

USING TRANSPORT IN REGIONAL COMMUNITIES TO ENABLE WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA **MIDWAY REPORT**



October 2026

DELIVERY PARTNERS



SUPPORTING PARTNERS



EYRE PENINSULA



Authors

Akshay Vij

Associate Professor, Adelaide University

akshay.vij@adelaide.edu.au

Anilan V

Research Fellow, Adelaide University

anilan.v@adelaide.edu.au

Lisa Brock

Local Jobs (Mid North), Workforce Australia

lisa@usgemployment.com.au

Andrea Broadfoot

Local Jobs (North West Country), Workforce Australia

andrea@localjobsprogram.com

Jack Ritchie

Local Jobs (North West Country), Workforce Australia

jack@localjobsprogram.com

Murray Coates

CEO, Australian Community Transport Association

CEO@communitytransportaustralia.org.au

Daniel Urrutia

Projects Lead, Australian Community Transport Association

Pilot@communitytransportaustralia.org.au

Acknowledgements

This study is funded by the Australian Community Transport Association, the iMOVE Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), Workforce Australia – Local Jobs and a consortium of funding and supporting organisations.

We proudly acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and pay respect to those who have preserved and continue to care for the lands and waters on which we live and work, and from which we benefit each day. We recognise the strengths and knowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples provide to the health, disability and aged care systems and thank them for their ongoing contributions to those systems and the wider community.

Executive Summary

The Using Transport in Regional Communities to Enable Workforce Participation in South Australia project examines how transport and mobility affect access to employment, training and workforce participation across the Mid North SA and North West Country SA regions. Its purpose is to identify how transport and related barriers constrain workforce participation and to develop practical, evidence-based responses that can be tested and, where successful, adapted more widely.

The project starts from a simple but important proposition: an employment opportunity is only practically available if a person can access it. In regional communities, this can depend on much more than the presence of a transport service. Distance, working hours, driver licensing, access to a reliable vehicle, transport costs and the coordination of existing services can all determine whether employment is realistically accessible. The project therefore treats mobility as workforce infrastructure, rather than as a standalone transport issue.

Stage 1 combined a literature and policy review, 34 stakeholder interviews, seven substantive Stakeholder Input Forms, a Community Survey with 233 valid responses, regional and spatial analysis, field engagement and consultation with government, employers and service providers. These evidence streams were triangulated and synthesised to identify the principal barriers, intervention pathways and remaining information requirements, before being taken into regional co-design to move the project from diagnosis towards practical intervention.

What the evidence shows

The evidence confirms that transport is a material constraint on workforce participation across the study regions, while also showing that transport barriers vary considerably and cannot be addressed through a single solution.

Regional geography is fundamental. People and employment are distributed across regional centres, smaller towns and dispersed communities, while many employment opportunities require travel across considerable distances or at times poorly aligned with available passenger transport. Private vehicles consequently remain central to workforce mobility. However, access to a driver licence and a reliable, affordable vehicle cannot be assumed.

The Community Survey provides particularly clear evidence from people directly experiencing these circumstances. Within this targeted workforce-relevant cohort, 82% reported that transport had somewhat or significantly limited their ability to apply for jobs better matched to their skills, while approximately two-thirds of respondents with comparable working-hours data indicated that efficient, reliable and affordable transport could enable them to work more hours. These findings are diagnostic rather than population estimates but demonstrate the significance of transport constraints within the surveyed cohort.

The research also challenges a simple characterisation of the problem as an absence of public transport. Regional South Australia has a diverse network of scheduled, community, demand-responsive and other passenger services. The more important issue is practical accessibility: whether a service connects the right origin and destination, operates when employment requires it, is available to the person needing it and is affordable and reliable enough for sustained workforce participation. Among Community Survey respondents, 58.4% reported no public transport within a 15-minute walk and, among those with nearby services, only 7.2% considered them generally suitable for typical work shifts.

Driver licensing emerged as a particularly important pathway to independent mobility. The evidence shows that licence attainment is not simply a matter of passing a test. Progress can depend on access to professional instruction, supervised driving hours, a suitable vehicle, testing, affordability and, for some participants, additional cultural, language, literacy or learning support. Licence retention and reinstatement present different challenges, particularly where loss of a licence can jeopardise existing employment.

Vehicle access is a separate constraint: people may hold a licence but lack a vehicle, depend on a vehicle shared with other household members, or be unable to sustain the costs of registration, insurance, fuel, maintenance and repairs.

These barriers also interact. A person may lack a licence, supervising driver and suitable vehicle; hold a licence but lack reliable vehicle access; or have passenger transport nearby that does not operate when work requires it. The Community Survey similarly found that reported employment constraints generally became more severe where multiple transport barriers were present.

A further finding is that considerable capacity already exists across the regions, but it is fragmented. Government agencies, employment services, community organisations, transport providers, driver-training programmes and employers each hold parts of the solution. Information, eligibility, funding and organisational boundaries can nevertheless make those resources difficult to navigate or combine around an individual's circumstances. Better coordination, information and referral therefore emerged as an intervention requirement in its own right.

The research also identified important information gaps for workforce-accessibility planning. Existing sources do not provide an integrated picture of how many people experience particular transport or licensing barriers, where they are located, the capacity of relevant services or how those barriers and interventions affect subsequent employment outcomes. These and other information requirements are being progressively verified through a working Data Requirements Register to support further analysis, agency clarification and future data development.

From evidence to action

Stage 1 evidence was synthesised into six intervention pathways:

1. Driver licence attainment
2. Licence retention and reinstatement
3. Vehicle access
4. Passenger transport
5. Remote work and digital participation
6. System coordination and referral

These pathways provided the framework for a regional co-design workshop held in Port Augusta on 6 July 2026, involving 30 participants representing 25 organisations. Three facilitated rounds generated 25 intervention concepts, subsequently consolidated into 23 opportunities and assessed against their workforce contribution, feasibility, affordability, sustainability, implementation readiness and broader delivery considerations.

