

# INDUSTRY PROFILE - Floristry

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**Flower Retailing  
Floristry**

*ANZSIC: 4274*

**Report Prepared August 2023**

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## 1. Industry Background (i.e., Regulatory and Licensing Bodies).

- The primary form of business undertaken by Florists is the buying and selling of cut flowers to the public. The Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) categorises it as a division of the retail trade. Therefore, Florists comply with Australian Consumer Law (ACL) regulations regarding their business practices. Under the Australian Consumer Law (ACL), products you buy from an Australian seller are covered by 'consumer guarantees'.<sup>1</sup> These guarantees cover a broad range of consumer rights. For example, that goods and services be:
  - Of acceptable quality and free of fault.
  - Match the description
  - Match the quality of any sample or demonstration model
  - Fit for the purpose specified

The above consumer rights also apply to online Florists.<sup>2</sup>

- Other areas of legislation that affect the industry relate to trading hours and employment conditions. Whilst Industry operations are governed by the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (previously the Trade Practices Act 1974). Respective state and territory governments regulate retail trading hours and certain licences and regulations regarding local trading practices.
- With regard to working as a Florist. No occupational licensing, certification, or specific legislative requirements exist to work as a florist. Many are self-taught, generational florists or are employed and taught on the job.<sup>3</sup>
- Under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (BAM Act 2007). the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's Quarantine WA service enforces strict biosecurity legislation in relation to importing plants, bulbs and cut flowers to Western Australia (including potting mix and soil) either from overseas or interstate. The legislation also covers plants and plant products purchased online *"The availability of an item on an internet-trading site does not imply that it is legal to import it into WA or that importation is unrestricted. The buyer must comply with WA's import requirements when importing online purchases."*<sup>4</sup> This means that out-of-state florists cannot send flowers directly. One stakeholder reported this as a benefit for their business.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Workforce Opportunities and Challenges

### 2.1. Opportunities

- eCommerce technology has the ability to offer Florists an expanded range of customer services. One such service is a subscription. Like a magazine subscription, a customer can now organise having flowers delivered on a regular basis. The subscription model benefits the customer as they can plan their flower needs and for the florist, it guarantees a set income for the duration of the subscription.
- Upselling and cross-selling are becoming ever more important income generators for Florists. As competition from other retail outlets selling cut flowers has increased Florists have responded by expanding their product ranges. For example, when purchasing an arrangement for a birthday a customer can add a bottle of wine to the order, or when buying an arrangement for a birthday one can also purchase other gifts such as candles, or soaps.<sup>6</sup> Sales techniques such as up-selling and cross-selling have become important skills.
- Development of locally produced flowers may provide opportunities for regional, rural and First Nations communities. For Florists, the commercial value of ethically sourced and sustainably grown flowers, both traditional and native species, is closely linked to growing consumer demand. There are opportunities both in micropropagation/Micro Flower Farming (MFF) and Wildflower Harvesting.
  - Micro Flower Farming is, as its name suggests, the small-scale propagation of flowers but at a hyper-local level. MFF aim is to promote local products it is also about mitigating many of the

negative effects of imported Fauna - for example, the environmental risks of invasive species as well as the carbon footprint of imported flowers. MFF is both good as a means of producing endemic species and for traditional Floristry flower varieties.<sup>7</sup>

- Wildflower Harvesting predominantly takes place in NSW. The NSW “Cut-flower sustainable management plan 2023–2027” states it is where “material is to be harvested from naturally occurring stands of native vegetation on freehold lands of which the applicant or licensee is the owner, and where the harvest is at such a rate that the harvest is considered by the Department of Planning and Environment to be sustainable (wild harvest licence).”<sup>8</sup> The advantages are the same as MFF with the added benefits of encouraging awareness of biodiversity and ecological sustainability which leads to improved custodianship of local natural resources. In WA current laws concerning the intrastate and interstate movement of Fauna and Flora, as well as laws protecting native species, may place too high a barrier for this form of propagation to be viable.
- Genetically modified flower research is still some way behind that of plants produced for agricultural crops.<sup>9</sup> However, the commercial possibilities for the industry range from, improving scent, longevity, and removing pollen to the development of new colours.<sup>10</sup>

