

Career pathways in Australia's agricultural production industry

Career Pathways for
Agricultural Trades Project
Report

December 2025

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.



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Executive Summary

Australia's agricultural production sector is undergoing rapid transformation, driven by technological innovation, evolving production systems, and shifting workforce expectations. As the industry adapts to these changes, the need for clear, accessible, and appealing career pathways has become increasingly important. Persistent challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers, particularly at the trade level, are compounded by a proliferation of job titles and qualification structures that do not always reflect the complexity and autonomy required in modern agricultural roles.

This project was initiated to investigate these challenges by mapping career pathways relevant to agricultural production, with a particular focus on the potential for a dedicated trade qualification. The project draws on a mixed-methods research design, including in-depth consultation with employers, training providers, and workforce development professionals, systematic analysis of job advertisements, and a review of relevant qualifications in the *Agriculture, Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management Training Package* (AHC Training Package) and related occupations in the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA).

Key findings

- The diversity of Australia's agricultural production subsectors has led to a broad and often inconsistent array of job titles and pathways, which can be difficult for career seekers and employers to navigate.
- Many commonly used job titles, such as 'farm hand' or 'machinery operator', fail to convey the level of responsibility, technical expertise, and problem-solving required in contemporary agricultural work.
- The lack of clarity impacts recruitment and retention and can contribute to credential inflation (where minimum level of education or qualification required for a job increases over time), which can lead to underutilisation of skilled workers.
- Stakeholder feedback consistently emphasises the need for job titles and qualification pathways that accurately reflect the skills and responsibilities of workers at all levels, and that are appealing to both new entrants and experienced professionals.

In response, the project proposes a Job Classification Model that harmonises key frameworks and provides six clear job levels, from entry-level labourer to executive manager. This model is designed to be adaptable across industry subsectors and to support the proposed agricultural trade qualification. The proposed trade qualification is intended to complement, rather than replace existing AHC Training Package

Certificate III level agricultural qualifications and aims to produce autonomous, highly skilled workers with a broad and deep set of core skills, complemented by sector-specific specialisations described using an over-arching job title of 'Agriculturist'.

The research also identifies:

- the importance of recognition of prior learning (RPL) and the need for accessible tools to support skilled workers without formal qualifications
- the value of career mapping visuals and resources, which can help demystify pathways and support career progression
- the increasing significance of emerging skills, such as digital literacy, automation, compliance, and traceability, which are now core competencies for career progression in modern agriculture
- the need for improved alignment between qualification structures, job titles, and industry needs, to reduce confusion and support workforce mobility.

By clarifying the structure and progression of agricultural careers and proposing a job classification model that reflects the realities of a contemporary and modern agricultural workforce, this report aims to support industry, educators, and career advisors in attracting and developing the next generation of skilled agricultural professionals. The findings and recommendations are intended to inform ongoing qualification design, enhance career guidance, standardise industry and occupation classification to improve workforce data and contribute to the development of a resilient, capable, and future-ready agricultural workforce.

Recommended Action Areas

To build on the insights presented in this report, the following action areas are proposed for consideration by stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners. Each step is linked to the project findings and aims to support ongoing improvement, collaboration, and evidence-based decision-making in agricultural career mapping.

Area 1- Consistency in job classification, titles, descriptors and shared language

Rationale

Greater consistency in job classification, titles and descriptors across government bodies, agencies and industry would support improved workforce data quality and comparability.

Using the [proposed job classification model](#) to capture current agricultural workforce data would provide a shared framework for standardising job titles across industries and regions, supported by common language and clearer responsibility markers, including how roles are described and advertised.

This consistency would help provide a more accurate picture of the workforce, enabling better identification of trends and clearer insight into potential challenges and opportunities across the industry and its sectors.

Actions

1. Embrace the proposed job classification model.
2. Build advocates for a standardisation of job titles across industries and jurisdictions, working with sector representatives to develop shared language and clear responsibility markers.
3. Pilot the use of title families and scope statements in job advertisements and recruitment materials, assessing their impact on applicant understanding and mobility.
4. Consult with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) workers and indigenous groups to ensure that job titles and descriptors are accessible and inclusive.

Who should be involved?

Skills Insight to continue to involve key agricultural industry stakeholders, government departments and other relevant stakeholders to refine and implement the proposed job classification model.

Area 2 - Simplify the skills recognition tools

Rationale

Simplified tools for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC), in language that existing employees and employers in the agricultural workforce can understand, could improve the process of recognition of a person's existing skills. This will also enable the necessary qualified workforce to supervise the on-the-job training of ag trade apprentices. Current exploration by Jobs and Skills Australia on the National Skills Taxonomy has explicitly raised RLP. Skills Insight supports simplification but remains attuned to the need to consider safety in any changes.

Actions

1. Consult with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to explore documenting current practices of RPL or RCC, with a view to sharing effective best practice models and improving consistency.
2. Undertake further investigations into RPL evidence collection tools, to ensure they are in language that existing employers and workers understand. This will assist existing skilled workers who lack formal qualifications to achieve the core units and high usage elective units in current AHC Certificate III qualifications in Agriculture, Dairy Production, Feedlot Operations, Pork Production, Poultry Production or Production Horticulture. The tools should reference common holistic work-based tasks that clearly map to the performance criteria and the assessment requirements of the core units and high usage elective units.
3. RPL evidence collection tools should also be developed for the proposed Ag Trade qualification when it is created.

Who should be involved?

Skills Insight to encourage, advocate for and support industry and reputable RTOs in the development of recognition tools.

Area 3 - Guidance for people considering vertical, horizontal and diagonal career progression

Rationale

With appropriate careers and training advice, many people can develop an achievable 'stepping stones training pathway' into their desired job role.

In many instances, existing workers will already possess some of the knowledge and skills to transition to new roles and be in a position to undertake RPL towards their desired qualification or units of competency within the qualification.

Actions

1. Work with industry stakeholders and RTOs to identify 'existing skills and knowledge profiles' of workers that are not currently in the agricultural workforce, that have a strong likelihood of successfully transitioning into agricultural production.
2. Work with industry stakeholders and RTOs to develop example 'stepping stones training plans', including opportunities for recognition of prior learning (RPL), and support their use in recruiting and developing new workers.
4. Continue to support and advocate for the ongoing and consistent funding and use of Skills Sets across all state and territory jurisdictions to support skills acquisition and career progression.
5. Advocate for ongoing funding for the AgCAREERSTART program to attract new and under-represented cohorts into the agricultural industry and act as a retention pathway leading to the ag trade apprenticeship.
6. Engage with VET workforce practitioners to document staged entry and mentoring arrangements for trainers and assessors, to support workforce recruitment and retention.

Who should be involved?

Skills Insight to advocate for and support industry and reputable RTOs to develop additional resources to support career progression and development.

Introduction

Explaining career pathways in Australia's agricultural production industry to a person not familiar with this industry poses many challenges. Typically, a person exploring a career in industry will have questions such as:

- What are the typical job roles and levels in this industry?
- What prior education, training and work experience is required to get these jobs?
- What jobs are in demand - now and in the future?
- What income and other benefits do these jobs provide?
- What ongoing education, training and work experience is required to progress in the industry?



Compared to other industry sectors, the information required to answer questions that potential career seekers may have about the Australian agricultural production industry is not easy to find or interpret, for several reasons, including:

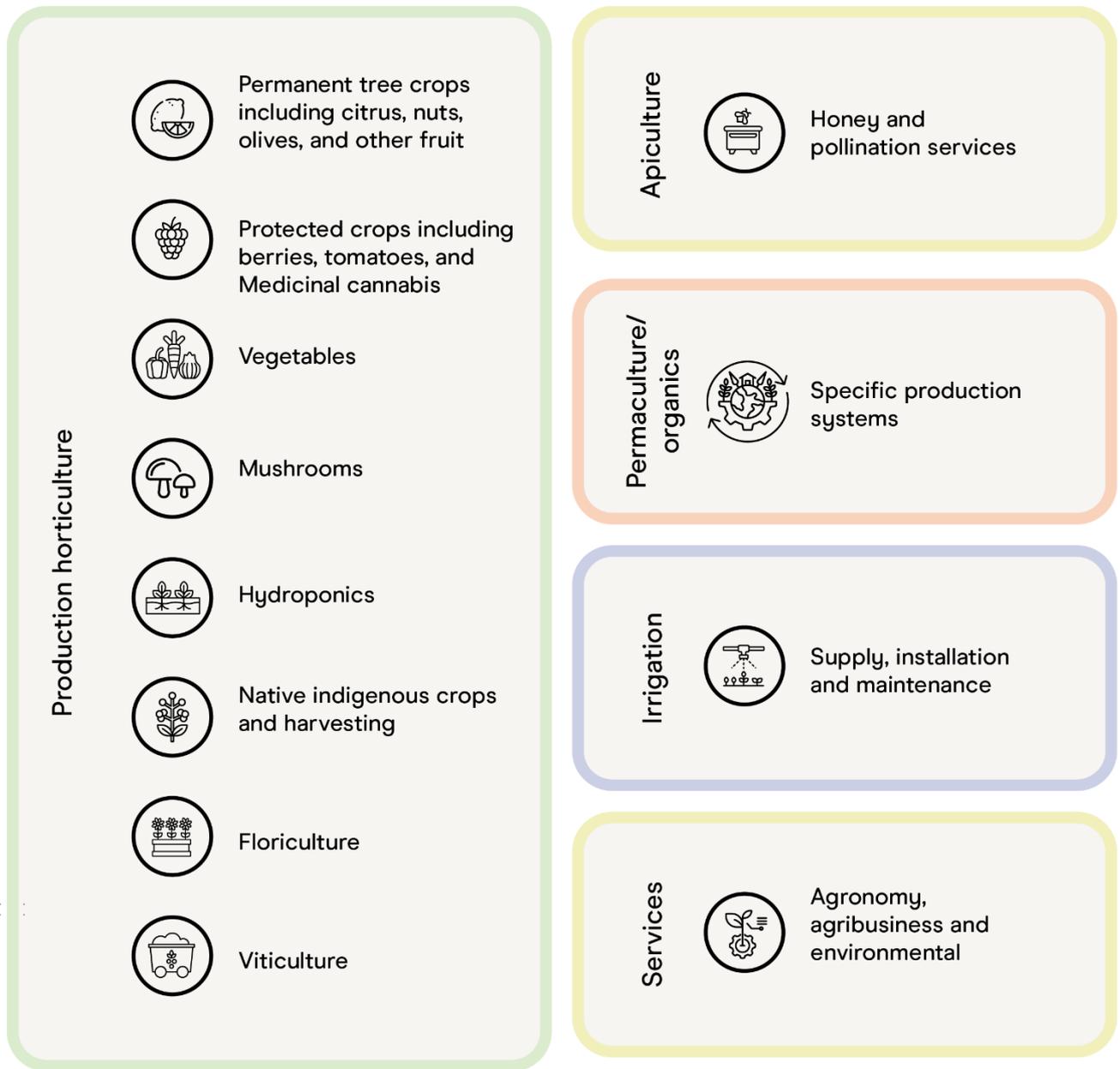
- agricultural production is not one homogenous industry. It consists of several commodity and service-based subsectors, and within these, the nature of the work may vary based on production systems and regional factors. For example, livestock production may occur on a remote cattle station, on a feedlot in a broadacre cropping area, or in fenced improved pasture paddocks in regions with year-round water supply. Figure 1 below provides an example of some agricultural production sectors.
- the variation of agricultural commodities and production systems has led to a wide range of job titles used to describe job roles and levels. This creates confusion for people outside the industry subsectors.
- many commonly used job titles such as 'farm hand', 'stock hand', 'farm worker', 'machinery operator' and 'vehicle operator' do not adequately convey the level, responsibilities, complexity and context of the actual job roles. In addition, stakeholders have identified that these job titles lack appeal to younger job seekers, particularly those who are not familiar with agricultural production.
- the existing frameworks and models (such as OSCA, Industrial Awards, and VET sector qualifications) that influence job titles and classifications information in agricultural production operate independently of each other, and lack harmony,

which adds to the complexity and confusion for individuals seeking accurate information and advice.