Eight priority opportunities have now progressed into development:

1. **Regional Driver Training Directory** – Creating a centralised resource for regional driver licensing information, accredited instructors, learner support programs and testing services.
2. **Regional Driving Academy Feasibility Study** – Developing and assessing a phased model to address funding, training and support gaps in obtaining a driver's licence.
3. **Assessing Regional Expansion of On the Right Track** – Exploring opportunities to extend the program to additional regional locations and learner cohorts.
4. **Accredited Third-Party Learner Testing** – Investigating opportunities to increase regional driver testing capacity through appropriately trained and accredited providers.
5. **Enhanced Work and Development Permit Scheme** – Exploring improved access to permit arrangements that help eligible individuals experiencing fines-related difficulties.
6. **Point-to-Point Employment Transport** – Developing targeted transport solutions connecting regional communities with employment opportunities, including first-mile and last-mile connections aligned with working hours.
7. **Licence Retention and Reinstatement Programme for Apprentices** – Exploring preventative support and reinstatement pathways for apprentices whose employment or training is at risk due to licence suspension or loss.
8. **Spencer Gulf Jobs Platform Enhancement** – Exploring improvements to an existing regional employment platform to increase access to job opportunities, including remote and hybrid work.

Note: Pilot 8 has been retained in the list for completeness, although it was subsequently withdrawn from further pilot development.

These constitute a developing portfolio rather than eight finalised implementation commitments. The opportunities are at different stages of feasibility assessment, partner engagement and implementation readiness, and some depend on regulatory decisions, funding or delivery arrangements beyond the project's direct control. Not all may therefore reach full implementation or evaluation within the remaining project period; for some, establishing feasibility, ownership and a viable implementation pathway will itself be an important project outcome.

Monitoring and evaluation will be incorporated into each pilot at a level appropriate to its maturity, scale and implementation period. In addition to assessing implementation and early outcomes, this will, where practicable, generate evidence relevant to the information requirements identified through Stage 1 and progressively refine the working Data Requirements Register.

Setting the scene

Regional South Australia offers significant employment opportunities, but long-standing transport barriers prevent many residents from accessing and sustaining work. Difficulties obtaining a driver's licence, limited public transport, vehicle and transport costs, and fragmented services can combine to place jobs out of reach.

The project concerns the Mid North and North West Country of South Australia, two substantial regional areas encompassing regional centres, smaller towns and communities separated by considerable distances. The Mid North includes centres such as Port Pirie, Kadina, Clare, Nuriootpa, while the North West Country includes Port Augusta, Whyalla and Port Lincoln. Figure 1 shows the geographic extent of the two regions and the distribution of key population centres.

The project emerged from several years of work at a regional level that culminated in workshop convened by Workforce Australia – Local Jobs and facilitated by ACTA in 2025. Its findings informed a project plan submitted to iMOVE for funding. Twenty partners contributed cash or in-kind support, and a co-design Advisory Group guides the research and practical solutions.

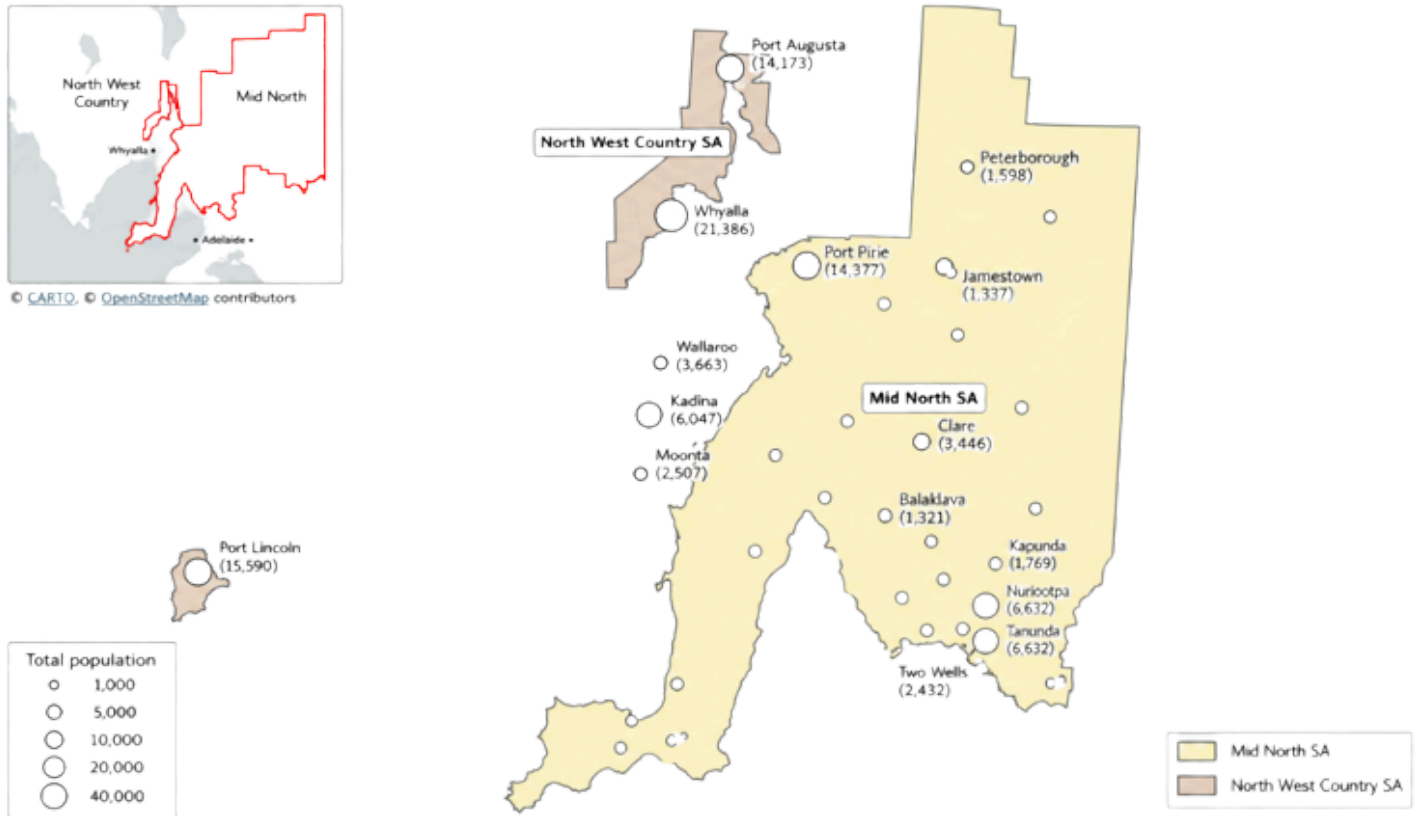
This interim report draws on Adelaide University's research, including 34 stakeholder interviews, a Community Survey with 233 valid responses, and regional analysis. Among survey respondents, 82% said transport had limited their ability to apply for jobs better matched to their skills. 58.4% reported no public transport within a 15-minute walk; among those with a nearby service, only 7.2% considered it generally suitable for typical work shifts.

