



Australian Forest and Wood Products Industry Sector

Annual Update 2021

IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work

Prepared on behalf of the Forest Management and Harvesting Industry Reference Committee (IRC), Timber and Wood Processing IRC and Timber Building Solutions IRC for the Australian Industry Skills Committee (AISC).



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Purpose of the Annual Update

This 2021 Annual Update to the Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work 2019 – 2022 (Skills Forecast) presents additional industry intelligence from 2021 to build on previously reported information. This Annual Update from the Forest Management and Harvesting Industry Reference Committee (IRC), Timber and Wood Processing IRC and Timber Building Solutions IRC, includes intelligence based on national and industry data sources and input from key stakeholders. It proposes vocational education and training (VET) training package review and development work that the IRC deems necessary to meet the needs of industry. The Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) considers this information and includes commissioned work in the National Schedule¹.

In 2019, the AISC changed the requirements for the annual Skills Forecast. IRCs are now required to submit comprehensive Skills Forecasts once every three years, with abridged annual updates in the intervening two years. As IRCs submitted comprehensive Skills Forecasts in 2019, the next are due in 2022. This Annual Update should be read in conjunction with the Skills Forecast and previous Annual Updates.

This document is not intended to be representative of every issue encountered across all industry sectors; it identifies and addresses the challenges and opportunities that industry has determined as 'priority' for this stage of the schedule, and is a resource for industry and associated skills, learning and accreditation bodies seeking to act upon them.

Detailed information concerning industry skills needs across all sectors covered by the Forest Management and Harvesting IRC, Timber and Wood Processing IRC and Timber Building Solutions IRC, including information from previous Skills Forecasts and Annual Updates, can be found on the Skills Impact website: <https://www.skillsimpact.com.au/forest-management-and-harvesting/skills-forecast/>.

Method & Structure

This is an annual update to the comprehensive Skills Forecast submitted in 2019. IRCs are required to answer the questions in **Section A** to provide updates on issues such as industry skills and workforce development, and qualification utilisation. Answers provided build on and are not repetitive of information reported in previous Annual Updates.

IRC's are also permitted to propose additional training package development work projects to be included in the Proposed Schedule of Work. These will now be submitted separately to the Annual Updates.

Section B details the extensive, robust and ongoing industry consultation undertaken by IRC members and Skills Impact, including with rural, regional and remote stakeholders. In line with Skills Impact's values², this helps to ensure transparency and accountability in the process of industry research and Training Package development work.

This Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work is developed in line with:

- Standards for Training Packages 2012³;
- Training Package Products Policy⁴;
- Training Package Development and Endorsement Process Policy⁵.

¹ <https://www.aisc.net.au/content/national-schedule>

² <https://www.skillsimpact.com.au/about/>

³ <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/standards-training-packages-2012>

⁴ <https://docs.employment.gov.au/documents/training-package-products-policy>

⁵ <https://docs.employment.gov.au/documents/training-package-development-and-endorsement-process-policy-0>

Industry Reference Committee

The Forest Management and Harvesting IRC, Timber and Wood Processing IRC and Timber Building Solutions IRC are responsible for national training package qualifications relevant to forest and wood products.

Qualifications overseen by these IRCs are in the *FWP Forest and Wood Products Training Package*.

These IRCs are supported by the Skills Service Organisation, Skills Impact.

Forest Management and Harvesting IRC

Name	Organisation or Area of Expertise
Dallas Goldspink	Forest Industry Council
Tammy Auld	Timberlands Pacific
Bill Paul (Deputy Chair)	Vic Forests
Craig Hallam	ENSPEC
David White	Sustainable Timber Tasmania
Denise Campbell-Burns	CFMMEU Manufacturing Division
Suzanne McCavanagh	Forests Products Commission WA
Martin Crevatin	PF Olsen Australia
Vacant	Forestry Corp of NSW
Stacey Gardiner (Chair)	Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA)
Yvonne Webb	Industry Skills Advisory Council NT
Vacant	Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI)

Timber and Wood Processing IRC

Name	Organisation or Area of Expertise
Clarissa Brandt (Chair)	Timber Queensland
Denise Campbell-Burns	CFMMEU Manufacturing Division
Suzanne McCavanagh	Forests Products Commission WA
Maree McCaskill	Timber NSW
Victor Violante	Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA)
Vacant	Industry Expert - Timber Processing
Vacant	Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI)

Timber Building Solutions IRC

Name	Organisation or Area of Expertise
Alicia Oelkers (Chair)	Timber and Building Materials Association (TABMA)
Denise Campbell-Burns	CFMMEU Manufacturing Division
Kersten Gentle	Frame and Truss Manufacturers Association of Australia (FTMA)
Vacant	Engineered Wood Products Association of Australasia
Vacant	MGA Independent Retailers/Timber Merchants Association
Vacant	Industry Expert - Timber Processing

Executive Summary

The forest and wood products industries have been operating for the last two years in the most complex and challenging environments experienced in memory. The combination of challenges has made it impossible to accurately forecast the short and medium term future of each business and the industry as a whole. There has been an increase in local demand, and plans remain in place for substantial industry investment, particularly in Northern Australia. While trying to support growth, industry has also been dealing with some of the biggest challenges ever faced and have been under pressure to solve these problems rapidly to meet public demand and national interest.

Devastating bushfires in major production areas were followed by the impacts of COVID, which built on existing challenges from the changeable and uncertain policy conditions surrounding the environmental restrictions and credentials of operators working with this natural and renewable resource. Then the major export market was substantially closed to Australian products, apparently based on concerns about pests.

While this has been happening, the IRCs for Forest Management and Harvesting, Timber Building Solutions and Timber and Wood Products have been overseeing a substantial review of the *FWP Forest and Wood Products Training Package*, focused on the entry and higher level qualifications. This project continues with the willing assistance of industry, demonstrating a commitment to vocational education and training (VET) as employers encourage workers to volunteer their time to contribute to the project as subject matter experts, reviewers and validators. The results of this work will be submitted to the AISC during 2021.

In September 2020, the Skills Ministers and the AISC required all IRCs to review all qualifications and units of competency with low enrolments at registered training organisations (RTOs), with the aim to streamline training packages. Low enrolments are common in the FWP Training Package, as a result of multiple factors including: extensive use of informal training based on the training package; supporting highly specialised occupations that employs very few people but are critical to the continued operation of the industry; the lack of government-funded programs and the complexity of accessing that funding; difficulties for RTOs in getting access to qualified assessors; the lack of flexibility in training delivery and the impacts on business as a result; and access to RTOs with qualifications on scope.

Employers and the IRCs support the directions of the Skills Ministers to simplify the system, but are concerned that access to essential and specialist skills needed by industry could be diminished if the process is not undertaken using timeframes that work for industry, and when business needs can be more easily forecast.

The IRCs are continuing their work to streamline the FWP Training Package and propose a project for 2021-22 to review and consolidate the sawmilling and timber processing qualifications and units. The IRCs also propose a project to improve available training to assist in the event of bushfires and similar emergencies.

The IRCs would like to express their thanks to employers, employees, trainers and assessors who have contributed and continue to contribute during this difficult time for the industry.

Section A: Overview

Industry Developments

The on-going impacts of bushfires and COVID-19

The Australian forestry and wood products industry has been significantly disrupted over the last year, along with its supply chains.⁶ Approximately 129,200 hectares of plantation forests were in bushfire-affected areas (6.6% of the national area of plantations) and 1.9 million hectares of 'public native forest available for timber production' were also burnt (17% of the national area of such forest)⁷. At the time of writing, salvage logging is taking place in Victoria and NSW to harvest timber in the window of time available before the timber starts deteriorating and is unable to be used.

Forestry Corporation NSW reported that the business lost a quarter of its softwood plantation estate and that half of the native forest resource was impacted by the fires. In the short term, salvage logging up until February 2021 has seen timber harvested at double the normal rate. This has created a lot of economic stimulus in regional NSW and has provided necessary timber to sawmills in those areas.

In the medium to long term however, the impact of the fires will severely impact wood volumes.

Even prior to the fires ABARES were forecasting a shortfall in the volume of softwood sawlogs available to the domestic market. According to ABARES, if exports of softwood sawlogs remain at 2015–16 levels the total volume of sawlogs available to the domestic market is forecast to fall short of demand by 2.6 million cubic metres per year between 2045 and 2049. With continuing growth in demand for softwood sawlogs, ABARES estimates that the domestic log availability shortfall could increase to 3.4 million cubic metres per year between 2050 and 2054. To provide context to these figures an additional 200,000 to 250,000 hectares of new softwood plantations would be required by 2050 to meet an annual deficit of 3.4 million cubic metres per year. However, given the uncertainty around future softwood sawlog supply and log equivalent demand in 2050, it has been proposed that the required area could be as high as 490,000 hectares (Omega Consulting 2017)

The reason for this is that softwood plantation establishment under was negligible, first in comparison to hardwood plantation establishment during the 1990's and 2000's and then since the collapse of the MIS scheme in 2009.

Simply put, softwood resource establishment has not grown at a rate required by industry and dependent communities partly as it has been in competition with plantation hardwood eucalypt establishment.

Uncertainties over the extent of bushfire damage to the forestry sector, and the potential duration and severity of the pandemic, mean that businesses are unable to forecast future revenue, with resulting employment insecurity. In May, AKD Softwoods, Australia's largest sawmilling company, stood down 51 workers in the town of Colac, Victoria. The company also has sawmills in Queensland and New South Wales, where 800 of its employees were placed on leave to prevent an oversupply of timber products. The business, alongside construction industry bodies, called for the Federal Government to introduce a housing stimulus package to prevent the decline of new house builds⁸.

In June, the Government responded by introducing the HomeBuilder incentive scheme that offers a grant of \$25,000 to eligible owner-occupiers (including first home buyers) to build a new house or substantially renovate their existing home. HomeBuilder was intended to stimulate the residential construction market and boost

⁶ ABC News (2020); *South Australia's Green Triangle trials forest fire detection system as Government surveillance is reduced*; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-02/forests-green-triangle-trials-forest-fire-detection-system/12832916>

⁷ J. Greenville, H. McGilvray, L.Y. Cao & J. Fell (2020); *Impact of COVID-19 on Australian agriculture, forestry and fisheries trade*; ABARES Research report, Canberra; p.21

⁸ ABC News (2020); *Australia's largest sawmill stands down workers as housing construction sector prepares for slow down*; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-07/coronavirus-causes-sawmill-worker-stand-downs/1222680>

demand for wood products and has now been extended to 31 March 2021 due to its success in doing so⁹. However, industry is still experiencing challenges leading to more downsizing; for example, in September, the operators of DTM Timber's Mundubbera sawmill were forced to make its 18 employees redundant due to the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions as well as difficulties replacing skilled staff¹⁰.

The limited time frame of the program in combination with supply side constraints, including a tight global market has put pressure on supply of saw timber to customers.

The Victorian industry is monitoring closely potential benefit from a series of initiatives from the Victorian Government including the record \$5.4 billion social housing commitment. Many of these projects are likely to be designated "strategic projects" under the Local Jobs First Act. This will mean that there is flexibility and discretion to mandate of local content and specify certain percentages of certain products.

It is likely that this will present opportunities for several sectors such as Frame and Truss and array of timber products and building materials sectors including LVL and plywood.

Longer-term, IBISWorld project that the industry will recover as the effects of COVID-19 become less severe¹¹. Revenue growth for the forestry and logging industry is expected to improve over the next five years and is forecast to reach \$5.4 billion in 2025-26. Timber prices are projected to rise, supporting revenue growth and higher profit margins as logging volumes increase. The industry's recovery is also projected to underpinned by steadily rising demand from downstream markets, particularly the residential building construction, log sawmilling, wood chipping, and timber resawing and dressing sectors.

Industry response to bushfire

A key concern for the IRCs relating to bushfires was feedback received that during the bushfire emergency, relevant supervisors appeared to lack knowledge and understanding of the expertise available to them from qualified forestry workers in relation to minimising risks injury, clearance work and establishing safe travel and buffer zones. Workers in relevant areas have significant knowledge of the environment, including the elements that are critical to fire control and safe navigation through the location. The IRCs believe that work could be undertaken with other IRCs, notably the Public Safety IRC and the Amenity Horticulture, Landscaping, and Conservation & Land Management IRC (potentially including the Animal Care & Management IRC in broader project).

One of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry recommendations was to align private and public firefighting brigades.¹² The Softwoods Working Group welcomes the recommendation to incorporate private forestry companies in as bushfire brigades. Companies like Hume Forests have significant resources of highly trainer and skilled personnel and heavy machinery.¹³ The group believes that by bringing private companies closer to the fire management system, the operational capacity of firefighting would improve across the board.

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management in their Inquiry into the 2019–20 Victorian fire season (phase 1) noted that the timber industry provides an important support capacity to fire management in Victorian forests with a skill set, knowledge base and operational experience in forest landscapes and that planning currently being undertaken by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning should be supported and continued to ensure the skills, knowledge and equipment of the industry remain accessible to land managers and fire agencies.

⁹ The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP (2020); *HomeBuilder success sees programme extended*; <https://ministers.treasury.gov.au/ministers/josh-frydenberg-2018/media-releases/homebuilder-success-sees-programme-extended>

¹⁰ ABC News (2020); *Mundubbera timber sawmill closes with 18 jobs to go as COVID-19 economic impact is felt in North Burnett*; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-04/sawmill-closure-sign-of-times-north-burnett/12628724>

¹¹ IBISWorld (2020); *Forestry and Logging in Australia: Australia Industry (ANZSIC) Report A0300*

¹² Timberbiz (2020); *Softwoods group wants stronger government and private forests bushfire partnerships*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/softwoods-group-wants-stronger-government-and-private-forests-bushfire-partnerships/>

¹³ Timberbiz (2020); *Softwoods group wants stronger government and private forests bushfire partnerships*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/softwoods-group-wants-stronger-government-and-private-forests-bushfire-partnerships/>

Bushfire recovery support and assistance from government

Victoria

The Victorian government has announced a major event review to assess the impacts of the bushfires and what action needs to be taken to ensure forests continue to be managed appropriately. The review is expected to take 6 months.¹⁴

Victoria's forest industry will be supported with the creation of a new State-owned nursery in East Gippsland which will help local forests and economies recover from the 2019-2020 bushfires. Establishment of the \$10 million Victorian Forest Nursery will increase the eucalypt seeding supply chain and create up to 30 new jobs, most of which will be ongoing. The program is part of the \$110 million investment in plantation timber.¹⁵

Also in Victoria, support from the State government is available for storage of salvaged timber. Eligible businesses can apply for grants of up to \$500,000 to support costs associated with storing timber above their usual volumes.¹⁶

New South Wales

The NSW government is implementing a \$140M Bushfire Industry Recovery Package to help forest industries impacted by bushfires.