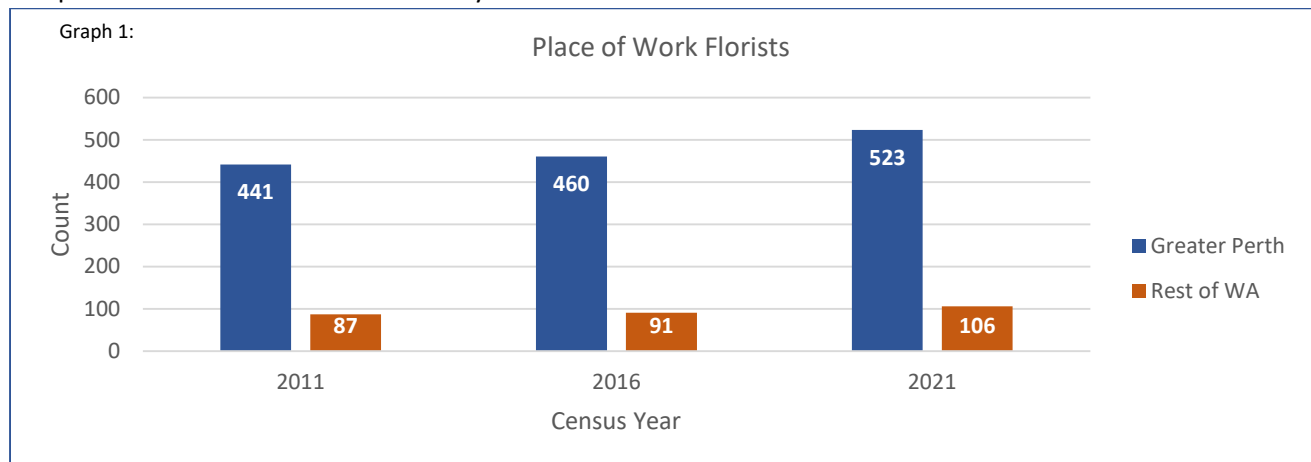
### 2.2 Challenges

- As with other segments of the retail sector, Florists depend upon consumer discretionary spending. Both the Australian Retailers Association (ARA) and the National Retail Association (NRA), the two main retail peak bodies, report concerns over rising interest rates putting pressure on retail businesses. Not just through the increased cost of their goods and services but also its effect on consumer expenditure. ABS figures show that retail sales in December 2022 fell 3.9% compared with November. Retail trade constitutes around 20% of GDP (as much as all private sector business investment).<sup>11</sup> Even though consumers appeared to spend more, inflation meant these figures were due to prices rising. Cost-of-living figures show that the cost of mortgage interest repayments rose 27% in the December quarter and 61% through 2022.<sup>12</sup> Deloitte has raised concerns that households are being forced to cut back due to high cost of living pressures driven by interest rate rises.<sup>13 14</sup>
- Fresh cut flowers and foliage import requirements were updated on March 1, 2018. The new rules mandate multiple pest control measures before shipment. As a result, flower importers experienced increased costs, which were passed on to industry retailers. Consequently, the price of imported flowers has gone up.
- All businesses consulted were unaware of any WA peak body to serve as a voice for their training needs. The lack of a WA peak body to advocate for the sector exacerbates many of the obstacles the sector is currently facing. For example, a WA peak body would provide:
  - The infrastructure for unified marketing campaigns.
  - A louder voice to raise industry issues with government agencies.
  - A central body to share best practices and provide various support services.
  - A central body to guide industry-specific training

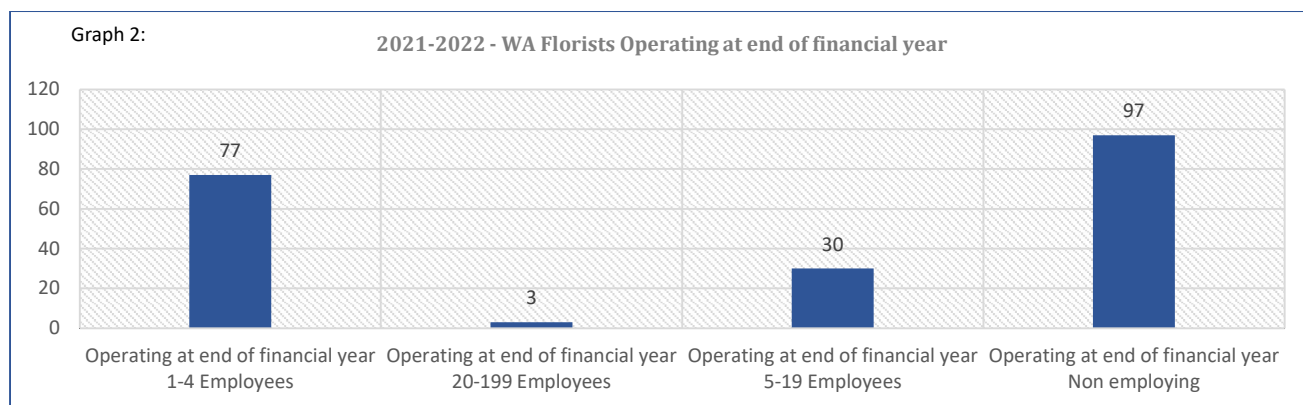
The above being the case, a new national peak body has recently formed in Victoria called Flower Industry Australia (FIA). The LDSC contacted the FIA to inquire as to whether they had plans to build capacity in WA. They responded that they were aware that there was a need for a representative body in WA and that they are currently “actively working to fill the void that businesses have expressed regarding a missing WA peak body”. To accomplish this, they commented that one of their roles is to advocate for the sector’s growth and so they would be happy to provide industry advice on how to address WA’s training needs and workforce challenges.