The evidence shows that barriers differ between people and places. A licence does not guarantee access to a vehicle, and a nearby passenger service may not run when someone needs to work.

Existing programmes and services offer considerable capacity, but better coordination, information and referral are needed to bring support together.

The findings informed six intervention pathways and a Port Augusta co-design workshop, where 30 participants from 25 organisations developed 25 concepts. Eight priority opportunities have progressed into feasibility assessment, partner engagement and implementation planning, spanning driver training and testing, licence retention, employment transport, remote work and better access to existing support.

2021 Census total population by ABS Urban Centre and Locality
(Mid North South Australia and North West Country South Australia)



Sources: ABS 2021 Census total population by Urban Centre and Locality;
ABS ASGS 2021 Urban Centres and Localities geometry; verified Mid North SA and North West Country SA Employment Region boundaries.
Circle size represents the total population, not the population density.

Figure 1: Mid North and North West Country Regions, South Australia & Population (2021) (Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Replacement)

Project background and objectives

Workforce Australia – Local Jobs (Mid North and North West Country) began consolidating regional intelligence and bringing organisations together in 2025 to identify practical responses to transport and licensing barriers. This included a Regional Drivers Licence and Transport Solutions Workshop in Adelaide in December 2025, facilitated by ACTA and involving State Government agencies, community organisations, and regional and workforce stakeholders.

The resulting Project Brief brought together findings from earlier discussions and reports. It identified how transport and licensing barriers interact, set out the need for a coordinated response tailored to regional communities, and outlined an approach to investigating barriers and developing practical solutions. It framed mobility as “workforce infrastructure, rather than as a “standalone service”.

The brief provided the foundation for Adelaide University to design the research project, which commenced in February 2026. The project brings together ACTA, Workforce Australia – Local Jobs, Adelaide University, regional stakeholders, and government to examine how transport accessibility affects workforce participation in the Mid North and North West Country.

Aim: Develop and test a scalable, evidence-based model to strengthen workforce participation by addressing transport and driver-licensing barriers in regional South Australia.

Figure 2 on the next page summarises the project’s system mapping, showing the main pathways through which transport, licensing and distance can affect workforce participation in the Mid North and North West Country regions.