Figure 1: Australian Agricultural Production Industry Sectors



Figure 1: Australian Agricultural Production Industry Sectors



Australia’s agricultural sector is undergoing significant transformation, driven by technological innovation, evolving production systems, and changing workforce expectations. As the industry adapts to these shifts, the need for clear, accessible, and appealing career pathways has become increasingly important. Stakeholders across government, industry, and education have identified persistent challenges in attracting, developing and retaining skilled workers, particularly at the trade level, where the complexity and autonomy required in modern agricultural roles are not always reflected in current job titles or qualification structures.

The lack of clear and consistent job titles and career pathways not only impacts training, recruitment and retention but also contributes to credential inflation and underutilisation of skilled workers. Stakeholder feedback has consistently highlighted the need for job titles and qualification pathways that accurately reflect the skills and responsibilities of the agricultural production workforce. Stakeholders want job titles and pathways that are appealing for new entrants and also guide existing workers.

In response to these challenges, this project was initiated to investigate and map career pathways relevant to agricultural production, with a particular focus on pathways into a proposed trade qualification and apprenticeships that will be designed to meet industry needs and support workforce mobility. The project considered how to create clear and consistent job titles and pathways for all job levels, including entry, trade, supervisory and management roles.

Project Objectives

This project was guided by the following objectives:

- Identify and map career pathways for existing *AHC Agriculture, Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management Training Package (AHC TP)* agricultural qualifications.
- Identify and map career pathways for a potential Trade Pathway for agricultural occupations.
- Identify and synthesise stakeholder preferences and needs relating to occupational job titles.
- Identify opportunities for potential streamlining of qualifications and the articulation of new and emerging skills.
- Investigate and describe suitable pathways opportunities for people making vertical, horizontal and diagonal career moves, including pathways into the VET workforce.

Informed by the project objectives, this report aims to support industry, educators, and career advisors in attracting and developing the next generation of skilled agricultural professionals. The findings and recommendations presented here are intended to inform ongoing qualification design, enhance career guidance, and contribute to the development of a safe, productive, professional, and future-ready agricultural workforce.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach to examine career pathways in specific sectors of Australian agricultural occupations, combining qualitative consultation with systematic analysis of job market signals and policy documents. A steering committee was established at the outset of this project.

Research was conducted between April and October 2025. Below is a short description of each method.

1. Consultation activities included eight (8) workshops with 104 participants attending one of the 6 face-to-face workshops or 2 online workshops
 2. 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders including executives from a range of enterprise sizes, farm managers, training coordinators, and job board operators.
- A systematic analysis of agricultural job advertisements was conducted to examine career pathways and qualification requirements across the projects identified five key subsectors.

Appendix 1 provides more detailed information on the research and consultation activities.

Proposed job classification model

A [proposed job classification model](#) was created in response to project objectives one, two and three. The model:

- was developed after stakeholder consultation and research to harmonise some of the key frameworks/models that are currently used, creating a simpler framework based on clear and transparent criteria, primarily the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) descriptors.
- has been built based on a sample of *AHC Agriculture, Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management Training Package* qualifications that relate to dairy, livestock, intensive livestock, broadacre cropping and production horticulture.
- is an initial attempt to create a framework that industry stakeholders can use to promote careers and replace the large variety of job titles currently being used that are confusing to potential career enquirers.

The [Ag Trade Feasibility Report](#) (Skills Insight, April 2024) recommended the 'Development and widespread industry use of coherent and appealing occupational titles and job descriptions that are recognisable in industry and new entrants and people outside the industry.' (page 6). It is recommended that key industry associations consider and refine the model as they see fit to more effectively promote careers in agriculture.

Model overview

The proposed job classification model has six levels and generic titles, which have been designed to be adapted to reflect the needs of industry subsectors:

1. Farm labourer

Closely supervised labourer doing structured/defined repetitive tasks. Reflects: AQF Level 1 and OSCA Skill Level 5.

2. Assistant Agriculturist/Assistant Horticulturist

Supervised semi-skilled worker that completes routine tasks and solves basic problems. Reflects AQF Level 2 and OSCA Skill Level 4.

3. Agriculturist/Horticulturist

Autonomous highly skilled trade level worker that plans and completes own work and solves problems. Reflects AQF Level 3 and OSCA Skill Level 3.

4. Agricultural/Horticultural Production Supervisor

Autonomous highly skilled supervisor responsible for a team. May also be a specialist in part of the production system. Reflects AQF Level 4 and OSCA Skill Level 3.

5. Agricultural/Horticultural Production Manager

Manager responsible for the enterprise or part of the enterprise. Reflects AQF Level 5 and OSCA Skill Level 1.

6. Agribusiness Consultant or Agribusiness Executive Manager.

General or Executive Manager with overall responsibility for the enterprise. May also be a specialised consultant, technical manager or researcher. Reflects AQF Level 6 and OSCA Skill Level 1.

The challenge of aligning the AQF and OSCA

The starting point for the model was an analysis of the job outcomes related to the agricultural production qualifications in the AHC Training Package that are spread across AQF levels 1 to 6. These were aligned as closely as possible to the five Skill Levels used by OSCA (refer to the table below), noting that:

- OSCA Skill Levels start at level 5 and work up to level 1, whereas AQF levels start at 1 and increase upwards to 10. OSCA provides a **range** of AQF qualification levels for each of its five Skill Levels. This range allows for flexibility of interpretation. For example, OSCA Skill Level 3 has been aligned with both AQF level 3 - Agriculturist/Horticulturist trade level jobs, and AQF level 4 - Agricultural/Horticultural Production Supervisor jobs, as both levels can be fitted comfortably based on the duties and suggested subtitles provided by OSCA for the 'Senior worker' occupations cited in the model.

- The OSCA Skill Level explanations also state that a period of 'relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification'.
- OSCA does not have sector specific Occupations across all Skills Levels. For example - Skill Level 4 is missing for Horticulture related occupations, despite these being described in other sources such as the AHC qualifications and the Horticultural Award.
- OSCA Skill Level 2 (that references AQF level 5, 6 and 7) is not used in the proposed model because the example occupations provided by OSCA for Skill Level 2 do not align with the job outcomes of the AQF level 5 and 6 Agricultural Production qualifications in the AHC Training Package.
- The model has aligned Agricultural/Horticultural Production Manager (AQF Level 5) and Agribusiness Consultant or Agribusiness Executive Manager (AQF level 6) to OSCA Skill Level 1. This may seem inappropriate because OSCA states 'Skill Level 1 occupations have a level of skill commensurate with an AQF Bachelor Degree (AQF level 7) or higher qualification' but as can be seen from the table below the Occupations at Skill Level 1 include **Cotton Grower**. When exploring OSCA 151131 Cotton Grower it clearly describes the role of a Cotton Farm Manger, a job outcome covered by AHC50122 Diploma of Agriculture. This qualification also covers other agricultural production manager occupations that OSCA describes as Farmers at Skill Level 1. For example: 152131 Beef Cattle Farmer, 152231 Dairy Cattle Farmer and 1511 Broadacre Crop Growers.

OSCA Skill Level explanations

Source: [OSCA - Occupation Standard Classification for Australia](#)

Skill Level 5 occupations have a level of skill commensurate with:

- compulsory secondary education, or
- AQF Certificate I

A short period of on-the-job training may be required in addition to or instead of the formal qualification for some occupations. In other occupations, no formal qualification or on-the-job training may be required.

Skill Level 4 occupations have a level of skill commensurate with:

- AQF Certificate II, or
- AQF Certificate III.

At least one year of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification. In some cases, relevant experience may be required in addition to the formal qualification.

Occupations at Skill Level 4 include: Accounts Clerk, Assistant in Nursing, Bus Driver, Correctional Officer, Medical Receptionist, Miner, Security Officer, Sewing Machinist, Storeperson, and Waiter.

Skill Level 3 occupations have a level of skill commensurate with:

- AQF Certificate III which includes at least two years of on-the-job training, or
- AQF Certificate IV.

At least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification. In some cases, relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification.

Occupations at Skill Level 3 include: Automotive Electrician, Bookkeeper, Butcher, Dressmaker or Tailor, Early Childhood Educator, Electrical Fitter, Firefighter, Hairdresser, Real Estate Agent, and **Senior Cattle Station Worker**.

Skill Level 2 occupations have a level of skill commensurate with:

- AQF Diploma
- AQF Advanced Diploma, or
- AQF Associate Degree.

At least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification. In some cases, relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification.

Occupations at Skill Level 2 include: Executive Assistant, General Duties Police Officer, Hotel or Motel Manager, ICT Customer Support Officer, Medical Laboratory Technician, Office Manager, Plumbing Inspector, Post Office Manager, and Ship's Officer.

Skill Level 1 occupations have a level of skill commensurate with an AQF Bachelor Degree or higher qualification. At least five years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification. In some cases, relevant experience and/or on-the-job training may be required in addition to the formal qualification.

Occupations at Skill Level 1 include: Civil Engineer, Composer, **Cotton Grower**, Mathematician, Nurse Practitioner, Paediatrician, Sales and Marketing Manager, Secondary School Teacher, and Software Engineer.

Table 1 below provides an excerpt from the proposed job classification model for the **Agriculturist** job title and level. It shows how the various titles currently being used to describe agricultural production job roles that reflect AQF level 3 and OSCA Skill Level 3 can be replaced with an overarching job title and level, and how this title can be

adapted to reflect industry subsectors and existing occupations within OSCA. In the example, more than fifty job titles related to livestock and broadacre cropping production have been replaced with seven suggested generic job titles, which have been customised and cross referenced to a related OSCA job classification and title.

Part of the project research and consultation was to identify a title for trade equivalent workers that the proposed [Ag Trade Apprenticeship](#) will produce. The majority of stakeholders consulted during face-to-face and online workshops, and also interviewees, supported the title of **Agriculturist** because it is simple, reflects the specialist technical knowledge and skills required to succeed in this role, and because it has broader appeal than other more archaic terms currently being used. It was acknowledged by many stakeholders that the transition from the current titles to Agriculturist will require some education, marketing and time to gain broader acceptance.

The 'Legend' below is from the [proposed job classification model](#). It explains the source of the key criteria used by the model and explains some abbreviations and formatting used in the model. It is provided to help the reader understand Table 1.

Legend

1. Typical job role/s are suggestions based on an interpretation of the 'Application of knowledge and skills' in the 'AQF qualification type learning outcomes descriptors'. Refer to the [Australian Qualification Framework](#) (AQF Version 2, 2013)
2. OSCA Skill Levels are taken from the [OSCA - Occupation Standard Classification for Australia](#) (Version 1.0, 2024)
3. Award Classifications provide a suggested alignment of job classifications from the [Pastoral Award 2020](#) and [Horticulture Award 2020](#) and AQF qualification levels
4. The [AHC qualifications](#) relate to Dairy, Livestock, Intensive Livestock, Broadacre Cropping and Production Horticulture
5. The current job titles in **black text** are taken from the AHC qualifications and/or the related [AHC Companion Volume Implementation Guide \(CVIG\)](#)
6. The current job titles in **blue text** have been provided by stakeholders during consultation. Where possible, the blue text job titles also have the source of the feedback, shown in brackets. The following abbreviations have been used:
 - 'Online' means the feedback was provided during online stakeholder consultation workshops held on 8 and 9 May 2025
 - 'PSC' means the feedback was provided during a Project Steering Committee meeting held on 28 May 2025.

