

# Dealing with pre-existing skill requirements in manual tree felling units of competency

A draft report on the recommendations and  
approach to implementation

Skills Insight acknowledges that First Nations peoples have been living on and caring for country for thousands of years. This is respected in our values and the way we work.



This Skills Insight JSC project is being managed with the support of ForestWorks as part of our collaborative partnership with Skills Insight. ForestWorks has an enduring and strong connection working with the forestry, timber, paper, fibre and furnishing industries and have been engaged by Skills Insight to deliver this project in partnership.



**Jobs and Skills Council**  
**Agribusiness, Fibre, Furnishing, Food, Animal and Environment Care**  
An Australian Government Initiative

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# Background

As part of a collaborative partnership with Skills Insight, the Jobs and Skills Council for the forest and wood products industry, ForestWorks set out to investigate and develop solutions for challenges related to establishing pre-requisite requirements for the units of competency in basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling.

This project builds on the revisions made to the three manual tree felling units of competency to reduce barriers to training delivery.

Introducing pre-requisites to the manual tree felling units received strong stakeholder support during an earlier [Tree Felling Project](#).

The objective of the current project is to enhance safety and skill development in manual tree felling operations by creating a clear pathway for learners to acquire the essential skills and knowledge before enrolling in a tree felling unit. This may involve adding pre-requisite requirements or exploring alternative approaches.

## Current advice on the use of pre-requisites in training package qualifications

As part of the current project, a review was conducted on current national policies and practices regarding the use of pre-requisites in nationally recognised vocational education and training (VET) qualifications. This review focused on the guidance provided in the Training Package Organising Framework (TPOF), which will take effect on 1 July 2025, as well as feedback from consultations with State and Territory Training Authorities (STAs) held in April and May 2025 [See Appendix 1].

In the TPOF, pre-requisites are defined as units of competency that a learner must be assessed as competent in before being deemed competent in a subsequent, dependent unit. They are applied only at the unit level within Training Package qualifications.

The TPOF emphasises that pre-requisites should only be used when essential for enabling a learner to safely or effectively undertake the learning or assessment associated with a particular unit. Their use must be clearly justified based on workplace or training requirements. Importantly, pre-requisites must not be used to dictate or enforce delivery sequences or training pathways. The Framework highlights the importance of maintaining flexibility in training to meet learners' needs and aspirations and to support workforce mobility across different roles and industries. Therefore, the number of pre-requisites should be minimised to avoid creating unnecessary barriers to learner progression and to ensure national recognition of skills.

The TPOF classifies any change to a pre-requisite as a major change to a Training Package. This includes the addition, removal, or revision of a pre-requisite. Such changes are significant because they can impact delivery, safety, learner access, and the integrity of learning pathways. Consequently, all proposed changes must demonstrate clear benefits for learner safety, industry relevance, and regulatory compliance while preserving accessibility and coherence in training.

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) have specific responsibilities regarding pre-requisites. They must ensure that learners have met all required prerequisites before being assessed in a dependent unit. RTOs must also design training and assessment strategies that account for pre-requisites, offer recognition of prior learning or credit transfer where appropriate, and inform learners about any unit-level pre-requisite requirements and the options available to fulfil them.

Consultations with STAs confirmed that all jurisdictions align with the TPOF, although they vary in their emphasis. For instance, Victoria favoured eliminating pre-requisites through qualification reform. New South Wales emphasised that pre-requisites should not become barriers to training access and highlighted the importance of transparency regarding the cost and availability of pre-requisite units. Queensland, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory highlighted the challenges of delivering training in remote areas, emphasising the importance of pre-requisites in ensuring safety. South Australia stressed the necessity of pre-requisites in high-risk contexts. The Australian Capital Territory supported flexibility in training and cautioned against using pre-requisites to limit learner progression. Tasmania held a more neutral stance, recognising that pre-requisites may be essential in certain circumstances to ensure safety.

Pre-requisites can play a crucial role in safeguarding learners and upholding the quality and integrity of vocational education and training. However, the TPOF reinforces that their use must be carefully justified and should not impose unnecessary constraints on learners. While the Framework discourages an over-reliance on pre-requisites, it does not prohibit their use where clear safety, regulatory, or knowledge-based needs exist. This nuanced approach was broadly supported by the various STAs consulted during the preparation of the report.

## **Current advice on prerequisite skills for basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units in the *FWP Forest and Wood Products Training Package***

The current version of the units of competency in basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling do not have pre-requisites.

The current advice on pre-requisite skills for these units is contained in the Companion Volumes for the FWP Training Package. The Companion Volumes assist industry and RTOs to deliver the units, qualifications and skill sets within a Training Package. Companion Volumes consist of Implementation Guides and User Guides. They include information to help trainers adapt to any new changes in a training package, as well as additional information about the impacts of regulation and licensing implications and workplace health and safety on their training. The advice contained in Companion Volumes is not mandatory.

The *Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024* provides recommendations on pre-existing skills and knowledge requirements for trainees before enrolling in manual tree felling units. The guide notes that the introduction of prerequisite units for tree felling trainees is a significant safety measure proposed by the industry to ensure that trainees embark on their training already equipped with the essential skills and knowledge to support a safe training and assessment process.

The guide goes on to note that *'...after extensive discussions and a rigorous review of the potential options for pre-requisite units, it was determined that none of the available options are compliant with the Training Package Organising Framework.'*

In lieu of including pre-requisites in the tree felling units of competency the guide notes that industry agreed to recommend the following, emphasising the value of prior experience:

- **Fell trees manually (basic):** Individuals who seek to undertake this unit must have prior skills and knowledge in the safe startup, shutdown, maintenance, and operations of a chainsaw to ensure their own safety and uphold the training provider's responsibility for safety.
- **Fell trees manually (intermediate):** Individuals who seek to undertake this unit must have prior skills and knowledge in safely starting up, shutting down, maintaining, and performing basic operations such as trimming, cross-cutting and basic tree felling with a chainsaw to ensure their own safety and uphold the training provider's responsibility for safety.
- **Fell trees manually (advanced):** Individuals who seek to undertake this unit must have prior skills and knowledge in safely conducting intermediate tree felling operations using a chainsaw to ensure their own safety and uphold the training provider's responsibility for safety.

The industry not only strongly recommends but expects that individuals enrolling in any of the tree felling units have pre-existing skills and knowledge of chainsaw operation specific to tree felling and associated risk level. This ensures they approach the training with the requisite safety awareness and competence necessary for each skill level: basic, intermediate and advanced. Training providers are recommended to implement the structured sequence of skills and knowledge outlined in Figure 1,

verifying prospective trainees’ completion of the respective course before allowing enrolment in tree felling units.

