

Workforce Functional Analysis

AMP SKI_ANN_2526_003
AMP Stage 3 Review
(Retail Butchery and
Smallgoods Sectors)



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This Skills Insight JSC project is being managed with the support of MINTRAC as part of our collaborative partnership with Skills Insight. MINTRAC has a strong history working with the Australian meat processing industry on skills and training solutions and have been engaged by Skills Insight to deliver this project in partnership.



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Contents

Executive summary	5
Recommendations.....	7
<i>Additional strategic industry & policy recommendations (For external/long-term scope consideration):</i>	<i>7</i>
1. Purpose and scope of this report	9
1.1 Background to the AMP Training Package Review	9
1.2 Retail Butchery and Smallgoods Project	10
2. Methodology for gathering information about the uptake and use of qualifications	11
3. Workforce scale, distribution and training engagement	13
3.1 Overview.....	13
3.2 Workforce distribution and industry scale	13
3.3 Occupational structure and workforce composition	14
3.4 Skills shortages and workforce gaps	15
3.5 Training system engagement	16
3.6 Enrolments and completions.....	16
3.7 Key findings from the data	17
4. Findings from industry and RTO consultations	19
4.1 Feedback on the current qualifications	19
4.1.1 Common structural themes.....	19
4.1.2 Retail Butchery	19
4.1.3 Smallgoods general and manufacture	20
4.1.4 Conclusion on qualification feedback.....	21
4.2 The role of RTOs.....	21
4.2.1 Workplace-based training	21
4.2.2 Blended delivery	22
4.2.3 In-house training	22
4.2.4 Challenges.....	23
4.2.5 Implications for training product review	23
4.3 The challenges businesses face in skilling the workforce	23
4.4 The emerging changes and opportunities for retail butcheries and smallgoods.....	25
4.4.1 Retail butchery	25
4.4.2 Smallgoods.....	25
4.5 The training required for the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors	26
4.5.1 Retail butcher qualification	26
4.5.2 Smallgoods qualifications.....	27
4.6 Summary of industry and RTO findings	27
5. The Training Package Organising Framework (TPOF) 2025	28
5.1 Recent reform changes	28
5.1.1 Unit of competency template options	28
5.1.2 Qualification Purpose	29
5.2 The Qualification Purpose Matrix.....	29
5.2.1 Application in the development cycle.....	29
5.2.2 The five areas of examination	30

5.2.3 Engagement and research process	30
5.2.4 Overall Matrix observations.....	30
5.2.5 Additional considerations.....	31
5.3 Proposed unit development methodology	33
5.3.1 Case study: functional alignment.....	33
5.3.2 Redesign and streamlining.....	33
5.4 Proposed qualification development summaries	33
5.4.1 AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)	34
5.4.2 AMP30916 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - General).....	35
5.4.3 AMP31016 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - Manufacture).....	35
Conclusion.....	37
Appendix.....	38

Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a workforce functional analysis of the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors, undertaken to inform the redevelopment of three Certificate III qualifications within the *AMP Australian Meat Processing Training Package*:

- *AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)*
- *AMP30916 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - General)*
- *AMP31016 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - Manufacture).*

The analysis draws on national workforce and training data, alongside consultation with industry stakeholders and registered training organisations (RTOs).

A central finding of the analysis is the existence of a structural imbalance between workforce demand and the supply of skilled, trade-qualified workers. While entry-level labour is generally available, there are persistent shortages in trade-level occupations, particularly in retail butchery and smallgoods production.

Engagement with the formal training system is moderate but uneven across the sector. In comparison to the two smallgoods qualifications, *AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)* demonstrates comparatively higher enrolments and completions, supported by established apprenticeship pathways. In contrast, this report has found that the two Smallgoods qualifications show lower enrolments and declining participation, combined with limited alignment with industry roles in larger-scale processing environments. The level of enrolments and completions for all three qualifications should be considered in light of these sectors being identified as National Skills Shortages by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). This project will provide a vehicle for discussion with stakeholders to identify opportunities to promote careers and retain existing workers in the industry.

Consultation findings indicate that, while the current qualifications provide a sound technical foundation, they do not fully reflect contemporary industry practice or emerging workforce requirements. Stakeholders identified duplication and inefficiencies within units of competency. For retail butchery there are seen to be gaps in areas such as customer communication, product knowledge, business and leadership capability. There is also a lack of alignment with the job roles for industrial smallgoods production.

The butchery and smallgoods sectors are continuously evolving, driven by changes in consumer demand, regulatory expectations and business models. There is growing demand for value-added products, including ready-to-eat meals, alongside increased customer expectations regarding provenance, nutrition and sustainability. At the same time, businesses are responding to evolving regulatory frameworks and adopting new technologies, including automation and digital systems. These changes are reshaping job roles and increasing the breadth of skills required at the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 3. Stakeholders also recommended enhancing pathways into and through qualifications, and suggested that a future project in this area could investigate the development of higher-level progression options.

The research suggests that a structured review of these qualifications would ensure they remain fit-for-purpose and responsive to the evolving needs of both industry and learners.

The findings highlight a sustained requirement for core technical proficiency, alongside a growing demand for specialised skills in value-adding, food safety, and business management. This report proposes that the Technical Committee consider a conceptual framework that prioritises flexibility and clear differentiation between the retail and smallgoods streams. By refining the purpose and structure of each qualification (details of

which are provided in the [qualification purpose section](#) of this report) the training package can better support the diverse range of business models operating across the sector.