Eden's South East Fibre Exports will receive \$2,249,679 from the Commonwealth Government "to replace fire-damaged, aged and obsolete high-voltage infrastructure to ensure electricity supply to all parts of the site is reliable".¹⁷ This is in addition to \$945,240 from the NSW Government for the power upgrade. Despite the impact of the fires, Eden has managed to export 785,000 tons of wood product in 2020, primarily salvaged plantation and native timber.¹⁸

The Tumut-based operations of AKD NSW will receive \$5.5 million to adopt the latest technology and equipment to ensure logs are cut more efficiently and effectively. The project will deliver an 8% increase in timber recovery, generating more timber from the scarce log resource.¹⁹ This is in addition to \$10 million for Project Corner received from the NSW Government.²⁰

Hyne & Son's manufacturing plant in Tumbarumba will receive \$3,508,474 to deliver better resource management practices through innovation, upgraded efficiencies and new technology to assist in offsetting an increase in manufacturing costs. ²¹ This is in addition to \$2,989,522 received from the NSW Government for the Tumbarumba Mill Optimisation Project.²²

The VISY Industries Australia Tumut Mill will receive \$3,103,177 to provide significant upgrades to various parts of the mill to maintain and secure commercial mill operations in the future. ²³ This is in addition to \$10 million received from the NSW Government to "secure the future of 1,200 manufacturing jobs".²⁴

The NSW Government is accelerating its tree planting program to 12.5 million new trees (planted by hand) each

¹⁴ The Hon Daniel Andrews – Premier (2020) – *Major event review for Victoria's Fire Impacted Forests Major Event Review For Victoria's Fire Impacted Forests | Premier of Victoria*

¹⁵ Victorian Government (2020); *New Nursery To Grow More Timber And Gippsland Jobs | Premier of Victoria*

¹⁶ Victorian Government (2020); *Bushfire Affected Timber To Be Salvaged For The Future | Premier of Victoria*

¹⁷ Timberbiz (2021); *Eden-Monaro forestry gets \$14m funding*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/eden-monaro-forestry-gets-14m-funding/>

¹⁸ Timberbiz (2020); *Eden back on its feet after bushfires exporting 785,000 tons*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/eden-back-on-its-feet-after-bushfires-exporting-785000-tons/>

¹⁹ Timberbiz (2021); *Eden-Monaro forestry gets \$14m funding*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/eden-monaro-forestry-gets-14m-funding/>

²⁰ NSW Government (2020); *Bushfire Industry Recovery Package Priority Projects*; <https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/Bushfire%20Industry%20Recovery%20Package%20Priority%20Projects%28Sector%20Development%20Grants%29.pdf>

²¹ Timberbiz (2021); *Eden-Monaro forestry gets \$14m funding*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/eden-monaro-forestry-gets-14m-funding/>

²² NSW Government (2020); *Bushfire Industry Recovery Package Priority Projects*; <https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/Bushfire%20Industry%20Recovery%20Package%20Priority%20Projects%28Sector%20Development%20Grants%29.pdf>

²³ Timberbiz (2021); *Eden-Monaro forestry gets \$14m funding*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/eden-monaro-forestry-gets-14m-funding/>

²⁴ NSW Government (2020); *Bushfire Industry Recovery Package Priority Projects*; <https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/Bushfire%20Industry%20Recovery%20Package%20Priority%20Projects%28Sector%20Development%20Grants%29.pdf>

year for eight years from 2021. Forestry Corp has expanded its nurseries to meet the increased demand. Private plantations are also increasing their planting for the next two years. This will facilitate recovery of the plantation estate.²⁵

With support of all levels of Government, Pentarch are establishing a briquette plant at the Allied Natural Wood Exports Eden which will produce around 8,000 tonnes of briquettes for domestic use by compressing and packaging wood processing residues. The new plant is planned to be operational by April 2021.²⁶

International trade

Australia exported \$614 million worth of logs and \$980 million worth of woodchips to China in 2018-19.²⁷ Exports are anticipated by IBISWorld to grow by 4% annually over the next five years as foreign demand recovers from the economic impacts of COVID-19. Exports are projected to reach \$680.3 million in 2025-26, accounting for 12.6% of industry revenue²⁸.

On 11 November 2020, Chinese customs notified Australian officials that imports of Victorian timber logs were suspended indefinitely after the pest known as bark beetle was detected in multiple shipments²⁹. Victorian whole log exports to China are valued at \$260m³⁰. This follows China's blocking of Queensland timber in October for the same reasons³¹. The China bans have been expanded to logs from Tasmania, South Australia, NSW and Western Australia.³²

In December 2020, the ban on timber products was extended to South Australia and Tasmania, having already impacted Victoria and Queensland. Tas exported \$64.1m worth of timber logs in 2019, \$44.2m to China³³. South Australia exported \$6.7m worth of timber logs in 2019, mostly to China³⁴

On December 23, China suspended the export of logs from Western Australia, again citing phytosanitary concerns.

Australia's log exports totalled 218 km³ in January 2021, down 9.5% on a year earlier as Chinese import bans continued to impact the trade. The result would have been even lower had it not been for shipments to India rising steeply in January³⁵.

In South Australia's Green Triangle region alone, the industry fears up to 1000 jobs could be lost³⁶ in 2021 if the trade ban is not resolved.

The industry is seeking to enhance fumigation and treatment processes whilst at the same time seeking new markets, including domestically.³⁷ Large exporting businesses face an uncertain period and, should the suspension continue into 2021, jobs in the harvesting and haulage sector, which have already been affected by

²⁵ Timberbiz (2020); NSW fast-tracks replanting softwood post bushfires; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/nsw-fast-tracks-replanting-softwood-post-bushfires/>

²⁶ Timber and Forestry E-News (2021); *Environmental benefits from briquettes*; <https://www.timberandforestrynews.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Issue-640-1.pdf>

²⁷ Timberbiz (2020); Australian \$1.6b timber exports to China in doubt; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/australian-timber-exports-to-china-in-doubt/>

²⁸ IBISWorld (2020); *Forestry and Logging in Australia: Australia Industry (ANZSIC) Report A0300*

²⁹ ABC News (2020); *Victorian timber log exports blocked from entering China due to bark beetle*; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-12/victorian-timber-logs-blocked-by-china-after-bark-beetle-found/12875066>

³⁰ Timberbiz (2020); *China confirms suspension of Victorian timber due to bark beetle*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/china-confirms-suspension-of-victorian-timber-due-to-bark-beetle/>

³¹ ABC News (2020); *Fears more trade bans to come as China halts imports of Australian timber, lobsters, barley*; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-03/china-broadens-trade-war-against-australian-imports/12841142>

³² Timberbiz (2021); *Queensland timber industry stung by China's bite*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/queensland-timber-industry-stung-by-chinas-bite/>

³³ Timberbiz (2020); *China paints a target on Australian forestry*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/china-paints-a-target-on-australian-forestry/>

³⁴ Timberbiz (2020); *China paints a target on Australian forestry*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/china-paints-a-target-on-australian-forestry/>

³⁵ Industry Edge (2021) *Australian Log exports hit hard by China ban – January data*

³⁶ Timberbiz (2020); *China paints a target on Australian forestry*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/china-paints-a-target-on-australian-forestry/>

³⁷ Timberbiz (2021); *Queensland timber industry stung by China's bite*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/queensland-timber-industry-stung-by-chinas-bite/>

the downturn in hardwood wood chips, are likely to be affected. An estimated 29 per cent of Australia's timber exports to China could be processed in Australia, but changes would need to be made to processing equipment.³⁸

Industry stakeholders have, however, suggested that a greater proportion of wood being available to local processors could present business and employment growth opportunities for smaller operators in areas such as the Green Triangle or Mount Gambier³⁹. Similarly, in Queensland, the industry is seeking to increase local processing and reduce unprocessed log exports.⁴⁰

Climate change

Federal Government has amended the ERF Water Rule to reduce the regulatory burden for new plantation forestry and farm forestry projects proposed under the Federal Government's Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF)⁴¹. The ERF (which has been renamed the Climate Solutions Fund) has eased its rules and will allow five regional forestry plantation hubs in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia to apply for funding to reduce carbon emissions. This will make it easier for the private sector to invest in new Australian forestry products, which will support regional jobs.

Challenges for Victoria's Forestry and Timber Industry

Industry remains vehemently opposed to the Victorian Government's policy to halve wood supply from public native forests from 2024 and shut down the industry by 2030.

Even the log supply volumes promised to be delivered in the Victorian Forestry Plan are under pressure due to uncertainty about outdated regulation in the form of the Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014 which the Government has promised to amend in response to litigation by opponents of the industry impacting supply.

Meanwhile despite the fact that the Victorian Forestry Plan is meant to ensure the future of Australian Paper, the largest private sector employer in Gippsland, there is growing scepticism about the viability of the transition plan's ability to deliver wood volumes to Maryvale post 2030.

The Federal and Victorian Governments have also agreed on a 'major event review' to examine the environmental protections of its Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs). It will assess the impacts of the 2019-20 bushfires, including on the forestry industry and biodiversity, and will recommend corrective actions to ensure the appropriate management of Victoria's forests. The Review is expected to take six months⁴².

Major hardware chain Bunnings announced that, from 30th June, it would no longer be accepting raw material input into their supply chain from VicForests⁴³. There has been widespread industry countering and calls to reverse the ban, including protests at Bunnings stores⁴⁴.

³⁸ ABC News (2020); Timber harvesting jobs lost in SA and Tasmania as China widens ban on Australian forest products; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2020-12-28/china-ban-causes-job-losses/13017450>

³⁹ ABC News (2020); *China's ban on Victorian timber exports could mean a boost for Green Triangle's processors*; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-13/timber-export-ban-boost-for-green-triangle-processors/12880024>; Timberbiz (2020); *China paints a target on Australian forestry*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/china-paints-a-target-on-australian-forestry/>; ABC News (2020); *Timber processor alarmed over 'massive amount' of softwood exported to China*; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-02/softwood-resource-exported-to-china-amid-log-supply-insecurity/12617994>

⁴⁰ Timberbiz (2021); *Queensland timber industry stung by China's bite*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/queensland-timber-industry-stung-by-chinas-bite/>

⁴¹ Australian Financial Review (2020); *Forestry plantations now eligible for ERF funding*

⁴² Mirage News (2020); *Major Event Review For Victoria's Fire Impacted Forests*; <https://www.miragenews.com/major-event-review-for-victoria-s-fire-impacted-forests/>

⁴³ ABC News (2020); *Bunnings stops selling native timber from state-owned VicForests after court ruling*; <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-01/bunnings-stops-selling-victorian-native-timber/12412328>

⁴⁴ Australian Forest Products Association (2020) Media Release

Opportunities and Challenges in Northern Australia

A recently completed “Northern forestry and forest products industry situational analysis” has found that there is an opportunity in sustainable local employment, including for Indigenous people and for this opportunity to be realised there is a requirement for training and skills development opportunities and integration with national training and skills recognition arrangements, for business development and management, through the entire forestry supply-chain to operator level.⁴⁵

The Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (CRCNA)⁴⁶ identifies key challenges facing the forestry and forest products sector:

- Limited infrastructure, which is a barrier to further developments;
- Climate variability, including the risk of cyclones causing catastrophic losses in the forestry industry;
- Workforce skills gaps, including silvicultural (forestry management) capabilities development needs;
- To support new developments, there is the need for a better understanding of commercial inventory of native forests across Northern Australia;
- There is a deficit of high-level policy, which creates uncertainty in potential investors; and
- On-going ambiguity over forest policies, which take account of diverse stakeholders such as native title holders, miners, pastoralists and government. Land managers and owners are impeded from expanding their operations without clear guidance.

The CRCNA also identifies opportunities for expanding the industry in Northern Australia:

- Economic development opportunities in Indigenous communities in forest management and in wood products manufacturing and supply (especially in East Arnhem Land, NT and Cape York, QLD)
- Development of commercial forestry plantations, including through mined land rehabilitation
- Investment in carbon sequestration schemes
- Collaborating with pastoralists on silvopastoral opportunities (forestry on grazing country).

The National Skills Commission and attracting new industry workers

The National Skills Commission (NSC) was created in 2019 when much of the national debate focused on skills gaps; but, with the onset of COVID-19, the focus shifted to managing skills surpluses and identifying training options for unemployed workers, especially young people, women and city-dwellers, who have been disproportionately affected.⁴⁷ The forest and wood products industry may be able to capitalise on the availability of people who have been displaced from their usual work and are seeking new opportunities.

As well as highlighting reskilling and upskilling options for improving the prospects of people already performing an industry role, the NSC are promoting ‘skills transferability’ to facilitate clearer pathways between roles in diverse industries that require similar capabilities. The IRCs note that skills transferability is an important objective that must be considered as complementary to the primary role of vocational education and training in enabling potential workers to reach competency and be job-ready. This contention recognises that specific skills are required for jobs in order to complete tasks safely and effectively.