**Figure 1:** Sequence of Recommended Skills and Knowledge Verification for Prospective Tree Felling Trainees

Tree Felling unit	Recommended skills and knowledge before enrolment*
FWPCOT2275 Fell trees manually (basic)	Completion of any of the following units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>AHCMOM213 Operate and maintain chainsaws</li><li>FWPCOT2256 Trim and cut felled trees, or</li><li>FWPHAR2209 Trim and cur harvested trees</li></ul>
FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate)	Completion of FWPCOT2275 Fell trees manually (basic)
FWPCOT3351 Fell trees manually (advanced)	Completion of FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate)

\*This includes the current versions of the listed units or their predecessors.

If an individual has acquired knowledge and skills corresponding to those listed in Table 1 through informal learning or coaching, they could undertake a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) process. This can be done either within the enrolment in a qualification or before enrolling in the tree felling unit, to assess the equivalency of their skill level.

This recommendation does not establish a compliance element for training delivery. Instead, it provides guidelines that emphasise the importance of safety and the responsibility of training providers for ensuring their own safety. It entrusts training providers with the responsibility to consider prior skills and integrate it into their risk assessment processes. In essence, this becomes a responsibility for risk assessment.

## Outcomes of stakeholder consultations on prerequisite arrangements for the manual tree felling units of competency

A series of stakeholder consultations was conducted during May and June 2025. The consultations involved sector-specific focus groups – covering the Forestry, Dealing with pre-existing skill requirements in manual tree felling units of competency:

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Emergency Services, Land Management and Arboriculture and Vegetation Management sectors—and a cross-sector focus group held on 10 June 2025 [See Appendix 2]. The purpose of these consultations was to gather expert views and develop a consensus position on pre-requisite arrangements for the manual tree felling units of competency at the basic, intermediate, and advanced levels.

Each of the sector focus group sessions followed a structured process facilitated by ForestWorks. Participants were provided with an Issues and Options paper [See Appendix 3] which set out the background to the project, the key issues impacting on the development of pre-requisite arrangements for the three manual tree felling units and a set of options for addressing the pre-existing skills requirements for these units. The five options presented in the paper were:

- Option 1 - Retain the current arrangements
- Option 2 - Amend the current units of competency to include explicit pre-requisite requirements for the basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units of competency
- Option 3: Enhance the guidance provided in the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually and roll this out to industry stakeholders on a national basis
- Option 4 - Establish an industry accord to support the adoption of the advice in the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually
- Option 5 - Apply the principles of the National Qualifications Reform process to redesign the existing tree felling units.

Detailed discussions were held around each option. Participants also had the opportunity to raise additional issues relevant to their own sector, including enterprise skill and progression requirements, the need for flexibility in interpreting pre-existing skill requirements and the limitations of identifying existing units of competency as prerequisites.

The three sector-specific focus groups displayed a remarkable degree of alignment in their evaluation of the five proposed options [See Appendix 4]. All three groups rejected Option 1 (retaining current arrangements) and Option 4 (industry accord). Option 5 was seen as a possible way forward, but not at this point, and it was noted that the opportunities presented by the Commonwealth's qualifications reform process may be more appropriate to consider during a full review of the qualification/Training Package. Options 2 and 3, while containing useful elements, were also deemed insufficient as standalone solutions. However, participants in each of the three sector-specific focus groups proposed a hybrid approach that integrated elements of Options 2 and 3.



While there were minor differences between the three groups [see Appendix 4], each supported an approach that included the addition of pre-existing skills statements in the Application section of each unit, alongside the development of a structured evidence guide. This evidence guide would outline the evidence that individuals may present to demonstrate they have met the requirements of the pre-existing skills statement included in the revised Application section of the basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling units of competency. This guide would detail how RTOs could verify learners' skills using recognised forms of evidence such as completed units of competency, RPL outcomes, skills assessments, and workplace documentation.

Following the sector-specific focus groups, a cross-sector focus group was held on 10 June 2025. This served as a forum to consolidate the outcomes from the sector-specific consultations and agree on a unified proposal. Participants reaffirmed that safety must be the guiding principle when establishing pre-requisite arrangements. There was agreement that current advice from regulators discourages unnecessary formal pre-requisites unless supported by a strong safety rationale. However, the group supported the inclusion of a statement on pre-existing skills requirements in the Application section of each tree-felling unit. Draft wording for these statements was reviewed and endorsed, and a framework for developing an evidence guide was confirmed. The evidence guide will outline acceptable forms of documentation to confirm skills, including relevant units of competency, RPL assessments, skills tests, and workplace-based evidence. It was agreed that the evidence guide should be included in the Companion Volume User Guide.

To support implementation, participants also recommended that a national professional program, virtual or face-to-face, for RTO trainers and assessors, be designed and rolled out that addresses:

- the proposed changes to the Application section in each unit of competency
- how to apply the proposed Evidence Guide to be included in the updated version of the *Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024*

A detailed outline of the recommendations from the cross-sector focus groups, including the suggested wording for insertion in the Application section of the three tree felling units of competency, is included in Appendix 5.

It was agreed that these measures would enhance consistency and support safe, competent progression through the tree felling training pathway.

# Recommendations

It is recommended that ForestWorks seek funding support from Skills Insight to undertake the following tasks.

1. Re-develop the basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling units of competency, in line with TPOF processes, to include a description of the pre-existing skills that an individual must hold. This is to be included in the Application section of each unit. The statement for each unit should be based on the pre-existing skills statements in the *Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually - April 2024* and the outcomes of the Pathways to Tree Felling project.
2. Develop an evidence guide that outlines the evidence that individuals may present to demonstrate they have met the requirements of the pre-existing skills statement included in the revised application section of the basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling units of competency.
3. Review the *Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually - April 2024*, to include:
  - the evidence guide for pre-existing skills requirements in the basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling units of competency, described in part 2, and
  - a set of support materials to assist RTOs implement the proposed new arrangements for recognising pre-existing skills base.
4. Design and roll out a national professional development program, virtual or face-to-face, for RTO compliance staff, trainers, assessors, careers advisers and industry personnel that addresses:
  - the proposed changes to the Application section in each unit of competency
  - how to apply the proposed Evidence Guide and support materials to be included in the updated version of the *Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually - April 2024*.

## Proposed activity plan

It is proposed that the recommendations outlined in the preceding section of this report be addressed in a new development project to be undertaken by ForestWorks with support from Skills Insight. This project, outlined in the subsequent section of this

report, is scheduled to be undertaken over ten months, potentially commencing in February 2026.