- Imports undermining local producers. This also means florists find it difficult to develop ranges based on locally produced products using endemic plant and flower species.

- Graph 1<sup>15</sup> - The majority of florists in Western Australia operate within the Greater Perth region. It is noteworthy that the Greater Perth area is home to 82% of the state's population. This reflects the significant obstacles confronting regional florists, as Perth not only houses the consumers but also the potential workforce for the industry.



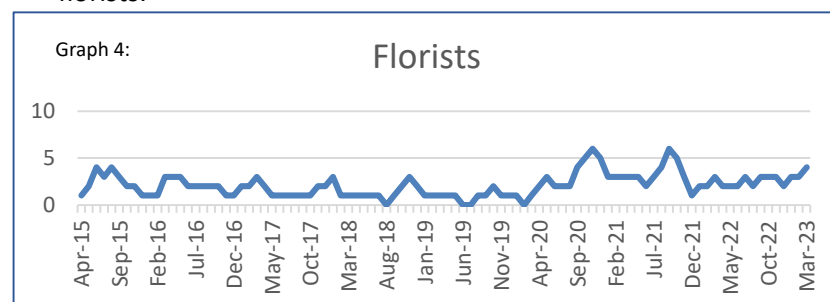
- Packaging and the use of harmful chemicals across the industry - not just from overseas suppliers but also via some local growers and distributors. The issue of chemical use is not just of concern due to their environmental impact, but also from the perspective of health and safety and the possible detrimental health implications faced by Florists due to their use in flower propagation.<sup>16</sup>
- Online as well as bricks-and-mortar flower retailers, continue to feel the impacts of Supermarkets and various food and grocery outlets selling cut flowers. The benefits of eCommerce have been mixed. One example is quality control, local Florists have reservations regarding the use of Interflora. This is due to the Florist taking the order and not having control over the final product when it is delivered to the customer. Whilst others report that e-Commerce and social media are very time-consuming.<sup>17</sup>
- More and more consumers are demanding ethically sourced products. One challenge for the sector is how to meet the consumers' desire for ethically sourced plants and flowers, whilst also staying competitive on price.
- Social media sites such as Facebook were initially seen as a tool to build customer engagement. However, feedback from stakeholders is how time-consuming they are and how little return on the effort put in the business gets.<sup>18</sup> Facebook to some extent is representative of this issue. Rather than set up their own webpage many Florists use Facebook as their online storefront. However, a review of Facebook pages found that many businesses start enthusiastically with regular posts, but soon drop off. On review, many had not posted in the last 6 months.
- eCommerce platforms such as Shopify and BigCommerce have allowed many new entrants into the Floristry market as they provide ready-made online store templates that can be easily set up. These new entrants, therefore, do not have as many business overheads as bricks and mortar Florists have. As there are no occupational licensing, certification, or specific legislative requirements to work as a florist many enter the industry without a qualification or training, or straight out of training, but with little business experience. Stakeholders felt this dynamic was damaging the industry as a whole.<sup>19</sup> These factors may explain that, of the 35 retail ANZSIC sub-categories, year ending 2021-2022,<sup>20</sup> Floristry had the second-highest business exit rate as a percentage of the total number of Florists, and the fifth-highest entry rate. The majority of these entries and exits consisted of non-employing businesses - businesses operated by own-account workers (i.e., people working in their own business without employees). Industry stakeholder feedback, from RTOs and businesses,<sup>21 22</sup> expressed concerns that not only is this phenomenon undermining the feasibility of established businesses, but due to the lack of skills and knowledge, the public may have a poor experience which damages the reputation of the industry.