This report finds that consultation with industry stakeholders has demonstrated support for the comprehensive redesign of the three Certificate III qualifications in line with Training Package Organising Framework (TPOF) 2025. This includes consolidating units, adding units to strengthen coverage of contemporary skills (including customer service, value-adding, food safety and certification compliance) and embedding business, costing and work team capabilities.

In summary, while the current training framework provides a foundation for workforce development, it is not fully aligned with industry needs and is not generating enough skilled workers to address ongoing shortages. The findings suggest that reform of the AMP Certificate III qualifications is necessary to ensure they are fit for purpose, responsive to industry change, and capable of supporting a sustainable and skilled workforce across the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the analysis of industry data, consultation feedback, and a review of the current qualification structures. These findings are presented as conceptual frameworks for the Technical Committee to consider during training product development.

1. **Redevelop the three qualifications:** Formally redevelop the three Certificate III Meat Processing qualifications (Retail Butcher, Smallgoods - Manufacture, and Smallgoods - General) to align with contemporary industry trends and TPOF 2025 standards.
2. **Adopt new purpose statements:** Implement the refined qualification purpose statements identified in the report to ensure clear differentiation between occupation-focused trade roles and specialist technical roles.
3. **Balance jurisdictional and workplace requirements:** Ensure the selection of core and elective units accounts for the differing commercial realities and regional requirements across Australia. The Technical Committee should specifically evaluate units where there are conflicting perspectives on occupational necessity (such as beef carcass breakdown) to determine the most appropriate placement within the qualification. This process should prioritise the integrity of the trade while considering the impact of training and assessment requirements on different business models.
4. **Consolidate units to reduce burden:** Identify and remove duplication within units to reduce the "excessive assessment burden" currently reported by RTOs and employers.
5. **Strengthen technical & retail content:** Update unit content to include modern meat science, grading systems, allergen management (e.g. gluten-free, halal), and enhanced customer-focused food knowledge.
6. **Embed business & team capability:** Integrate "work team" capabilities and fundamental business skills, such as costing and margin calculation, where they align with AQF Level 3 requirements of the qualifications.
7. **Facilitate learner mobility and retention:** Design qualifications with shared units to allow workers to transition more easily between different meat processing sectors. The Technical Committee should consider how these flexible structures can support better learner engagement and improved completion rates by ensuring pathways remain relevant to the learner's evolving career.
8. **Integrate digital & advanced tech:** Broaden the scope of units to explicitly include digital engagement and the use of evolving workplace technologies.
9. **Targeted regulatory consultation:** Establish clear and consistent engagement with state-based regulatory bodies and food safety authorities – with a specific focus on South Australia where formal qualifications are a mandatory requirement for smallgoods workers. This is to ensure the redeveloped training products continue to meet all legislative and licensing benchmarks for food safety and public health.

Additional strategic industry & policy recommendations (For external/long-term scope consideration):

- **Investigate Higher-Level Pathways:** Consider a future project to develop a Certificate IV or specialised skill sets for retail butchery to address high-level business functions that exceed AQF 3.
- **Promote VET Careers:** Engage with career advisers and Apprentice Connect Australia Providers (ACAPs) to improve the promotion of butchery and smallgoods as viable career paths to address National Skills Shortages.

- **Support flexible delivery in thin markets:** Encourage the development of delivery models that support regional and remote businesses where traditional RTO access is limited.
- **Standardise smallgoods training for large employers:** Engage with large industrial processors to align formal VET training with their enterprise-based systems, supporting task-specific training that leads to nationally recognised outcomes.

1. Purpose and scope of this report

This Workforce Functional Analysis Report (hereafter referred to as the 'report') details a workforce functional analysis carried out for the retail butchery and smallgoods making sectors. Findings from this report provide the evidence base to guide the Technical Committee during the subsequent training product development phase, informing the review and enhancement of training products within the *AMP Australian Meat Processing Training Package*.

The report informs the qualification purpose statements and assists in identifying the skills and knowledge required to work at trade/traineeship (AQF3) level within the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors. The report also provides recommendations related to packaging rules and unit development to ensure the updated qualifications meet current and emerging industry needs and are compliant with TPOF 2025.

The research has been informed by employment and training data, combined with a three-level stakeholder analysis, conducted with the purpose of:

- Collecting and analysing information about the industry sectors and their job roles and functions.
- Determining current and emerging capability, skills and knowledge requirements for working at AQF3 level in retail butchery and smallgoods.
- Providing recommendations on the scope and purpose of updating the Certificate III qualifications in meat processing for the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors.

1.1 Background to the AMP Training Package Review

A full review of the *AMP Australian Meat Processing Training Package* began in 2021. Stage 1 involved the review of the Certificate III and IV in Meat Safety qualifications, while Stage 2 involved the review of the Certificate II qualifications.

This Stage 3 project represents the third stage of the review, focusing on the remaining 15 Certificate III qualifications in Meat Processing, and their associated units of competency¹. To ensure targeted sector engagement, the Stage 3 project has been divided into two dedicated streams running concurrently:

- **Part A:** Retail Butchery and Smallgoods (the focus of this report)
- **Part B:** Meat Processing.

For each stream, a dedicated Technical Committee will be established to lead the review, update or creation of training package products. These Technical Committees will be guided by the research findings in this report, the issues identified in the initial Activity Submission, and ongoing stakeholder engagement throughout the development phase. All development activities will be carried out in accordance with the TPOF2025 and relevant policy requirements.