Table 1: Excerpt from the proposed job classification model for Agriculturist

AQF Level and Typical job role	OSCA Skill Level	AHC qualifications and Current Job Titles	Award classifications	Proposed Job Classification and Title	Suggested Titles and related OSCA Occupations
<p>AQF Level 3</p> <p>Autonomous highly skilled trade level worker that plans and completes own work and solves problems.</p>	<p>Skill Level 3</p>	<p>AHC30122 Certificate III in Agriculture (Includes Livestock, Intensive Livestock and Broadacre Cropping Production)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm or station hand • Farm or station worker • Livestock transport driver. <p>Livestock Production</p> <p><i>Rural context</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled farm hand (Beef/Sheep) (NSW) • Highly skilled farm worker (Beef/Sheep) (NSW) • Farmer (online) • Agricultural Technician (Livestock production) (NSW and online) <p><i>Remote context</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stockperson (Beef) • Musterer (Beef) • Bore runner (Beef) • Drover (Sheep) • Farm Technician (QLD) • Livestock production specialist (QLD) • Maintenance technician (QLD) • Contract musterer (QLD) <p>Broadacre Cropping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled Agricultural Technician (broadacre 	<p>Pastoral Award:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm and livestock hand (FLH) Levels 6 to 7. • Piggery attendant level 5 • Poultry farm worker level 4 	<p>3. Agriculturist</p> <p>(Aligns with AQF Level 3 and OSCA Skill Level 3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculturist (Livestock Production) • Agriculturist (Intensive Livestock Production) • 343231 Senior Beef Cattle Station Worker (OSCA SL 3) • 343232 Senior Cattle and Sheep Farm Worker (OSCA SL 3) • 343236 Senior Sheep Farm Worker (OSCA SL 3) • 343299 Senior Livestock Farm Workers nec) (OSCA SL 3) • Agriculturist (Dairy Production) 343233 Senior Dairy Cattle Farm Worker (OSCA SL 3) • Agriculturist (Pork Production) 343235 Senior Piggery Stockperson (OSCA SL 3) • Agriculturist (Poultry Production) 343299 Senior

		<p>cropping) (WA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled Agricultural Technician (Mechanical - plant and machinery operations) (WA) • Skilled Agricultural Technician (drones and other emerging technologies) (PSC) • Machinery Operator for planting and harvesting (includes harvester / combine operator and trucks) (PSC) • Broad acre cropping technician (QLD) • Assistant farm /production manager (QLD) • Precision Agric technician (QLD) • Pest and disease checker (VIC) • Tractor Operator (VIC) • Skilled Agricultural Technician (Irrigation) (mainly eastern states) (PSC) <p>AHC30224 Certificate III in Dairy Production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dairy production farmhand • Dairy worker • Dairy farm leading hand (WA) • Agricultural Technician (Dairy production) (QLD and online) • Senior farm hand - (WA, QLD and PSC) • Farm Technician (QLD) • Livestock production specialist (QLD) • Maintenance technician (QLD) <p>AHC33325 Certificate III in Feedlot Operations</p>			<p>Livestock Farm Workers nec (OSCA SL 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculturist (Broadacre Crop Production) 343136 Senior Broadacre Crop Farm Worker (OSCA SL 3) • 343135 Senior Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farm Worker (OSCA SL 3) • 343199 Senior Aquaculture, Crop and Forestry Workers nec (OSCA SL 3)
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedlot maintenance worker • Feedlot hand • Feed mill operator • Feed mill hand • Livestock farm worker • Livestock hand • Pen rider • Feedlot administration worker • Agricultural Technician (Feedlot operations) (Online) • Farm Technician (QLD) • Livestock production specialist (QLD) • Maintenance technician (QLD) <p><i>AHC30422 Certificate III in Pork Production</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piggery attendant • Pork stock person • Piggery hand (VIC) • Production worker (VIC) <p><i>AHC30522 Certificate III in Poultry Production</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poultry farm technician • Poultry breeding technician • Egg grading technician • Poultry services provider • Hatchery technician • Poultry hand (VIC) 			
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Benefits of the proposed job classification model

Simplicity, clarity and objectivity

The model provides an objective and equitable way to compare occupations and levels based on the transparent criteria provided by the AQF and OSCA Occupations and Skill Levels. It has the potential to replace many job titles that have variable interpretations with fewer job titles that have more objective and consistent interpretations.

The model has six generic job levels and related titles that can be contextualised by adding the industry/commodity subsector to the title. Some examples for the manager level and role may include:

- Agricultural Production Manager (Cotton) which is reflected in OSCA 151131 Cotton Grower
- Agricultural Production Manager (Broadacre Cropping) which is reflected in OSCA 151132 Grain, Oilseed, Pulse or Pasture Grower
- Agricultural Production Manager (Broadacre Cropping and Livestock) which is reflected in OSCA 151332 Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farmer
- Agricultural Production Manager (Livestock Production) which is reflected in OSCA 151332 Broadacre Crop and Livestock Farmer
- Agricultural Production Manager (Pork Production) which is reflected in OSCA 152934 Pig Farmer
- Horticultural Production Manager (Vegetables) which is reflected in OSCA 151236 Vegetable Grower
- Horticultural Production Manager (Fruit) which is reflected in OSCA 151232 Fruit Grower
- Horticultural Production Manager (Viticulture) which is reflected in OSCA 151237 Wine Grape Grower

Career Guidance

The model can be used to promote agricultural production jobs and career pathways through titles and levels that more accurately reflect the work and have broader appeal. The six clear job levels demonstrate a linear (vertical) pathway for career seekers that starts from low skilled to highly skilled.

The model also enhances the status and appeal of the trade level role by calling it an Agriculturist or Horticulturist rather than a 'farm hand'. This change will contribute to the creation and implementation of the Ag Trade Apprenticeship proposed by the National Farmers Federation in their 2030 Roadmap - Australian Agriculture's Plan for a \$100 Billion Industry (NFF, 2018), that was also supported by the National

Agricultural Labour Advisory Committee in the National Agriculture Workforce Strategy (Azaris et al., 2020). The model shows pathways into the trade level role and pathways beyond trade level roles.

More accurate careers information

The project explored websites that describe occupations and provide career information, and found inconsistencies and anomalies regarding job titles, levels and educational requirements. The model can be used to provide [more accurate and useful career guidance](#), by reducing the current inconsistencies and anomalies.

For example, currently a person seeking to become a farm manager may be guided to enrol in a Bachelor Degree or higher as the recommended pathway. It appears the ANZCO and OSCA descriptors for 'Farmer' and 'Grower' occupations which align the Skill Level to a Bachelor Degree or higher may have created 'credential inflation' and anomalies in the messages being provided to career seekers. While a higher education qualification may be appropriate for some, many new entrants into agriculture would be better advised to undertake a Certificate III qualification via a traineeship/apprenticeship pathway to become an agriculturist. With further work experience, an individual may seek to become a farm manager, either via a Diploma in Agriculture or a Bachelor Degree.

The project included research on how current job titles and their usage may impact recruitment. For example, Table 5: Potential Ambiguity and Overlap in Advertised Job Titles

provides examples of how the same job title is used to represent roles with different Skill Levels according to OSCA. The model can be used to improve recruitment practices by providing agreed terminology on job levels and titles.

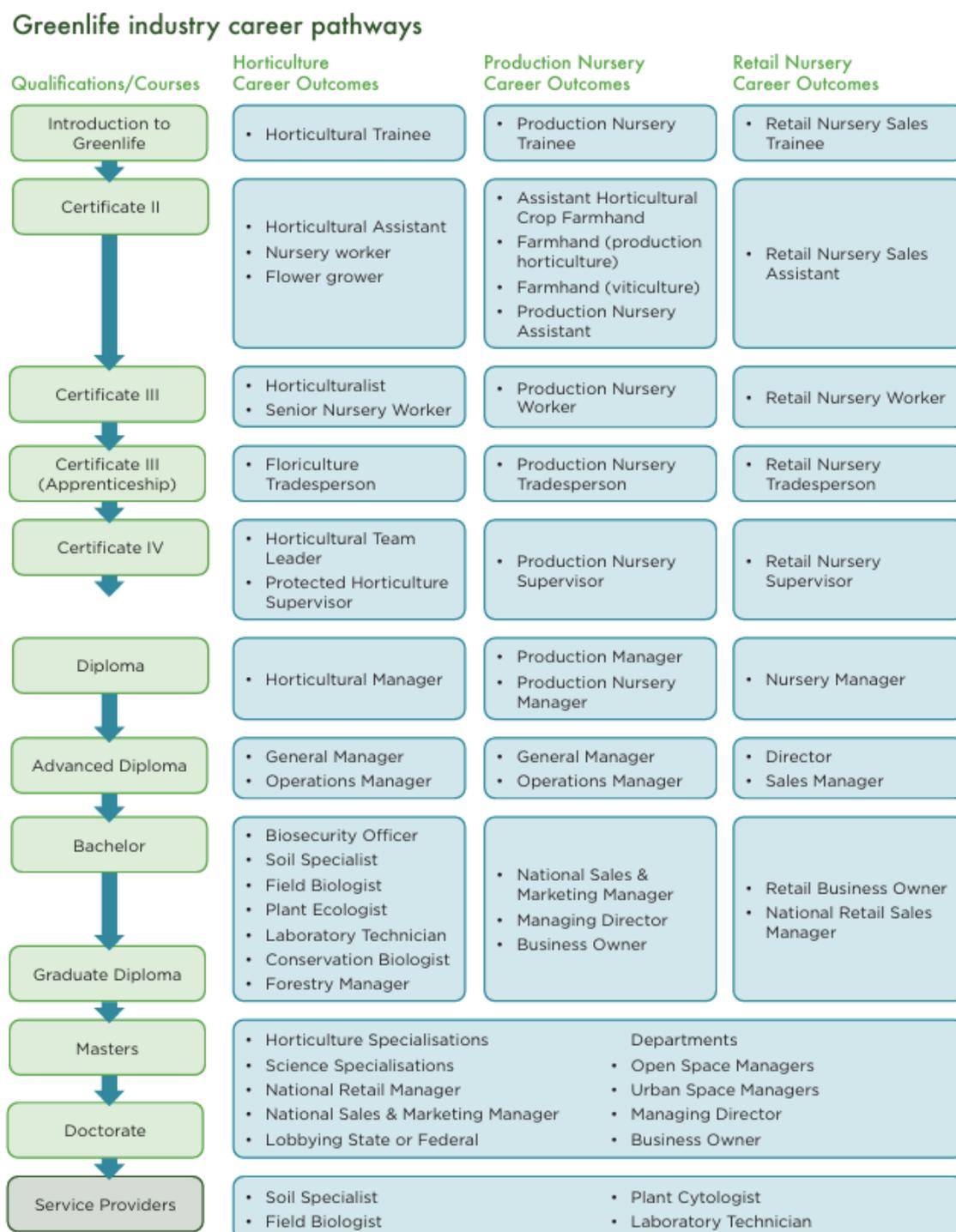
The Greenlife Industry career pathways flow chart in Figure 2 below provides examples of job roles related to AQF qualifications in the horticulture industry. The proposed job classification model was developed without any knowledge of this flow chart and yet there are several similarities between the horticulture industry job titles in this flow chart and the proposed job classification model.

Table 2: Similarities of career outcomes

Australian Qualification Level	Greenlife Industry - Horticulture career outcomes	Proposed job classification model - horticulture sector job titles
Certificate II	Horticultural Assistant	Assistant Horticulturist
Certificate III	Horticulturist	Horticulturist

Certificate IV	Protected Horticulture Supervisor	Horticultural Production Supervisor
Diploma	Horticultural Manager	Horticultural Production Manager
Advanced Diploma	General Manager	Agribusiness Executive Manager

Figure 2: Greenlife Industry Australia career pathways flow chart (2021)



Ag career pathways

Stakeholder feedback on job titles and typical pathways

A key part of the project research and consultation was to identify and map career pathways, and especially the pathway into the proposed Ag Trade level role which has

been described above as an Agriculturist or Horticulturist. Early in the project, Skills Insight conducted face-to-face and online consultation workshops to collect stakeholder feedback on current job titles and suggested job titles that correspond to the occupational outcomes of the agricultural production qualifications in the AHC Training Package that range from AQF levels 1 to 6.

To facilitate the process, participants in the face-to-face workshops were provided with a worksheet that included a summary of the AQF's 'Application of Skills and Knowledge' descriptors for levels 1 to 6, along with 4 to 5 examples of generic job roles that reflect these levels. Participants were then allocated an industry subsector they were familiar with and asked to list the job roles/titles related to AQF levels 1 to 6 for their subsector. It was this process that built the [Ag Careers Mapping document](#) that was available for broader stakeholder feedback on the project website during June - July 2025.