- Online has also raised issues of misleading business practices related to where a business is claiming to be located. In 2022 two online Flower retailers received court-enforceable undertakings related to their misleading consumers into thinking that they were ordering from small local businesses - when in fact the online seller was using a network of local sellers to fulfil their orders. This same issue was also raised in relation to another online Flower retailer making similar claims - even though they distributed from large warehouses which were often far from the customer.<sup>23</sup> This issue was also raised by stakeholders in their responses to the 2023 Floristry Survey.

## 2.3 Supply and Demand for Workforce

- Regarding workforce response to job advertisements. Industry stated that when advertising a position, they get an overwhelming response. However, very few applicants have Floristry training, either accredited or non-accredited, or experience.
- The yearly National Skills Commission's (NSC) Skills Priority List (SPL) for June 2022, and current job vacancy data, indicate no immediate shortage of florists in WA, and soft future demand for qualified florists.<sup>24</sup>



- Graph 4 WA Job vacancy data from 2015 to 2023 shows an annual peak in demand around October each year. Possibly driven by Florists seeking to hire in preparation for Christmas and the increase in events and parties.

Graph 2 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/business-indicators/counts-australian-businesses-including-entries-and-exits/latest-release>

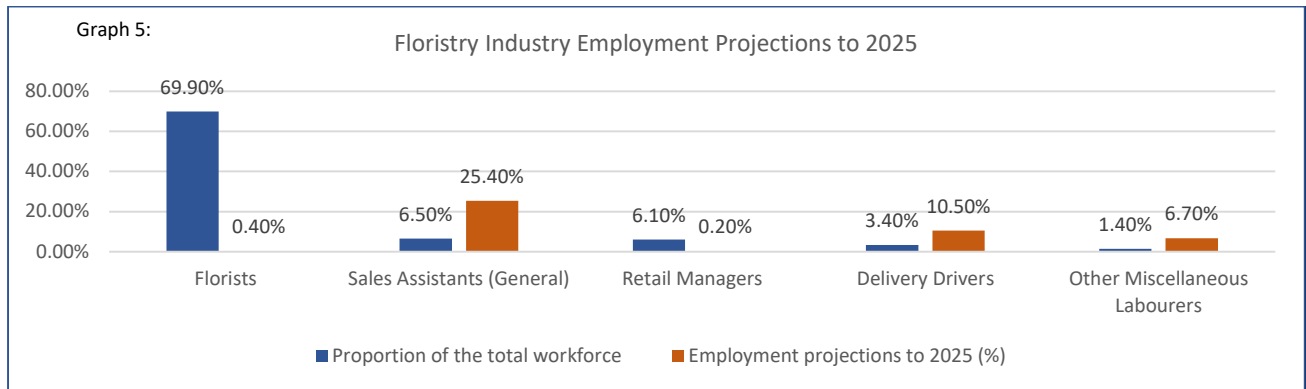
Graph 3 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/business-indicators/counts-australian-businesses-including-entries-and-exits/latest-release>

Graph 4 <https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/topics/internet-vacancy-index>



## Industry Profile – Floristry

- Top skills in demand for this industry include creativity, communication skills, organisational skills, detail-oriented, time management and working well within a team environment.
- Looking at the Floristry industry as a whole, (ANZSIC 4274) and employment trends. The Australian Industry and Skills Committee data below projects that Florists as a percentage of the total Floristry industry workforce will remain static. However, demand for Sales Assistants and Delivery Drivers within the industry sector will potentially increase.

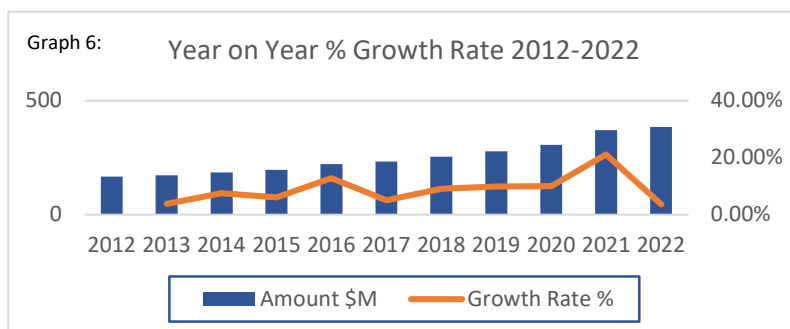


- Both Labour Market Insights and IBISWorld project that between now and 2025/6 workforce growth will remain flat – at between 6,100 (Labour Market Insights) and 6,400 (IBISWorld).<sup>25</sup> A review of 2011, 2016 and 2021 census data shows that, as an occupation, Florist numbers in WA have increased by approximately 15% since 2011. It is to be noted that this growth increase correlates to the approximate 15% growth in the WA population over the same period. This implies that future workforce demand will be closely tied to WA population figures - which are forecast to increase by between 13% to 17% by 2031.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.4 Technology