1.2 Retail Butchery and Smallgoods Project

The scope of the Retail Butchery and Smallgoods component (Part A) of the Stage 3 project encompasses the review of the following three Certification III level qualifications:

¹ Skills Insight, *Annual Training Product Development Plan 2025–26*, Skills Insight, <<https://skillsinsight.com.au/annual-activity-plan/>>

- *AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)*
- *AMP30916 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - General)*
- *AMP31016 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - Manufacture).*

In total, this stream of work comprises 3 qualifications, 66 units of competency, a skill set, and the Companion Volume Implementation Guide. The anticipated timeline for completion of both streams of Stage 3 is 29 February 2028.

2. Methodology for gathering information about the uptake and use of qualifications

A national consultation process was undertaken involving:

- industry workshops and meetings (SA, NT, NSW, QLD, TAS, WA, VIC)
- site visits to retail butcheries and processing operations
- engagement with RTOs and state training advisory bodies
- surveys and interviews with employers, trainers, and workers.

This approach ensured representation from:

- small to medium enterprises (SMEs)
- an enterprise RTO and smallgoods representative from a large processor
- retail and wholesale meat processing-based businesses
- public and private RTOs
- unions
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia.

The sectors include:

- retail butcher shops (independent and supermarket-based).
- wholesale and food service suppliers.
- smallgoods manufacturers (artisan and industrial scale).

Consultations highlighted the diversity of business models:

- high-end retail butcheries focused on quality and craftsmanship.
- regional butcheries requiring full trade capability.
- food service providers and wholesale butchers.
- large smallgoods processors using highly segmented production roles and automation.
- traditional smallgoods processors with whole of product job roles.

The information gathering tools included a combination of surveys, interviews, site visits and focus groups run in each state and the Northern Territory.

These were used to compile information on:

- The uptake of training across *AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)* and *AMP31016 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - Manufacture)* and *AMP30916 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - General)*. This information is based on national and state enrolment and completion data at the level of qualifications, skill sets and units, as well as discussions with RTOs about their offerings.
- The methodology for delivery and assessment of the three qualifications, including the training arrangements negotiated between employers and RTOs. This information was gathered through surveys and focus groups conducted in all states and the Northern Territory.
- The extent to which the qualifications are fit for purpose and provide a comprehensive framework for the job role of skilled tradesperson, based on the workplace performance and the application of skills and knowledge specified in the units. Any units considered no longer relevant were identified with a view to recommending their review and redrafting in the next generation of qualifications. The currency and applicability of the qualifications was discussed in industry meetings, and further responses were gathered through surveys of employers, RTOs, state training advisory bodies and workers (including apprentices).

- The emerging trends for butchery and smallgoods businesses and the staff capability that is required to embrace these business opportunities and achieve growth. This was discussed in the industry meetings. Responses were also gathered through surveys and interviews on-site with butchers and smallgoods makers.
- The training needs that arise from changing work practices, the business environment and the uptake of technology. This was discussed in industry meetings and will form the basis for incorporating the required skills and knowledge into the national qualifications for butchery and smallgoods. This will assist in future-proofing the butchery and smallgoods qualifications as the business and operating environment continues to develop and change.
- The purpose and type of structure for each of the qualifications. This was informed by a survey tool (a Qualification Purpose Matrix) developed by Skills Insight.

3. Workforce scale, distribution and training engagement

3.1 Overview

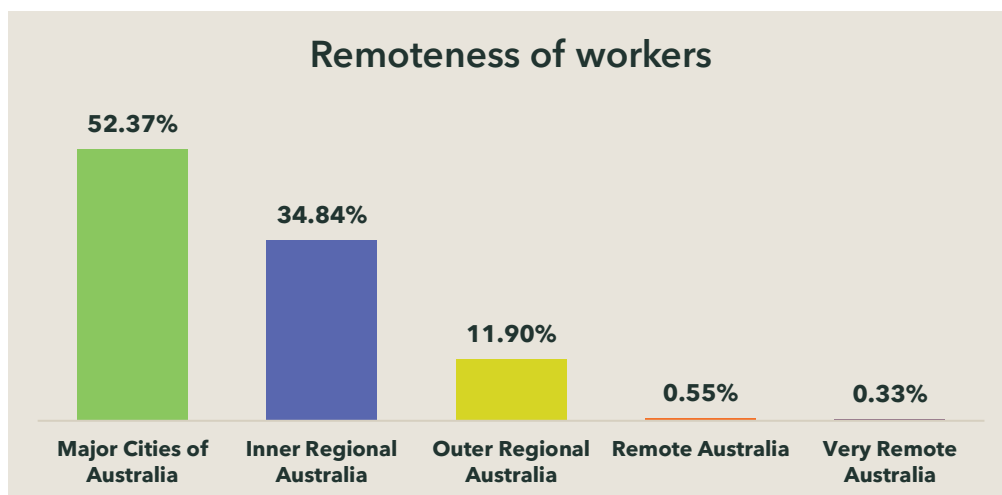
The meat, poultry and seafood processing industries are significant employers nationally. Data collated in the Skills Insight Workforce Plan 2025-2026² shows that 31,500 people work in the industry, with significant employment in most states.

The butchery and smallgoods sector is characterised by a moderate-sized workforce that is geographically concentrated and unevenly engaged in formal training pathways. This report will highlight the emerging business and skills needs of the retail butchery sector, which will increase the demand for training at trade levels and higher.

While the industry maintains a stable base of employment, there is clear evidence of a structural imbalance between workforce demand and the supply of skilled, trade-qualified workers, particularly in retail butchery and smallgoods production roles. There is a designated National Skills Shortage³ in both butchery and smallgoods makers. Given the skilled nature of the work, and the need for businesses to manage risks in food safety, WHS, environmental impacts and QA compliance, the *AMP Training Package*, and the RTOs who deliver it, have an important role to play in industry development.