Project Objectives

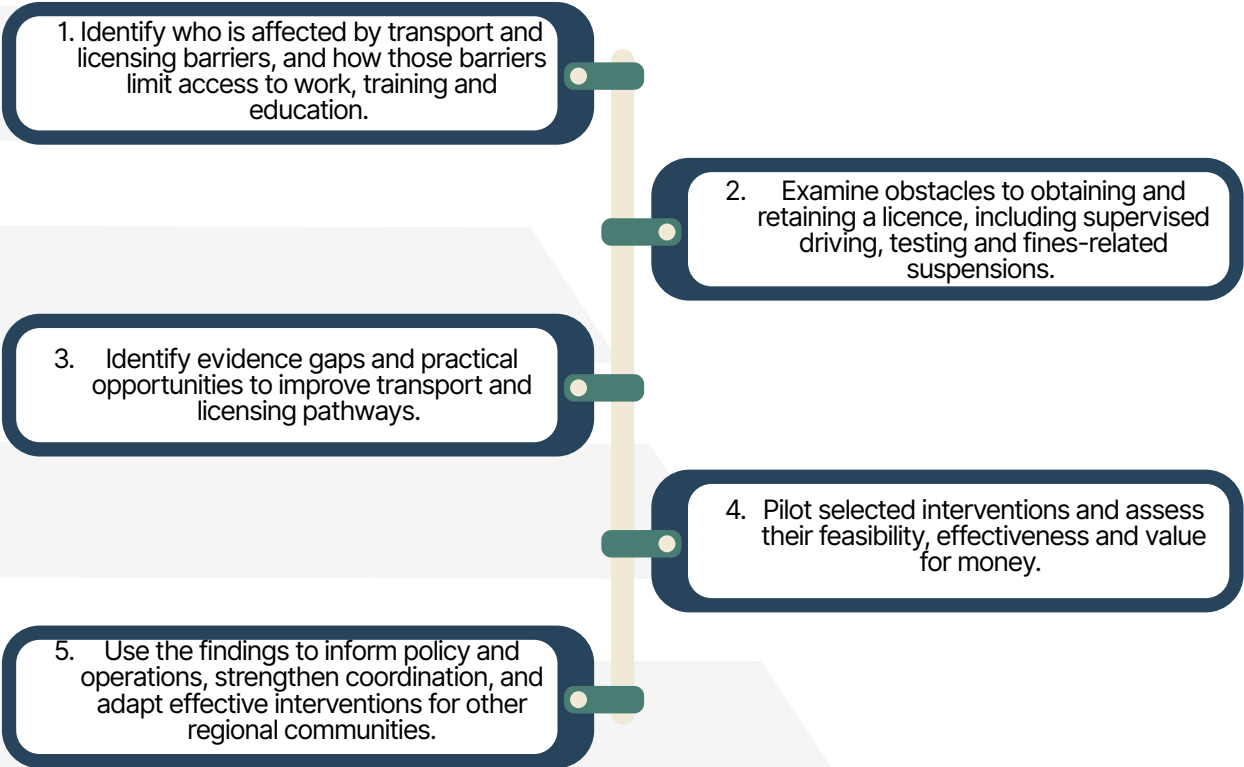
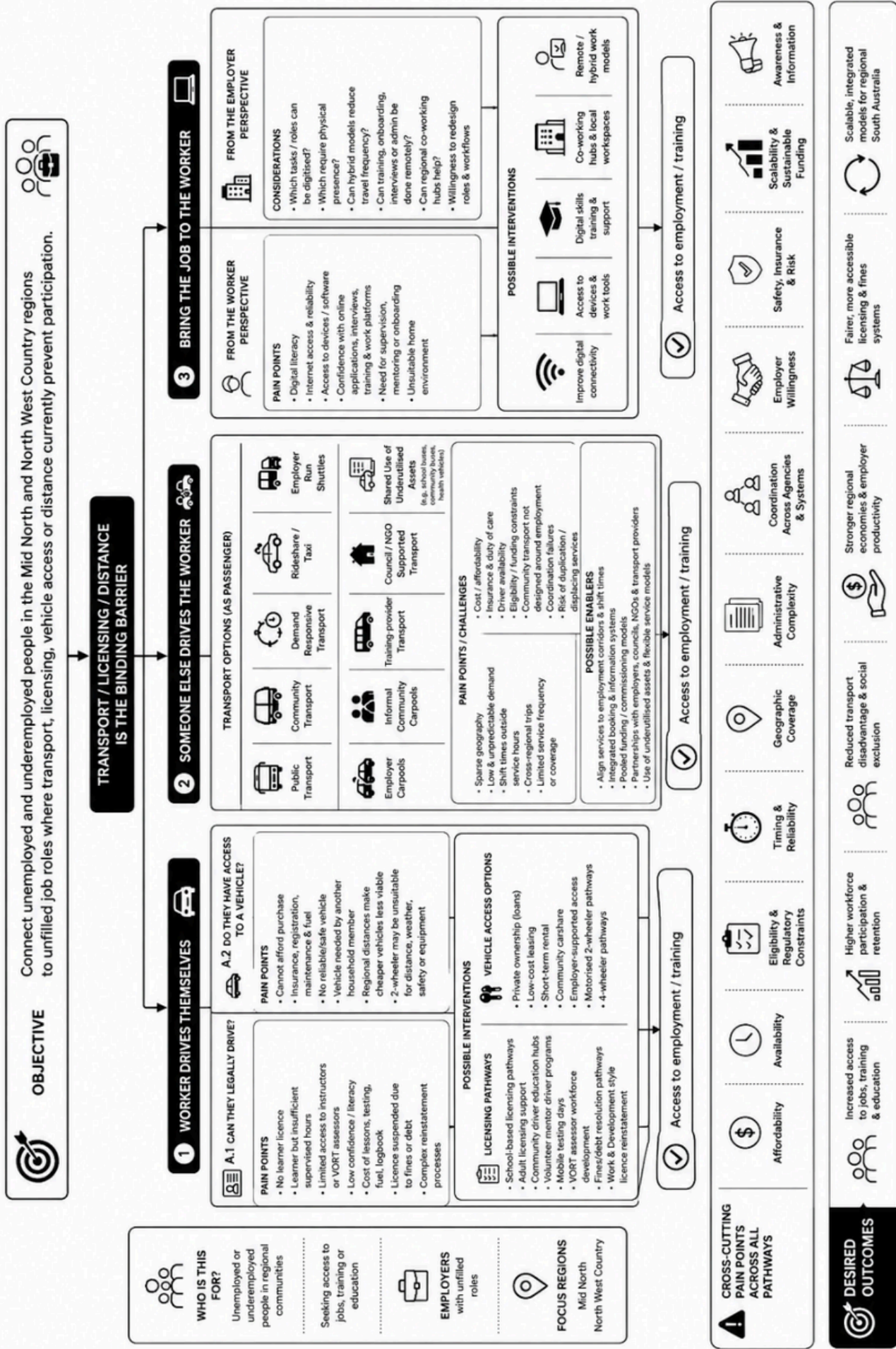


Figure 2: Project Objectives



Project co-design framework

The project’s co-design framework figure 3 – brings together four groups with distinct roles.



Figure 4: Project co-design framework

Project lifecycle

The project commenced in February 2026 and has progressed through the lifecycle outlined below: evidence gathering and system diagnosis, co-design of potential responses, and real-world testing. This sequence was designed to ensure that interventions were informed by research and regional experience before implementation. At the time this Interim Report was issued, the project had reached Stage 3: real-world testing, see figure 4 below for reference.



Figure 5: Project progression from evidence to implementation

Stage 1 – Evidence and System Mapping was designed to establish a robust evidence base across the Mid North and North West Country by surveying unemployed and underemployed residents, examining the spatial relationship between employment and residential locations, analysing existing transport services, licensing pathways and fines-related constraints, engaging with service providers and government agencies, and reviewing relevant Australian and international approaches. The intended outcome was a system-wide understanding of where and why access to employment was breaking down.

Stage 2 – Co-design and Pilot Readiness was intended to use this evidence to develop practical interventions with regional stakeholders, government, employers and service providers. The project team organised this work around three interlinked areas: transport to employment and training; community licensing and driver-education pathways; and fines and debt-resolution pathways. These represented the initial intervention framework rather than the final analytical structure generated through the research.

Stage 3 – Pilot Delivery and Evaluation provides for selected interventions to be implemented and evaluated under real-world regional conditions. Key areas for assessment were implementation feasibility, participant engagement and progression, workforce-access outcomes, system coordination and value for money. The intended result is evidence capable of informing future scaling, policy refinement and broader regional application.

At the time of this Interim Report, the project has progressed to Stage 3: pilot implementation and evaluation. Stage 1 brought together the literature and policy review, stakeholder interviews and engagement, a regional community survey, secondary-data analysis, field engagement, and examination of relevant service and institutional arrangements. Together, these evidence sources have provided complementary perspectives on transport-related workforce barriers and identified where important information remains unavailable, incomplete or insufficiently integrated.

That evidence was taken into a structured co-design process. A stakeholder workshop in Port Augusta on 6 July 2026 brought together approximately 30 participants from around 25 organisations and generated 25 potential intervention concepts. These were consolidated into 23 opportunities and assessed through the project's management and advisory processes, leading to eight priority opportunities for development.