During these workshops participants were also asked to describe the typical pathways (prior educational, training and work experience requirements) to work in their respective industry subsectors, for the job roles at:

- **supervised semi-skilled worker** that completes routine tasks and solves basic problems. For example: vehicle operator, machinery operator, farm hand, station hand and roustabout.
- **autonomous highly skilled trade level worker** that plans and completes own work and solves problems. For example: tradesperson, skilled technician, precision machinery/vehicle operator and contractor.
- **manager** responsible for the enterprise or part of the enterprise. For example: manager, production manager, analyst, agronomist and consultant.

Based on the feedback from stakeholders during the consultation workshops, the pathways vary according to the industry subsector, local skill shortages/requirements, local secondary school vocational programs and/or work experience programs, the availability of seasonal work, and industry led programs to attract and develop workers. Table 3 below provides a summary of the stakeholder feedback for each of the job levels.

Table 3: Job role and educational and work experience requirements

Job role	Educational and work experience expectations
<p>Supervised semi-skilled worker that completes routine tasks and solves basic problems.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle operator • Machinery operator • Farm hand • Station hand • Roustabout 	<p>The livestock/animal production-based sectors seek a person that has completed a Certificate II qualification or similar level 'taster' program and had some work experience on a livestock farm.</p>
	<p>The broadacre crop production sectors want a person that has completed a Certificate II qualification or similar level 'taster' program and had some work broad acre cropping experience. This experience may have been gained via seasonal/holiday work or school arranged work experience program.</p>
	<p>The production horticulture sectors are prepared to hire people that have not completed Certificate II or similar taster program. Work experience in the sector is valued, including high school work experience from Year 9 upwards.</p>
	<p>All sectors above, during times of worker shortage, will also employ a person without education and work experience, if the person is physically capable of manual work, reliable, teachable and willing to work long hours when needed.</p>
<p>Autonomous highly skilled trade level worker that plans and completes own work and solves problems.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tradesperson • Skilled technician • Precision machinery/vehicle operator • Contractor 	<p>The livestock/animal production-based sectors want a person that is undertaking or has completed a Certificate III qualification via traineeship/apprenticeship pathway. This pathway requires a person to be employed on a farm under supervision for approximately two years. A specialisation and work experience (for example - in beef, dairy, feedlot, sheep or pork) as part of the qualification is highly regarded.</p>
	<p>The broadacre crop production sectors want a person that is undertaking or has completed a Certificate III in Agriculture (with a focus on units of competency related to this broadacre cropping) via a traineeship/apprenticeship pathway. This pathway requires a person to be employed on a farm under supervision for approximately two years.</p> <p>These sectors will also consider upskilling a person to become a trade level worker if the person has achieved a <i>Certificate II in Agriculture</i> that includes broadacre crop production units of competency and at least two growing seasons. During times of severe skill shortages, these sectors will also employ people with suitable broadacre farm-based work experience (including vehicle/machinery operation) and upskill them in the workplace.</p>

	<p>The production horticulture sectors want a person that is undertaking or has completed a <i>Certificate III in Production Horticulture</i> via traineeship/apprenticeship pathway. This pathway requires a person to be employed on a farm under supervision for approximately two years.</p> <p>These sectors will also consider upskilling a person to become a trade level worker if the person has achieved a <i>Certificate II in Production Horticulture</i> and at least two growing seasons. During times of severe skill shortages, these sectors will also employ people with suitable production horticulture farm-based work experience (especially licenses to operate /drive a forklift and truck, and chemical handling certificates) and upskill them in the workplace.</p>
<p>Manager responsible for the enterprise or part of the enterprise.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager • Production manager • Analyst • Agronomist • Consultant 	<p>The livestock/diary/broadacre production-based sectors suggested that a trade level worker with about 10 years' farm work experience that included supervising other workers would then need to undertake one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma in Agriculture • Advanced Diploma of Agribusiness Management • Bachelor degree and/or higher qualification in Agricultural Science, Agribusiness or Business Management <p>These sectors also stated that larger employers run graduate trainee programs for people coming via higher education pathways, but these roles require several years farming experience for a person to succeed.</p> <p>The production horticulture sectors suggested that a trade level worker with several years' production horticulture work experience that included supervising other workers, would then need to undertake one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate IV in Production Horticulture • Diploma of Production Horticulture

Pathways for a potential trade apprenticeship

Background

The Career Pathways for Agricultural Trades Project explored pathways for the potential Ag Trade Apprenticeship.

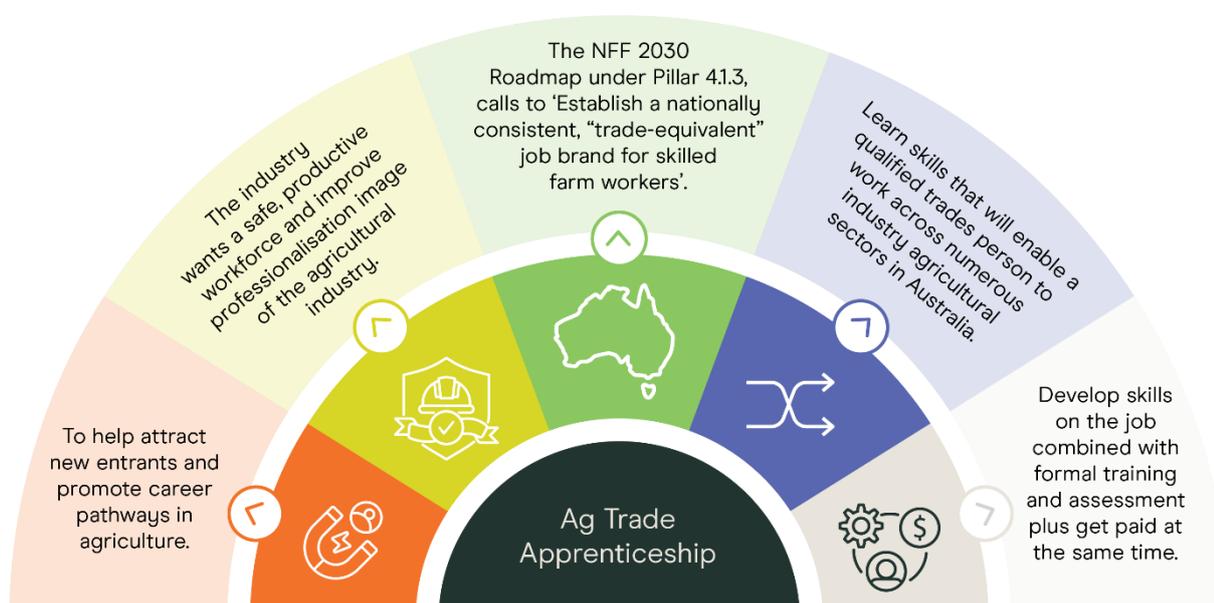
The design and structure of Australian vocational qualifications have evolved over the past 30 years, responding to workforce changes and challenges generally driven by technology, regulation and compliance, and finally the policy frameworks that guide the development and endorsement of Training Package Products. Trade qualifications are predominately aligned with AQF Level 3 and typically used to describe the knowledge and skills required for workers to undertake trade level roles. These qualifications have been the cornerstone of many apprenticeship pathways.

As such, these Certificate III qualifications typically reflect a specific trade role and mandate a large number of core units and a limited choice of electives. For example, *Certificate III in Carpentry* describes the knowledge and skills required for a trade level carpenter. It requires a total of 34 units of competency – 27 core units and 7 elective units. The elective choices are limited to guide users to specialise in Commercial, Residential and Formwork Carpentry. Like most traditional trade occupations, a Carpenter and the apprenticeship pathway required to become one, is generally well understood in our society.

In contrast, AHC Training Package agricultural production Certificate III qualifications have evolved to be more generic (in part to meet the variety of subsectors/commodities within industry) and also the challenges that RTOs and employers experience training workers in an industry that can be challenged by factors outside of its control. These include – input costs, drought, floods, pests, biosecurity risks, labour shortages, access to processing facilities, supply chains, wholesale and retail demand, international markets, and evolving consumer choices. This has led to less prescriptive Certificate III qualifications that typically require 16 units, few of which are core, that are considered more flexible and easier/quicker to deliver.

This flexibility has also resulted in Certificate III qualifications that lack the breadth and depth of knowledge and skills to produce the autonomous, highly skilled trade level workers needed to succeed in modern agricultural production. A skilled trade level worker in Agriculture (i.e. Agriculturist/Horticulturist) is not widely understood, especially by people unfamiliar with the agricultural industry. The qualification and apprenticeship pathway required to create these workers needs to be developed and promoted widely to develop the skilled workers needed by industry.

Proposal for an Ag Trade Apprenticeship



A research project into the feasibility of an Ag Trade Apprenticeship was conducted by Skills Insight Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) and the findings were published in the [Ag Trade Apprenticeship Feasibility Report \(Skills Insight, April 2024\)](#), which recommended several actions to establish an Ag Trade Apprenticeship, including the development of a dedicated trade qualification. An example trade qualification titled 'Certificate III in Agricultural Production' is available in the Feasibility Report.

What might the proposed Ag Trade Apprenticeship look like?

- A prescriptive yet flexible qualification to develop autonomous, highly skilled workers in broadacre cropping, dairy, and livestock production.
- Designed to be delivered via an apprenticeship typically over three to four years to provide a variety of growing seasons, contexts and commodities.
- Apprenticeship combines paid employment, on-the-job training, and formal study with a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

Including:

- A robust core of 20 core units (covering health and safety, biosecurity, plant/soil management, machinery, digital skills, quality assurance, record keeping, communication, and more).
- Packaging rules that require the achievement of at least one specialisation:
 - Broadacre cropping: 14 elective units

- Dairy production: 18 elective units
- Livestock production: 15 elective units
- Options for dual specialisations (e.g., cropping and dairy) by completion of additional elective units.

Next Project

- Skills Insight will commence in 2026 the development of a new nationally recognised Certificate III in Agricultural Trade qualification and associated units within the AHC Training Package, designed for delivery via an apprenticeship. The project will build on prior feasibility work and strong industry and jurisdictional support. Skills Insight will invite participation in the development of this project in early 2026.

Pathways into the proposed Ag Trade Apprenticeship

The pathways described below assume that a fit for purpose trade level Certificate III qualification has been developed by Skills Insight in collaboration with key industry and training stakeholders according to the requirements of the TPOF 2025, and has been endorsed by the Commonwealth Skills Ministers, published on the National Training Register, and declared an Apprenticeship by each state and territory jurisdiction.

It is not expected that the proposed trade level qualification will have entry requirements, so any individual with the appropriate language, literacy and numeracy skills can commence an apprenticeship if the three key parties can be found and agree to the apprenticeship contract and training plan. This however needs to be tempered with the reality that apprenticeship completions in trade occupations between 2019 – 2023 were 54% (NCVER, 2024), so before committing to an apprenticeship, employers are naturally cautious and seek apprentices that are likely to be a good fit for their workplace and therefore, more likely to complete the apprenticeship. RTO's may also be selective in whom they enrol, as they have a responsibility to support the learners to successfully achieve the qualifications in which they have enrolled. The pathways into the proposed Ag Trade Apprenticeship include:

1. Completion of the *Certificate II in Agriculture* or *Certificate II in Rural Operations* that include elective units related to Livestock, Dairy and Broadacre Crop Production in conjunction with previous work experience on a farm. This pathway may provide direct Credit Transfer for a few units related to machinery and vehicle operations that are available in the Certificate IIs and also listed as electives in the proposed *Certificate III in Agricultural Production*.
2. Completion of an existing Certificate III qualification (i.e.: Agriculture or Dairy Production or Feedlot Operations) combined with work experience on a farm.