### **Activity Plan**

Five activities are proposed to incorporate the pre-existing skills requirements into the basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling units of competency. These activities also aim to design and roll out support materials and a professional development program to facilitate the implementation of the changes to the units of competency. These activities are:

- **Activity 1:** Redevelop basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling units of competency to incorporate pre-existing skill requirements
- **Activity 2:** Design an evidence guide on pre-existing skills and support materials for each unit of competency and incorporate it in the *Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually - April 2024*
- **Activity 3:** Design a professional development program
- **Activity 4:** Roll out professional development program to stakeholders nationally
- **Activity 5:** Review the professional development program

### **Activity 1: Redevelop basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling units of competency to incorporate pre-existing skill requirements (February - August 2026)**

Objectives:

- Confirm with the Assurance Body the process for making the proposed changes to the basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling units of competency and the companion volume user guide. Conduct broad industry consultations to validate the proposed changes to the units of competency. Update the units of competency to include the statements on pre-existing skills. Submit the redeveloped units of competency for endorsement and listing on the national register. The objective of this stage is to redevelop the basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling units of competency to include pre-existing skill requirements.

Methodology:

- Consult with the Assurance Body, Skills Insight and STAs on the process for making the proposed changes to the basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling units of competency and the companion volume user guide.

- Review outcomes of the Pathway to Tree Felling Skills project undertaken by ForestWorks in 2025 and recommendations related to the inclusion of pre-existing skills in the three units of competency.
- Organise one online workshop with key stakeholders to validate the pre-existing skills statements to be included in the Application of the three manual tree felling units of competency.
- Re-develop the three manual tree felling units of competency and associated documentation in line with requirements of the Quality Assurance body and the Training Package Organising Framework.
- Submit the re-developed units of competency and associated documentation to the Assurance Body for endorsement.
- Manage all communications from submission through to listing of redeveloped units of competency on the national register.

#### Deliverables:

- Re-developed versions of the basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling units of competency listed on the national register.

### **Activity 2: Design an evidence guide on pre-existing skills and support materials for each unit of competency and incorporate in the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually (May-June 2026)**

#### Objectives

- Develop a clear and practical evidence guide that outlines how individuals can demonstrate the pre-existing skills required for each unit of competency and a set of support materials to assist users implement the evidence guide. Integrate the evidence guide and support materials guide into a revised edition of the *Companion Volume User Guide - Fell Trees Manually*.

#### Methodology

- Review outcomes of the Pathways to Tree Felling Skills project undertaken by ForestWorks in 2025 to identify types of evidence that may be presented of pre-existing skills in the three units of competency.
- Develop draft evidence guide and support materials for the pre-existing skill requirements for each unit of competency.
- Conduct two national online workshops to validate the draft evidence guide and support materials with trainers, assessors and other stakeholders.
- Draft the final version of the evidence guide and support materials validated with stakeholders through an online workshop with the key stakeholders.

- Finalise and incorporate evidence guide and support materials into the Fell Trees Manually Companion Volume User Guide in line with the requirements of Skills Insight and the Assurance Body.

#### Deliverables

- Evidence guide on pre-existing skills and support materials incorporated into the Companion Volume User Guide – Fell Trees Manually.

### **Activity 3: Design a professional development program (July-August 2026)**

#### Objectives

- Design a structured professional development program that supports trainers, assessors, career advisers, RTO compliance personal and industry stakeholders to implement the pre-existing skill requirements in the redeveloped units of competency and applying the evidence guide.

#### Methodology

- Identify the roles and learning needs of trainers, assessors and other stakeholders related to interpreting and applying pre-existing skill requirements identified in the basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling units of competency.
- Consult with stakeholders to identify the appropriate mode of delivery of the proposed professional development program – online, face-to-face, blended delivery.
- Review other professional development programs used in the forest and wood products industry to identify success factors.
- Develop learning outcomes for the professional development program.
- Design program format, content and support materials for the professional development program considering the preferred mode of delivery.
- Pilot the program in one region and refine program and support materials based on feedback.

#### Deliverables

- Fully actionable professional development program [online, face-face or hybrid format] and support materials.

## **Activity 4: Roll out professional development program to stakeholders nationally (September – October 2026)**

### Objectives

Deliver the professional development program across Australia, enabling trainers, assessors and other stakeholders to effectively implement the pre-existing skill requirements in the redeveloped units of competency and apply the evidence guide.

### Methodology

- Develop a national roll-out schedule for the proposed professional development, in consultation with key stakeholders.
- Promote the professional development program to trainers, assessors, career advisers, RTO compliance personnel and industry stakeholders
- Facilitate and monitor the delivery of the professional development program.
- Collect participant feedback for continuous improvement.

### Deliverables

Professional development program delivered to trainers, assessors, career advisers, RTO compliance personnel and industry stakeholders in all States and Territories.

## **Activity 5: Review professional development program (November 2026)**

### Objectives

- Evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of the professional development program and identify areas for improvement based on implementation experience.

### Methodology

- Design an evaluation framework that includes a national online workshop and key respondent interviews.
- Collect and analyse data on the take-up of the program and feedback from participants and facilitators, if the face-to-face delivery mode is utilised.
- Identify program strengths and improvement areas.
- Prepare a review report that includes findings and recommendations, as well as a review of lessons learned and potential applications to other projects with a professional development component.

### Deliverables

- Evaluation Report on the Effectiveness of the Professional Development Program with Recommendations for Future Iterations.

## **Appendix 1 – Participating key stakeholders in consultations on pre-requisite use in training package qualifications**

Department of Education and Training – Australian Capital Territory

Department of Education and Training – Northern Territory

Department of Employment, Small Business and Training – Queensland

Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions – Victoria

Department of Training and Workforce Development – Western Australia

Education and Skills Reform, NSW Department of Education – New South Wales

Melbourne Polytechnic

Skills Impact

Skills Initiatives, Department of State Development, – South Australia

Skills Tasmania

Victorian Skills Authority

## Appendix 2 – Participating key stakeholders in focus groups

Australian Timber Trainers Association

Country Fire Authority

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action - Victoria

Department of Fire and Emergency Services – Western Australia

Fire Tasmania

Foresite Training

ForestWorks

Lemke Timber Training

MTO Group

National Workplace Services Group

NSW State Emergency Service (SES)

Public Skills Australia

Rural Fire Service – NSW

TAFE Gippsland

TAFE NSW

TAFE Tasmania

Timber Training Creswick - Victoria

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate

Wodonga Institute of TAFE - Victoria



# Appendix 3 – Issues and Options Paper

## Issues and Options Paper:

### **Pre-requisite requirements for the FWP Forest and Wood Products Training Package units of competency in basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling.**

*Note: This paper has been developed to stimulate discussion at a series of stakeholder focus groups, conducted by ForestWorks, on the pre-requisite requirements for basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling. The options presented in this paper do not necessarily reflect the position of ForestWorks or Skills Insight on this matter.*

## **1.0 Background**

ForestWorks has been commissioned by Skills Insight, the Jobs and Skills Council for the forest and wood products industry, to investigate and develop solutions for challenges related to establishing pre-requisite requirements for the units of competency in basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling.