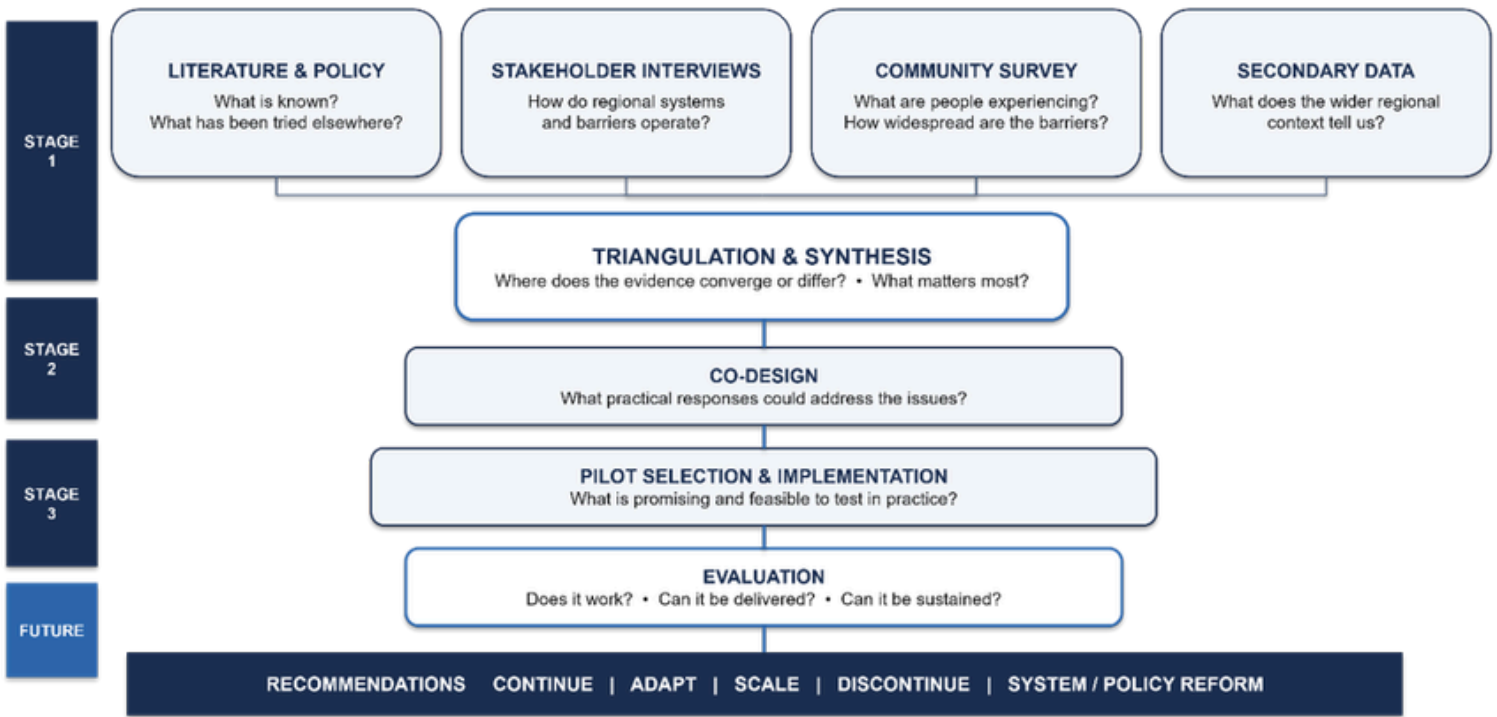
The eight opportunities have now progressed into implementation planning, although their readiness and implementation status vary. Their selection indicates that they are sufficiently relevant and feasible to warrant practical testing; it does not establish that they are effective. The pilot and evaluation stages will examine what works during the trial period, under what conditions, at what cost, and with what prospects for continuation or wider application. They may also identify constraints that require changes to broader State or Commonwealth policy, regulation, funding or service arrangements.

The Interim Report therefore marks the transition from understanding the problem to testing responses. It provides a progress update on the evidence gathered, findings to date and development of the priority opportunities, rather than presenting final conclusions or recommendations. The Final Report will bring together the complete analysis, pilot evaluation findings and recommendations, helping turn the evidence, pilot findings and identified systemic constraints into a “practical blueprint for coordinated action”.

The research approach

The project used an applied, mixed-method and iterative approach to examine how transport and mobility affect workforce participation in the Mid North and North West Country. It brought together research and policy evidence, stakeholder knowledge, community experience and secondary data because no single source could fully explain how individual circumstances, geography and services interact.

The evidence was used to test the issues identified in the Project Brief, inform co-design and select interventions for piloting and evaluation, as shown in Figure 5. The figure below outlines the multiple sources of evidence informing the project, including stakeholder interviews and the community survey.



Source: Adelaide University research team.

Figure 6: Project progression from evidence to implementation

The project combined desktop research, secondary-data analysis, stakeholder engagement and a Community Survey to examine how transport affects workforce participation in the Mid North and North West Country regions. The findings were then taken through regional co-design and used to develop a portfolio of pilot opportunities. This sequence allowed the project to move from identifying barriers to examining how they operate in practice and what responses may be feasible.

Desktop research and secondary-data analysis

The desktop research reviewed relevant literature, policy, licensing arrangements and existing transport and employment initiatives. Secondary-data analysis drew principally on ABS Census and regional datasets, supplemented by driver-licence data and information on regional passenger transport services. It examined where people and employment are located, how residents travel to work, household vehicle availability and the transport connections between communities.

The analysis showed that the two study regions have different settlement patterns. Mid North SA comprises a dispersed network of towns and employment locations, while North West Country SA is more concentrated around several major centres separated by substantial distances. In both regions, private vehicles dominate commuting: 67.0% of employed residents in Mid North SA and 69.8% in North West Country SA drove to work at the 2021 Census. Bus travel as the sole method of commuting accounted for 0.5% and 1.3%, respectively. At the same time, 4.3% of Mid North households and 10.4% of North West Country households reported having no motor vehicle, see figure 6 for reference.