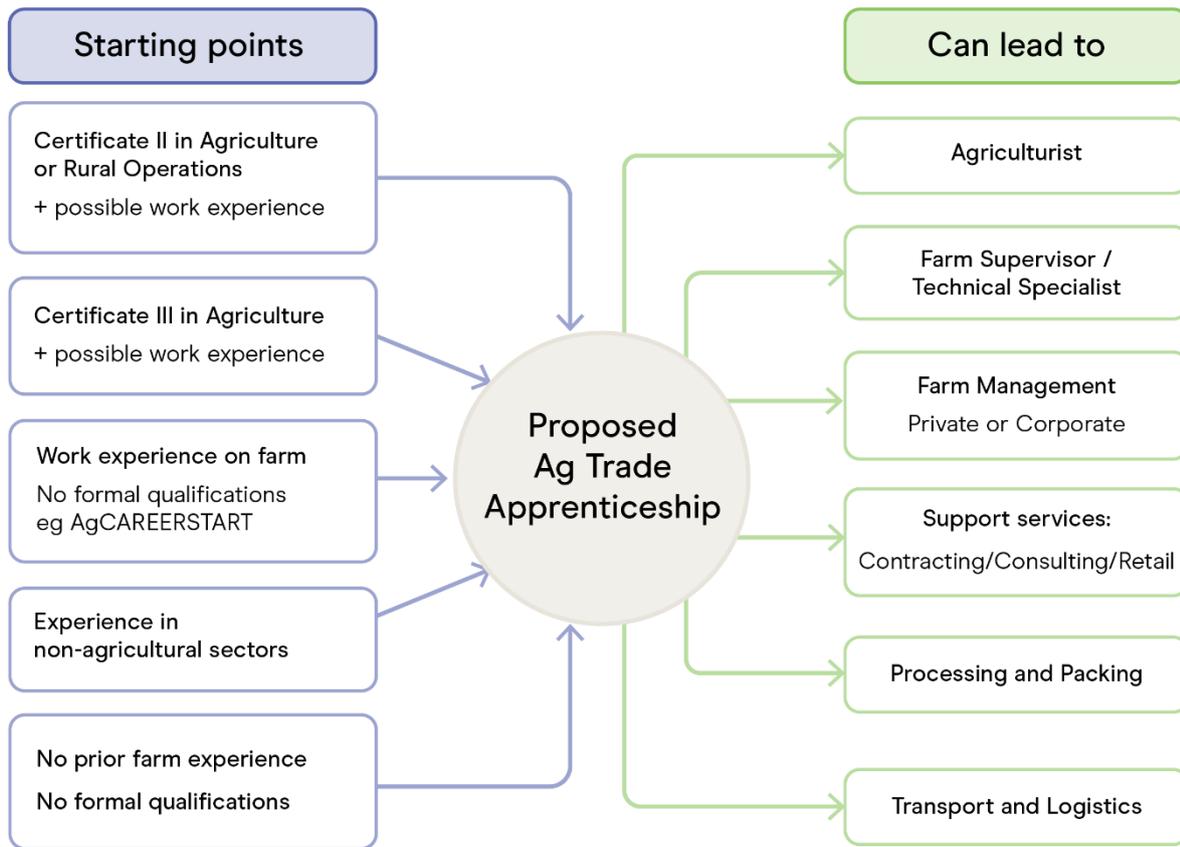
This pathway is likely to provide direct Credit Transfer for several units listed in the proposed *Certificate III in Agricultural Production*. It is possible these experienced workers may also have the opportunity to receive RPL for some of the units in the proposed *Certificate III in Agricultural Production*.

3. Experienced and skilled farm workers who do not have a formal qualification but are operating at trade level in their current job roles will likely successfully complete the proposed *Certificate III in Agricultural Production* and also have enhanced opportunities to receive RPL for some of the units in the proposed qualification.
4. Individuals participating in the AgCAREERSTART program or similar industry led programs would be perfectly suited to enrol in a qualification such as the proposed Ag Trade Apprenticeship. While these programs are not directly linked to a formal qualification, they provide robust work experience and develop foundational skills in agricultural production.
5. A person may also undertake the proposed trade qualification via an apprenticeship without prior education, training or work experience in agriculture and successfully complete the apprenticeship. It is not unusual to hear stories of people that become disillusioned with their current study or career pathway and go on to become successful tradespeople.
6. Many agricultural production sectors use heavy vehicles, equipment and machinery that are also used in many other industry sectors, including mining, civil construction, conservation and land management, landscaping, transport and logistics, and forestry. Existing workers in these sectors possess many transferable skills that will enable them to successfully undertake the proposed trade qualification. To assist these workers to achieve this qualification, it is recommended that a project be undertaken that maps the current skills these workers have to the units in the proposed qualification.

With respect to pathway two described above, it is not envisaged that the proposed trade qualification will replace the current AHC Certificate III qualifications. These existing qualifications can be used as stepping stones that prepare people to undertake the proposed trade qualification.

The current *AHC30122 Certificate III in Agriculture* is well suited for incremental career planners and people who prefer to explore options, build skills gradually, or respond to local job market conditions.

Pathways into and beyond the proposed Ag Trade Apprenticeship



*Communication skills, people skills and a positive attitude will assist the learner to be successful

Career pathway mapping

Career mapping supports

The project research found various industry associations, employer and careers websites present careers advice using visuals - often in the form of maps or pathway diagrams. Many of these visuals provide 'stepping stones' to the next level in a career journey, and the qualifications associated with specific job roles. The '*Job roles in the Greenlife Industry*' flow chart shown in Figure 2 is a good example of a linear pathway in horticulture related industries.

'We've done a lot of work around providing a visual on career pathways for our own employees.' -Employer

While providing career pathways information using diagrams and maps is beneficial, there are two key risks of which to be aware:

1. Ensuring the information provided is accurate and current, especially when it relates to the qualifications and other technical requirements for a job.
2. The visual pathways presented being interpreted too rigidly and limiting potential individual career moves to the typically vertical pathways that are displayed.

To negate this second risk, many career websites provide real life examples of people who have made successful **vertical, horizontal and diagonal** career moves.

Vertical, horizontal and diagonal career pathways

This section investigates plausible pathway opportunities for people making vertical, horizontal and diagonal career moves across agricultural subsectors, and for practitioners entering the Vocational Education and Training (VET) workforce.

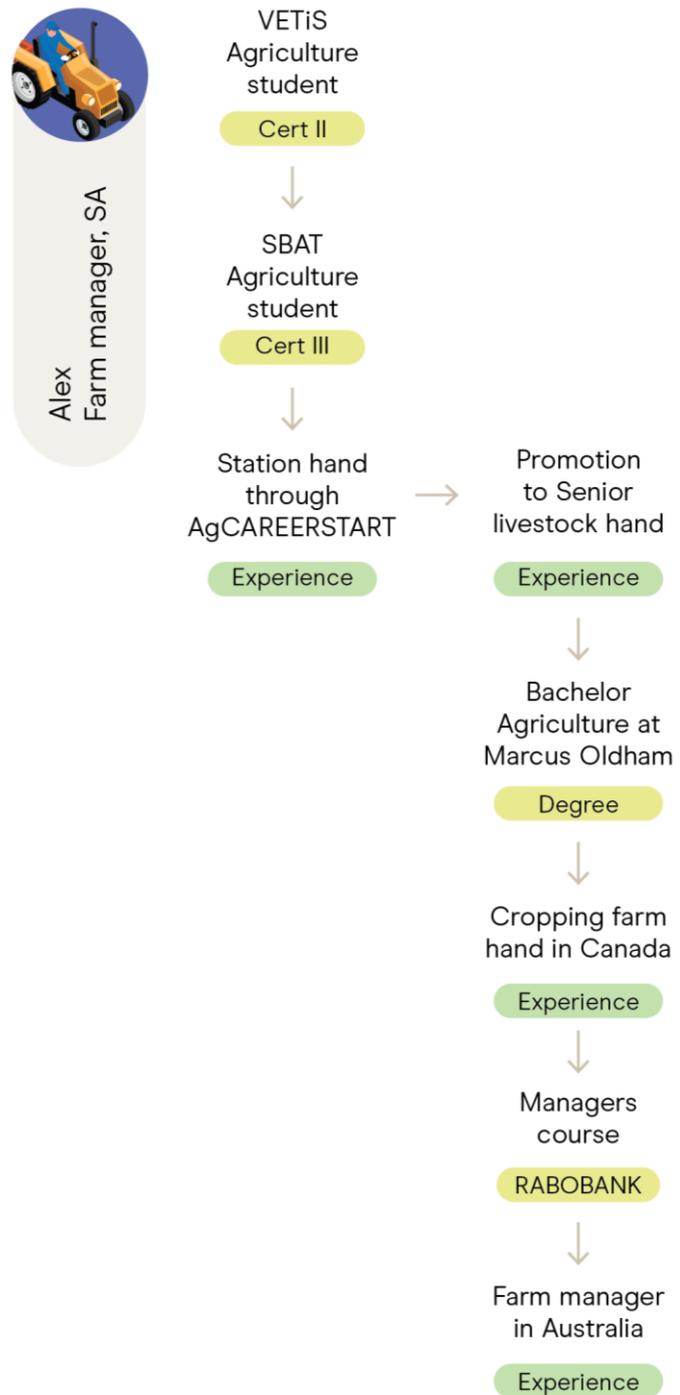
Vertical moves

Vertical moves occur when a person advances within the same industry sector/s, and takes on more responsibility, discretion, autonomy and influence on people and production systems. Using the proposed job classification model, vertical moves typically include a transition from Assistant Agriculturist to Agriculturist to Agricultural Production Supervisor and then Agricultural Production Manager levels.

Vertical moves are often misunderstood as a matter of only additional technical content, which may be the case if an individual is moving up into a specialist technical role that does not require supervision or management of others. For example, a pest control specialist or an animal breeding specialist. Most vertical moves typically also require people management and leadership for success. For example, coordination of people and resources, planning, budgeting, and problem solving. A worker who has mastered technical skills, may still be unprepared for supervision of others.

Recent research on non-technical skills shows why this distinction matters: communication, teamwork and problem-solving are important at all levels, while strategic planning and creativity/innovation rise in importance in supervisory and managerial roles (CQU, n.d.). It is common for aspiring managers to undertake formal training in leadership and business management, typically at diploma level and above.

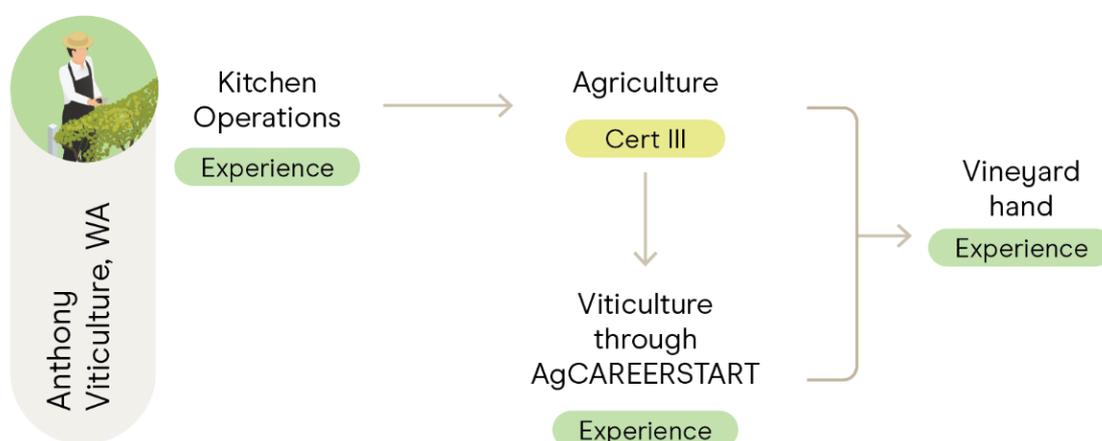
Appendix 2 .



Horizontal moves

Horizontal moves occur when an individual moves into a different industry sector while retaining the same job level. For example, an irrigation manager in production horticulture may become an irrigation manager in broadacre cropping which may not require additional training.

Horizontal moves typically depend on transferable knowledge and skills. Across the agricultural and horticultural production sectors, transferable knowledge and skills may include communication, teamwork, planning, problem solving, workplace health and safety, biosecurity, irrigation, soil management, weed, pest and disease control, chemical handling and application, equipment/machinery/vehicle operation, infrastructure and equipment maintenance, quality assurance, traceability and record keeping.