This project builds on the revisions made to the three manual tree felling units of competency to reduce barriers to training delivery.

Introducing pre-requisites to the manual tree felling units received strong stakeholder support during the Tree Felling Project.

The objective of this project is to enhance safety and skill development in manual tree felling operations by creating a clear pathway for learners to acquire the essential skills and knowledge before enrolling in a tree felling unit. This may involve adding pre-requisite requirements or exploring alternative approaches.

## **2.0 Current advice on pre-requisite skills for basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units in the FWP Forest and Wood Products Training Package**

The current version of the units of competency in basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling do not have pre-requisites.

The current advice on pre-requisite skills for these units is contained in the Companion Volumes for the FWP Training Package. The Companion Volumes assist industry and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to deliver the units, qualifications and skill sets within a Training Package. Companion Volumes consist of *Implementation Guides* and *User Guides*. They include information to help trainers adapt to any new changes in a training package, as well as additional information about the impacts of regulation and licensing implications and workplace health and safety on their training. The advice contained in Companion Volumes is not mandatory.

The Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024 provides recommendations on pre-existing skills and knowledge requirements for trainees before enrolling in manual tree felling units. The guide notes that the introduction of prerequisite units for tree felling trainees is a significant safety measure proposed by the industry to ensure that trainees embark on their training already equipped with the essential skills and knowledge to support a safe training and assessment process.

The guide goes on to note that *'...after extensive discussions and a rigorous review of the potential options for prerequisite units, it was determined that none of the available options are compliant with the Training Package Organising Framework.'*

In lieu of including prerequisites in the tree felling units of competency the guide notes that industry agreed to recommend the following, emphasising the value of prior experience:

- Fell trees manually (basic): Individuals who seek to undertake this unit must have prior skills and knowledge in the safe startup, shutdown, maintenance, and operations of a chainsaw to ensure their own safety and uphold the training provider's responsibility for safety.
- Fell trees manually (intermediate): Individuals who seek to undertake this unit must have prior skills and knowledge in safely starting up, shutting down, maintaining, and performing basic operations such as trimming, cross-cutting and basic tree felling with a chainsaw to ensure their own safety and uphold the training provider's responsibility for safety.
- Fell trees manually (advanced): Individuals who seek to undertake this unit must have prior skills and knowledge in safely conducting intermediate tree felling operations using a chainsaw to ensure their own safety and uphold the training provider's responsibility for safety.

The industry not only strongly recommends but expects that individuals enrolling in any of the tree felling units have pre-existing skills and knowledge of chainsaw operation specific to tree felling and associated risk level. This ensures they approach the training with the requisite safety awareness and competence necessary for each skill level: basic, intermediate and advanced. Training providers are recommended to implement the structured sequence of skills and knowledge outlined in Figure 1, verifying prospective trainees' completion of the respective course before allowing enrolment in tree felling units.

**Figure 1:** Sequence of Recommended Skills and Knowledge Verification for Prospective Tree Felling Trainees

Tree Felling unit	Recommended skills and knowledge before enrolment*
FWPCOT2275 Fell trees manually (basic)	Completion of any of the following units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AHCMOM213 Operate and maintain chainsaws</li> <li>FWPCOT2256 Trim and cut felled trees, or</li> <li>FWPHAR2209 Trim and cur harvested trees</li> </ul>
FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate)	Completion of FWPCOT2275 Fell trees manually (basic)
FWPCOT3351 Fell trees manually (advanced)	Completion of FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate)

\*This includes the current versions of the listed units or their predecessors.

If an individual has acquired knowledge and skills corresponding to those listed in Table 1 through informal learning or coaching, they could undertake a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) process. This can be done either within the enrolment in a qualification or before enrolling in the tree felling unit, to assess the equivalency of their skill level.

This recommendation does not establish a compliance element to training delivery. Instead, it provides guidelines that underscore the importance of safety and the responsibility for safety of training providers. It entrusts training providers with the responsibility to consider prior skills and integrate it into their risk assessment processes. In essence, this becomes a risk assessment responsibility.

### 3.0 Issues

The following seven matters need to be considered in developing pre-requisite arrangements for the tree felling units of competency.

#### ***Advice on the use of prerequisites in the Training Package Organising Framework***

The recently released Training Package Organising Framework, which comes into effect on 1 July 2025, defines a prerequisite unit as '*... a unit of competency in which the learner must be assessed as competent prior to the determination of competency*'

in the subsequent unit'. It includes the following guidance on the use of prerequisite units:

- Principle 2 - Qualifications support the diversity of learners' needs and aspirations - Training Package product design enables multiple exit and entry points for learners to be considered, and for pre-requisites to be minimised.
- Pre-requisite units must only be used where essential to achieving the subsequent competency.
- Pre-requisite units must not be used for the purpose of driving delivery order or sequencing.
- Where a core or elective unit has a pre-requisite requirement, the pre-requisite unit and any associated pre-requisite chain of units must be identified in the Packaging Rules field of the qualification template.
- Where an imported unit has a pre-requisite requirement, the pre-requisite unit and any associated pre-requisite chain of units must also be identified in the Packaging Rules field of the qualification template.
- Where any unit that forms part of a skill set has a pre-requisite requirement, the pre-requisite unit and any associated pre-requisite chain of units must be identified in the skill set requirements.
- Major changes to Training Packages include:
  - revising a unit of competency in the core of a qualification (which includes any changes to a pre-requisite unit of competency).
  - changing pre-requisite requirements by adding or removing a pre-requisite to a unit of competency and/or updating (revising) a pre-requisite to a unit of competency.

The new templates for units of competency in the Training Package Organising Framework includes provision for pre-requisite units.

### **Identification of prerequisites**

The selection of specific units, such as those identified in section 2.5 - AHCMOM213, FWPCOT2273, and FWPHAR2209, as pre-requisites for the tree felling units, presents practical challenges.

According to the Training Package Organising Framework, pre-requisites must only be used where essential to achieving the subsequent competency.

AHCMOM213 meets this requirement as it addresses crucial skills in chainsaw operation and maintenance, which are not explicitly addressed in tree felling units. It is important to note that AHCMOM213 is not listed in *FWP20122 Certificate II in Forest Operations*. However, the qualification packaging rules do allow for units from

other Training Packages to be imported into *FWP20122 Certificate II in Forest Operations*. If this unit is used as a pre-requisite, consideration should be given to listing AHCMOM213 in *FWP20122 Certificate II in Forest Operations* – this is a relatively straightforward process which would benefit providers of the qualification.