3.2 Workforce distribution and industry scale

The meat, poultry and seafood processing workforce is predominantly located in major cities and inner regional areas, with significantly lower levels of employment in outer regional and remote locations. This distribution reflects broader population patterns but has important implications for training delivery and workforce development. The remote and outer regional areas usually have small to medium businesses who find it difficult to recruit or replace staff. This also puts pressure on RTOs who have to find ways to provide viable training into an environment of thin markets.

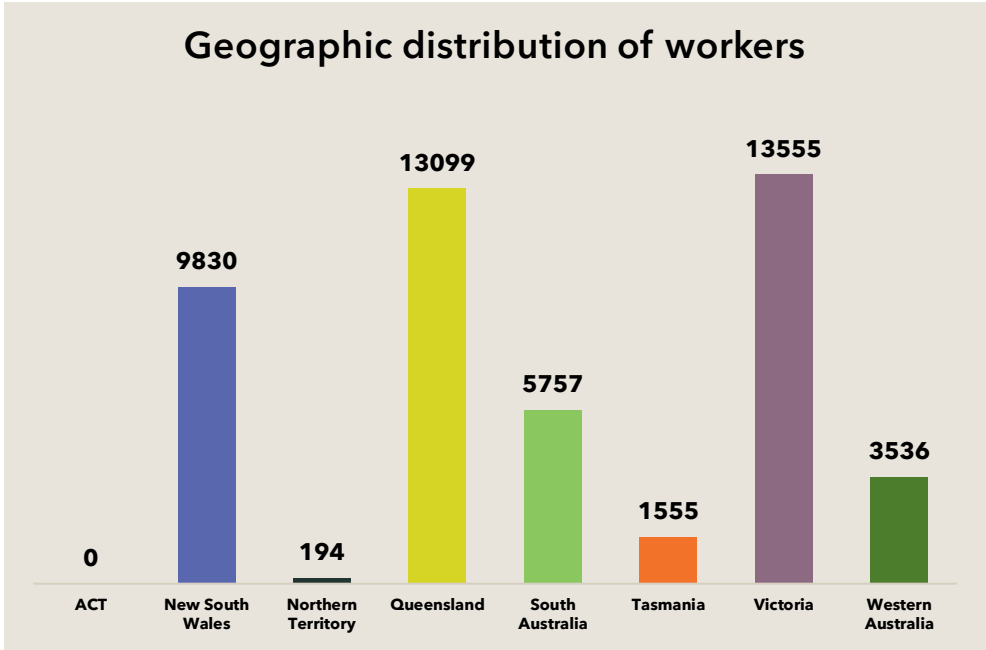


1: Skills Insight Workforce plan 2025-2026

²Skills Insight, *Workforce Planning*, Skills Insight, <<https://skillsinsight.com.au/workforce-planning/>>

³Jobs and Skills Australia, *Occupation Shortage List*, Jobs and Skills Australia, <<https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-shortage/occupation-shortage-list>>

Employment in meat, poultry and seafood processing is also strongly concentrated in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, which together account for the majority of workers in the sector. Smaller jurisdictions have comparatively limited workforce presence, which can affect the viability of local training delivery, access to skilled labour and the opportunity to access training and development opportunities. This report found many examples of flexible delivery approaches that support regional and remote businesses, detailed in [Section 4.2](#). Providing qualifications that are based on best practice and reflect the needs of industry is critical for businesses and employers to make the investment into VET qualifications.



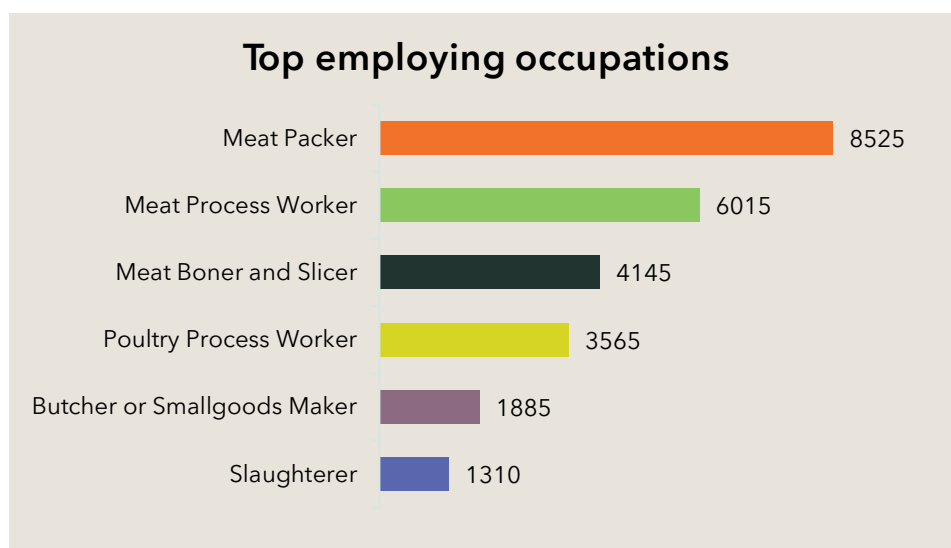
2: Skills Insight Workforce plan 2025-2026

3.3 Occupational structure and workforce composition

The occupational profile of the meat processing industry is dominated by processing and production roles, including meat packers and meat process workers. These roles form the largest proportion of the workforce and are generally associated with lower levels of formal qualification requirements.

In contrast, butchers and smallgoods makers represent a smaller but critical segment of the workforce, requiring higher-level technical skills and broader capability across product preparation, customer engagement, and value-adding.