Appendix 3

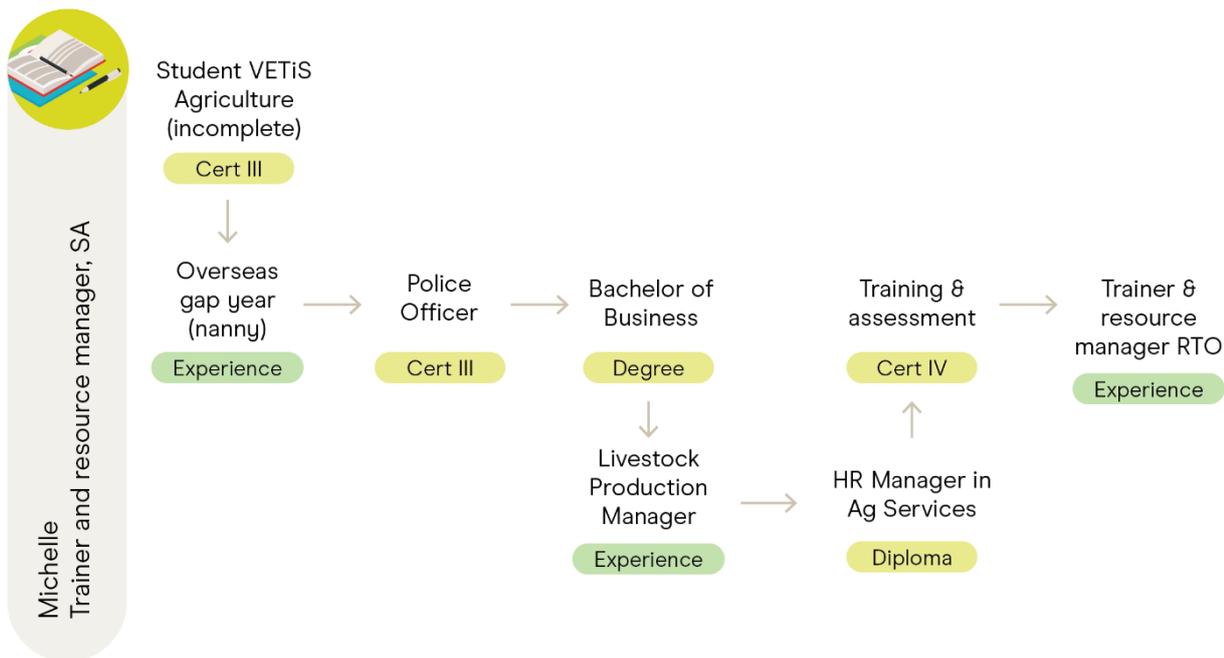
Diagonal moves

Diagonal moves typically combine a sector change with an increase in responsibility. For example, a horticulturist becomes a rural supplies retail manager. A diagonal move may also occur within the same industry sector or even the same organisation. For example, a livestock breeding specialist moves into the role of general manager of livestock production.

Diagonal moves may be more complicated than vertical and horizontal moves. They ask the worker to demonstrate the foundations of a new industry sector (or another part of the business) and to assume higher-level responsibilities. To increase the likelihood of a successful move, employers typically look for comparable experience in other sectors. For example, previous successful supervisory, planning and budgeting experience in another sector. Training can then fill specific gaps, and supervised

practice can make the added responsibility visible over time (AUSVEG, 2025; Skills Insight, 2025).

With all moves, having a clear understanding about scope and responsibility of the 'next' job, including selection criteria that define the knowledge, skills and other capabilities required to succeed help to reduce the risks associated with the job move, as well as the steps required to develop any additional capabilities (Skills Insight, 2025a). For some people, additional training may be required, such as undertaking a skill set or short course to address the gap. At times, the employer may be willing to take responsibility to train the new worker on the job.



[Read about Michelle’s journey in Appendix 4](#)

Pathways into the Vocational Education and Training (VET) workforce

Entry into the VET workforce is a special kind of diagonal move because it pivots technical practice into education while adding regulatory and pedagogical responsibility. Typical routes combine recent industry practice with the *Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE)*.

Evidence from the VET Workforce Blueprint (DEWR 2024) that seeks to address the shortage of trainers and assessors highlights some key challenges - including access to and difficulties in achieving the required *Certificate IV in Training and Assessment*.

These challenges affect attraction of new trainers and assessors. Practical entry points to become a trainer and assessor include enterprise mentoring/co-assessor roles with an RTO; supervised delivery while attaining the TAE; moderated resource use and assessment standardisation; and secondments or part-time arrangements that allow

practitioners to maintain vocational currency. Requirements vary by provider and jurisdiction, and no process advice is offered here; the purpose is to indicate plausible routes and the delivery realities that accompany them (Skills Insight, 2025).

For existing trade qualified workers, a staged entry often works best. Co-teaching practical sessions while shadowing assessment provides direct experience of classroom and workshop management. For employers, such models can improve recruitment and retention by creating development options that do not require a full break from industry.

There is a significant shortage of Trainers and Assessors for the AHC Training Package agricultural production qualifications and units, especially in rural, regional and remote areas. The proposed Ag Trade Apprenticeship, if successfully implemented, will over time provide a supply of highly skilled workers. With encouragement and support to get a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, these workers may become the AHC TP trainers and assessors of the future.

Importance of careers advice

Empirical work on vocational identity and agricultural careers suggests that parents and career advisors have an important role in career guidance. De Guzman, Sullivan and McDonald (2025) find that early exposure, relationships with trusted adults, and developing self-efficacy shape decisions to enter and persist in agriculture.

Those mechanisms were described in interviews and case studies in this and other studies including the Exploring Training Demand and Supply Challenges (Skills Insight, 2024), where mentoring and visibility repeatedly underpin progression. Such findings support the use of sector pathway visuals as orientation, not prescription, when they are paired with short narratives that make real transitions legible.

The Australian Blueprint for Career Development (National Careers Institute, 2022) provides a helpful vocabulary for this orientation task. It aims to treat careers as lifelong, being contextual and articulates competencies that people build over time. Using that lens, it becomes reasonable to judge a pathway resource by whether it helps a reader recognise their current strengths, see options, and plan a next step with an employer or mentor, rather than by whether it sets out a single, linear route.

Barriers in rural, regional and remote areas

A realistic narrative

Residential location often impacts on availability of career guidance a person may access, and professional career guidance is typically more difficult to access in rural, regional and remote (RRR) areas. During project consultation workshops, the following common themes emerged as the advice young people received, typically from their parents, when considering a career:

- It is increasingly difficult to make a living on a family farm, so it is best to think about other career alternatives.
- Consider moving to metropolitan areas to:
 - complete a traditional trade via an apprenticeship, or
 - complete a university education to get into a profession that pays well.
- Living in rural, regional and remote areas is increasingly difficult - consider a career that enables you to work in metropolitan areas.

It is also worth noting that some stakeholders saw potential to overcome these 'pessimistic' narratives:

- The proposed Ag Trade Apprenticeship may be a strategic way to retain young people in RRR and in agricultural production, because highly skilled trade level job roles are well recognised, in high demand and well rewarded.
- The proposed job classification model, along with positive career guidance resources can be effective tools for agricultural production industry stakeholders to attract, develop and retain workers.

Access to training

Access to training providers in RRR can be another barrier for career seekers. Skills Insight's 2025 - 2026 Skills Insight Workforce Plan notes that access to timely training is a precondition for any honest conversation about career pathways. For many stakeholders operating in regional, rural and remote areas, and in agribusiness related sectors, the problem is not a lack of motivation but the inability to obtain timely delivery or a trainer with the right equipment and assessment practices. The Workforce Plan characterises this gap as both unmet and, at times, latent demand: enterprises and learners stop asking when they know nothing is available. That insight helps explain why absence of enrolments cannot be assumed as absence of need and why national program settings that rely on historical delivery patterns struggle to support genuine mobility outside metropolitan centres.

Jobs and Skills Australia's analysis of VET in regional, rural and remote Australia (2023) documents different vocational training program mixes and qualification patterns outside metropolitan areas, along with continuing constraints on delivery. Those realities were reflected in the interview evidence about distance, thin markets and trainer supply.

Job Advertisements

Job advertisements are one of the most visible and important signals of career pathways for potential employees. This research found a lack of consistency in the description of different roles and the required educational and work experience employers sought.

Advertised jobs and their and OSCA Skill Level alignment

The project reviewed a selection of jobs advertisements across various industry subsectors advertised during September 2025 and compared the advertised job title, educational and work experience requirement to the OSCA Skill Level definitions. A summary is provided in the table below, in which the jobs have been aligned to the best fit OSCA Skill Level.

The findings highlight how employer requirements vary, the value of work experience, and that experience can also substitute for formal qualifications, especially for lower Skill Level jobs. This finding is not surprising as the OSCA Skill Level descriptors allow for suitable relevant experience to replace or supplement formal qualifications across all the Skill Levels.

For example, in the table below, job advertisements for occupations that align with:

- Skill Level 4 'Hand' roles (or **Assistant Agriculturist/Assistant Horticulturist** in the proposed job classification model) include statements such as 'Experience preferred but not essential' (Broadacre) and 'Experience is necessary' (Dairy).
- Skill Level 3 'Senior Hand' roles (or **Agriculturist/Horticulturist** in the proposed job classification model) require 'several years of experience' or 'at least 3 years' experience.'
- Skill Level 2 'Supervisory/Assistant Manager' roles (which are called **Production Supervisor** in the proposed job classification model aligned to Skill Level 3) introduce explicit team supervision or management and operational planning, with Diploma or Certificate III preferred'.
- Skill Level 1 'Managerial roles' (or **Production Manager** in the proposed job classification model) require a degree or substantial experience (4+ years), with explicit responsibility for business, finances, and strategic direction.

All examples below are directly sourced from industry job advertisements via Seek and industry sites during September 2025 month.

Table 4: Advertised Job Experience and Qualification Requirements by OSCA Skill Level

Example of advertised jobs	Typical experience described in the job advertisement	Qualification required	OSCA Skill Level alignment
Farm Hand	Experience preferred but not essential (Broadacre)	None or Certificate II	Level 4
Dairy Farm Hand	Experience is necessary (Dairy)		
Station Hand	Experience with farm machinery including tractors & implements (Livestock)		
Feedlot Hand	Previous livestock handling experience, especially with cattle, is highly desirable (Feedlot)		
Farm Hand	General Farmhand experience (Horticulture)		
Senior Farm Hand	Several years of experience in broadacre farming, with the confidence to make independent decisions (Broadacre)	Certificate III preferred	Level 3
Senior Dairy Hand	At least 3 years' experience (Dairy)		
Senior Station Hand	Minimum 5 years of experience in similar role with strong background in cattle work (Livestock)		
Pen Rider	Proven horsemanship skills (Feedlot)		
Senior Farm Hand	At least 2 years' experience in agriculture or horticulture (Horticulture)		
Assistant Manager	Minimum 1-2 years of people management experience required (Broadacre)		Level 2

Example of advertised jobs	Typical experience described in the job advertisement	Qualification required	OSCA Skill Level alignment
Assistant Farm Manager	Proven experience in dairy farming (preferably in a large or corporate farm setting) (Dairy)	Certificate IV/ Diploma preferred	
Overseer	Minimum 3 plus years' sheep industry experience (Livestock)		
Feedlot Supervisor	Previous feeding experience (Feedlot)		
Production Horticulture Supervisor	Certificate III or IV in production horticulture or higher (Horticulture)		
Farm Manager	Experience in the agricultural industry across the sheep, cattle and cropping industries (Broadacre)	Degree preferred or 4+ years' experience	Level 1
Dairy Farm Manager	Previous experience as a Dairy Farm Manager in a large-scale livestock operation (Dairy)		
Farm Manager	At least 4 years demonstrated experience managing pastoral station operations (Livestock)		
Feedlot Manager	Proven senior leadership across multiple farming or production sites (Feedlot)		
Farm Manager	Minimum 5 years' proven management experience in large-scale commercial fruit production (Horticulture)		

Table 5 below illustrates how the same job title could be interpreted at different OSCA Skill Levels (SL), depending on the actual responsibilities described in the job advertisement. For example, 'Senior Farm Hand' can mean assisting with routine tasks (SL4) or taking independent decisions (SL3), and 'Supervisor' similarly can span both technical and team leadership duties. This overlap creates ambiguity for job seekers and employers.