Car dependence and transport access across the study regions

2021 Census indicators for Mid North SA and North West Country SA.

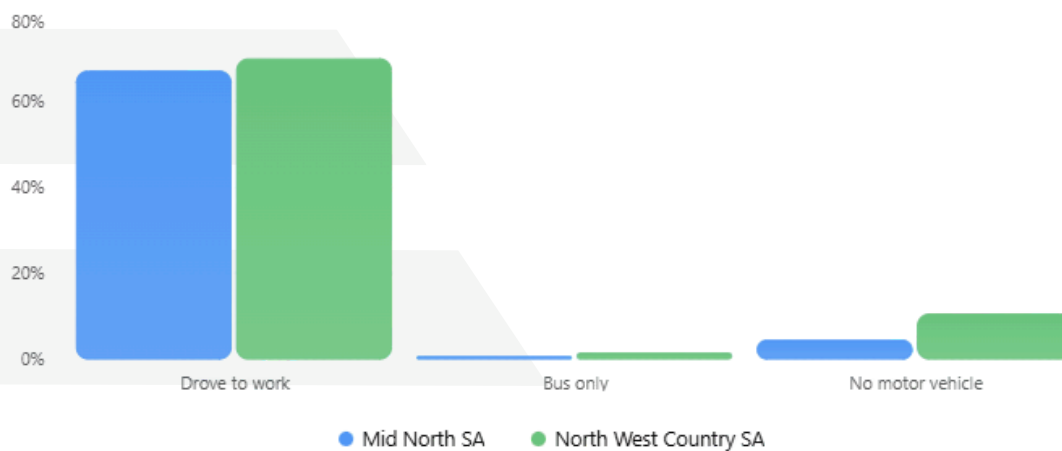


Figure 7: Project progression from evidence to implementation

The review also identified a varied network of scheduled, inter-town, long-distance, demand-responsive and community passenger services. Its presence does not necessarily mean that a person can reach a particular workplace at the required time, at an affordable cost, or under the service's eligibility rules. The research therefore identified practical employment accessibility rather than route or service presence alone as the key question. Existing datasets describe population, employment activity, commuting and services, but do not provide an integrated measure of whether particular workers can reach suitable jobs. Employment counts were used to identify concentrations of activity; they should not be read as counts of available vacancies.

Stakeholder interviews and engagement

Qualitative interviews with 34 stakeholders brought operational knowledge into the research. Participants involved in transport, licensing, employment, training and regional service delivery helped explain how barriers arise across an individual's pathway into work.

Obtaining a licence may depend on several supports working together: affordable instruction, supervised-driving hours, access to a suitable vehicle and timely testing. Describing the limits on expanding a supervised-driving programme, one stakeholder said:

“We would need another team of volunteers... because there's just so many people that need to get their logbook hours. It's just a huge barrier that we know regionally.”

— **Stakeholder ET-01**

Licence retention and reinstatement present different challenges, including fines, legal processes and the risk that losing a licence may disrupt work or training. One stakeholder described an apprentice whose car-pooling arrangement stopped working after a change of worksite:

“One apprentice ... he lost his licence. He was actually carpooling with someone else, and then he got put onto another site and the guy that he was carpooling with wasn't on that site. So, then he couldn't get to work.”

— **Stakeholder EI-01**

Likewise, the existence of a transport service does not establish that it is suitable for employment. As another participant observed:

“They can be good. But you can't necessarily rely on them to get to school on time, or work on time, or if you've got set appointments.”

— **Stakeholder CS-01**

Stakeholder engagement also identified considerable existing activity across the regions. However, assistance is spread across organisations with different responsibilities and eligibility rules. A community-transport stakeholder described the difficulty of navigating multiple programmes:

“A lot of these programs, whilst we may have quite a few different programs, they all have their own eligibility... where people are not eligible for them, where it's not seamless... So not one size fits everybody.”

— **Stakeholder CT-01**

Clear information, effective referrals and sustained coordination therefore emerged as practical requirements for making better use of existing resources.

Community Survey

The online Community Survey (voluntary) gathered direct evidence from adults whose employment circumstances made transport access particularly relevant. Following quality screening, 233 responses were retained for descriptive analysis. The questionnaire examined employment, passenger and community transport, commuting, driver licensing, vehicle access, affordability and respondents' views on possible solutions.

The survey used targeted eligibility screening to recruit participants relevant to the study objectives. Eligible respondents were aged 18 years or over, resided within the study area, and reported that transport, mobility or driver-licensing issues affected their own, or their own ability, or that of their 15–17-year-old child or dependent, to access work, training, interviews or other important activities.

Yet among the 160 respondents who indicated that they would use on-demand shared transport, 81.2% said they would pay no more than \$15 per trip for the specified 50-kilometre work journey. This highlights the need to consider affordability alongside operating costs when developing a service.

The strongest overall finding was the diversity and overlap of barriers. 17.6% experienced all three of the structural constraints examined: no full and valid licence, no private vehicle access for commuting and no public transport within a 15-minute walk of home. Among respondents experiencing one of these constraints, 77.8% said transport limited access to better-matched jobs; this rose to 92.7% among those experiencing all three. When asked to identify the single solution that would make the biggest difference, respondents most frequently selected improved public or community transport (25.0%) or private vehicle access (24.1%), but no option was preferred by a majority, see figure 7.

Employment impacts increase as mobility constraints accumulate

Respondents reporting that transport limited access to better-matched employment opportunities.

