplace culture.
- Nearly one third of respondents were dissatisfied with their work-life balance.
- Around half of the survey respondents were worried about their job security. Insecure roles and intensified workloads often disproportionately burden emerging professionals, threatening long-term workforce sustainability.

## REMUNERATION FOR SCIENCE HAS STAGNATED

- Nearly two thirds of respondents felt their remuneration is not keeping up with market rates. Annual salary increases for scientists in the past year have averaged around 2–2.5%, less than the national Wage Price Index.
- Unpaid and unrecognised overtime is widespread; more than half of scientists aren't compensated for extra hours.
- Many scientists encounter 'salary ceilings', especially those with doctorates, in both academia and public roles, despite taking on extra responsibilities without title or pay progression.

## THE FUTURE SUPPLY OF STEM PROFESSIONALS IS LOOKING UNCERTAIN

- While the overall year 12 student population has grown, the number studying STEM subjects fell by 10% between 2013 and 2023.
- In 2023, 8.4% of year 12 students participated in higher and intermediate maths – down from 10.9% in 2010. General maths participation also declined from 21.5% in 2010 to 16.8% in 2023.
- Participation in year 12 physics has declined from 14.9% in 2015 to 12.1% in 2023.

## AUSTRALIA HAS A STRONG RELIANCE ON OVERSEAS-BORN STEM TALENT

- Around 42% of the STEM workforce holding a Bachelor degree or a mix of Bachelor and VET qualifications was born overseas.
- In 2024, around one third of undergraduate and postgraduate STEM commencements (33%) and completions (34%) were international students.
- While Australia clearly needs and benefits greatly from this overseas talent, there is still work to be done on ensuring inclusive practices across the STEM sector.

# URGENT ACTION IS REQUIRED – NOW

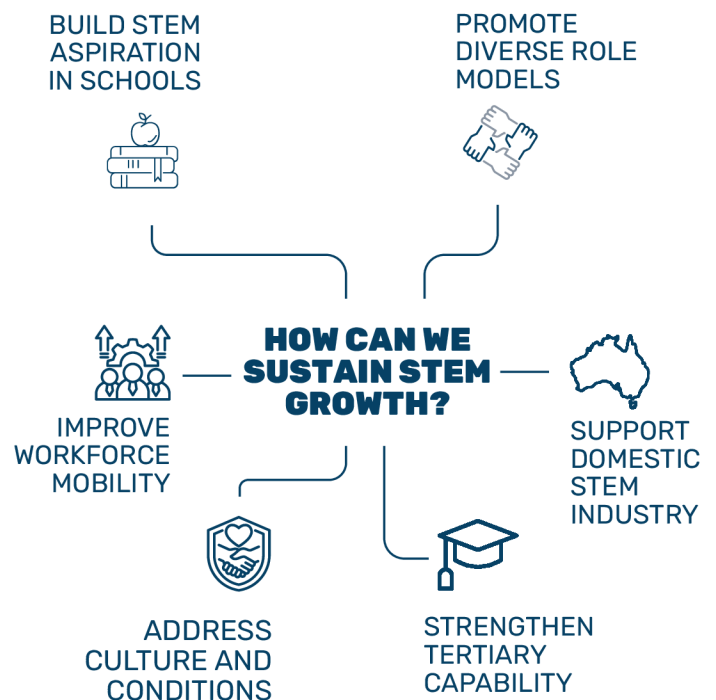
Australia faces a critical inflection point in sustaining its STEM capability. In the face of projections that the country will need additional 550,000 highly qualified STEM professionals by 2035 – a 24% increase on today's 'STEM workforce – one third of our current workforce anticipates leaving the sector, and school STEM participation is declining.

This convergence of rising demand and diminishing supply threatens Australia's innovation capacity, economic resilience and sovereign capability. To protect Australia's future economic resilience – and the nation's ability to meet Government priorities critical to the nation's wellbeing – Australia must reinvigorate efforts to support the current STEM workforce and nurture our future STEM leaders and professionals.

This requires coordinated national action across education, research, and employment policy.

The Government must leverage the opportunities offered through current system reforms – the establishment of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission, implementation of the Ambitious Australia report, the new National Health and Medical Research Strategy and the 2026 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap – to sustain Australia's STEM workforce.

As a nation, we must double down on efforts to secure Australia's STEM capabilities – and secure the Australia's future productivity, prosperity and wellbeing.



**WORK WITH US TO SECURE AUSTRALIA'S STEM CAPABILITY**

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