### 2.4.1 e-Commerce and Social Media

- Across the retail sector COVID-19 accelerated and embedded the use of eCommerce as a means to purchase goods and services. Flower Retailing also experienced this shift in consumer buying habits.



Graph 6<sup>27</sup> shows a 21% spike in revenue growth between 2020 and 2021. Post-COVID mandates this rate of growth, and its incursion into brick-and-mortar market share has shown a steeper decrease than initially thought, however, the online Floristry sector will continue to develop its share of the total Floristry market.

Dependent upon the business model chosen the encroachment of eCommerce into the traditional bricks and mortar Floristry sector has created both opportunities and challenges.

- For brick-and-mortar Florists, eCommerce offers a blend of opportunities to sell to the public whilst retaining a physical storefront. Florists can opt to set up their own eCommerce offer, utilising services such as Shopify or Adobe Commerce, and/or join services such as Interflora - a flower delivery network, associated with over 58,000 affiliated flower shops in over 140 countries.

Graph 5 <https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/topics/employment-projections>

Graph 6 G4274 Flower Retailing in Australia - MyIBISWorld

- For individuals, eCommerce provides the opportunity to set up a Floristry business that can be managed and run from their homes. Thus, saving money on various business costs such as rent.
- A currently developing model that is finding success forgoes a traditional storefront in favour of a warehouse – where rent costs per sq meter can be much lower. This, coupled with a focus on a smaller selection of arrangements and only retailing through the internet, means Florists can sell at more competitive prices – as the Florist can buy cut flowers in bulk from wholesalers.

### 2.4.2 Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG)

- Stakeholder feedback was mixed. Responses as to the position of the business on ESG depended to some extent on the audience the business owner was targeting. Those whose model was to keep overhead low - but keep quality high by focusing on a limited range - tended to do what was necessary rather than be proactive. Other stakeholders saw opportunities to tap into consumer demand for environmentally and sustainably sourced products, and so rated ESG-related goals as important.<sup>28 29</sup>

## 3. Training and Education Needs

### 3.1 Current and Anticipated Training Needs

- Industry believes training should include business units that not only help with running a small business but also provide guidance when downturns are happening. How to re-arrange finances, renegotiate terms with suppliers etc.<sup>30</sup>
- Floral arrangements that are intricately detailed require a certain level of skill to assemble, which commands a higher premium. Florists who specialize in creating such displays will be better equipped to avoid competing on price with supermarkets and other retailers. However, to achieve this the Floristry training package must be reviewed more regularly to ensure it stays up to date with the latest trends and techniques.
- There is a growing desire among consumers for more environmentally and ethically sourced materials. For example, cut flowers that are grown without pesticides or locally grown varieties that have less of a carbon footprint. These environmental and ethical concerns are an aspect of the current SFL package that requires review to meet changing consumer habits and pre-empt possible regulatory changes.
- Many florists lack the resources, knowledge, and confidence to build and manage their own digital presence. Not only does the training package for Floristry need to review and update those digital technology skills embedded in the Certificate III and Certificate IV qualifications, but there is also a need for effort focused on finding and developing the infrastructure for the delivery of the units.
  - BSBTEC405 - Review and maintain the organisation's digital presence – no provider on scope to deliver in WA
  - BSBTEC501 - Develop and implement an e-commerce strategy - no provider on scope to deliver in WA
  - SIRXES001A - Acquire and retain online customers – deleted

### 3.2 Results from the 2023 Floristry Training Survey:

- Most businesses that replied reported that either the business owner had a mix of accredited or non-accredited training, or a member of staff did. This mix translated to 80% of respondents having some form of accredited training within the business.
- 40% of respondents offered staff-accredited training - whilst the remaining provided on-the-job training.
- Floral design skills were considered a must by 80% of respondents followed closely by customer service skills, then merchandising and stock management.
- As the business owner, the majority of respondents chose customer service and business management skills as an area they would like to develop - e.g. negotiation, budgeting, staff management etc



- Even though e-Commerce was not perceived as a must-have when hiring, or as important in relation to what is needed to be a Florist, it was rated highly as an area that respondents would like more training in.
- When hiring respondents listed floral design skills a must-have, followed by retail and merchandising skills. Plant knowledge was not considered essential.
- The two main barriers to training were:
  - Lack of local training
  - The difficulty in finding out what is available.
- With regard to e-Commerce and social media, the biggest challenge stakeholders reported was how time-consuming both are - one respondent commented that social media gave very little return on investment.