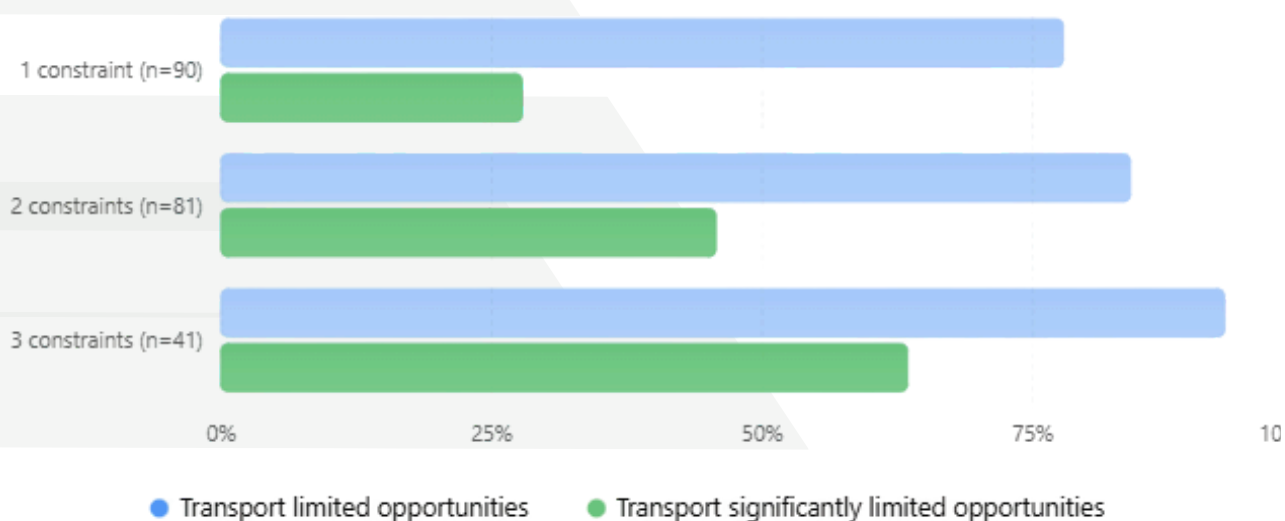


Figure 8: Number of major mobility constraints experienced by respondents

Co-design and regional consultation

The Stage 1 findings were organised into six intervention pathways: driver licence attainment; licence retention and reinstatement; vehicle access; passenger transport; remote work and digital participation; and system coordination and referral. These pathways structured the project's co-design work while leaving room for regional participants to propose other practical responses.

A regional workshop was held at the South Augusta Football Club in Port Augusta on 6 July 2026. It brought together 30 participants from 25 organisations, including State and Local Government, employment service providers, TAFE SA and regional non-government organisations. Over five hours and three facilitated co-design rounds, participants used the research and their operational experience to move from identified barriers to potential interventions.



Figure 9: Co-design workshop - Port Augusta, 6 July 2026

Figure 10: Co-design workshop, photo 2 - Port Augusta, 6 July 2026



The workshop generated 25 concepts across the six pathways. They included driver-training information and support, a regional driving academy, third-party testing, fines and licence-retention measures, fuel and vehicle assistance, employment-focused passenger transport, digital employment access and improved coordination of existing resources. Follow-up discussions refined the proposals, and related concepts were consolidated into 23 distinct opportunities.

An initial shortlist of eight priorities was then examined for immediate workforce impact, feasibility and potential strategic champions.

The subsequent assessment considered practicality, affordability, sustainability, scalability, implementation readiness, cross-agency collaboration and complexity. This process established an important distinction: an intervention may be valuable but still require policy decisions, regulatory assessment, funding or delivery partnerships before it can be tested.

Pilot development, implementation and learning

The table below provides an update on the eight pilot projects, outlining their progress, partner engagement and implementation status at the Interim Report stage.

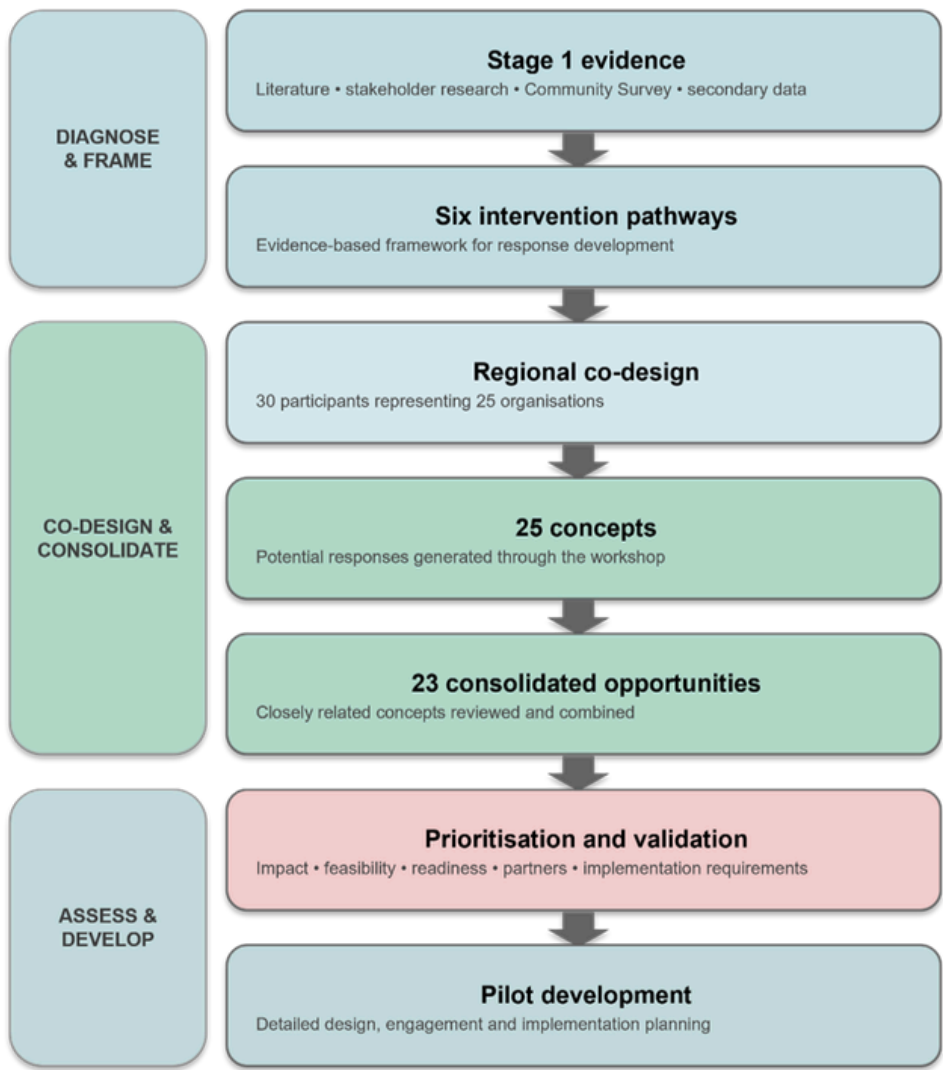
#	Pilot name	Intention
1	Regional Driver Training Directory	Develop a simple web directory that gives learners and referral organisations one place to find accredited instructors, mentor programs, learner supports, testing and licensing resources, and relevant contacts.
2	Regional Driving Academy Feasibility Study	Test a supported driver training approach for eligible unemployed and underemployed people in the Mid North and North West Country regions, while establishing referral pathways and an evaluation framework.
3	Assessing Regional Expansion of On the Right Track	Work with DIT to assess whether the existing model can extend to one centre in each project region, needs modification, or has elements that could strengthen other programs.
4	Accredited Third-Party Learner Testing	Work with TAFE SA and DIT to determine the scope, requirements and implementation pathway for additional accredited regional testing capacity.
5	Enhanced Work and Development Permit Scheme	Plan a small regional trial using existing programs and services to improve access to the scheme for up to 30 participants across two or three groups.
6	Point-to-Point Employment Transport	Map jobseeker locations against existing community transport and bus routes, then identify practical transport gaps and first and last mile opportunities that can be addressed within available fleet, funding and driver capacity to connect jobseekers with training, employment support and assistance services through employment service providers.
7	Licence Retention and Reinstatement Programme for Apprentices	Progress a safe-driving induction for apprentices, subject to funding and implementation arrangements. Separately, explore the issue of suspended learner drivers with DIT. The proposed restricted employment-linked licence component is not being pursued.