This distribution highlights a key structural issue – that the industry has a broad base of lower-skilled roles, supported by relatively accessible entry pathways, while there is a limited pipeline of trade-qualified workers, particularly in retail and specialised production contexts.



3: Skills Insight Workforce plan 2025-2026

3.4 Skills shortages and workforce gaps

The Occupations Shortage List has identified shortages in the trade and specialist roles of butchery, smallgoods workers, slaughterers, and boners and slicers. These roles are consistently identified as being in shortage across multiple jurisdictions. In contrast, there is less evidence of widespread shortages in general processing roles. This suggests that entry-level labour is more readily available, particularly where overseas workers are sponsored for meat packing roles.

While entry-level labour is accessible, the sector still faces challenges for this part of the workforce, including recruitment, retention and providing training to workers with low language or literacy skills. However, the primary industry challenge lies in the development and retention of skilled and experienced workers. Industry consultation for this report highlighted the challenges of competing with other industries for workers, particularly in remote areas.

From 1 January 2026, the Australian Government reduced incentives for employers and apprentices in priority occupations, including butchery and smallgoods:

- **Priority Hiring Incentive (Employers):** For employers of apprentices in priority occupations, incentives decreased from \$5,000 to \$2,500, paid in two instalments during the first year. In the 2026-27 Budget, it was further announced that from 1 January 2027, employers with 200 or more employees will not be eligible for this incentive (except group training organisations). This payment will remain available until 30 June 2029.
- **Apprentice Support Payment (AATSP):** Maximum payment for apprentices in priority occupations dropped from \$5,000 to \$2,500, paid over the first two years⁴. This payment will remain available until 30 June 2029.

These reduced financial incentives create a significant barrier to workforce entry. A formal trade-based training pathway for both the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors is one way to mitigate these recruitment challenges and ensure a pipeline of skilled labour.

⁴ Australian Government, *Changes to Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System from 1 January 2027*, Apprenticeships.gov.au, <<https://www.apprenticeships.gov.au/home/changes-australian-apprenticeships-incentive-system-1-january-2027>>

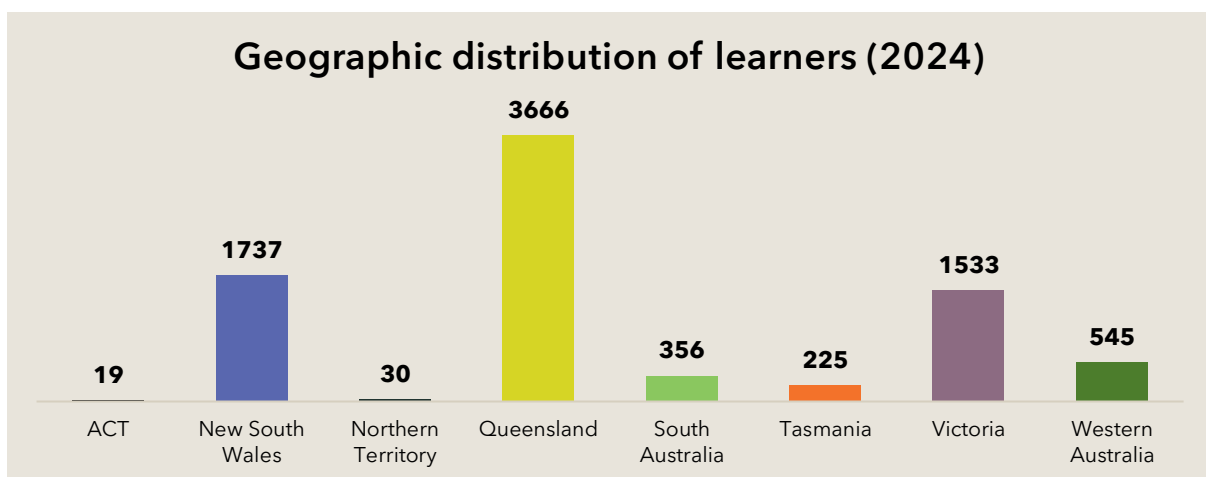
3.5 Training system engagement

Training delivery is dominated by private RTOs, with a smaller contribution from TAFE and minimal involvement from enterprise or higher education providers. This reflects a strong reliance on in-house models and flexible, workplace-oriented training approaches. The following table shows the enrolments for the *AMP Training Package* for the different class of providers.

Training provider type for <i>AMP Training Package</i>		
	Enrolments	% of total
Private RTOs	5394	65
TAFE institutions	2019	24
Enterprise RTOs	858	10
Universities	28	0.3

4: Skills Insight Workforce plan 2025-2026

However, participation in training is not consistent across regions or sectors. Learners are concentrated in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, mirroring workforce distribution, and the limited amount of meat processing in northern Australia and Tasmania. Factors which contribute to lower enrolment numbers include perceptions about tertiary compared to trade qualifications, relatively low wages compared to non-apprenticeship jobs and a lack of engagement (or incentives) for employers. The qualifications resulting from this project will enable potential recruits to become part of the food industry in retail butchery and smallgoods processing through an apprenticeship training pathway.