⁴⁵ Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (2020); *Northern Forest Products Industry opportunities final report 2020*; p.18

⁴⁶ Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia (2020); *State of the North 2020*; p.30

⁴⁷ National Skills Commission (2020); *A snapshot in time: The Australian labour market and COVID-19*

Establishment of additional forestry hubs

Furthering an action of the National Forest Industries Plan, an additional 4 Regional Forestry Hubs were established in 2020. These are in addition to the 5 hubs established in 2019.

Each of the hubs is working with industry, state and local governments, and other key stakeholders to undertake strategic planning, technical assessments and analyses to support growth in the forest industries in their region.

The hubs established in 2020 were:

- Central West New South Wales
- Gippsland
- North Queensland
- South East Queensland

Each hub has begun to identify and progress priorities relevant to their region as outlined below:

North East New South Wales

The North East NSW Forestry Hub commenced operations in April 2019. The priorities identified by the hub are to advance:

- industry communications
- resilient forests, ensuring plantation and native wood production forest estates respond to climate change
- residues utilisation, including bioenergy, biochar and fertilisers
- carbon sequestration
- First Nations partnerships
- supply, including from farm forestry, plantations, private native forestry
- infrastructure, including roads and bridges
- workforce skills.

Central West New South Wales

The Central West NSW Regional Forestry Hub commenced operations in May 2020. The priorities for the hub are:

- defining the boundaries of the region
- completing strategic assessments of factors impacting forest growing and processing sectors in the region
- undertaking detailed assessments of the priority issues to determine technical issues, needs and opportunities for progress of the industry into the future
- consulting with industry in the hub.

South West Slopes New South Wales

The South West Slopes NSW Regional Forestry Hub commenced operations in September 2019. The priorities identified by the hub in its Strategic Plan are:

- community engagement
- people and skills
- adequate infrastructure
- resource security.

Gippsland

The Gippsland Forestry Hub commenced operations in May 2020. The priorities for the hub are:

- facilitating a stakeholder forum on growing the future of the industry
- exploring value adding opportunities
- defining the boundaries of the region
- exploring opportunities for expanding wood supply, including from farm, private native, and Indigenous forestry
- developing a skills needs framework and conducting a skills audit
- facilitating innovation and regional research
- building stakeholder communications.

Green Triangle

The Green Triangle Forest Industries Hub commenced operations in April 2019. The priorities for the hub include to:

- increase the size of the plantation estate in the region and its productivity
- encourage local mills to invest in greater capacity and efficiency
- produce bioenergy, particularly for heat plant and kilns
- build workforce capacity
- continue to improve workplace safety
- improve community awareness of the benefits of forestry, such as renewability, carbon capture, recreational benefits and innovative wood uses
- support carbon footprint reductions and encourage forestry industry carbon sequestration and pricing schemes.

North Queensland

The North Queensland Regional Forestry Hub commenced operations in mid-2020. The priorities for the hub are being developed.

South East Queensland

The South East Queensland commenced operations in mid-2020. The priorities for the hub are being developed.

South West Western Australia

The South West Timber Hub commenced operations in May 2019. The priorities for the hub are to:

- improve investment returns
- encourage new plantation development on farms
- explore business models for new product manufacturing, and wood waste use
- build opportunities for enterprises, employment and land management with the Noongar people
- increase research and its application to build excellence.

Tasmania

The North and North West Tasmania Regional Forestry Hub commenced operations in mid-2019. Its host entity is the Tasmanian Forests and Forest Products Network. In June 2020, additional funding was provided for the hub recognising that additional work was needed to adequately accommodate industry linkages across the rest of the state. The focus for the North and North West Tasmania elements of the hub are:

- land access and land use policy for plantation forest investment
- supply chain and Infrastructure
- climate change and carbon farming
- culture, skills and training.

New Timber Manufacturing Plants and investment

Changes to the way timber is produced and new timber products being developed has led to several investments in new and upgraded facilities, machinery and equipment across the timber and wood products manufacturing sector.

A new timber manufacturing plant will be built in Tarpeena SA, by Timberlink which will deliver 50 new jobs to the Green Triangle. The plant will produce both cross laminated timber (CLT) and Glue laminated timber (GLT) for commercial building construction. Timberlink's expectation is to primarily service the Australian market to replace imports from Europe.⁴⁸

Hyne timber has commissioned a \$23 million glue laminated timber plant in Maryborough which will create 40 jobs once fully operational and will deliver a 400% expansion on existing capability.

Fenning Timbers in Bairnsdale Victoria has invested \$5 million in a finger jointing machine.

Parkside Timber is investing \$14 million to upgrade their Manjimup facility, creating 65 new full-time jobs. The upgrade will introduce new timber processing technology including two high-speed scanning and docking lines, an auto stacking line, finger joining line, large end section joinery planning line and a 56-pocket bin sorter.⁴⁹

Researchers at the Salisbury Research facility have been working to deliver and validate technologies that transform low-value forest resources and sub-optimum quality logs into high value construction and aesthetic products suitable for Australian and international markets. Uses include bridge girders, power cross arms and large dimension posts and beams.⁵⁰

Global software giant Atlassian plans to build the world's tallest hybrid timber tower for its new headquarters at the southern end of Sydney's CBD. The 40-storey building next to Central Station will become the centrepiece of the state government-planned tech hub, which will eventually span from Central to near Redfern station in Sydney.

⁴⁸ ABC News (2020): Timberlink *Australia to build first timber facility of its kind in the country at Tarpeena*

⁴⁹ Timberbiz (2021); *Timber industry drives employment boost in Manjimup*; <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/timber-industry-drives-employment-boost-in-manjimup/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.timberandforestrynews.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Issue-614.pdf>

Five-storey Queensland building up in 26 days

The latest five-storey mass engineered timber building to be constructed in Queensland topped out this week as the final prefabricated Glue Laminated Timber beams and Cross Laminated Timber panels were craned into position.

The NIOA facility extension in the Brisbane Airport precinct is the first mass timber structure of its kind for builder Besix Watpac, and site manager Ben Rowlands has nothing but praise.

“We forecast the structure to take 36 days for completion, but we are on track to be complete in just 26 days in total,” he said.

“Part of the construction brief from the client was to ensure we do not hinder the day-to-day operations of the busy NIOA facility so the quicker we can construct and cleaner we can keep the site, the better.

“Using all prefabricated engineered timber for the structure means we have minimal waste on site, less trades on site, faster, quieter construction and a far cleaner site than what we see with a traditional construction project.

While the load bearing ground floor is made of traditional concrete, the four storey walls, floors, roof, stairwell and lift shaft are all Cross Laminated Timber supplied by XLam, while the columns and bracing are all Glue Laminated Timber supplied by Hyne Timber.

The timber is all Australian grown and certified plantation pine. The volume of timber used in this building will grow back within Australian plantation in just 45 minutes.



Source: Timberbiz 15 February 2021

There have been several new commitments and investments in new technology for the development of traditional and engineered timber products. Over the last few years, the uptake and use of cross-laminated and glue-laminated timber into building projects has increased and is highly regarded as an innovative and sustainable building material.

Qualifications in these areas, including the Certificates II and III in Timber Manufactured Products and Certificates II and III in Wood Panel Products have not been reviewed in their entirety for over a decade and many units of the qualifications do not reflect the newest manufacturing processes and products.

This sector of the industry is impacted the thin market issue facing RTOs and the industry with only between 1 and 2 RTOs servicing the whole industry sector that employs 40,000 people and is regionally dispersed.

Qualification	No of RTOs on scope
Certificate II Timber Manufactured Products	2
Certificate II Timber Manufactured Products	2
Certificate II Wood Panel Products*	1
Certificate III Wood Panel Products*	1

**These qualifications have been deleted due to zero enrolments.*

The Certificates II and III in Wood Panel Products were deleted through the streamlining process in December 2020. Whilst the Timber Building Solutions IRC acknowledges that there were no enrolments in the qualifications, it should be recognised that with only one RTO with the qualifications on scope it is understandable that there are low enrolments in these areas.

The IRC maintain that lack of RTOs who are able to market and provide viable, flexible and qualified services to the industry is the main reason for low enrolments in the timber manufacturing areas of the FWP Training Package.

The IRC would like to ensure that qualifications in the timber manufactured products areas are available and reflect today's technology for the manufacture of:

- Plywood
- Cross-laminated timber (CLT)
- Glue-Laminated timber (GLT)
- Other engineered wood products

TAFE Gippsland Timber Training Unit manager wins Australia's Teacher/Trainer of the Year Award

Kevin Nunn, TAFE Gippsland Timber Training Unit Manager, won Australia's 2020 Teacher/Trainer of the Year award .

“I'm very happy that the work we do in training existing and future timber workers and emergency response staff to keep our community safe and the local timber industry vibrant has been recognised.”

VET Qualifications & Employment Outcomes

For the year 2020, it remains the case that most people who undertake qualifications from the FWP Training Package are already employed in the industry.

Table 1: FWP qualification enrolment level by employment status, 2015-2019

Qualification Level	Employed	Unemployed	Not in the labour force
Certificate I	0	0	0
Certificate II	4103	391	679
Certificate III	5943	324	65
Certificate IV	306	0	0
Diploma	123	0	0
Advanced Diploma	2	0	0

Source: NCVET VOCSTATS, TVA program enrolments 2015-2019

The Forest and Wood Products Industry is not an industry that relies on the VET system to produce its workforce for it. It relies on the VET system to skill and upskill its recently employed or existing workforce. It needs training to:

- keep the workforce safe in what is inherently dangerous work
- for the workforce to be innovative in order to develop new, exciting and sustainable products
- optimise operations and functions in all areas so as to use its resources wisely
- to instil the above values in young people joining the industry.

The task of attracting and employing a workforce for the industry is complex and multi-layered, and therefore has been identified in all 9 Regional Forestry Hubs strategic areas of focus. Access to training is critical to progress these strategies.

But unlike other industries such as construction and aged care, employers in the forest and wood products industry do not have the luxury of choosing from a large number of already qualified VET graduates.

In many cases a student is employed and then placed into a training program within the first 12 months. In other cases, the students are existing employees who are undertaking training to maintain compliance or to upskill.

Training for Compliance

Compliance in forestry operations is a significant driver for use of parts of the FWP Training Package. This will in most cases be against individual units of competency that describe high risk and essential skills such as machinery operations, tree-felling and environmental care.

These requirements are specified to ensure that the workforce is:

- Undertaking dangerous forestry tasks safely.
- Meeting environmental requirements.
- Ensuring that contracted businesses have appropriately qualified operators to undertake the work.

They are put in place and committed to via Forest Managers and through the industry program “Safe and Skilled” developed by the Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) and the Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA).

Contracted harvesting crews are generally small to medium businesses employing between 5 and 30 people.

Within this small but critical industry sector, the values and benefits of VET are realised:

- Employees have *transferable* skills if they choose to move between employers.
- Skills held by employees are *recognisable* by managers and employers.
- All parties know that the skill outcomes are *consistent* because they are based on an agreed standard (a unit of competency).

Trades – Saw Technicians and Wood Machinists

Employers require Saw Technicians (Saw Doctors) and Wood Machinists to obtain qualifications for these 2 trades in the industry.

The impact of thin training markets is demonstrated here through there being only one RTO delivering the Wood Machinist qualification and 2 RTOs delivering the Saw Technician qualification.

Due to the small number of students undertaking these qualifications, RTOs use block release training to deliver. Students fly from all states to undertake the training.

Saw Technicians are few in number but critical to the operation of the industry. There may be only one or two in a sawmill of 50 staff, but they ensure that sawmilling machinery is running efficiently, effectively and with exact precision. Without a Saw Technicians, these sawmills would not be able to produce the 4.0 million cubic metres of sawn timber it produces each year, the majority of which is used in the domestic housing market. There needs to be greater policy consideration given to the issue of whether industry skills standards should be maintained, updated and available for use even though there will always be few enrolments in the formal VET system.

Trades in qualifications from other Training Packages

Forestry and timber businesses employ apprentices outside of those included in the FWP Training Package including mechanics, electricians and maintenance engineers.

Funding Availability

Within the *Forest Growing and Management* and *Harvesting and Haulage* qualifications, it remains the case that the majority of training is not government funded but paid for by employers on a fee-for-service basis.

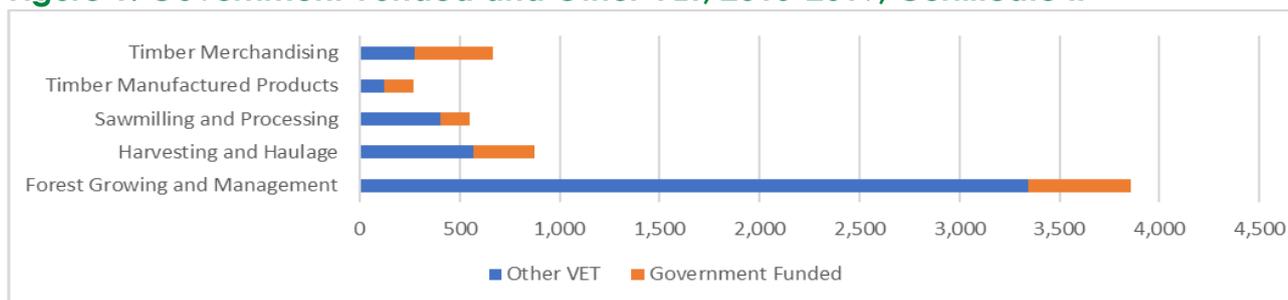
Employers have cited the reasons for this being:

- Learners not being eligible for government subsidised training places.
- Employers believing accessing the government subsidies is too complicated.
- Employers being unable to access the funding in the 3 months timeframe allowed (enrolling a student in a qualification before their probation period ends to gain the benefit from pay roll tax concessions is often not attractive to employers).
- Employers prefer accessing skill sets to make a worker job ready, where a full qualification is not necessary.

RTOs have reported that government subsidies have decreased in real terms from 2006 onwards, impacting their viability to deliver government funded training. This is addition to other impacts of servicing a thin training market, such as numbers of potential students in one place, travel time, access to equipment and pressure on resources.

