

12 August 2022

Senator the Hon. Tony Sheldon
The Chair
Education and Employment Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House ACT 2600
via email: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator,

**RE: JOBS AND SKILLS AUSTRALIA BILL 2022 AND JOBS AND SKILLS AUSTRALIA
(NATIONAL SKILLS COMMISSIONER REPEAL) BILL 2022**

The Australian Retailers Association (ARA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Jobs and Skills Australia Bill 2022* and the *Jobs and Skills Australia (National Skills Commissioner Repeal) Bill 2022* (the Bills).

The ARA is the oldest, largest and most diverse national retail body, representing a \$400 billion sector that employs 1.3 million Australians. As the country's peak retail body, representing more than 120,000 retail shop fronts and online stores, the ARA informs, advocates, educates, protects and unifies our independent, national and international retail community.

The ARA recognises that the purpose of the Bills is to pave the way for the creation of the new Jobs and Skills Australia agency, which will be established once the Jobs and Skills Summit has taken place in September 2022.

As Australia's largest private sector employer, we believe that the ARA would make a valuable contribution to the Jobs and Skill Summit. We have not yet received an invitation to attend but remain hopeful of attending so that we might provide insights from retailers who are managing skills and labour shortages that predate the pandemic and are expected to deteriorate further in coming months.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics recently reported there were 40,000 vacancies across the sector and that vacancies in retail are growing faster than any other sector. A recent survey of our own membership found:

- 82% considered the labour shortage to have worsened over the last six months;
- 60% of retailers reported that frontline roles and managers are the most difficult vacancies to fill, with up to 12 weeks to fill vacancies – well above business as usual; and
- 52% felt that a lack of skilled candidates was the most significant driver of the labour shortage.

The ARA recommends that the Committee supports the Bills as they stand, noting our concerns outlined above in relation to the labour and skills shortage across the Australian retail sector..

We welcome further engagement on these issues and our policy team can be contacted at policy@retail.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Zahra
Chief Executive Officer