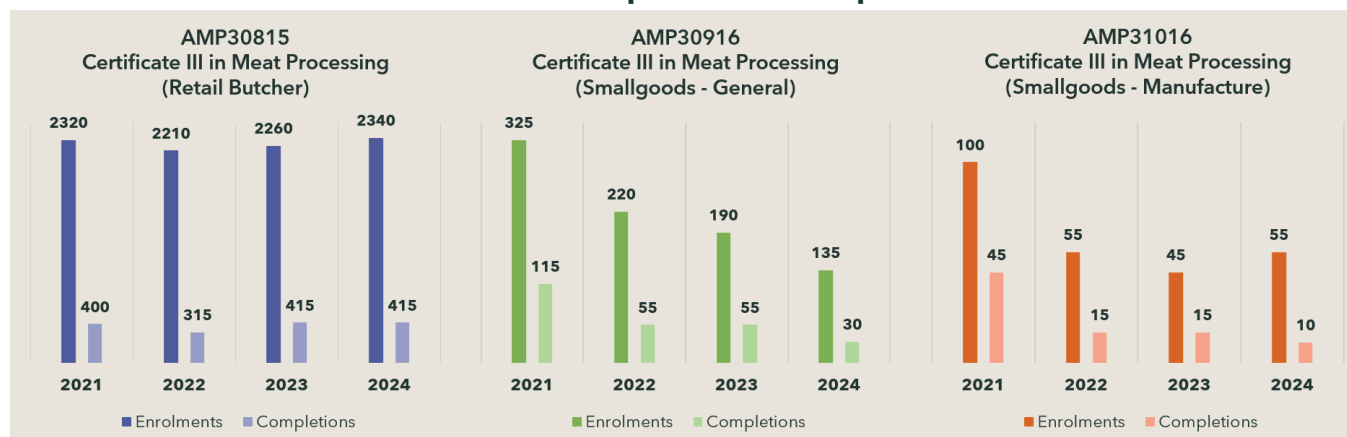


5: Skills Insight Workforce plan 2025-2026

3.6 Enrolments and completions

NCVER training activity data shows enrolments have been relatively stable over time in retail butchery qualifications. However, enrolment levels in smallgoods-related qualifications are significantly lower and show a declining trend.

Enrolments and completions across qualifications



6: Skills Insight Workforce plan 2025-2026 & NCVER

The highest level of enrolments for the AMP30916 *Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - General)* is in Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. South Australia has a regulatory requirement for all smallgoods workers to hold a qualification, but this doesn't appear to have increased training activity. The lower level of enrolments in the smallgoods qualifications could also reflect a heavier reliance on informal training, and a need for career promotion by careers advisers and Apprentice Connect Australia Providers (ACAPs). This report discusses employer feedback that the AMP30916 *Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - General)* has misalignment of unit outcomes with the job functions.

AMP30815 *Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)* has the strongest completion outcomes, reflecting more established apprenticeship pathways. AMP30815 is also well serviced by RTOs and has a long history of apprenticeship training supported by ACAPs or their predecessors. Retail butchers as employers have a commitment to the apprenticeship system, and industry comment was that butchery training was providing skilled staff for other meat processing sectors. The recent changes to Federal incentives may temper this, but there is a strong tradition of apprenticeships in the industry. Industry visits have confirmed that there is an increasing participation rate of women and mature workers entering butchery apprenticeships⁵.

Stakeholders also identified that a significant proportion of workforce capability is developed through informal, on-the-job training and enterprise-based training models not captured in formal qualification data. Informal training can contribute to a lack of transferability between qualifications and jobs in different meat processing sectors, a lack of promotion of career pathways and business opportunities to potential recruits, less training in core skill areas such as WHS, and a lower retention rate due to workers' skills not being recognised. Informal training can also lack consistency as it isn't accountable to regulatory and quality requirements.

3.7 Key findings from the data

The combined workforce and training data demonstrates that the butchery and smallgoods sector is not generating a sufficient volume of skilled, trade-qualified workers through the formal VET training system to meet current and emerging industry demand.

⁵ Skills Insight, *Changes to Apprenticeship Incentives*, Skills Insight, 16 December 2025, <https://skillsinsight.com.au/news/changes-to-apprenticeship-incentives/>

Contributing factors to this shortfall include:

- Prevalence of informal, in-house training: Many businesses rely on informal training tailored to specific workplace requirements. While this training is often of a high standard and meets immediate operational needs, it does not result in a portable, nationally recognised qualification or a fully-rounded trade skill set.
- Reduced financial viability: Decreased apprenticeship incentives for both employers and learners have weakened the business case for engaging with the formal training system.
- Sector competition: High demand for manual and technical skills in competing industries (such as mining or general manufacturing) often draws potential apprentices away from the meat industry.
- Retention and churn: High turnover in entry-level roles prevents many workers from transitioning into the multi-year commitment required for a formal trade apprenticeship.

These findings reinforce the need for qualifications that:

- Ensure industry alignment: Produce workers who meet the specific requirements of employers through industry supported nationally-endorsed training and assessment.
- Enhance accessibility: Support flexible delivery models that cater to regional and remote areas where traditional RTO access may be limited.
- Clarify pathways: Strengthen articulated pathways into and through trade qualifications to encourage and support career progression.
- Modernise Smallgoods training: Address low engagement in smallgoods by ensuring training reflects contemporary production methods, technical advancements, and evolving food safety standards.
- Improve completion rates: Implement structures that support learner retention and lead to higher qualification completion rates.

Addressing these challenges requires a more integrated approach to qualification design, delivery, and industry engagement. This will ensure that training systems can respond effectively to immediate workforce needs while adapting to future industry developments.

4. Findings from industry and RTO consultations

The findings in this section are qualitative in nature, reflecting direct engagement with the workforce and training providers. This primary research was gathered through face-to-face interviews, site visits, workplace task audits, and structured surveys involving employers, employees, and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) across multiple jurisdictions. These insights represent the lived experience and professional judgment of those currently operating within the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors.