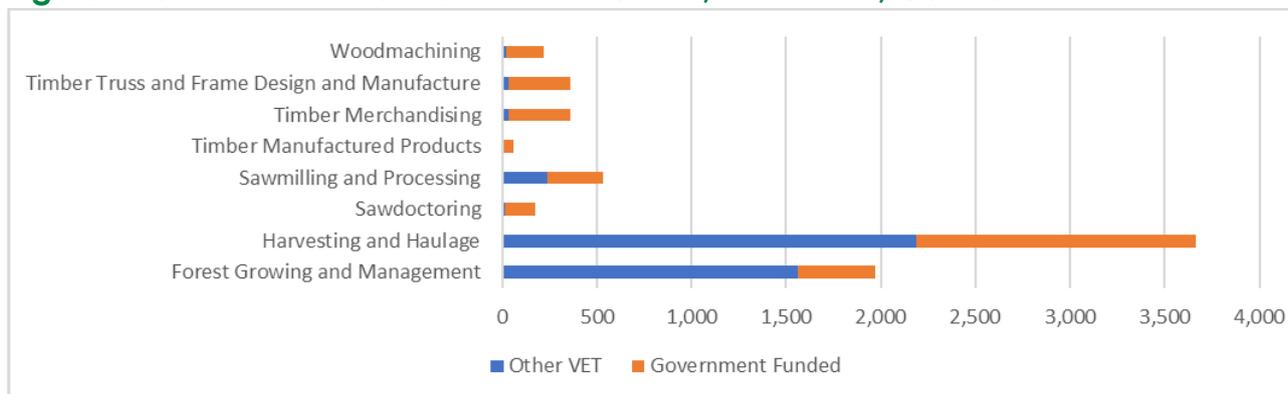
This is not so much the case in the *Timber Merchandising* sector of the FWP Training Package. In this sector, which is less regionally based than forestry operations, there is enough activity, employment and businesses to sustain a model of entry level traineeships facilitated by a Group Training Provider.

Figure 1: Government-Funded and Other VET, 2015-2019, Certificate II



Source: NCVET VOCSTATS, TVA program enrolments 2015-2019

Figure 2: Government-Funded and Other VET, 2015-2019, Certificate III



Source: NCVET VOCSTATS, TVA program enrolments 2015-2019

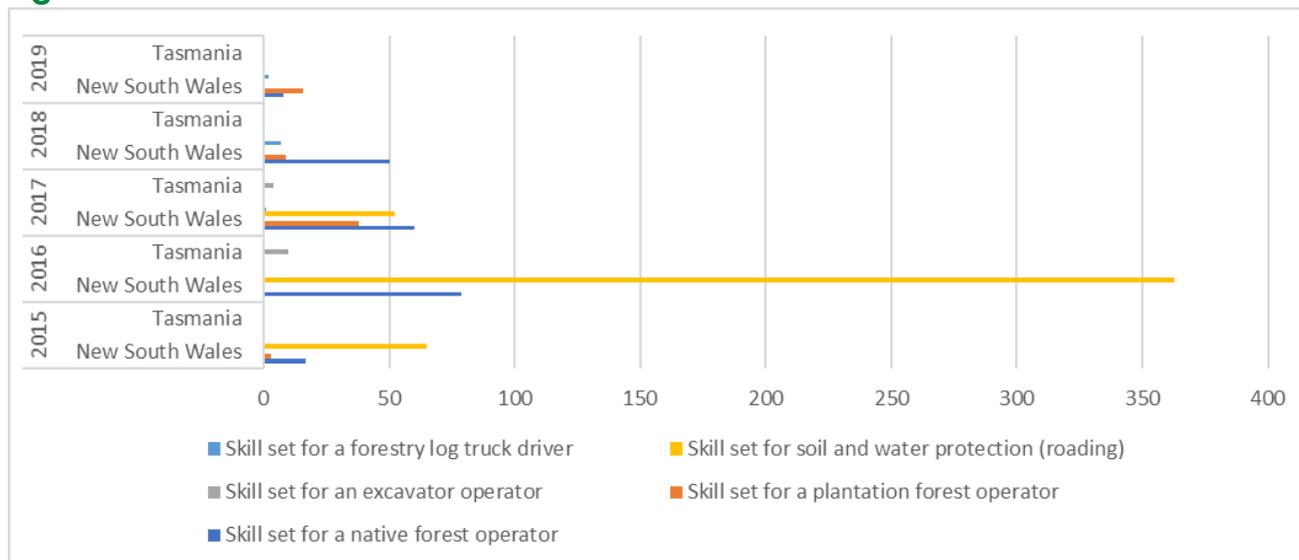
Skill set enrolments

Overall, the Forest and Wood Products Training Package is yet to see substantial enrolments in skill sets, despite industry support for them. The IRC notes that this is evidence that other factors than industry demand/need play a role in enrolments, specifically in this case the lack of appropriate funding mechanisms and consequent impacts on potential RTO delivery.

An exception to this has been in NSW with enrolments in the following skill sets:

- Skill set for a native forest operator
- Skill set for a plantation forest operator
- Skill set for soil and water protection (roading).

Figure 3: Skill set enrolments



Source: NCVET VOCSTATS, skill set enrolments 2015-2019

Other Training Used by Employers

The 2020 Annual update reported that 40% of 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' use unaccredited training, which is almost double the percentage of employers who use accredited training which is 21.5%. This continues to be the case; however, the IRC and industry have undertaken research to examine this further.

Industry cite the reasons for not pursuing nationally accredited training as:

- Belief that in-house training is good enough
- Perceived difficulty in navigating the VET system
- Views that national competencies are not specific to the needs of the business
- Too costly to have employees off the job to undertake training
- RTOs are unable to offer the flexibility that businesses require
- RTOs cannot attract and maintain assessors with the high degree of technical knowledge required for some areas ⁵¹.

Use of FWP the Training Package informally

Last year's Annual Update identified that there were concerns that the increased TAE requirements and ASQA policies were stymieing the long-used model of RTOs partnering with workplace trainers and assessors to conduct nationally recognised training.

Clearly this is not just an issue in the FWP and PPM industries, with the issues recently outlined in a paper entitled "Building Capability and Quality in VET Teaching: Opportunities and Challenges" by NCVET stating:

"There is low support for... adding to the entry requirements to VET teaching due to the deleterious effects of the recent TAE upgrade on the VET teaching workforce, with some respondents reporting that it may have contributed to teachers exiting the system."⁵²

⁵¹ ForestWorks, (2020) *Improving Enrolments project*, (unpublished)

⁵² Building capability and quality in VET teaching: opportunities and challenges Josie Misko National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2020, available online @

https://www.ncver.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0033/9662271/Building_capability_and_quality_in_VET_teaching_opportunities_and_challenges.pdf

Consultations and interviews with industry and RTOs have since shown that this is now a mass exodus of workplace trainers and assessors within enterprises. TAFE NSW reported that they lost 15 workplace trainers and assessors that they had arrangements with and that NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) had lost over 40 of their workplace trainers and assessors through individuals electing not to undergo and then maintain additional requirements under the TAE.

The issue with the TAE qualification is around the requirements for assessors to hold *TAELLN411 Address adult language, literacy and numeracy skills* and *TAEASS502 Design and develop assessment tools*. In the model used in the past, the RTO would provide this expertise and support. The assessor was able to focus on passing on skills and knowledge related to the technical work function.

Practically how this works is that the RTO comes into the business to set up the program, and then visits regularly to provide additional learning, support and formalise assessments. In many cases most of the employees training program would be on-the-job, with some learning, mostly soft skills such as communication and teamwork, happening off-site.

The benefits of the FWP Training Package being delivered by through a partnership between employers, workplace trainers and assessors and overseen and facilitated by an RTO are:

- it allows the RTO to visit periodically – in a thin market the RTO cannot get to all the places they need to go because of the geographically dispersed nature of the industry
- it allows RTOs and employers to use the enterprises' own equipment
- it accommodates and addresses the small number and low turnover of people employed in the industry, resulting in a lack of scale
- allows for specific training relevant to the worksite
- encourages and provides a framework for industry experts to share their knowledge
- it reduces the time required for the employee to be off-site.

This model does have risks however:

- the learners and the employers need to feel that they are learning and developing skills. If the RTO is seen to be only turning up to “tick and flick” – the learner and the employer will start to question the value of the training.
- workplace trainers and assessors need to ensure that their skills are up to the task. Whilst the IRCs and industry believe that the increased requirements of the TAE are overly onerous, it is also acknowledged that there is a need for trainers and assessors to possess skills in identifying language, literacy and numeracy issues and development of assessment tools, however responsibility for undertaking these should rest with the RTO overall.

Use of FWP the Training Package for areas other than training

Through interviews conducted with businesses for the Skills Impact/ForestWorks Improving Enrolments project, it has been identified that there are a number of businesses who use the national units of competency to inform and align their Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). This was identified particularly in the sawmilling and wood processing sector and at least one frame and truss manufacturer⁵³.

Many enterprises also use FWP units of competency as skills standards for purposes other than training. Units of competency, or skills standards as they are sometimes referred to, are also used as the basis of determining individual career pathways, workforce development plans, and are often reflected in position descriptions.

Areas of non-accredited and informal training that is reflected in the FWP Training Package

Industry are currently accessing and using informal or non-accredited training in the following areas:

- Forest certification - Australian forests and forest products are required to be certified to international standards. There are 810 Responsible Wood and FSC Chain of Custody Certificates current in Australia along with 66 Sustainable Forest Management and related certificates. Multiple staff usually

⁵³ ForestWorks, (2020) *Improving Enrolments project*, (unpublished)

hold responsibility for developing and implementing the system. It is a critical requirement of the standards that there is adequate training of those responsible for administering and implementing the requirements of them and there is obviously a wealth of expertise within industry. Whilst there are units of competency for these areas in the FWP Training Package, there are no RTOs who specialise in this area.

- Specialist equipment – the advancement in technology in the sawmilling, wood processing and engineered wood products sector often is operationalised by the introduction of extremely large pieces of equipment such as saws, CNC equipment and other machinery and manufacturing systems. Training for this machinery is normally provided by the equipment supplier, often an overseas based worldwide company, by trainers that will fly in to provide training, or via virtual modes. Whilst these operations are reflected in the FWP Training Package, the training is not mapped to units of competency, or delivered by or in partnership with an RTO.

Areas of non-accredited training that is not reflected in the TP

Industry enterprises continue to seek out and utilise non-accredited training in the following areas:

- Leadership and management
- Production efficiency such as and including lean manufacturing
- Safety
- Mental health first aid

During 2020 industry came together to address mental health concerns raised as part of the IRC consultations into the impact of COVID19 on businesses and identified areas of need. As a result, ForestWorks supported the industry to attend two online Mental Health First Aid seminars attracting more than 100 attendees.

Enrolment Levels

Table 2: Forest Growing and Management Enrolments

Forest Growing and Management	Enrolments				RTOs approved to deliver (Feb '21)	RTO approved to deliver change since 2020
	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Certificate I in Forest and Forest Products	0	0	0	0	1	Same
Certificate II	1006	551	685	647	11	Down 1
Certificate III	475	317	260	294	14	Down 3
Certificate IV (Forest Operations)	40	47	36	46	5	Same
Diploma of Forest and Forest Products	36	19	35	28	4	Down 1
Advanced Diploma (Forest Industry Sustainability)	0	0	2	0	1	Same

Source: NCVET VOCSTATS, TVA program enrolments 2015-2019

Forest Growing and Management qualifications at Certificate levels II and III have had consistent enrolments over the past 5 years. There has been an increase in the enrolment levels for the Certificate IV in Forestry Operations.

All of the above qualifications are being reviewed in 2020 as part of the “Entry level forestry skills” and “High level forestry skills” projects.

The Forest Management and Harvesting IRC is monitoring closely the decrease in the number of RTOs with qualifications on scope in this sector.

Table 3: Harvesting and Haulage Enrolments

Harvesting and Haulage	Enrolments				RTOs approved to deliver (Feb '21)	RTO approved to deliver change since 2020
	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Certificate II	238	102	68	57	9	Down 2
Certificate III	1038	478	553	547	13	Down 3

Source: NCVER VOCSTATS, TVA program enrolments 2015-2019

Harvesting and Haulage qualifications have seen a decrease in enrolments at the Certificate II level, but a sustained increase in enrolments at Certificate III level since 2017. Traineeships in this qualification have increased significantly (see Traineeships below).

These qualifications are also being reviewed during 2020 as part of the “Entry level Forestry Skills Project”. The Forest Management and Harvesting IRC is monitoring closely the decrease in the number of RTOs with qualifications on scope in this sector.

Currently there is no RTO with this qualification on scope approved to deliver in WA.

Table 4: Sawmilling and Processing Enrolments

Sawmilling and Processing	Enrolments				RTOs approved to deliver (Feb '21)	RTO approved to deliver change since 2020
	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Certificate II	159	48	79	94	3	Down 1
Certificate III	115	89	82	97	4	Down 2
Certificate IV (Timber Processing)	22	11	7	14	3	Same

Source: NCVER VOCSTATS, TVA program enrolments 2015-2019

Sawmilling and Processing qualifications have increased at all levels. The Certificate IV in Timber Processing enrolments doubled from 2018 to 2019. Qualifications at Levels II and III have not been updated since 2016.

The Timber and Wood Processing IRC is monitoring closely the number of RTOs with the qualifications on scope and would like to explore options to support RTOs to service the sector.

Table 5: Trade Qualifications Enrolments

Certificate III	Enrolments				RTOs approved to deliver (Feb '21)	RTO approved to deliver change since 2020
	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Saw Technology (formerly Saw Doctor)	45	36	24	31	1	(2 for the previous Qual)
Wood Machining	43	51	40	41	1	(2 for the previous Qual)

Source: NCVER VOCSTATS, TVA program enrolments 2015-2019

The industry’s two traditional trade apprenticeships - Saw Technology and Wood Machining - were significantly revised through a project in 2018-2019. However, final endorsement and uploading to TGA did not occur until January 2020. The two RTOs delivering the qualifications are currently re-developing materials for the new qualifications. At the time of writing there is one RTO with the qualifications on scope.