In contrast, FWPCOT2273 and FWPHAR2209 contain some overlapping content with tree felling units but do not offer skills critical to the specific techniques involved in tree felling. The techniques learned in the trim and cut units are not inherently essential for mastering tree felling skills. Consequently, designating FWPCOT2273 and FWPHAR2209 as pre-requisites would not fulfil the objective of imparting essential tree felling skills; instead, it would lead to only accumulating experience in chainsaw use, which contradicts the purpose of establishing pre-requisites.

### ***Use of optional units of competency as prerequisites.***

The templates used in the Training Package Organising Framework require pre-requisite units of competency to be listed in the relevant unit. This appears to rule out listing optional pre-requisite units.

### ***Prerequisites for the intermediate tree felling unit of competency.***

Consultations revealed that stakeholders are divided on whether to mandate the basic tree felling unit or the same pre-requisite options for the basic unit as the pre-requisite for the intermediate unit. This disagreement may be due to some RTOs bypassing the basic tree felling unit.

### ***Prerequisite for the advanced tree felling unit of competency***

Consultations revealed that stakeholders agree that the intermediate tree felling unit is the appropriate pre-requisite for the advanced tree felling unit.

### ***Sequencing of learning***

The progression from basic to intermediate to advanced level tree felling may be seen to contradict the Training Package Organising Framework, which cautions against using pre-requisites to sequence learning. This issue arises because the tree felling units at each level are very similar, making it impossible to determine whether there are components of skills and knowledge in one unit that are essential for enrolling in the subsequent unit. While establishing a delivery order may help consolidate skills and experience in manual tree felling, it tends to contradict the Training Package Organising Framework. The overlapping content in these units also tends to undermine the argument for using one unit as a pre-requisite for the other. If it is to serve this latter role, a clear distinction between the units may be required.

### ***Status of the Companion Volumes in Training Packages***

The User and Implementation Guides in the Companion Volumes are support, not mandatory documents. In addition, consultations suggest that the Companion Volumes are mainly used when delivery of the units occurs within the original

qualification/Training Package. The tree felling units are regularly imported into qualifications from outside the FWP Forest and Wood Products Training Package. This means that the advice in the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually may be overlooked or ignored.

### ***Implications of qualifications reform***

On 6 December 2024, Skills Ministers agreed to a new approach to VET qualification design, aiming to improve quality, simplify course designs, reduce duplication, and make the VET system easier to understand and navigate for learners, employers, and training providers. The existing tree felling units have overlapping and duplicated knowledge and skill requirements. Additionally, these requirements are reflected in the outcomes of other units in the FWP Training Package that involve the use of chainsaws in forestry operations. The National Qualifications Reform process presents an opportunity to redesign the existing tree felling units. This redesign could [1] eliminate duplication, [2] establish a clear pathway for learners to acquire the pre-requisite skills and knowledge in tree felling, and [3] enable learners to seamlessly progress through the basic, intermediate, and advanced tree felling units.

## **4.0 Options**

The ensuing section of this paper outlines five options for addressing pre-requisite requirements for basic, intermediate, and advanced tree felling units.

### ***Option 1 - Retain current arrangements***

Under Option 1, there will be no change to the current basic, intermediate, or advanced tree felling units, nor the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024. This option acknowledges the need for learners to possess the pre-existing skills specified in the User Guide before commencing the tree felling units. It also recognises that the User Guide is a relatively recent document, and that RTOs need time to operationalise the current advice.

The key advantages and disadvantages of this option are outlined below.

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
User Guide provides clear advice on the pre-existing skills required by learners prior to enrolling in the tree felling units	User Guide is an advisory not mandatory document and as such there is no compulsion for users to follow the advice
Minimal disruption to RTOs offering the three tree felling units	User Guide is open to interpretation that may lead to varying prerequisite requirements across the RTO network

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User Guide provides sufficient flexibility to enable the pre-existing skill requirements to be met in different sectors and skill development environments

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User Guide references a unit AHCMOM213 Operate and maintain chainsaws that is not listed in the basic tree felling qualification

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**Option 2 - Amend the current units of competency to include explicit pre-requisite requirements for the basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units of competency**

In Option 2, the selection of pre-requisites would be guided by the advice in the User Guide and the preceding discussion on the policy guidance in the Training Package Organising Framework. Given these constraints, a potential pre-requisite structure is shown in the following table.

**Figure 2:** Potential pre-requisite units of competency

Tree Felling Unit	Pre-requisite unit of competency
FWPCOT2275 Fell trees manually (basic)	AHCMOM213 Operate and maintain chainsaws
FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate)	FWPCOT2275 Fell trees manually (basic)
FWPCOT3351 Fell trees manually (advanced)	FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate)

The implementation of this option would likely necessitate:

- listing AHCMOM213 Operate and maintain chainsaws in *FWP20122 Certificate II in Forest Operations*
- revising the three tree-felling units to accurately reflect the identified specific skills and knowledge for each unit
- developing a case for the proposed pre-requisite arrangements, most likely based on safety and remoteness considerations, that addresses the current guidelines in the Training Package Organising Framework, which state that pre-requisites must not be used to drive delivery order or sequencing.

**Note:** An alternative to identifying *AHCMOM213 Operate and maintain chainsaws* as a pre-requisite for *FWPCOT2275 Fell trees manually (basic)* may be to detail a set of skills required for this unit in the

Application statement. These skills could be based on the content of *AHCMOM213 Operate and maintain chainsaws*.

The key advantages and disadvantages of this option are outlined below.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Clear, mandatory advice on the prerequisites for the three tree felling units of competency provided for industry, learners and RTOs	Prerequisites may be inflexible and not suited to the sectors and range of environments in which the units are delivered
Consistent implementation of the prerequisites across the national RTO network, supported by RTO and ASQA monitoring and audit procedures	Introducing pre-requisites is defined as a major change under the Training Package Organising Framework. This will take time to implement and have resource implications for JSCs, S/TTAs and RTOs
User Guide not used or de facto regulatory instrument	Revising the existing units of competency to accurately reflect the identified specific skills and knowledge in each unit will need to be resourced and may prove to be technically challenging
	Addressing the Training Package Organising Framework guidance on the use of pre-requisites for driving delivery order or sequencing may be problematic

**Option 3: Enhance the guidance provided in the Companion Volume User Guide: *Fell Trees Manually* and roll this out to industry stakeholders on a national basis**

Option 3 aims to enhance guidance and support for the pre-requisite skills required for the tree felling units outlined in the Companion Volume User Guide: *Fell Trees Manually*. This includes detailed advice and support materials on:

- progression pathways in tree felling operations
- the training and certification required to progress through the basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units. This could be specified in a variety of ways, including: the units of competency held, the number of hours of supervised chainsaw use, the maintenance of a training or work log detailing work activities undertaken, and/or a record of tree felling tasks.