4.1 Feedback on the current qualifications

4.1.1 Common structural themes

Across all consultations, there was broad agreement that while units within the current *AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)* remain technically relevant to day-to-day operations, the qualification's overall scope is no longer sufficient to meet the full range of contemporary industry requirements. Task audits conducted within multiple jurisdictions consistently supported the fact that the existing units align with traditional butchery tasks; however, the qualification fails to explicitly address modern workforce needs that have become integral to the role, including digital engagement, and evolving and advanced technology.

Site visits and employer and employee surveys confirmed that almost all tasks covered by the qualification were indeed carried out in the workplace, indicating that the qualification's individual units are fundamentally aligned to specific job functions. However, some stakeholders were clear that relevance alone is not sufficient and that the qualification requires broadening to reflect contemporary practice.

Compounding these gaps in scope is an inefficient structure within the current qualification. Several RTOs and employers identified duplication across units, leading to an excessive assessment burden. TAFE representatives noted that the qualification "has a lot of duplication of content... requiring constant assessment," raising concerns about delivery efficiency and learner engagement. This suggests that while critical new skills are missing from the qualification, the time currently allocated to training is often consumed by redundant assessments of existing content.

4.1.2 Retail Butchery

A consistent theme from feedback for the *AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)* was that retail and customer-focused components need to be strengthened. Some units relating to customer service were considered outdated or insufficiently aligned to contemporary meat industry retail practice. Some retail butchers argued that units such as *AMPR202 Provide advice on cooking and storage of meat products* require updating given the increasing food knowledge and interest in nutrition and sustainability necessary to deal with customer enquiries. As one Sydney butcher noted:

Butchers now require "a high level of knowledge... including where the meat comes from, how to cook it, and how to provide that advice to customers."

Significant technical skill and knowledge gaps were also identified, including:

- knowledge of meat science, grading systems, and eating quality
- allergen management and food safety requirements including the requirements for the certification, handling and sale of gluten free, halal and kosher products, and the processes for separation or labelling of allergens.

In addition, there was seen to be a clear lack of business and leadership skills within the current qualification. Multiple stakeholders highlighted that the qualification does not adequately prepare apprentices to run a butchery business, which requires capability to perform tasks like calculating breakeven prices and profit margins, managing purchases and sales, implementing sales strategies and rostering and supervising staff. However, it was noted that some of these high-level business functions may not be suitable for inclusion at the AQF 3 level. To maintain appropriate AQF alignment, alternative solutions could include the development of separate skill sets or a Certificate IV in Retail Butcher as a future career pathway.

4.1.3 Smallgoods general and manufacture

The *AMP31016 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods – Manufacture)* qualification was rated by industry as technically relevant, with strong alignment between unit requirements and job tasks carried out in traditional ‘end to end operations’ processing plants. Areas of concern included the coverage of food safety units, working with emerging technology, and dealing with customers and clients where applicable to the job role. The consultation meeting in South Australia concluded that tasks carried out in industry align with those in the qualification.

The *AMP30916 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods – General)*, however, was viewed negatively by industry due to the poor alignment of units with the work functions at larger processing plants. Discussions with smallgoods processors indicated an interest in using VET qualifications and traineeships, but expressed concerns about the misalignment of the qualification with its work roles, particularly where facilities are structured into discrete production areas or production line models involving limited and repetitive tasks, and with automation.

Large processing businesses often operate enterprise-based training systems for QA and food safety requirements with highly task-specific training aligned to workplace-specific production roles. While these systems are effective for operational needs, they often result in non-accredited outcomes and limited engagement with national qualifications. A smallgoods qualification describing work at AQF3 level should include the ability of workers to complete technical tasks, perform a mentoring or ‘leading hand’ role, or demonstrate initiative in tasks such as monitoring WHS, food safety and QA systems compliance. Consultation indicated that this interpretation applied to job roles, with a need for lower AQF level training for some production staff.

The impact of the current qualification structure is that the perceived value of the *AMP31016 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods – General)* appears to be low for its target audience in the large-scale processing environment. Industry representatives from one of Australia’s largest smallgoods manufacturers, JBS, stated that “smallgoods qualifications aren’t valued by the industry,” as training is often delivered informally on-the-job and focused on compliance rather than technical skill development, further confirming misalignment between the qualification and work roles and industry’s expectations of worker skills and knowledge levels.

A significant structural issue is that the high number of units shared between the ‘General’ and ‘Manufacture’ qualifications does not reflect the distinct job roles in these different environments. This misalignment is explicitly highlighted by feedback from JBS stating that

the Smallgoods General qualification is currently unattainable within their production environment under normal work conditions.

The JBS feedback is a critical indicator of a systemic issue: if the national qualification for industrial processing cannot be successfully implemented by the sector's largest employers, it effectively renders the qualification irrelevant for a significant portion of the workforce. This mismatch drives large processors toward internal, non-accredited training systems to meet compliance needs, undermining the VET system's goal of creating a portable, qualified trade workforce. This is particularly problematic in South Australia, where smallgoods is a recognised trade and employees in smallgoods production must be formally qualified to work in the industry. An unattainable qualification structure is a direct regulatory barrier to formal trade recognition and legal employment. This will be the subject of further discussion with the SA Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) during the training product development phase.

4.1.4 Conclusion on qualification feedback

Overall, while current qualifications provide sound technical foundations, they require technical updating, expansion of scope, and a full review of packaging rules. Stakeholders reported that the qualifications have not kept pace with changes in business models, consumer expectations, technological advances, and regulatory requirements. In particular, *AMP30916 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - General)* requires fundamental redevelopment, beginning with a detailed job and task analysis of industrial-scale operations.

4.2 The role of RTOs

Delivery models vary significantly between the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors, driven by differences in industry structure, geographic constraints, and the availability of specialised training infrastructure.