Enrolments in both qualifications have remained relatively stable.

Please see previous sections of this update for thin market factors impacting these particular roles.

The Timber and Wood Processing IRC continue to assert that whilst there are comparatively low enrolments compared to other qualifications and industries, these are critical roles within sawmills and timber processing plants.

Table 6: Timber Truss and Frame Enrolments

Timber Truss and Frame	Enrolments				RTOs approved to deliver (Feb '21)	RTO approved to deliver change since 2020
	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Certificate II (Design and Manufacture)	0	0	0	0	2	Same
Certificate III (Design and Manufacture)	72	71	76	84	2	Same
Certificate IV (Design) Certificate IV (Manufacture)	12 4	5 5	14 1	10 4	2	Same
Diploma (Design) - deleted Diploma (Manufacture) - deleted	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1	Same
Certificate III in Timber Systems design (new)	-	-	-	-		
Certificate III in Timber Truss and Frame Design and Manufacture (new)	-	-	-	-		

Source: NCVER VOCSTATS, TVA program enrolments 2015-2019

The qualifications in the Timber Truss and Frame sector, under the guidance of the Timber Building Solutions IRC, were revised and updated during 2019-2020. This resulted in the deletion of the 2 Diploma qualifications in this area. The Certificate IV in Timber Truss and Frame Manufacture and the Certificate II in Timber Truss and Frame Design and Manufacture were also deleted.

There is also a Victorian Course in Timber Systems Design that has been developed. Learning and assessment materials for this course have been developed with funding by the Victorian Government.

Table 7: Timber Merchandising

Timber Merchandising	Enrolments				RTOs approved to deliver (Feb '21)	RTO approved to deliver change since 2020
	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Certificate II - deleted	198	150	110	53	1	
Certificate III	106	71	70	45	2	Same

Source: NCVER VOCSTATS, TVA program enrolments 2015-2019

Qualifications in the Timber Merchandising sector were also revised and updated in 2019-2020. This resulted in the deletion of the Certificate II in Timber Merchandising. The Certificate III in Timber Merchandising was superseded by the Certificate III in Timber Building Products Supply.

Enrolments have declined over the last 5 years and the Timber Building Solutions IRC hopes that the revised qualification has an increase in uptake.

Table 8: Timber Manufactured Products

Timber Manufactured Products	Enrolments				RTOs approved to deliver (Feb '21)	RTO approved to deliver change since 2020
	2016	2017	2018	2019		
Certificate II	17	69	80	70	3	Same
Certificate III	31	18	12	1	2	Same

Source: NCVET VOCSTATS, TVA program enrolments 2015-2019

Timber Manufactured Products qualifications

As a result of no enrolments over 5 years, the following qualifications have been deleted:

- Certificate II in Wood Panel Products
- Certificate III in Wood Panel Products

There were also 64 units of competency that were deleted due to no enrolments – all of these were in the wood panels and timber product manufacturing area. This occurred through the AISC streamlining process that occurred in November 2020.

The Timber Building Solutions IRC believes that the lack of enrolments in this area is due to:

- Industry being unaware of the qualifications through the VET system – no direct marketing, support or assistance for industry to access the qualifications.
- Lack of RTOs able to market to and effectively service the sector – there was one RTO with the qualifications on scope.
- The qualifications being outdated and needing to be reviewed to reflect modern industry practices (the qualifications had not been reviewed for many years).

The IRC is keen to explore how updated skills relating to wood panel product manufacturing can be incorporated into the Timber Product Manufacturing qualifications. The IRC is also keen to explore options to support RTOs servicing this sector.

Overall factors impacting enrolment levels

Enrolment levels in many FWP qualifications and units of competency remains very low.

Consultation and research undertaken throughout 2020 has identified key information regarding the low use of qualifications, including:

- Unmet demand for 'flexible' training
- Difficulty for employers accessing and navigating the VET system
- Emerging preference for short courses and micro-credentials
- A lack of trainers and assessors with pedagogical excellence and industry expertise, both within RTOs and in workplace partnerships
- RTO viability challenges, especially relating to:
 - compliance
 - training and assessment materials development
 - thin markets in RRR areas
 - government funding
 - creating and maintaining industry partnerships.

RTO delivery issues and thin markets

The challenges faced by RTOs of being viable while delivering training in thin markets is real and is at the front of their mind when formulating their service offerings.

As stated in the 2020 Annual Update, RTOs continue to struggle to offer viable training delivery in regional areas where FWP-related businesses are located. Additional costs, such as adhering to industry regulation and safety requirements and travelling to dispersed workplaces, have been prohibitive for many RTOs, and now there are very few RTOs that have FWP qualifications on scope. In the absence of training providers engaging with and marketing themselves and nationally recognised training, employers often turn to non-accredited options, which serves to further obscure demand for formal training.

Low attrition rates in the industry contribute to the often-low volume of learners undertaking training. This means that RTOs travelling often long distances to train and assess often small cohorts of learners “on the job” (which is often the preference of both employers and employees due to the need to train on specific equipment and for production to continue) is often not viable for the RTO.

Employers and employees in the industry who do not engage with the VET system report that the reason for this is because they believe there is not enough value to be gained from using the formal vocational skills system given the lack of access and the barriers to training. Conversely, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) report barriers to offering nationally accredited training which all related to the balancing service provision and viability of their operations.

Lack of funding

A lack of funding, or funding programs not fitting the needs of industry, is a factor in enrolments.

Funding only for qualifications has caused a disconnect between RTOs wanting to maintain viability in a thin market through subsidised training places, and employers and learners having and needing a preference for individual unit and skill set funding. Over the years this has impacted on the industry’s perception of VET, the quality of RTO service provision, which in turn has impacted enrolments.

Reasons for Non-Completion

Overall, the main reasons for non-completion are:

- Employees leave the business or the industry – as the majority of enrolments in the FWP Training Package are already employed in the industry, the arrangement for training is usually through the employer;
- Preference for a smaller number of units (skill sets) therefore only completing what is really needed from a qualification;
- Unmet flexibility needs – RTOs and businesses unable to sustain flexible delivery through the complete qualification;
- Wage differences between trainees and employees – learners are keen to move from traineeship wages to employee wages; and
- Access to machinery and dollar value – because the employers equipment is often used due to onsite delivery requirements – employers need to have operators in the machine rather than trainees.

“This is an industry that doesn’t lend itself to traditional training delivery – there are long days, long travel times – there is no time to train. We need to develop smarter delivery models.”

[Industry RTO]

The Harvesting and Haulage sector of the industry is characterised by small businesses, operating under contract to forest managers and landowners in regional areas where forestry is an established industry. Employees do tend to move between contracting crews. Often when a learner has engaged in a training program through an employer and then changes employers, the RTO marks the learner as non-complete.

Some industry RTOs have become aware of the impact of this on the learners and employers and have begun to put in place strategies and procedures that allow them to follow and transfer the learner from one employer to another. This is an example again of how VET service providers, including RTOs have needed to and have effectively adapted and responded to the forest industry's particular needs.

This is evidenced by the following improvements in qualification completions in Certificate III in Harvesting and Haulage.

Qualification completions	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
FWP30216- Certificate III in Harvesting and Haulage	100	85	86	83	114	468

Source: NCVET data

The improvements in this area is also as a result of the Tasmanian Training and Skills Development Service (TSDS) which supports industry businesses to undertake training.

The Training and Skills Development Service program provides funding for any training that is of benefit to industry, not just full qualifications. That program, which has completion rates currently at 97%, has had 3,361 training places approved. A feature of this program that is funded by the Tasmanian state government, is that support and assistance is provided to industry enterprises and RTOs as they move through the programs.

Cross-Sector Units

During the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020, the Timber Building Solutions IRC identified a need within the industry for mental health first aid, in response to pressures and strain on employers brought about by lockdowns, closures and potential job losses.

As detailed above, industry facilitated 2 well attended webinars on the topic. The issue had been raised with the AISC through consultations on COVID impact. The IRC are pleased to note that cross-sector units for mental health first aid have been developed and are currently going through the endorsement process.

The IRCs are also pleased that there is work being done in the area of digital literacy, and hope that there will be not just cross-sector units of competency, but training that able to be contextualised to our industry to support the forest and wood products workforce.

Of the cross-sector units developed over the last two years, the units relating to Environmental Sustainability, Teamwork and Communication would be those most likely to align with and be incorporated into the FWP Training Package. This will be undertaken through any current and future projects.

The IRCs have also raised the following as areas of identified need which could be addressed through cross-sector skills:

- Additional Employability skills – financial literacy and digital literacy
- Family violence prevention
- Bioenergy, co-generation and biochar
- Cladding and fire safety product development
- Fire prevention and management

Changes to Skill Requirements

Bushfire response

As outlined as the beginning of this report, and in last year's update, the Forest Management and Harvesting IRC are concerned about the work carried out by its workforce in bushfire preparation, response and mitigation.

Review of Timber Manufactured Products/Sawmilling and Processing Qualifications

As described throughout this report, there continues to be significant technological advancement in the wood processing and timber manufactured product sectors, and training package products.

Apprenticeship & Traineeship Barriers

Traineeships

All FWP qualifications in the FWP Training Package are available as traineeships. There are differing challenges for different sectors of the industry when it comes to employing trainees.

In the *Forest Growing and Management* and *Harvesting and Haulage* sectors the challenges are related to attracting people into the industry where the employment is in regional and remote areas. Many young people leave the area to undertake further schooling or to seek alternative employment.

Regional Forest Industry hubs across the nation are grappling with this issue. There are also industry groups working to support traineeships – a good example of this is the Arbre Forestry Hub in Tasmania whose aim is to promote careers in the industry, capture interest, and then support employment through a pre-employment training program.

Another example is LITA Training offering Certificate III in Harvesting and Haulage as traineeships in the Green Triangle area, an area bordering South Australia and south west Victoria, which grows 17% of Australia's softwood.

With the exception of the above and some other programs, the further barrier to employing trainees in these sectors is the availability of local RTOs and employment support providers that can assist in carrying out the traineeship. This area again is impacted by the thin market issue.

The IRC acknowledges that forest industry training providers have a significant task when it comes to providing services in this area and many RTOs and trainers and assessors go to great lengths to adapt their services to meet the needs of industry.

The *Timber Merchandising* and *Timber Product Manufacturing* sector is less regionally based so employers are able to access a bigger pool of potential trainees. There are 2 active industry owned RTOs, Timber Training Creswick and TABMA Training, that are able to service this sector well, but are still significantly impacted by the issues related to thin markets.

Industry-specific data relating to the Australian Government's \$2 billion JobTrainer skills package, which includes objectives to attract new apprentices and keep existing apprentices in jobs, has yet to be released. Its design is in part a response to research⁵⁴ forecasting that COVID-19 will cause apprenticeship/traineeship commencements to decrease over the next few years because they have fallen during past economic downturns, with struggling employers reluctant to commit to three- to four-year apprenticeship arrangements⁵⁵. JobTrainer anticipates such challenges and will further be supported by industry strategies to expand apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities. ForestWorks and FTMA have supported industry to access Frame

⁵⁴ Hurley, P. (2020). The impact of coronavirus on apprentices and trainees. Mitchell Institute for Education and Health Policy, Victoria University.

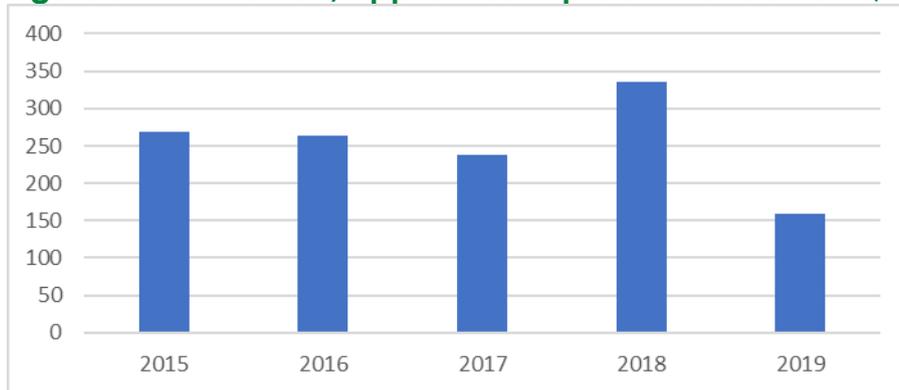
⁵⁵ Hurley, P. (2020). The impact of coronavirus on apprentices and trainees. Mitchell Institute for Education and Health Policy, Victoria University.

and Truss traineeships, with more than 50 enrolments at the time of writing.

The IRCs will assess the outcomes of such initiatives as information becomes available.

The number of employers taking on trainees in our industry increased in 2018. The growth has largely been driven by a more than doubling in the number of Harvesting and Haulage Trainees.