- the minimum evidence requirements for recognising prior learning [RPL] for the basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units, such as the type and volume of work experience, the number of hours of supervised work, and verified records of specific skills required for progression.
- the continuing professional development requirements needed to maintain competency in basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling.
- best practices in planning and implementing progression pathways for different learner groups, including new entrants, existing workers, First Nations learners, people from regional and remote communities and individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- information for inclusion in tree felling course descriptions and career guides.

A comprehensive professional development program is planned to support the nationwide implementation of the updated User Guide. The proposed guidance and support materials may be available in various formats, including printed materials and audiovisual resources.

The key advantages and disadvantages of this option are outlined below.

Advantages	Disadvantages
User Guide provides detailed advice on prerequisites and the progression pathways available to learners	User Guide is an advisory document and there is no compulsion for users to follow the advice
User Guide supports and strengthens recognition of prior learning processes by identifying and documenting evidence requirements	User Guide, which is designed to be an advisory document, may be used as de facto regulatory instrument
There are few, if any, restrictions on the advice that may be provided in the Companion Volume of Training Packages	Revising the User Guide will need to be resourced and it may prove to be challenging to reach consensus on the guidance to be provided

#### ***Option 4 - Establish an industry accord to support the adoption of the advice in the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually***

Option 4 proposes the development and formalisation of an industry accord that recognises the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually as the primary source of advice on best practices for planning, implementing and evaluating training

and assessment, progression pathways, recognition of prior learning, trainer professional development and skill maintenance arrangements in manual tree felling operations.

The key advantages and disadvantages of this option are outlined below.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Builds industry consensus on the pre-existing skills required by learners prior to enrolling in the tree felling units	Both the User Guide and the proposed accord are advisory documents intended to guide best practice and there is no compulsion for users to follow the advice
Strengthens the authority and status of the advice in the User Guide	User Guide, which is designed to be an advisory document, is used as de facto regulatory instrument
	Development and maintenance of the proposed accord will need to be resourced, and it may prove to be challenging to reach consensus on the intent, content and management of the proposed accord

### ***Option 5 - Apply the principles of the National Qualifications Reform process to redesign the existing tree felling units.***

Option 5 proposes addressing the pre-requisites for tree felling by leveraging opportunities created through the National Qualifications Reform process. This would likely involve developing a unit of competency using one of the new templates that focuses on the common skills and knowledge in the tree felling units, such as chainsaw operation and maintenance. This could be expanded to include other relevant units in the FWP Training Package that involve the application of skills in chainsaw operation and maintenance.

To enhance clarity and efficiency, the felling units would be re-engineered to eliminate any overlap or duplication of components. Figure 3 illustrates the areas of potential duplication within the units that include chainsaw components in the Certificates II, III, and IV FWP qualifications.

*Figure 3: Units with chainsaw types and components, operation, maintenance, safety knowledge and performance requirements.*

	Basic operation	Maintenance	Safety	Types and purposes	Components and attachments
<b>Certificate II in Forest Operations</b>					
FWPCOT2254 Maintain chainsaws		X	X	X	
FWPCOT2273 Trim and cut felled trees		X	X		
FWPCOT2275 Fell trees [basic]		X	X	X	
FWPCOT3301 Trim trees using pole saw		X	X	X	X
FWPCOT3317 Use chainsaw within a tree	X	X	X	X	X
FWPHAR2209 Trim and cut harvested trees		X	X		
<b>Certificate III and IV in Forest Operations</b>					
FWPCOT346 Fell trees manually [intermediate]	X	X	X	X	X
FWPCOT351 Fell trees manually [advanced]	X	X	X	X	X
FWPHAR3205 Harvest trees	X	X	X	X	X

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manually  
[intermediate]

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FWPHAR3209					
Harvest trees manually [advanced]	X	X	X	X	X

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The key advantages and disadvantages of this option are outlined below.

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### Advantages

### Disadvantages

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Modernise training products in basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling in line with Training Package Organising Framework and the National Qualifications Reform process

The proposed reconfiguration of the tree felling units of competency represents a major change which would have significant implications for RTOs, S/TTAs and JSC

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Removes the need for 'bolt on' pre-requisite arrangements as these are addressed in the unit design process

Resources would be required to support the reconfiguration of the tree felling units of competency

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Provides a model for applying the Training Package Organising Framework and the National Qualifications Reform process in the redesign of existing qualifications

The Training Package Organising Framework and the National Qualifications Reform process are at an early stage of implementation and further advice on policy, procedures and best practices may be needed prior to advancing work in this area.

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## Appendix 4 – Notes of sector-specific focus groups

### Pathway to Tree Felling Skills – Focus Group Summary Report

Report on outcomes of focus groups held in May 2025, which discussed possible pre-requisite arrangements for basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling units of competency.

#### 1.0 Purpose

1.1 To summarise the key outcomes of the sector-specific focus groups conducted to gather views on the development of pre-requisites for the basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling units of competency.

#### 2.0 Background

2.1 As part of the Pathway to Tree Felling Skills Project, ForestWorks organised three focus groups in May 2025 at the Novotel, Melbourne Airport, to explore options for developing pre-requisites for the basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling units of competency.

2.2 The focus groups were organised by sector, with sessions for stakeholders from the following fields:

- Forestry
- Emergency Services
- Arboriculture and Vegetation Management.
- Land management

2.3 Participation in the focus groups was by invitation, with those being extended to a range of stakeholders including industry, RTO, and emergency services groups. ForestWorks consulted Public Skills Australia and the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council on the composition of the Emergency Services focus group.

2.4 Before each focus group, all participants received a copy of the Issues and Options Paper. This document outlined the issues related to prerequisite development and presented five possible options for developing prerequisites for the manual tree felling units of competency. The five options were:

- Option 1 – Retain current arrangements
- Option 2 – Amend the current units of competency to include explicit pre-requisite requirements for the basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units of competency

- Option 3: Enhance the guidance provided in the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually and roll this out to industry stakeholders on a national basis
- Option 4 - Establish an industry accord to support the adoption of the advice in the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually
- Option 5 - Apply the principles of the National Qualifications Reform process to redesign the existing tree felling units.

2.5 At each focus group, participants were provided with an overview of the:

- objectives of the Pathways to Tree Felling project
- project timeline
- current advice on the pre-requisites for basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling in the FWP Training Package
- key issues impacting on the development of pre-requisite arrangements for the three manual tree felling units of competency
- five options, outlined in the Issues and Options Paper, for addressing pre-requisite arrangements for the three manual tree felling units of competency. This included a set of discussion questions on each option.