### 4. Training Challenges and Opportunities

- Currently, there is only one accreditable training provider delivering in Western Australia. Certificates II, III and IV in floristry are available along with Floristry Essentials Skills Set and a traineeship option. After-school traineeships are available and usually take around 12 and 24 months to complete. There is one provider in Queensland that has the SFL training package on scope in WA but they do not currently promote this in WA.
- RTOs report that Certificate II has few enrolments. NCVER data shows there have been no enrolments in WA since 2017. One training provider advises prospective students not to do the cert II as they feel it does not meet the minimum standards to work in the industry.
- Consultation found that employers would consider sending employees for training. However, the current length of time it takes, and the number of units, is too long – to graduate with CERT III requires 21 units (622 Nominal Hours) to be completed.<sup>31</sup> Those businesses based regionally also reported travel, and associated costs, as a barrier.<sup>32</sup>
- One challenge for training is why Cert II is not seen as fit for purpose by the industry and training providers, and why so few Cert III graduates go on to study Cert IV or Diploma.
- One local RTO has attempted to engage with school-based training but found the uptake from students to be very low - they would require around 10-15 students for the delivery to be viable. One reason given was the poor perception of Floristry as a career.

#### 4.1 VET In Schools Register<sup>33</sup>

##### Certificate II in Floristry (Assistant)

Auspicing advice is High Risk

- Industry prefers delivery of this qualification via SBT, to ensure students have access to suitably equipped and staffed florist work environments.
- Institutional delivery is only supported when delivered by an RTO with an appropriate simulated industry environment, due to the training package requirements.

##### Certificate III in Floristry

Auspicing advice is High Risk

- This qualification is only supported for delivery by an RTO with an appropriate simulated industry environment due to the training package requirements.

### 5. Career Pathways and Graduate Outcomes

- There are no occupational licensing, certification, or specific legislative requirements to work as a florist. Many are self-taught, generational florists or are employed and taught on the job.<sup>34</sup> However, the Australian Apprenticeship Pathways AAP suggests the below table as a guide for graduates. Both employers and those who were self-employed, found Certificate III fulfilled their needs.

Certificate II	Certificate III	Certificate IV	Diploma
	Online Florist	Senior Florist	

- Labour Market Insights: related occupations.

Low to medium skill level	High skill level
Garden and Nursery Labourers	Visual Arts and Crafts Professionals
Nurserypersons	
Greenkeepers	
Gardeners	

- NCVER Graduate outcomes data for Certificate III in Floristry.<sup>35</sup> Due to the low enrolment and completion numbers for accredited training, the number of people offering unaccredited short courses, and the propensity for people to enter the sector without any training, NCVER outcomes data needs to be read in context. The 2022 Survey shows a 58% improvement in employment status after training (2021 reported 52%) which highlights how beneficial training can be. However, the 17% rate for students going on to further study was a significant drop from the 2021 figure of 23%.

Of all qualification completers					
Number respondents	of	Employed or in further study	Improved employment status after training	Commenced further study after training	Satisfied with the training
261		77.7	58.1	17.3	84.3

Top 3 industries (of those employed after training)					
Industry 1	%	Industry 2	%	Industry 3	%
Retail Trade	46.2	Accommodation and Food Services	11.2	Health Care and Social Assistance	8.6

- NCVER data also shows that nearly 78% of graduates are employed or in further study. This may be due to a person being hired without a qualification and then upskilling whilst employed. Feedback from industry supports this, as the majority of WA stakeholders reported either they or their staff had some form of training (83% reported accredited and 66% un-accredited).
- As mentioned earlier consultation with industry did support NCVER outcomes data. All businesses interviewed said they would automatically consider an applicant for a role if they had listed a Floristry qualification in their application. Whilst 60% of respondents to the 2023 Floristry Survey reported that applicants with an accredited qualification would be automatically selected for interviewing - whilst one response considered accredited training a must-have.

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<sup>31</sup> LDSC.

<sup>32</sup> LDSC.

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