Table 5: Potential Ambiguity and Overlap in Advertised Job Titles

Job Title Advertised	Quote from Job Advertisement	Associated OSCA Skill Level (SL)
Senior Farm Hand	Several years of experience in broadacre farming, with the confidence to make independent decisions (Senior Farm Hand, Broadacre)	SL 3 - 343136 Senior Broadacre Crop Farm Worker
Senior Farm Hand	Assist with planting, tending, and harvesting of crops (Senior Farm Hand, Broadacre)	SL 4 - 841134 Grain, Oilseed, Pulse and Pasture Farm Worker
Leading Hand	Mentor junior staff, lead daily routines (Leading Hand, Broadacre)	SL 3 - 343136 Senior Broadacre Crop Farm Worker
Leading Hand	Duties include Milk harvesting, Calf rearing, Handling Livestock, Operating machinery. Experience is not essential, but applicant must be willing to learn.	SL 4 841233 Dairy Cattle Farm Worker
Supervisor	Responsible for ensuring accurate delivery of grain and feed mixes to two feedlots and overseeing maintenance of a wide range of machinery, vehicles and infrastructure.	SL 3 - 343231 Senior Beef Cattle Station Worker
Supervisor	Managing all aspects of the feeding and milling functions including team management, engagement, development and training in a positive and proactive manner. Maintaining compliance with policies, including but not limited to: WHS, HR, QA, Animal Welfare & Environmental obligations	SL 1 - 152131 Beef Cattle Farmer. (Feedlot Manager)

The job advertising research reinforces the need to create an agreed job classification model, job titles and terminology that is standardised and understood by all stakeholders. Stakeholder feedback overwhelmingly supports the need for common language (job titles and levels) that should be used consistently when promoting careers and during recruitment. The proposed job classification model can be used as a starting place for industry to develop a nationally recognised classification of job roles and related titles to harmonise the industry.

Commonality of language is critical for successful recruitment, development and retention of workers. It is important to note that organisations such as Jobs and Skills Australia and other organisations currently collect data from employment websites to define jobs, skill levels, and provide careers advice. The accuracy of information these

organisations collect, analyse and publish should significantly improve when common language is consistently used across industry associations, employer and training providers.

New and Emerging Skills

Recent job advertisements across all sectors increasingly reference emerging skills as essential requirements. For example:

- In broadacre cropping, one advertisement listed 'using John Deere Operations Centre and Agworld for recording, planning, and reporting,' while another specifies, 'operating John Deere equipment with both Green Star and Trimble GPS.'
- In the feedlot role, requirements include 'accurate data collection and entry using our BMS feedlot software,' and 'new technologies that help to implement and enforce feedlot policies and procedures, including quality assurance, workplace health and safety, animal welfare, and environmental obligations.'
- In dairy, descriptions like 'maintenance of robotic milking equipment' can be a key focus, reflecting the sector's adoption of automation. An example from horticulture roles is 'HACCP, GlobalG.A.P., HARPS, and Fair Farms compliance and full traceability from field to packhouse,' demonstrating the growing importance of food safety and traceability.

These examples show that digital literacy, precision agriculture, compliance, automation, and traceability are no longer optional but are becoming core competencies for career progression in modern agriculture. These new and emerging skills were also mentioned as essential by many industry stakeholders during the Ag Trade Apprenticeship Feasibility study, and as such were reflected in the core units of an example qualification included in that [project report](#).

The following list of emerging skills is illustrative rather than exhaustive. It provides examples of how emerging skills can be linked to portable capability and sequenced as short steps. Many of these changes can be readily implemented and are worthy of further investigation. Some of the technologies cited below have existed for several years, but they are constantly being updated by rapidly changing technology and therefore require upskilling of workers.



Broadacre cropping

Precision field operations: use of GPS/RTK autosteer, variable-rate application and yield mapping to plan and optimise field activities.

Remote and proximal crop-sensing basics: interpreting device outputs to support chemical application and harvest decisions. These skills often sit alongside digital record-keeping and WHS-capabilities that are easily signalled as portable (AUSVEG, 2025; DEWR, 2025).



Dairy

Automated milking systems (AMS) operations: set-up, troubleshooting and data interpretation for herd management.

Sensor-based herd monitoring and alert triage linked to SOPs: these are frequently referenced with quality and compliance tasks, and can be bridged to other livestock settings where similar device literacy is required (Skills Insight, 2025).



Intensive livestock - feedlot

National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme (NFAS) - aligned QA practices: in feed delivery and animal health.

Digital livestock monitoring (e.g. pen rider observations recorded into electronic systems): the QA/data package is widely portable across livestock and post-farm-gate settings where chain-of-responsibility and traceability matter.



Livestock farming

Animal welfare standards: and their practical interpretation (handling, transport readiness, pain relief).

Electronic identification (eID): readiness for sheep and goats, including reading devices and integration with property systems. These capabilities link directly to digital traceability and QA.



Production horticulture

Irrigation scheduling and water-use efficiency: planning and adjusting flows using soil, weather and plant indicators; basic telemetry or data-logger interpretation.

Packhouse QA and traceability: maintaining HACCP records, investigating non-conformances and preparing for audits. Both examples pair naturally with cross-industry digital skills and therefore lend themselves to portable signalling (AUSVEG, 2025).

Cross-industry

Digital data capture and traceability: consistent use of device and system interfaces, data export and validation, and audit readiness.

Device/telematics literacy: basic configuration, troubleshooting and interpretation of sensor outputs across plant, livestock and post-harvest settings.

AI-assisted analytics and decision support: using workplace-grade tools to summarise records, flag anomalies and draft plans; the objective is literacy and safe application, not algorithm design.

Potential streamlining of AHC qualifications

The Ag Careers Mapping Project explored opportunities for potential streamlining of Agricultural Production qualifications in the AHC Training Package. In this context streamlining is merging several qualifications into fewer qualifications to reduce the number of different qualifications at the same AQF level. Streamlining of Training Package products (which also includes the removal of unnecessary duplication of products) has been part of the policy frameworks that shape the development and endorsement of Training Package qualifications for over 10 years and has been

successfully implemented across industry sectors where stakeholders have agreed to its benefits.

Benefits of streamlining

These benefits merging qualifications may include:

- Offering both broad and specialised pathways for learners within the same qualification.
- Retaining industry defined outcomes and pathways in a merged qualification that would have otherwise been lost in qualifications that are no longer viable due lack of enrolments.
- Less confusion for learners by presenting fewer qualification choices.
- Less administrative burden for RTOs by reducing the number of related qualifications on their scope of registration.
- Fewer qualifications to maintain on the National Training Register (NTR).
- Less administrative burden for state and territory funding bodies.

For example, *ACM30121 Certificate III in Animal Care Services* was created by merging three existing qualifications (*ACM30117 Certificate III in Animal Studies*, *ACM30417 Certificate III in Companion Animal Services* and *ACM30617 Certificate III in Pet Grooming*). The merged qualification allows for specialisations in Animal care, Pet grooming and Customer service.

Challenges of Streamlining

Organisations experienced in Training Package product development have found that merging qualifications can be challenging, and these challenges include:

- Industry sector concerns that the merged qualifications may not deliver the specificity of skills and knowledge required by industry to the same degree as current qualifications.
- Reaching consensus on the merged qualification's packaging rules, including the total number of units to achieve the qualification and the core units, can take time, and may involve compromises among the sectors involved.
- Industry concerns about the merged qualification title no longer referencing their sector. Sector-specific qualification titles are considered better vehicles for attracting learners into their workforce.

For each qualification, NCVER determines the ANZSCO occupation (the intended occupational outcome for graduates) and the ASCED Qualification/Course Field of Education Identifier. Currently NCVER only assigns one ANZSCO occupation and one ASCED code and field of education. This information is included in the 'Classifications'

information for each qualification on the National Training Register (NTR). It is expected that the NTR will transition to presenting OSCA Identifiers in place of ANZSCO Identifiers after 2025 (OSCA superseded the ANZSCO as the national occupation classification in 2024). Skills Insight have advocated for multiple occupational outcomes to be identified in qualifications where relevant. This is consistent with VET Qualification Reform principles, which encompasses the following advice in the Training Package Organising Framework (TPOF, 2025, p.7):

- *'Qualifications that prepare learners for multiple, related occupations will consider skill similarity and transferability, with reduction of product duplication and specification where possible, while retaining industry relevance.'*
- *'Qualifications designed to support pathways, and applied learning may be focused on cross-sectoral and foundation skills units and have a stronger emphasis on reducing product duplication and specification.'*

Referring again to *ACM30121 Certificate III in Animal Care Services* as an example, the ANSZCO code is '361199 Animal Attendants and Trainers Nec (not elsewhere classified)' and ASCED code is '0611 Veterinary Studies'. These two codes do not reflect the Pet Grooming and other industry subsectors the qualification was designed for.

The issue was documented in Skills Insight's *Qualification Reform Final Report (2024)*, with the following statement on page 23:

ANZSCO: *Currently, only one ANZSCO classification can be tagged to each qualification. This limits visibility of the multiple outcomes a qualification can offer, which will need to be changed for qualification reform's goal of reduced duplication to be achieved. (Note that using higher level ANZSCO Codes (to 4 digits) also does not work effectively. The best available solution is allocation of multiple codes, although further work by JSA on Skills categorisation may provide an alternative solution.)'*

While many industry stakeholders are not aware of the 'Classifications' information on the NTR, many stakeholders are increasingly aware of the importance of the ANZSCO and OSCA, as these classifications are used in national and state/territory data collections and government policies when identifying and addressing occupation shortages, including the Australian Apprenticeship Priority List. When industry stakeholders are informed that a merger of their existing sector specific qualification may result in the loss of the assigned sector-specific ANZSCO / OSCA occupation on the NTR, they are less likely to support the merger.

AHC30122 Certificate III in Agriculture

AHC30122 Certificate III in Agriculture can also be used to illustrate the limitations of the Classifications information on the NTR. According to the qualification description, it 'describes the skills and knowledge for general job roles in agriculture including livestock production, cropping or in the case of mixed farming workplaces, both cropping and livestock.

The Classifications information for this qualification has the ANZSCO identifier as **842314 Livestock Husbandry Worker** (Skill Level 4), which does not reflect the Broadacre Crop Production occupations related to the qualification.

The Classifications information should include most, if not all, of the following OSCA occupations:

Livestock related:

- 841231 Beef Cattle Farm Worker (OSCA SL 4)
- 841232 Cattle and Sheep Farm Worker (OSCA SL 4)
- 841234 Livestock Husbandry Worker (OSCA SL 4)
- 841237 Sheep Farm Worker (OSCA SL 4)

Broadacre related

- 841131 Cotton Farm Worker (OSCA SL 4)
- 841134 Grain, Oilseed, Pulse and Pasture Farm Worker (OSCA SL 4)

Example of a potential merger at AQF level 2

During the research for this project, several AHC Training Package agricultural production qualifications were considered for potential streamlining, with respect to the unique purpose of each qualification and potential stakeholder reactions to proposals to merge their qualifications. Of the qualifications considered, the following four horticulture sector qualifications show potential for merging subject to sufficient industry stakeholder support and a project being approved by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). The [‘Categorisation Analysis’](#) Skills Insight completed for DEWR as part of the Qualification Reform Project in 2024 also pointed to these qualifications as being potentially appropriate for merging.

Table 6: Overview of qualifications, including NTR ‘Classifications’ information, RTO and enrolment data

Qualification and units required	<i>AHC20324 Certificate II in Production Horticulture</i> (15 units - 4 Core & 11 Elective)	<i>AHC20422 Certificate II in Horticulture</i> (15 units - 8 Core & 7 Elective)	<i>AHC20724 Certificate II in Nursery Operations</i> (16 units - 3 Core & 13 Elective)	<i>AHC21824 Certificate II in Protected Horticulture</i> (12 units - 6 Core & 6 Elective)
Specialisations	Two possible - Horticulture and Floriculture	None Listed	Two possible - Nursery Production and Nursery Operations	Four possible - Picking, Packing, Crop Work and Nursery
ANZSCO Identifier and classification *	842299 Crop Farm Workers	843211 Garden Labourer	843311 Horticultural Nursery Assistant	843311 Horticultural Nursery Assistant
ASCED Qualification/Course Field of Education Identifier *	0503 - Horticulture And Viticulture			
Industry Sector Classification value **	Floriculture, Nurseries	Parks and Gardens, Nurseries	Nurseries	Horticulture

Occupation Classification value **	Production Horticultural Assistant Workers	Garden Labourer, Horticulture Assistant , Landscape Worker	Production Nursery Assistant	Greenhouse Assistant Worker, Horticultural Assistant Worker
RTOs with scope to deliver the qualification on 12 November 2025 ***	8	84	0	1
Average enrolments per year during 2020 - 2024 ****	60	5920	15	0
Average completions per year during 2020 - 2024 ****	70	1520	5	0

* Information provided to the NTR by the ABS

** Information provided to the NTR by Skills Insight Job and Skills Council

*** Source: [NTR](#), accessed 12 November 2025

**** Source: NCVER Vocstats, accessed 12 November 2025

Table 6 above shows that each of the four qualifications are designed to provide the knowledge and skills for 'Assistant' level occupations in Horticulture related sectors, which suggests potential to merge these qualifications. However, based on the ANZSCO identifiers (that will be replaced by OSCA), only *AHC20724 Certificate II in Nursery Operations* and *AHC21824 Certificate II in Protected Horticulture* share the same code and therefore, intended occupational outcome.