Figure 3: FWP Trainee/Apprenticeship Commencements, 2014-2019

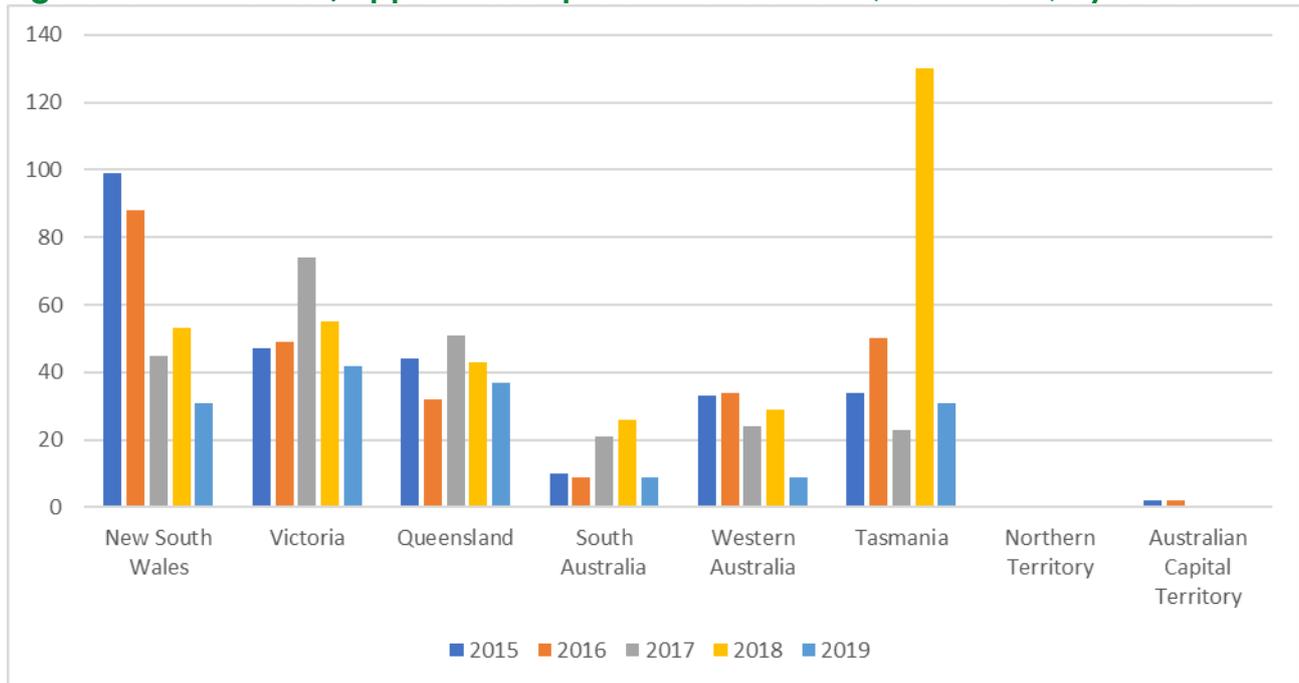


Source: NCVET VOCSTATS: Apprentices and trainees

The greatest proportion of apprentices and trainees over the five-year period have been in NSW but, in 2018, the number of trainees in Tasmania increased fourfold. Most of these enrolments were in the Certificate III in Harvesting and Haulage, which accounts for the overall growth in Harvesting and Haulage apprentices/trainees. This is due to the Training and Skills Development (TSDS) program in Tasmania, a program funded by the Tasmanian State government and managed by ForestWorks under direction of an industry Steering Committee. The key outcomes of this service are:

- Enterprises assisted to meet and respond to emerging industry directions that will support the rebuilding and growth of the Tasmanian Forest and Timber Products Industry;
- Enterprises supported to increase their performance via a review of future enterprise development objectives, job roles, skills gaps and planning for skills development activity;
- Employees in the forest and timber industry up-skilled and engaged in learning to meet changing work environments and skill requirements;
- Existing employees are able to have their existing appropriately recognised.

Figure 4: FWP Trainee/Apprenticeship Commencements, 2014-2019, by State



Source: NCVET VOCSTATS: Apprentices and trainees

Apprenticeships

There are 2 apprenticeships in the industry:

- Certificate III in Saw Technology
- Certificate III in Wood Machining

As described previously in this report, these are highly specialised roles within sawmills and wood processing facilities. The roles, particularly Saw Technicians (previously called Saw Doctors), are critical to the whole of the cutting process, and their job is to ensure that the saws in the facility are working effectively to produce timber to the high quality standards required.

Selection for these roles is often done internally as employers report that they like to ensure that the apprentice (and the business) are committed to undertake the 3-year apprenticeship.

With only 2 providers across the nation, many Saw Technology apprentices are required to travel interstate to access their training, normally done in block release times.

Again, there are numerous challenges for RTOs to deliver these apprenticeships – the most significant being the need for RTOs to cover the range of placements, not only in terms of distance and time, but also in needing to maintain individualised training programs for each placement in each business.

The qualifications for Saw Technology and Wood Machining were revised in 2019 to reflect current industry practices, job functions and skills.

Other Relevant Activities

The IRCs have been busy during 2020, with additional responsibilities, consultation, and meetings in response and for dealing with the impacts of COVID-19

The IRCs have assisted the AISC and the AISC Emergency Response Sub-Committee (ERSC) by seeking industry input and responding to a number of requests for information. These requests have taken place in several stages.

Immediate crisis response

- Identification of immediate training issues relating to workplace and campus-based training (completed April 2020).
- Identification of skills needs and delivery challenges for essential workforces (completed May 2020).

Supporting training for worker movement and potential surge workforces to meet current needs

- Identification of existing training products and potential surge workforces (completed May 2020).
- Analysis of available infection control training (completed June 2020).

Support for workforce recovery

- Critical Response Projects to create pathways for displaced workers (submitted July 2020, in progress).
- Promotion of pathways for displaced workers (first projects submitted July 2020, under consideration).

Mandatory Work Placements Analysis and Response

- Initial analysis of units requiring mandatory work placements or assessment/training conditions that were likely to require the use of physical workspaces, most likely in workplaces (completed April 2020).
- Analysis of units within qualifications with high levels of enrolments (completed October and November 2020).

The IRCs have also responded to a Ministers' request to delete units and qualifications which had zero enrolments in the years 2017 to 2019.

The additional work detailed above has required that the IRCs meet more regularly and that members conduct many more additional "out of session" discussions and consultations than in previous years. This has been achieved without additional IRC members or secretariat support. The Chairs of the IRCs would like to express their gratitude to all IRC members and stakeholders who have given up so much of their time and energy in 2020 to complete this important work.

IRC Sign-Off

This IRC Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work Annual Update was agreed as the result of a properly constituted IRC decision.

Signed for and on behalf of the three Industry Reference Committees by their appointed Chairs:

Forest Management & Harvesting IRC



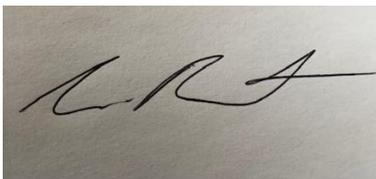
Stacey Gardiner
IRC Chair
15 June 2021

Timber & Building Solutions IRC



Kersten Gentle
IRC Chair
15 June 2021

Timber & Wood Products IRC



Clarissa Brandt
IRC Chair
15 June 2021

Section B: Ongoing Consultation

Detailed below is the industry consultation undertaken by IRC members and Skills Impact, including with rural, regional and remote stakeholders.

Engagement activities are described across four key areas:

- **Ongoing engagement** and validation with industry and stakeholders
- Collection of **industry intelligence**
- **Promotion of the VET** system
- Cultivating and maintaining **networks and partnerships** with industry including engagement in rural and regional areas.

Entity Name	Sector	State	Rural/ Regional/ Remote	Ongoing engagement	Industry intelligence	Promotion of VET	Networks & Partnerships
Ace Saw Services P/L	Commercial Business	Multi-state			✓		
Advanced Truss Systems	Commercial Business	QLD		✓	✓	✓	✓
AHH Wood	Commercial Business	NSW	Yes		✓		
AIR CTI	Forestry and Timber Industry Services	National	Yes		✓		
AKD Softwoods	Commercial Business	Multi-state	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
AKS Forest Solutions	Commercial Business	TAS	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Allen's Chainsaw Training	Commercial Business	QLD			✓		
Arbor Guy	Commercial Business	WA		✓	✓		
Arboriculture Australia	Professional Association	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Arbre Forestry Hub	Forestry and Timber Industry Services	TAS	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arbuthnot Sawmill	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes		✓		✓
Austimber Harvesting & Haulage	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes				
Austral Plywoods	Commercial Business	QLD			✓	✓	
Australian Building Codes Board	Industry Body	National			✓		

Entity Name	Sector	State	Rural/ Regional/ Remote	Ongoing engagement	Industry intelligence	Promotion of VET	Networks & Partnerships
Australian Cabinet and Furniture Association (ACFA)	Industry Association	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA)	Industry Association	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA)	Industry Association	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Australian Pulp and Paper Industry Technical Association (APPITA)	Industry Association	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Australian Sustainable Hardwoods	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes	✓	✓	✓	
Australian Timber Importers Federation	Industry Association	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Australian Timber Trainers Association (ATTA)	Industry Association	Multi-state		✓	✓	✓	✓
Australian UAV	Commercial Business	National			✓		✓
AW Moran Sawmilling	Commercial Business	NSW	Yes		✓	✓	
BARWON TIMBER BAR-TRUSS	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes		✓	✓	
Bennetts Logging	Commercial Business	TAS	Yes	✓	✓	✓	
Big River Industries	Commercial Business	NSW	Yes		✓	✓	
Boral Timber	Commercial Business	National	Yes		✓	✓	
Borgs	Commercial Business	NSW	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Box Hill Institute of TAFE	Registered Training Organisation	VIC		✓	✓		✓

Entity Name	Sector	State	Rural/ Regional/ Remote	Ongoing engagement	Industry intelligence	Promotion of VET	Networks & Partnerships
Bretts Timber and Hardware	Commercial Business	QLD			✓	✓	✓
Britton Timbers	Commercial Business	Multi-state	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bush and Beach Tree Services	Commercial Business	QLD	Yes		✓	✓	✓
Bushfire Prone Planning	Forestry and Timber Industry Services	WA			✓		
C3 Australia	Commercial Business	SA	Yes		✓	✓	
Casegrande Lumber	Commercial Business	TAS	Yes		✓	✓	
CFMEU Manufacturing Division	Union	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Chainsaw Accreditation Safety Training	Registered Training Organisation	NSW		✓	✓		✓
Climb High Training	Registered Training Organisation	ACT		✓	✓		✓
Compliance Assist	Other	QLD			✓	✓	✓
Corbet's Group	Commercial Business	QLD	Yes		✓	✓	
Dahlsens	Commercial Business	VIC		✓	✓	✓	✓
Department of Agriculture and Forestry	Government Department	QLD		✓	✓	✓	✓
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning	Government Department	VIC		✓	✓	✓	✓
Department of State Growth	Government Department	TAS		✓	✓		✓
Dindas Australia	Commercial Business	National			✓	✓	
DTM Timber	Commercial Business	QLD	Yes		✓	✓	
Engineered Wood Products Association of	Industry Association	National		✓	✓	✓	✓

Entity Name	Sector	State	Rural/ Regional/ Remote	Ongoing engagement	Industry intelligence	Promotion of VET	Networks & Partnerships
Australasia (EWPA)							
ENSPEC	Commercial Business	VIC		✓	✓	✓	✓
Evergreen Tree Care	Commercial Business	QLD			✓	✓	
Federation Training	Registered Training Organisation	VIC		✓	✓		✓
Fennell Forestry	Commercial Business	SA	Yes		✓	✓	✓
FIST Training	Registered Training Organisation	TAS	Yes	✓	✓		✓
Food, Fibre & Timber Industries Training Council (WA)	ITAB	WA		✓	✓		✓
Foresite Training	Registered Training Organisation	VIC		✓	✓		✓
Forest and Wood Products Australia	Industry R&D Services Body	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Forest Industry Council (Southern NSW) Inc	Industry Network	NSW	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forest Industries Association of Tasmania (FIAT)	Industry Association	TAS		✓	✓	✓	✓
Forest Industries Federation (FIFWA) Inc.	Industry Association	WA	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forest Practices Authority	Government Department	TAS		✓	✓	✓	✓
Forest Research Mount Gambier (University of South Australia)	Industry Body	SA	Yes		✓	✓	✓
Forestry Corporation NSW	Commercial Business	NSW	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forestry SA	Government Department	SA	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forests Products Commission WA	Commercial Business	WA	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓

Entity Name	Sector	State	Rural/ Regional/ Remote	Ongoing engagement	Industry intelligence	Promotion of VET	Networks & Partnerships
Forico	Commercial Business	TAS	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Four Wheel Drive Victoria	Industry Association	VIC			✓	✓	
Frame and Truss Manufacturers Association of Australia (FTMA)	Industry Association	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
FWM Group	Registered Training Organisation	NSW	Yes	✓	✓		✓
Gippsland Forestry Hub	Industry Hub	VIC	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
GMT Logging	Commercial Business	QLD	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gottstein Trust	Other	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Green Triangle Forest Industry Hub	Forestry Hub	SA	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Green Triangle Forest Products	Commercial Business	SA	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gunnersens	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes		✓	✓	
Hazelwood Forestry	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hazelwood Hill	Commercial Business	VIC		✓	✓	✓	✓
Hettich Australia	Commercial Business	NSW			✓	✓	
Himmelzimmer	Timber Industry Services	VIC			✓		
HQPlantations	Commercial Business	QLD	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Huhtamaki	Commercial Business	Multi-state		✓	✓	✓	✓
Hume Forests	Commercial Business	NSW	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
HVP Plantations	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hyne Timber	Commercial Business	Multi-state	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Independent Hardware Group (Mitre 10)	Commercial Business	National			✓	✓	

Entity Name	Sector	State	Rural/ Regional/ Remote	Ongoing engagement	Industry intelligence	Promotion of VET	Networks & Partnerships
Industry Skills Advisory Council NT (ISACNT)	ITAB	NT		✓	✓		✓
IndustryEdge	Consulting Company	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Inglewood Products Group	Commercial Business	WA	Yes		✓	✓	
Institute of Foresters Australia (IFA)	Industry Association	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Into trees	Commercial Business	VIC			✓	✓	
ITI QLD	Commercial Business	QLD			✓	✓	
Jamax Forest Solutions	Commercial Business	NSW	Yes		✓	✓	✓
Key Building Truss and Frame	Commercial Business	NSW		✓	✓	✓	✓
Kimberly Clark Australia	Commercial Business	SA	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kinetic Force Support Services (Service Agent Komatsu)	Forestry and Timber Industry Services	QLD			✓	✓	
KJ Padgett & Co P/L	Commercial Business	TAS	Yes		✓	✓	
L.V. Dohnt	Commercial Business	SA	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Latrobe Valley Training and Assessment Centre	Registered Training Organisation	VIC		✓	✓		✓
Learning Australia	Other	VIC			✓		
Les Walkden Enterprises	Commercial Business	Multi-state	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
LITA Training	Registered Training Organisation	SA	Yes	✓	✓		✓
Lonza Wood Protection	Timber Industry Services	National	Yes		✓		
Masters Builders Victoria	Industry Association	VIC		✓	✓	✓	✓
MBM Harvesting Solutions (Sunchip)	Commercial Business	QLD	Yes		✓	✓	