2.6 Participants were informed that the outcomes of each focus group would be presented to a cross-sector focus group, which ForestWorks would convene in mid-June 2025. Participants were invited to register their interest in participating in the cross-industry focus group.

### **3.0 Summary of outcomes of the sector-specific focus groups**

The key outcomes of each focus group are described below.

#### **3.1 Arboriculture and Vegetation Management**

Date: 21 May 2025

##### *Attendance*

- Foresite Training
- Wodonga Institute of TAFE
- MTO Group
- Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate
- Country Fire Authority, Victoria

*Key outcomes:*

The group:

- Reviewed the five options identified in the Issues and Options Paper.
- Agreed that Options 1,4, and 5 should not be pursued.
- Considered Options 2 and 3 but decided that neither in their current form presented a viable way forward.
- Identified a hybrid option involving elements of Options 2 and 3. The key features of this hybrid option are:
  - Include a statement describing the pre-existing skills that an individual must hold before enrolment in the basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units of competency and insert this in the Application statement in each unit. The statements for each unit should be based on the pre-existing skills statements in the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually - April 2024.
  - Develop an evidence guide that outlines the evidence individuals may present to demonstrate they have met the requirements of the pre-existing skills statement included in the Application statement for each unit. The forms of evidence might include:
    - i. Completion of a relevant unit[s] of competency
    - ii. RPL assessment
    - iii. Skills test conducted by the RTO
    - iv. Workplace experience
  - Include the evidence guide, described above, in an updated version of the User Guide.
- All participants expressed interest in participating in the cross-industry focus group.

### **3.2 Emergency Services Focus Group**

Date: 23 May 2025

*Attendance*

- Department of Fire and Emergency Services - WA
- NSW State Emergency Services (SES )
- Fire Tasmania
- Public Skills Australia
- NSW Rural Fire Service

- Public Skills Australia

*Key outcomes:*

The group:

- Reviewed the five options identified in the Issues and Options Paper.
- Agreed that Options 1,4, and 5 should not be pursued.
- Considered Options 2 and 3 but decided that neither in their current form presented a viable way forward.
- Identified two possible hybrid options involving elements of Options 2 and 3. The key features of these two hybrid options are:
  - Option A
    - i. Include a statement describing the pre-existing skills that an individual must hold before enrolment in the basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units of competency and insert this in the Application statement in each unit. The statements for each unit should be based on the pre-existing skills statements in the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024.
    - ii. Develop an evidence guide that outlines the evidence individuals may present to demonstrate they have met the requirements of the pre-existing skills statement included in the Application statement for each unit. The forms of evidence might include:
      - a. Completion of a relevant unit[s] of competency
      - b. RPL assessment
      - c. Skills test conducted by the RTO
      - d. Workplace experience
    - iii. Include the evidence guide, described above, in an updated version of the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024
  - Option B
    - i. Include a statement describing the pre-existing skills that an individual must hold before enrolment in the basic and intermediate tree felling units of competency and insert this in the Application statement in each unit. The statements for each unit should be based on the pre-existing skills statements in the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024.



- ii. Make the completion of FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate) the pre-requisite for FWPCOT3351 Fell trees manually (advanced)
  - iii. Develop an evidence guide that outlines the evidence individuals may present to demonstrate they have met the requirements of the pre-existing skills statement included in the Application statements for the basic and intermediate tree felling units of competency. The forms of evidence might include:
    - a. Completion of a relevant unit[s] of competency
    - b. RPL assessment
    - c. Skills test conducted by the RTO
    - d. Workplace experience
  - iv. Include the evidence guide, described above, in an updated version of the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024.
- All participants expressed interest in participating in the cross-industry focus group.

### **3.3 Forestry Focus Group**

Date: 27 May 2025

#### *Attendance*

- Lemke Timber Training
- MTO Group
- National Workplace Services Group
- Australian Timber Trainers Association
- TAFE Gippsland
- TAFE Tasmania
- Timber Training Creswick
- TAFE NSW
- AFCA

*Key outcomes:*

The group:

- Agreed that safety was the overriding consideration in the development of pre-requisite arrangements for the basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling units of competency
- Reviewed the five options identified in the Issues and Options Paper.
- Agreed that Options 1,4, and 5 should not be pursued.
- Considered Options 2 and 3 but decided that neither in their current form presented a viable way forward.
- Identified a hybrid option involving elements of Options 2 and 3. The key features of this hybrid option are:
  - Include a statement describing the pre-existing skills that an individual must hold before enrolment in the basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units of competency and insert this in the Application statement in each unit. The statements for each unit should be based on the pre-existing skills statements in the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024.
  - Develop an evidence guide that outlines the evidence individuals may present to demonstrate they have met the requirements of the pre-existing skills statement included in the Application statement for each unit. The forms of evidence might include:
    - i. Completion of a relevant unit[s] of competency
    - ii. RPL assessment
    - iii. Skills test conducted by the RTO
    - iv. Workplace experience
  - Include the evidence guide, described above, in an updated version of the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024.
  - Roll out a national professional development program, virtual or face-to-face, for RTO trainers and assessors on the proposed changes to the Application statements in each unit of competency and how to apply the proposed Evidence Guide to be included in the updated version of the Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024
- Discussed a letter from David Sharpe, Team Leader Arboriculture and Horticulture, TAFE NSW about the inclusion of FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate) in the core units of AHC30824 Certificate III in Arboriculture, noting the relevance of the unit of competency for urban

arborists and the impact of the unit on the availability of trees for training and assessment purposes. It was agreed that this letter would be referred to Belinda Tierney, General Manager, ForestWorks.

- Discussed the indemnity and insurance implications for RTOs of conducting tree felling training and assessment activities on private and public land. Advice on sources of professional advice on these matters was passed to Rob Stowell.
- All participants expressed interest in participating in the cross-industry focus group.

### **3.4 Land Management Focus Group**

Date: 29 May 2025 – cancelled due to limited availability of invitees.

Follow up meetings are being arranged with key relevant stakeholders who have not attended previous sector specific focus groups.

# Appendix 5 – Notes on cross sector focus group

## Pathway to Tree Felling Skills

Report on outcomes of the cross-sector focus groups on possible pre-requisite arrangements for basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling held at the Novotel Hotel on 10 June 2025

### 1.0 Purpose

To summarise the key outcomes of the cross-sector focus group conducted on 10 June 2025 to gather views on the development of pre-requisites for the basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling units of competency.