It is also worth noting here that the ANZSCO and the OSCA occupations assigned to these qualifications are defined at Skill Level 5, which is inconsistent with the skills required to competently undertake the work. Skills Insight analysis suggests these three occupations should be classed as Skill Level 4, based on Skills Insight's stakeholder-informed assessment of their skill level, and also because the main duties listed by OSCA for these occupations better align with the main duties of 841142 Vineyard Worker (OSCA Skill Level 4).

The four qualifications are similar in the total number of units required to achieve the qualification, and have many common elective units listed, however, they also have significant differences. For example:

- They have only one core unit in common - AHCWHS202 Participate in workplace health and safety process
- Three allow for specialisations and one does not.

Conclusion on streamlining

Despite these differences, with industry support, it may be possible and prudent to create one or two broader 'pathway focussed' qualifications from these four qualifications that may more effectively attract new workers into each industry sector. The RTO, enrolment and completion data above suggests a merger of *AHC20724 Certificate II in Nursery Operations* and *AHC21824 Certificate II in Protected Horticulture* with either *AHC20324 Certificate II in Production Horticulture* or *AHC20422 Certificate II in Horticulture* may be the best option to retain the knowledge and skills outcomes currently provided by these qualifications. Fewer qualifications will also likely reduce administrative burden for RTOs that operate in this sector without compromising the knowledge and skills they deliver.

Appendix 1 - Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to examine career pathways in Australian agricultural occupations, combining qualitative consultation with systematic analysis of job market signals and policy documents.

The research was conducted between April and October 2025.

Steering committee

A steering committee consisting of members of industry associations, registered training organisations, the NFF and AWU was formed at the beginning of this project. Face-to-face and online workshops have taken place throughout the project. Steering Committee members attended the project consultation workshops held in their jurisdiction and online.

Consultation activities

Consultations

Six full day face-to-face consultation workshops were held during April and May, and a further two online consultation workshops on May 8 and 9, 2025.

Registration for the consultation workshops was via the project webpage and open to all. Attendees included a wide range of industry stakeholders; registered training organisations (RTOs), industry bodies, and workforce development professionals. A total of 104 individuals attended.

The face-to-face workshops took place in:

- Orange, NSW
- Toowoomba, QLD
- Wodonga, Victoria
- Adelaide, SA
- Albany, WA
- Longford, TAS

15 in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Interviews were carried out during September. Participants included executives from a range of enterprise sizes, farm managers, training coordinators, and job board operators. They were selected to ensure representation across the five target subsectors (broadacre cropping, dairy, intensive livestock feedlot, extensive livestock, and production horticulture) and diverse geographical locations including regional, rural, and remote contexts.

Job advertisement analysis

Between September and October 2025, a systematic analysis of agricultural job advertisements was conducted to examine career pathways and qualification requirements across the five key subsectors.

A total of 247 advertisements were collected: broadacre cropping (n=54), dairy (n=49), livestock (n=46), feedlot (n=44), and production horticulture (n=54). Job advertisements were sourced from general employment platforms including SEEK, as well as industry-specific job boards (e.g., AgCareers, Farm Tender) and employer websites.

A series of career case studies were developed that drew upon attendees from workshops held in Adelaide and Wodonga. These de-identified narratives provided depth on the role of mentoring, recognition of prior learning, and community networks in facilitating mobility.

Analytical Approach

The analysis employed a triangulation strategy where patterns that repeated across multiple evidence streams (job advertisements, consultation, case studies, industry resources) were given greater weight in findings. Where evidence streams diverged or contradicted, these tensions were explicitly identified and explained. This approach acknowledged the complexity and variability in agricultural career pathways while identifying robust patterns that could inform policy and practice.

Limitations

Several limitations shaped the scope and claims of this research.

The consultation sample, while deliberately diverse, provides qualitative insight rather than statistical representation. Industry career resources vary in recency and comprehensiveness across subsectors.

Job advertisements included in this research only capture those employers who recruit through public online channels, potentially under-representing small family enterprises and positions filled through informal networks.

Appendix 2 - Vertical pathway stakeholder narrative

Name: Alex

Role: Farm Manager, SA

Alex is an individual passionate about agriculture, they embarked on a structured pathway from school leaver to advanced farm management. This pathway highlights key education milestones, diverse work experiences, and international exposure, offering valuable insight for students, educators, and career advisors interested in agricultural careers. Alex's story demonstrates how strategic choices, ongoing learning through industry led structured training, and hands-on experience can lead to a fulfilling and progressive career in agriculture.

Alex completed the Certificate II in Agriculture while in year 10, and as part of a School-Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (SBAT), completed the Certificate III in Agriculture during years 11 and 12. This hands-on training allowed Alex to integrate classroom learning with supervised farm work, deepening knowledge in livestock handling, crop management, and farm maintenance. The SBAT experience developed essential skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving, preparing Alex for employment and further study.

Alex returned to work on the family livestock and cropping farm for a short while, then learned of the AgCAREERSTART program. This took Alex to a cattle station in Queensland to work as a station hand and introduced them to large-scale livestock operations, including mustering, animal health checks, fencing and water infrastructure maintenance. A promotion to senior livestock hand, required them to take on leadership responsibilities and led to further study at Marcus Oldham College, in Victoria. The Marcus Oldham experience broadened Alex's perspective on global agricultural trends, innovation and sustainable practices, preparing her for advanced roles in the sector.

After graduation, Alex took a gap year in Canada, on a large-scale cropping operation. This international experience exposed Alex to different agronomic practices, climate challenges, and innovative technologies, further enhancing skills and global awareness. Coupled with a Rabobank Farm Managers Course, Alex has returned to lead the family farm towards a successful future. Alex's agricultural career pathway demonstrates the value of combining formal education, practical experience, and international exposure.

Appendix 3 - Horizontal pathway stakeholder narrative

Name: Anthony Gatens

Role: Vineyard Hand

Anthony Gatens has always enjoyed horticulture, starting with his own vegetable garden at age 8. After finishing school, he trained in Kitchen Operations and worked as a cook, soon after he realized he preferred working with plants and soil.

To follow his passion, Anthony enrolled in the Certificate III in Agriculture at Tocal College. During a college excursion in 2022, he learned about the AgCAREERSTART program. With his background in food and wine, he saw this as a great chance to gain experience in viticulture, the field he wants to work in long-term.

Anthony was placed at Swinney Wines in Western Australia as a Vineyard Hand. The farm joined AgCAREERSTART to help young people start careers in viticulture and to attract new employees. Anthony was excited to move far from home and learn new skills, both on the farm and in the local community. He recommends AgCAREERSTART to anyone interested in agriculture.

Anthony plans to keep learning about vineyard management and pursue further study in production horticulture.

Appendix 4 - Diagonal pathway stakeholder narrative

Name: Michelle

Role: Trainer and resource manager, SA

Michelle's journey began in high school, where she developed a keen interest in agriculture. She enrolled in agricultural studies, laying the groundwork for her future career. She began a Certificate III in Agriculture, though was unable to complete while at school. On finishing school, she took a gap year in Europe working as a nanny, while not in agriculture she did gain valuable interpersonal and cross-cultural skills.

On her return to Australia, Michelle pursued a career as a police officer. Completed her Certificate III in Police Studies and served in the force for several years. This proved challenging and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder prompted her to reconsider her career path.

Michelle moved back to the family farm. She completed a Bachelor of Business, and took on significant responsibilities, eventually becoming the Livestock Production

Manager. During this time, she navigated major life events; marriage, raising children, and unfortunately, divorce. These experiences shaped her resilience and adaptability.

Seeking new opportunities, Michelle relocated to the city. She transitioned into a role as HR Manager in an agricultural services company, where she completed a Diploma of Agriculture to deepen her technical expertise. Her leadership and industry knowledge led her to become a Trainer and resource manager in a Registered Training Organization (RTO), where she now supports the next generation of agricultural professionals.

Appendix 5 - Glossary of terms used in this report

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework.

It provides a framework that (among other objectives):

- supports the development and maintenance of pathways which provide access to qualifications and assist people to move easily and readily between different education and training sectors and between those sectors and the labour market
- supports individuals' lifelong learning goals by providing the basis for individuals to progress through education and training and gain recognition for their prior learning and experiences' (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2013, Page 9)

Credit Transfer

Credit transfer is recognition that you've previously completed a unit of your course through VET or higher education.

To receive a credit transfer for a unit you must provide formal evidence that you've previously completed the unit or a unit which matches in content and outcome. Formal evidence can be a qualification certificate or transcript, statement of attainment or your USI transcript. When credit is recognised, you don't need to repeat training or assessment for that unit. (ASQA, 2025, <https://www.asqa.gov.au/students/choosing-course-and-provider/credit-transfer-and-recognition-prior-learning-rpl>)

OSCA (Occupation Standard Classification for Australia)

OSCA (Occupation Standard Classification for Australia) provides current occupation descriptions and an indicative sense of skill and responsibility levels. While legacy datasets still refer to ANZSCO, OSCA offers a more contemporary frame for the reading of levels in this report. In parallel, national reforms emphasise clearer qualification purpose statements and explicit treatment of transferable skills and Skill Sets, which strengthens the case for transparent signalling in job titles and descriptors (DEWR, 2025).

Micro credentials

A certification of assessed learning or competency, with a minimum volume of learning of one hour and less than an AQF award qualification, that is additional, alternate, complementary to or a component part of an AQF award qualification. (DESE, 2021)

Qualification

A qualification is a formal certification issued by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), which recognises that an individual has achieved competencies and/or learning outcomes relevant to identified professional, industry or community needs.

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) defines the essential characteristics of the different types of qualifications issued across the senior secondary education, VET and higher education sectors, ensuring national recognition and consistency.

Each training package qualification must be appropriately aligned with the AQF.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL assesses the competency/s of an individual that may have been acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual meets the requirements specified in the training package (units of competency) or VET accredited courses.

- formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction and is linked to the attainment of an AQF qualification or statement of attainment (for example, a certificate, diploma or university degree);
- non-formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction, but does not lead to the attainment of an AQF

qualification or statement of attainment (for example, in-house professional development programs conducted by a business); and

- informal learning refers to learning that results through experience of work-related, social, family, hobby or leisure activities (for example the acquisition of interpersonal skills developed through several years as a sales representative).(ASQA, 2025, <https://www.asqa.gov.au/guidance-resources/resources-providers/faqs/recognition-prior-learning-rpl>)

Registered Training Organisations (RTO)

RTOs deliver nationally recognised training in the Vocational Education and Training sector. To deliver this training, they need to be approved by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA, 2025a).

Skill Set

Skill sets are not qualifications and are defined as single units of competency, or combinations of units of competency from endorsed training packages, which link to a licensing or regulatory requirement, or a defined industry need.

Unit of Competency

Units of competency are the smallest component of training that is nationally recognised.

Units of competency must specify knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

VET provides students with relevant workplace specific skills and knowledge for a wide range of skilled work and occupations. VET qualifications help students to: get qualified for a new career, return or enter the workforce, upskill current qualifications, enter university. Only organisations that are registered as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and listed on the National Training Register can advertise, offer and deliver VET. (ASQA 2025a).

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