Entity Name	Sector	State	Rural/ Regional/ Remote	Ongoing engagement	Industry intelligence	Promotion of VET	Networks & Partnerships
Mechanised Logging Pty Ltd	Commercial Business	Multi-state	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Melbourne Polytechnic	Registered Training Organisation	VIC		✓	✓		✓
Meyer Timber	Commercial Business	National	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
MGA Independent Retailers	Commercial Business	VIC		✓	✓	✓	✓
MGATMA	Industry Association	VIC		✓	✓	✓	✓
Midway	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Midway Logistics	Commercial Business	Multi-state	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
MiTek	Commercial Business	Multi-state		✓	✓	✓	✓
Mountain Logging	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multinail	Commercial Business	QLD		✓	✓	✓	✓
N.F. McDonnell & Sons	Commercial Business	SA	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Norske Skog	Commercial Business	National	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Territory Government - Tiwi project	Government Department	NT	Yes		✓	✓	
NSW Department of Primary Industries - Forestry	Government Department	NSW		✓	✓		✓
NSW Fire and Rescue	Organisation	NSW		✓	✓	✓	✓
OneFortyOne Plantations	Commercial Business	SA	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Orora Group	Commercial Business	VIC		✓	✓	✓	✓
Peuker and Alexander	Commercial Business	VIC			✓	✓	✓
PF Olsen	Commercial Business	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Phoenix Supply Company Pty Ltd	Commercial Business	NSW			✓	✓	

Entity Name	Sector	State	Rural/ Regional/ Remote	Ongoing engagement	Industry intelligence	Promotion of VET	Networks & Partnerships
Plantation Partners	Commercial Business	National			✓	✓	
Primary Industries and Regions SA PIRSA	Government Department	SA		✓	✓		✓
Private Forestry Service Queensland	Commercial Business	QLD	Yes			✓	
Private Forests Tasmania	Commercial Business	TAS	Yes			✓	
Pryda	Commercial Business	Multi-state			✓	✓	✓
QMI Solutions	Consulting Company	QLD			✓		
Reliance Forest Fibre	Commercial Business	TAS	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Responsible Wood Certification Scheme	Industry Standards Body	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Ryan and McNulty Sawmillers	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
ScienceTech Consulting	Consulting Company	VIC			✓		
SES Victoria	Organisation	VIC		✓	✓	✓	✓
SFM Asset Management	Commercial Business	Multi-state	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simmonds Lumber	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Slacks Hardwood	Commercial Business	QLD	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Softwoods Working Group	Industry Network	Multi-state	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
South Regional TAFE - WA	Registered Training Organisation	WA		✓	✓		✓
Steve Smith Chainsaw Training	Registered Training Organisation	QLD	Yes	✓	✓		✓
Strongbuild	Commercial Business	NSW		✓	✓	✓	✓
Sunshine Frame and Truss	Commercial Business	QLD			✓	✓	

Entity Name	Sector	State	Rural/ Regional/ Remote	Ongoing engagement	Industry intelligence	Promotion of VET	Networks & Partnerships
Superior Wood Pty Ltd / Finalyson's Timber & Hardware	Commercial Business	QLD		✓	✓	✓	✓
SureTrac Four Wheel Drive Training	Registered Training Organisation	VIC		✓	✓		✓
Sustainable Timber Tasmania	Commercial Business	TAS	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tabeel Trading	Commercial Business	SA			✓	✓	
TAFE Gippsland	Registered Training Organisation	VIC	Yes	✓	✓		✓
TAFE NSW	Registered Training Organisation	NSW		✓	✓		✓
Tasmanian Forest and Forest Products Network	Industry Network	TAS		✓	✓	✓	✓
TasTAFE	Registered Training Organisation	TAS		✓	✓		✓
Technical Forest Services	Commercial Business	TAS	Yes		✓	✓	
The Laminex Group	Commercial Business	National		✓	✓	✓	
The Living Forest	Commercial Business	SA			✓	✓	
Thought Planters	Commercial Business	NSW			✓	✓	
Tilling Timber	Commercial Business	VIC		✓	✓	✓	✓
Timber and Building Materials Association (TABMA)	Industry Association	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Timber Insight	Consulting Company	WA			✓		
Timber NSW	Industry Association	NSW		✓	✓	✓	✓
Timber Preservers' Association of Australia (TPAA)	Industry Association	National		✓	✓	✓	✓

Entity Name	Sector	State	Rural/ Regional/ Remote	Ongoing engagement	Industry intelligence	Promotion of VET	Networks & Partnerships
Timber Queensland	Industry Association	QLD		✓	✓	✓	✓
Timber Training Creswick	Registered Training Organisation	National	Yes	✓	✓		✓
Timber Training Pty Ltd	Registered Training Organisation	NSW		✓	✓		✓
Timberlands Pacific	Commercial Business	Multi-state	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Timberlink Australia	Commercial Business	Multi-state	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Towie Timber Training	Registered Training Organisation	WA		✓	✓		✓
TPC Solutions (Aust) Pty Ltd	Timber Industry Services	VIC			✓		
Training and Skills Commission South Australia	Government Department	SA		✓	✓		✓
Training and Skills Commission South Australia	ITAB	SA		✓	✓		✓
Tree Care Machinery	Commercial Business	SA		✓	✓	✓	✓
Tree Time	Commercial Business	VIC			✓	✓	
Treescape	Commercial Business	VIC			✓	✓	
Verdance Group	Consulting Company	National			✓		
Vic Forests	Commercial Business	VIC	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI)	Industry Association	VIC		✓	✓	✓	✓
Virginia Building Supplies	Commercial Business	QLD			✓	✓	✓
Visy	Commercial Business	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Wesbeam	Commercial Business	WA	Yes		✓	✓	✓
Wespine	Commercial Business	WA	Yes		✓	✓	✓

Entity Name	Sector	State	Rural/ Regional/ Remote	Ongoing engagement	Industry intelligence	Promotion of VET	Networks & Partnerships
Whiteheads Timber	Commercial Business	Multi-state	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wodonga TAFE	Registered Training Organisation	VIC		✓	✓		✓
Womersley' Mitre 10 Frankston	Commercial Business	VIC			✓	✓	
Wood Solutions	Industry Body	National		✓	✓	✓	✓
Workspace Training	Registered Training Organisation	NSW	Yes	✓	✓		✓

Section C: Proposed Projects

2021–2022 Project Details

Project 1: Sawmilling and Timber Processing

Description

The sawmilling, timber processing and timber products sectors are undergoing rapid digital transformation and technological advancement. The skills required of operators are changing. They need the skills to work with new technologies and produce innovative products such as cross laminated timber (CLT) and glue laminated timber (GLT). The demand for skills to monitor, maintain, optimise and troubleshoot highly specialised automated equipment that moves, grades, assesses, scans, cuts and assembles timber pieces and products is surpassing the need for operators to pass, move, lift, grade, assess, stack, and sort timber and wood products. This project proposes a review of current qualifications and skills standards to incorporate current skills requirements and to consolidate the number of qualifications and units, to reduce complexity in the training system.

Case for Change

Rationale for Change

This project will meet the needs of the sawmilling, timber processing and timber products industry sectors by addressing their rapid digital transformation and technological advancement. Sawmills are investing in and integrating state-of-the-art equipment into workplace environments to produce innovative and value-added products, including CLT and GLT.

This project proposes to review five qualifications, 48 units of competency and four skill sets related to sawmilling and processing and timber manufactured products. The project will consider consolidating qualifications at AQF levels II and III. The updated qualifications will remain suitable for smaller, specialised sawmills that still utilise more traditional equipment and processes. To address the skills needed to operate highly specialised automated equipment and processes, up to eight new units may be developed. Units with low enrolments will be assessed for industry need before being recommended for deletion. Overall, the project is expected to reduce the number of qualifications and units in the training package.

The *Certificate IV in Timber Processing* will be reviewed to ensure it includes higher-level timber processing and wood product manufacturing skills. It will also be assessed to ensure the incorporation of units on wood and timber product knowledge, and data analyses of wood processing and timber product manufacturing.

Consultation with industry businesses in the sector have identified a need for skills in the following areas:

- automated wood processing technology
- use of program logic control systems and constant flow technology in wood processing operations
- maximising yield in wood processing operations
- chain of responsibility requirements for wood processing operators
- incorporation of mobile plant and licensing requirements into qualifications (using imported units).

This project will work closely with industry RTOs to ensure that the revised qualifications provide the best outcomes for scope viability while also providing the best training outcomes for industry. This is critical to addressing issues relating to thin training markets in the sector.

By not carrying out this work, sawmills, timber processors and manufacturers, many in rural, regional and remote (RRR) areas, will be without qualifications and units of competency that support the skills needed to complete current and emerging work tasks.

Evidence for Change

During the consultation process, businesses expressed a need for the FWP qualifications be updated to reflect significant technological shifts and advancements in sawmills across Australia. These relate to new sawmill structures, production processes, equipment and workforce skills requirements. The skills required of operators to work in teams to pass, move, lift, grade, assess, stack, and sort timber and wood products are now being replaced with skills in monitoring, maintaining, optimising and troubleshooting highly specialised automated equipment that moves, grades, assesses, scans, cuts and assembles timber pieces and products. Operators require a high degree of product knowledge to be able to identify, analyse and rectify issues during these new processes.

In 2018 a project was undertaken to incorporate emerging skills in sawmill process optimisation into the *FWP Training Package*. This project complements that work by reviewing and updating units that were not included in the scope of that 2018 project.

The FWP Prioritisation Framework categorises the qualifications as:

- *Certificate II in Timber Manufactured Products* – Routine update
- *Certificate III in Timber Manufactured Products* – Monitor
- *Certificate II in Sawmilling and Processing* – Routine update
- *Certificate III in Sawmilling and Processing* – Routine update
- *Certificate IV in Timber Processing* – Monitor

The National Skills Commission lists “Paper and wood processing machine operators” as one of the top employing occupations within “Machinery Operators and Drivers”⁵⁶. While more than one-third (36 per cent) of Machinery Operators and Drivers are based in regional areas, more than half of paper and wood processing machine operators live in regional or remote Australia⁵⁷. Nearly one-quarter (23.2 per cent) of paper and wood processing machine operators have a Certificate III or Certificate IV qualification.

Consideration of Existing Products

The project will consider the suitability of existing units from other training packages, including the *Manufacturing and Engineering Training Package*, for incorporation into the revised qualification. Importing the current MEM engineering units of competency pose issues due to the high number of pre-requisites of individual units.

Consultation with a member of the MEM IRC helped identify the need for developing an FWP unit “prepare timber processing machinery for maintenance” to replace the unit *MEM18011*, which has recently listed 3 pre-requisites units, and includes elements and performance criteria beyond what is needed in the forest and wood products industry and is hence unusable.

Approach to Streamlining and Rationalisation of the Training Products Being Reviewed

There are similarities in the *FWP Training Package* ‘Sawmilling and Processing’ and ‘Timber Manufactured Products’ qualifications (both at Certificates II- and III-level). This project will seek to consolidate these into one group of ‘Sawmilling and Timber Products’ qualifications. Subject to industry consultation and support, this would mean reducing the number of qualifications in this cluster from 5 to 3. The overall number of units is also expected to be reduced.

⁵⁶ [Machinery Operators and Drivers | National Skills Commission](#)

⁵⁷ Census of Population and Housing, 2016, TableBuilder

Stakeholder Consultation

Stakeholder consultation undertaken in the development of Case for Change

The Timber and Wood Processing IRC and the Timber Building Solutions IRC are representative of the industry sectors related to this project. Additional consultations via online and face to face meetings have occurred with the following major employers:

- Timberlink
- Borg Timber
- AKD
- OneFortyOne

These businesses provided details on the new equipment and automation that has impacted their operations, including their implications for the number of operators and skills required for job functions. Employers expressed their reliance upon units of competency, both to reflect and inform their standard operating procedures (SOPs). All companies consulted conveyed concern over their lack of access to, or low levels of service provided by, RTOs due to equipment being inaccessible for training purposes, thin markets, and other issues associated with rural, regional and remote locations.

Training providers delivering the qualifications have expressed their support for reviewing and consolidating the selected qualifications and units.

Evidence of Industry Support

Please contact Skills Impact for further information or access, if required.

Proposed Stakeholder Consultation Strategy for Project

The Timber and Wood Processing and Timber Building Solutions IRCs will oversee the project. A subject matter expert working group, made up of representatives from industry businesses, RTOs and industry associations, will inform the review and development of components. The working group will meet at least 4 times during the project.

The opportunity for industry stakeholders to participate in the project will be promoted through industry newsletters, Skills Impact newsletters, and direct approach by email. Consultation will occur through email and online and face to face meetings, including onsite meetings if COVID restrictions allow. Skills Impact will facilitate two public consultation periods to collect feedback and validate any changes to training package components.

Licencing or Regulatory Linkages

There are no links between the training package products included in the proposed project and any regulatory or licencing requirements. The unit *FWPCOT3231 Operate a steam boiler* will be reviewed with industry consultation on its potential replacement by the unit *MSMBLIC001 Licence to operate a standard boiler*, which would facilitate additional opportunities for learners.