### 2.0 Attendance

- Department of Fire and Emergency Services – Western Australia
- TAFE Tasmania
- Fire Tasmania
- Public Skills Australia
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action – Victoria
- Country Fire Authority – Victoria
- MTO Group
- TAFE Gippsland
- Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate
- NSW SES
- Wodonga Institute of TAFE – Victoria
- Timber Training Creswick – Victoria
- National Workplace Services Group
- TAFE NSW
- William Lee – NSW Rural Fire Service
- ForestWorks

### 3.0 Background

As part of the Pathway to Tree Felling Skills Project, ForestWorks organised a series of focus groups in May-June 2025 at the Novotel Hotel Melbourne to explore options for developing pre-requisites for the basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling units of competency.

These focus groups comprised sector-specific focus groups for stakeholders from the Forestry, Emergency Services, Land Management, and Arboriculture and Vegetation Management sectors. This was followed by a cross-sector focus group, convened on June 10, 2025. The aims of the cross-sector focus group were to:

- draw together outcomes of the sector-specific focus groups held in May 2025
- develop a unified position on pre-requisite skills for the basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units of competency.

Participation in the focus groups was by invitation, with invitations extended to a range of stakeholders, including companies, industry groups, and private and public Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). All participants in the sector-specific focus group were invited to attend the cross-sector focus group.

Before the cross-sector focus group, all participants received a copy of the *Pathway to Tree Felling Skills - Focus Group Summary Report*. This document summarised the key outcomes of the sector-specific focus groups conducted to gather views on the development of prerequisites for the basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling units of competency.

At the cross-sector focus group, participants were provided with an overview of the:

- objectives of the Pathways to Tree Felling project
- project timeline
- current advice on the prerequisites for basic, intermediate and advanced manual tree felling in the FWP Training Package
- outcomes of the sector-specific focus groups
- common themes emerging from the sector-specific focus groups

Participants then took part in facilitated small group discussions focused on the:

- outcomes of the sector-specific focus groups
- preferred approach to addressing pre-requisite requirements for the three manual tree felling units of competency.
- support materials, activities, and materials required to implement the preferred approach.

Participants were informed that the results of the cross-sector focus group would be documented and shared with all participants. Additionally, these outcomes would be used to guide a broader consultation process scheduled for July to August 2025.

#### **4.0 Summary of outcomes of the cross-sector focus groups**

The key outcomes of the cross-sector focus group are outlined below:

- The participants agreed that safety was the overriding consideration in developing pre-requisite arrangements for the basic, intermediate, and advanced manual tree felling units of competency.
- The participants noted that feedback from State and Territory Training Authorities, as well as the advice in the Training Package Organising Framework, suggests that formal pre-requisites should be minimised unless a clear safety case can be demonstrated.
- The participants reviewed the outcomes of the sector-specific focus groups and agreed that:
  - There was a relatively high degree of agreement among the outcomes of the sector-specific focus groups regarding the five options identified in the Issues and Options Paper.
  - Options 1 and 4 in the Issues and Options Paper should not be pursued.
  - Option 5 may provide a way forward, but not at this point, and the opportunities presented by the Commonwealth's qualifications reform process may be more appropriate to consider during a full review of the qualification/Training Package.
  - Options 2 and 3, in their current form, did not present a viable way forward.
  - A hybrid option, combining elements of Options 2 and 3, provided the most viable way forward. The key features of the hybrid options are:
    - i. a statement describing the pre-existing skills that an individual must hold before enrolment in the basic, intermediate and advanced tree felling units of competency should be inserted in the Application section of each unit. The statement for each unit should be based on the pre-existing skills statements in the *Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually - April 2024*.
    - ii. an evidence guide that outlines the evidence individuals may present to demonstrate they have met the requirements of the pre-existing skills statement included in the Application section of each unit be developed. The forms of evidence might include:
      - a. Completion of a relevant unit[s] of competency

- b. RPL assessment
  - c. Skills test conducted by the RTO
  - d. Workplace experience
- iii. the evidence guide, described above, be included in an updated version of the *Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024*
- iv. a national professional development program, virtual or face-to-face, for RTO trainers and assessors, be designed and rolled out that addresses:
  - a. the proposed changes to the Application section in each unit of competency
  - b. how to apply the proposed Evidence Guide to be included in the updated version of the *Companion Volume User Guide: Fell Trees Manually – April 2024*

The participants reviewed a set of draft statements for inclusion in the Application section of each of the basic, intermediate, and advanced tree felling units of competency. Following the discussion, the participants recommended that the following statements be included in the units of competency:

- **FWPCOT2275 Fell trees manually (basic)** - Before commencing this unit, individuals must be able to safely start up, handle, operate, shut down and maintain a chainsaw. This can be verified by meeting the evidence requirements in the current version of the User Guide – Fall Tree Manually.
- **FWPCOT3350 Fell trees manually (intermediate)** - Before commencing this unit, individuals must be able to safely start up, handle, operate, shut down and maintain a chainsaw and perform trimming, cross-cutting, and basic tree felling techniques. This can be verified by meeting the evidence requirements in the current version of the User Guide – Fall Tree Manually.
- **FWPCOT3351 Fell trees manually (advanced)** - Before enrolling in this unit, individuals must have skills and knowledge in safely conducting intermediate tree felling operations using a chainsaw. This can be verified by meeting the evidence requirements in the current version of the User Guide – Fall Tree Manually.

The participants discussed the types of evidence that might be included in the proposed evidence guides, which would be incorporated into the *User Guide – Fall Tree Manually*. It was agreed that an evidence guide should be developed for each of the three tree-felling units of competency and that types of evidence would include:

- Units of competency – a list of units of competency from the FWP and other Training Packages
- Skills test – the key skills and knowledge that could be assessed through a time/cost-effective skills test administered by the RTO
- RPL – the outcomes of an RPL process that showed that the learner met the outcomes of one of the units of competency identified as meeting the pre-existing skills requirement
- Workplace or other evidence – a collection of evidence, such as a third-party report, video, job description, etc, which illustrates that the learner has the pre-existing skills requirement.

The participants identified samples of each of these four forms of evidence.

The participants identified a range of support materials that would be required to implement the arrangements described above. These included:

- National professional development workshops, online or face-to-face, for RTO compliance staff, trainers & assessors.
- Customisable evidence templates – learner self-assessment, employer, third-party report, assessor checklists.
- Short induction materials for employers explaining the new expectations so they can gather evidence before sending staff to be trained.
- Revision of the Companion volume, including moving history tables to an appendix and providing clear, unit-specific assessor guides.

The participants noted that a summary report of the meeting will be prepared and circulated to participants. The information gathered through the cross-industry focus group will inform the broader consultation that will be conducted in July-August 2025. Any changes to the units and companion volume resulting from this project will be addressed in a separate Skills Insights development project, provided funding is available.