Table 1: Evaluation Pilot Projects Summary Table

Pilot development, implementation and learning

Spencer Gulf Jobs Platform enhancement was originally included in the list of proposed pilots but has since been withdrawn from the current pilot program. Adding remote and work-from-home job tags is not recommended for implementation at this stage because the cost is disproportionate to the likely benefit, and the tags could cause confusion for the target group. The project team will provide further recommendations if a future regional platform upgrade offers a practical way to add this function.

The implementation framework presented below describes the methodology and workflow that will guide the project, including the consultation and research activities undertaken at each stage. It incorporates the seven remaining pilot projects (following the withdrawal of one pilot) and illustrates how evidence and insights generated through the pilots will contribute to the development of the final report's recommendations.



The pathway was iterative: opportunities were progressively refined through validation and engagement with potential partners.

Source: ACTA/AU Stage 1 research and Regional Co-design Workshop, 6 July 2026.

Figure 12: Evidence-to-pilot development pathway

The practical learning to date comes from developing and assessing these opportunities; the report does not yet establish their delivery outcomes. The work has shown that each proposal needs a defined group of users, a clear delivery owner, workable partner arrangements and an understanding of its funding, operational and regulatory dependencies. Some opportunities may be tested within the remaining project period. For others, establishing feasibility and a credible pathway to delivery will be the immediate outcome.

Monitoring and evaluation are being built into each opportunity in proportion to its scale and maturity. Where practicable, the project will record the initial mobility barrier, assistance delivered, immediate mobility outcome, workforce outcome and resources required. This will help distinguish activity such as trips provided, referrals made or lessons delivered, from whether a barrier was resolved and whether access to employment improved. Evidence from implementation will also be used to verify and refine the project's Data Requirements Register ahead of the Final Report.

Across all activities, the central finding is consistent: workforce mobility depends on the combination of a person's circumstances, the location and timing of work, and the transport and licensing support available to them. The co-design and pilot phase tests how that evidence can be translated into responses that work in regional practice.

Interim conclusion

The central finding at this stage is that workforce mobility depends on several interconnected pathways, with barriers in one area often affecting others and the binding constraint differing between people, places and employment circumstances.

The practical implication is that responses need to identify what prevents a person or cohort from accessing employment and address that constraint through the most appropriate combination of existing resources, targeted intervention and system coordination. This may involve enabling licence attainment, preventing avoidable licence loss, improving vehicle access, providing targeted passenger transport, enabling remote job participation or connecting existing services more effectively.

The project has therefore moved from identifying the problem to developing and testing responses grounded in regional evidence and co-design. The next phase will determine which interventions can be implemented within the project period, what can be learned from their implementation and early outcomes, and which warrant continuation, adaptation or broader consideration. In parallel, remaining information requirements will continue to be verified and refined, strengthening the evidence available for the Final Report and subsequent policy and investment decisions. Ideas arising from these consultations that cannot be implemented within the project period will continue to be considered and, where practical, incorporated into the design or refinement of ongoing pilots, or developed into recommendations for future action.

Next steps and considerations

The project has moved from understanding the transport barriers facing regional communities to developing practical responses based on local evidence and co-design.

The next phase will focus on getting the pilot projects ready for delivery and understanding what works in practice. This will include finalising the scope, implementation plan and evaluation framework for each pilot, taking into account its readiness, delivery arrangements and any dependencies.

As the pilots progress, the project will look at their outcomes and delivery requirements, as well as the local conditions needed for them to continue beyond the trial. Importantly, the evaluation framework phase will consider not only whether an initiative works during the pilot, but whether it has a realistic pathway to continue, be adapted or be applied elsewhere.

The Final Report, due to the Management Group in late October 2026 and to the final Advisory Group meeting on 24 November 2026, will bring together the evidence collected throughout the project, the system mapping and the pilot findings. It will set out practical opportunities for future action and identify where broader changes to policy, funding, regulation or services may be needed.

Project reports, resources and supporting materials will also be available through [the project website](#) for stakeholders and communities who would like to explore the work in more detail.

The Final Report will acknowledge the project partners and funding organisations whose contributions have supported the work of this project since day one.

Get Involved

This project is designed to be collaborative. Its success depends on active participation from regional stakeholders across transport, employment, education, industry and community sectors.



SHARE LOCAL INSIGHTS

Provide data, operational knowledge and lived experience to strengthen system mapping and identify priority barriers.



SUPPORT PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

Assist in testing coordinated transport services, licensing pathways or referral mechanisms within your organisation or network.



CONTRIBUTE TO EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Provide feedback, service data and practical insights to help assess what works and where refinement is needed.



SUPPORT FUTURE SCALING

Engage in discussions on long-term commissioning, funding models and cross-sector integration beyond the pilot phase.

By participating, stakeholders can help shape a model that reflects regional realities and delivers tangible workforce outcomes.

For further information or to express interest in participating, please contact:

Project Lead

Australia Community Transport Association
Murray Coates
0439 548 203
ceo@communitytransportaustralia.org.au

Research Lead

Adelaide University
Akshay Vij
(08) 8302 0817
akshay.vij@adelaide.edu.au

Regional Lead

Workforce Australia - Local Jobs (Mid North)
Lisa Brock
0449 671 183
lisa@usgemployment.com.au

Workforce Australia - Local Jobs (North West Country)
Andrea Broadfoot
0459 340 001
andrea@localjobsprogram.com