Project Implementation

Prioritisation Category

It is proposed that this project is progressed as a *routine* update.
The relevant qualifications are categorised as:

- *Certificate II in Timber Manufactured Products* – Routine update
- *Certificate III in Timber Manufactured Products* – Monitor
- *Certificate II in Sawmilling and Processing* – Routine update
- *Certificate III in Sawmilling and Processing* – Routine update
- *Certificate IV in Timber Processing* – Monitor

According to the Prioritisation Framework for the *FWP Training Package*, this indicates a project period of 12 months.

The IRCs note that 34 of the 48 units of competency have not been reviewed since updating to the new standards for training packages in 2016. Of these units, 14 were last updated in 2018.

Project Milestones

Months	Activity
1-3	Project planning and briefing, identification of experts and consultation with IRCs
4-5	Workshops with subject matter experts including research and workforce functional analysis
6-8	Public Consultation National public consultation of draft qualifications, skill sets and units (Including national workshops)
9	Review of public consultation and Equity Review
10-11	National public validation of final draft qualifications, skill sets and units
12	Approval of Case for Endorsement to IRCs and submission to AISC

Summary of Components

Component	To be reviewed	To be updated	To be deleted	To be created
Units	48	Up to 48	Up to 15	Up to 8
Qualifications	5	Up to 5	Up to 2	
Skill Sets	4	Up to 4		Up to 3

Delivery or Implementation Issues

The most significant implementation issue is that training delivery by RTOs is often deemed unviable, leaving employers with no access to training services. Viability is affected by RTOs not having access to learning and assessment materials when training package products are created, or having to redevelop existing materials when training package products are revised, which is expensive and time-consuming.

To alleviate this pressure – which compounds other challenges associated with delivery in rural, regional and remote areas – the IRCs would like to see avenues and opportunities for national resource development alongside the development and review of units of competency and qualifications.

Implementing the Skills Minister's Priority Reforms for Training Packages (2015 and October 2020)

Ensure that more information about industry's expectations of training delivery is available to training providers to improve their delivery and to consumers to enable more informed course choices

The packaging rules of the revised qualifications will support providers to work with users – both individuals and businesses – to build a qualification that best suits their needs.

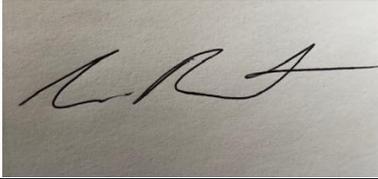
Ensure the training system better supports individuals to move more easily between related occupations

This project will set a VET pathway for individuals to enter and then progress through to varying job roles in timber production plants and sawmills. The pathways will be flexible enough for delivery to businesses in the sector with varying size and scope.

Foster greater recognition of skill sets and work with industry to support their implementation

This project will develop a number of skill sets that align to functions within a broader qualification pathway. Industry have indicated a preference for units and skill sets over full qualifications and this project will develop skill sets that can be utilised on their own.

This Case for Change was agreed to by the Timber and Wood Processing IRC

Name of Chair	Clarissa Brandt
Signature of Chair	
Date	15 June 2021

This Case for Change was agreed to by the Timber Building Solutions IRC

Name of Chair	Kersten Gentle
Signature of Chair	
Date	15 June 2021

Project 2: Responding and Assisting in Bushfires

Description

Forestry operators hold a key role in assisting with fire mitigation, firefighting, clean up, and clearing operations. They have expertise in the heavy machinery used in both harvesting operations and fire-fighting and support the prevention of bushfire through mechanical thinning. With the frequency and intensity of bushfires in Australia expected to increase, forestry operators and emergency services supervisors need to be effectively trained and ready to respond and assist. Seventeen current units of competency within the FWP training package are proposed for review, to incorporate the skills required for bushfire prevention, assistance and recovery. Two units may also need to be developed to fill a skills gap in fire incident control and leadership. The revised and new units could be exported into other training packages to support job roles outside the forestry industry, which have also expanded to undertake activities assisting with bushfires.

Case for Change

Rationale for Change

This project proposes to address gaps in current training packages for job roles, both within and outside the forestry industry, which have expanded to undertake activities in bushfire prevention, assistance and recovery. It will require the review of 17 current units of competency and the creation of up to 2 units of competency in the *FWP Training Package*. Updated and created units will be proposed for use across a range of FWP qualifications and for exportation into other training packages.

The Forest Management and Harvesting IRC has identified a need to review skills related to:

- forestry skills for firefighters; and
- fire-fighting skills for forestry operators.

This project will assess the role of forestry operators in a bushfire context. The IRC also notes that there are non-forestry workers undertaking leadership roles in a bushfire context without sufficient understanding of the critical forestry skills used to respond to a bushfire; for example: using heavy plant (heavy duty machinery and equipment) in fire control operations on steep wooded terrain.

The frequency and intensity of bushfires in Australia is expected to increase. As has been apparent during previous fire seasons, fires often burn in areas of significant forestry resource, including both plantation and hardwood.

Forestry operators, both contractors and managers, assist in fire mitigation, firefighting, clean up, and clearing operations. This is primarily because of their expertise in the heavy machinery used in both harvesting operations and fire-fighting. The Forest Management and Harvesting IRC are committed to ensuring the safety of harvesting contractors undertaking these operations. Given the anticipated increase in fire-related events, forestry operators and emergency services supervisors need to be effectively trained and ready to respond and assist. Units of competency and qualifications in this sector must reflect the need to undertake operations not just in harvesting operations, but also in firefighting assistance.

Recent Bushfire Inquiries

As a result of the 2020-21 fire season, inquiries were conducted by the Federal Government⁵⁸, as well as the State Governments of New South Wales⁵⁹, Victoria⁶⁰ and Queensland⁶¹. The findings relevant to this Case for Change include:

- Nationally accredited training is critically important
- Forestry workers and their equipment are vital to bushfire preparedness and response
- Mechanical hazard reduction is important, and will become increasingly so
- Incident management training requires improvement.

Mechanical Thinning

The Forest Management and Harvesting IRC, based on consultation and the results of inquiries and investigations, has determined a skills gap in relation to mechanical thinning. Mechanical thinning is used as an alternative to prescribed burning as part of bushfire prevention. It is anticipated that new skill standards will be required to support operators undertaking mechanical thinning as part of the industry's approach to managing forests sustainably.

Reduced capability to conduct hazard reduction burning contributed to the severity of the fires in 2019-2020. With a declining window for conducting hazard reduction burning, there will likely be increased demand for mechanical hazard reduction. The Federal Government's *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements*, tabled in Parliament on 30 October 2020 ("the Federal Royal Commission") found that mechanical thinning carried out prior to the arrival of an unplanned fire has the potential to reduce the intensity and rate of spread of a bushfire⁶².

Further, the Tasmanian Government has recently announced that it will make it easier to use mechanical fuel reduction to complement prescribed burns as a bushfire mitigation tool. There is a need to review the existing unit related to mechanical thinning and test if it is fit for purpose for these hazard reduction activities.

Understanding forestry in fire incident control

The Forest Management and Harvesting IRC has received evidence from industry of a skills gap pertaining to incident controllers, who, when working with the forestry workforce, lack an understanding of forestry operations. In consultation with public safety and emergency services, this project will investigate the extent of this skills gap and propose training package solutions.

Scope of Review Proposed

The Forest Management and Harvesting IRC notes that some FWP units related to bushfire prevention are already under review as part of a current project.

History of this proposal

In 2020, a proposal was presented to the AISC for undertaking a functional job analysis to determine potential changes to the *FWP Training Package* to reflect new roles performed by forestry operators associated with fire prevention, firefighting and fire recovery (in both native and plantation forestry). Upon request, this proposal was taken back to the Forest Management and Harvesting IRC for further consultation and discussion to determine the units requiring review as part of the proposal.

⁵⁸ M. Binskin *et al.* (2020); *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report*

⁵⁹ D. Owens & M. O'Kane (2020); *Final Report of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry*

⁶⁰ Inspector-General for Emergency Management (2020); *Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian fire season*

⁶¹ Inspector-General Emergency Management (2020); *Queensland Bushfires Review Report 2: 2019-20*

⁶² M. Binskin *et al.* (2020); *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report*; p. 366

Impact of recommended changes

The outcomes of this project will ensure that forestry operators have clear and accessible training for skills relating to bushfire operations. It will also provide opportunities for non-forestry workers to understand critical forestry skills.

Risk of not implementing the change

Without this important work to identify and address forestry operators' skills gaps for assisting in bushfire operations, there is a risk that the forestry workforce will be inappropriately- or under-skilled to carry out these extremely hazardous activities and help prevent or contain future fires. There is also a risk that non-forestry workers are inadvertently exposed to forestry hazards in a bushfire context.

Evidence for Change

The need for this project was confirmed by the Forest Management and Harvesting IRC at their October 2020 meeting. The IRC identified a requirement to look at the role of 'forestry operator' in a bushfire context. At the meeting, Bill Paul (VicForests) stated, "There is a need for ongoing development and maintenance of skill standards for fire prevention, assistance and recovery."

A number of inquiries have been carried out at enterprise, industry, state and national levels, including the Federal Royal Commission. The Forest Management and Harvesting IRC has closely monitored these reviews to gain insights into additional skills needs for forest operators undertaking vital work to assist in bushfire prevention response and recovery. The reports acknowledge and discuss the role that the timber industry plays, and the valuable skills of its workforce. The IRC is committed to ensuring ongoing recognition of these skills, and the continued development of training products and infrastructure that will support the on-going learning and refining of such skills.

Consideration of Existing Products

The project will review existing units of competency relating to forest operations that use machinery, such as excavators, dozers, and graders, to ensure that the functions carried out in a bushfire context are duly reflected in the unit. Any gaps in knowledge or performance will be identified and addressed appropriately. Care will be taken not to create assessment impediments by adding content that cannot be suitably contextualised outside of bushfire contexts (i.e. units will remain applicable to 'normal' operations).

The *FWP Training Package* also imports a number of units from the *RII Training Package* for use in forestry operations. The units listed below will be considered in the project for their use in forestry operations in a fire context:

- RIIMPO315E- Conduct tractor operations
- RIIMPO317F- Conduct roller operations
- RIIMPO318F- Conduct civil construction skid steer loader operations
- RIIMPO319E- Conduct backhoe/loader operations
- RIIMPO320F- Conduct civil construction excavator operations
- RIIMPO321F- Conduct civil construction wheeled front end loader operations
- RIIMPO322E- Conduct civil construction tracked front end loader operations
- RIIMPO324F- Conduct civil construction grader operations
- RIIVEH304E- Conduct tip truck operations

Approach to Streamlining and Rationalisation of the Training Products Being Reviewed

As a significant objective of this project is to identify and address gaps in existing units, there is no intention to delete or rationalise any units or qualifications. By broadening the scope of existing units, the need for additional or parallel units to be developed in other training packages may be averted.

Stakeholder Consultation

Stakeholder consultation undertaken in the development of Case for Change

The Forest Management and Harvesting IRC identified the need to carry out this project. A large portion of the evidence that informed this proposal was gathered by the Australian Forest Contractors Association (AFCA), which represents forestry harvesting contractors across Australia. AFCA is also represented on the IRC. Other IRC members represent industry stakeholders in this project, including Forest Industry Council, Timber NSW and the CFMEU. Vic Forests have also provided evidence of need based on feedback collected by the organisation.

Evidence of Industry Support

Please contact Skills Impact for further information or access, if required.

Proposed Stakeholder Consultation Strategy for Project

The project will ensure consultation with, and seek subject matter experts nominated by, the IRCs for Public Safety (PUA), Amenity Horticulture, Landscaping and Conservation and Land Management (AHLCLM), and Forest Management and Harvesting. The FMH IRC will share project reports and the final Case for Endorsement with all IRCs for their consideration and approval.

Licensing or Regulatory Linkages

There are no relevant licensing or regulatory issues to be considered in this project.

Project Implementation

Prioritisation Category

The Forest Management and Harvesting IRC have considered the prioritisation framework. This project is not based on full qualifications, and it is therefore difficult to apply a prioritisation category. The IRC considers that this project should be rated as a routine update and that a 12-month timeframe should apply.

Project Milestones

Months	Activity
1-3	Project planning and briefing, identification of experts and consultation with IRCs
4-5	Workshops with subject matter experts including research and workforce functional analysis
6-8	Public Consultation National public consultation of draft qualifications, skill sets and units (Including national workshops)
9	Review of public consultation and Equity Review
10-11	National public validation of final draft qualifications, skill sets and units
12	Approval of Case for Endorsement to IRCs and submission to AISC

Summary of Components

- Units to be reviewed: 17
- Units to be updated: 17
- Units to be deleted: 0
- Units to be created: 2

Delivery or Implementation Issues

The most significant implementation issue is that training delivery by RTOs is often deemed unviable, leaving employers with no access to training services. Viability is affected by RTOs not having access to learning and assessment materials when training package products are created or having to redevelop existing materials when training package products are revised, which is expensive and time-consuming.

To alleviate this pressure – which compounds other challenges associated with delivery in rural, regional and remote areas – the Forest Management and Harvesting IRC would like to see avenues and opportunities for national resource development alongside the development and review of units of competency and qualifications.

Implementing the Skills Minister's Priority Reforms for Training Packages (2015 and October 2020)

Ensure that more information about industry's expectations of training delivery is available to training providers to improve their delivery and to consumers to enable more informed course choices

This project will ensure that training providers understand the different forestry skills used in usual forestry activities as compared to the skills required for using forestry skills in firefighting.

Ensure the training system better supports individuals to move more easily between related occupations

Units updated and developed in this project will be proposed for use across a range of qualifications and occupations.

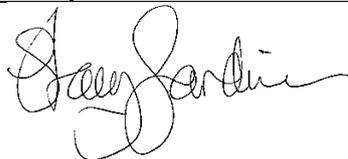
Improve the efficiency of the training system by creating units that can be owned and used by multiple industry sectors

Units developed in this project could be used by Emergency Services personnel who engage with and utilise the services of forestry operators.

This Case for Change was agreed to by the Forest Management and Harvesting IRC

Name of Chair
Signature of Chair

Stacey Gardiner



Date

11 June 2021