For the *AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)*, consultations identified a range of established delivery categories, including fully workplace-based, blended, and institution-based models. In contrast, the smallgoods sector covering *AMP30916 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - General)* and *AMP31016 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - Manufacture)* is characterised by a lack of formal RTO pathways, with a heavy reliance on in-house systems or non-accredited training.

4.2.1 Workplace-based training

A fully workplace-based approach is common in most states, particularly among private RTOs who deliver 65% of current training. There was support for this model from a range of retail butchery employers. This model relies on on-the-job training and assessment, with RTOs supporting employers to reinforce training in the workplace and using learning materials to cover required knowledge. A close working relationship between employer and RTO is required for this model, with the level of commitment (including the allocation of time for training) identified as having a strong impact on the outcomes and overall success of the training. One stated advantage of on-the-job training was seen to be utilising the existing skills in the workforce, which at the same time supported a training culture in the business.

One criticism of this approach is that the depth of knowledge and skills acquired can be compromised by a lack of dedicated training time which is often deprioritised to meet day-to-day operational demands. Some employers and RTOs also expressed concerns about the lack of knowledge acquisition to support practical skills development. One TAFE RTO delivering all on-the-job training commented that: "Practical competency (capability) is generally achieved successfully in the workplace environment; however, the theoretical component [of competency] relies heavily on learner motivation and self-directed study."

4.2.2 Blended delivery

A more blended approach, which combines workplace training with structured off-the-job training, was regarded by participating employers as being highly effective. For example, some apprentices in the Sydney region attend Granville TAFE one day per week on work release. This allows them to develop skills in a training environment before applying them in the workplace. The training facilities include a full butchery, including carcase breakdown, boning out areas and cooking facilities, as well as a small retail store. The employers we spoke with who use this facility were strongly supportive of this approach, noting that apprentices “respond positively and quickly develop confidence and skills” when exposed to this structured training approach. One employer noted that apprentices were able to demonstrate almost all the required trade skills after twelve months using this approach.

These types of training facilities, typically owned by public RTOs, also provide a clear pathway from Certificate II qualifications in meat processing or meat retailing. For example, South Metropolitan TAFE in Perth currently runs a program for school-based students using on-campus facilities leading to the Certificate II in Meat Processing. Given these positive outcomes, expanding funding for pre-trade training within these dedicated facilities could offer significant benefits for industry.

Another effective blended approach involves intensive on-campus workshops for specific key skills such as carcase breakdown and boning. This approach is especially effective when these tasks are not normally carried out in the learner’s primary workplace. Institutions such as TAFE Tasmania, South Metropolitan TAFE in Perth, William Angliss Institute of TAFE Victoria, TAFESA, Southwest Sydney Institute of TAFE and Charles Darwin University offer these programs to ensure apprentices gain exposure to the full range of trade skills, regardless of their employer’s operations. To further bridge these gaps, some RTOs facilitate the temporary ‘swapping’ of apprentices between employers to help them acquire skills that aren’t available at their current workplace.

In addition to physical workshops, digital resources play a vital role in supporting the sector. For example, MINTRAC has developed [online safety induction materials](#) specifically for the meat processing industry. This type of industry support model provides important supports, particularly for RTOs delivering to remote apprentices.

4.2.3 In-house training

In industrial smallgoods processing environments, a different model operates. Industrial processors rely more on in-house training systems, supported by their own trainers and enterprise RTOs (or use non-accredited training), with most training focused on systems compliance and aligned to production roles. These include structured induction programs, buddy systems, and training in standard operating procedures, usually resulting in non-accredited training outcomes.

The response from artisan smallgoods manufacturers was that formal training was mainly accessed through the TAFE system, provided there were dedicated training facilities available. Of the RTOs who provided input only TAFE NSW at Granville had a dedicated smallgoods trainer. This is borne out by the low number of enrolments and completions nationally. An inclusive consultation process as the qualifications are developed may generate more interest and uptake of training for this sector which contributes to regional food and tourism-based employment, and forms part of the skills base for retail butchers. As it stands, smallgoods trainers report that their main source of students are apprentice butchers, and trade butchers and chefs who want to be able to make smallgoods as part of a food business.

4.2.4 Challenges

Each approach presents unique challenges. Many regional areas don't have access to appropriate training facilities, so on-the-job training becomes the default option. However, the training can still be highly effective and could be further enhanced by the uptake of technology for individual or group training sessions, purpose-designed and innovative training and assessment methods, as well as close collaboration between RTOs, apprentices and employers.

Some examples of using technology to overcome distance challenges include the Independent Institute of Food Processing which actively builds employer capability to conduct training and assessment and uses online platforms to support delivery. The Charles Darwin University RTO also uses communication technology to conduct training and assessment for its regional and remote learners.

Additionally, employers can be reluctant to release apprentices for off-the-job training due to time pressure and labour costs, while RTOs report difficulties in accessing the necessary facilities and consumables for workplace-based training and assessment. These issues are amplified for geographically dispersed learners. In remote and regional areas, delivery approaches such as mobile or fly-in training have been criticised as ineffective. One remote Western Australian retail butcher described these brief, intermittent training sessions as "a poor and inefficient training arrangement." Instead, there is a strong advocacy for block release training, which allows apprentices to spend longer periods of dedicated time in high-quality facilities to properly practice the necessary skills.

4.2.5 Implications for training product review

The challenges identified across these delivery models – particularly the "theory-practice gap" and the difficulties of remote delivery – directly inform the review development of the project's qualifications. To address these issues, the following cross-sector strategies have been identified:

- ACAPs incorporating a knowledge-based learning strategy (including dedicated training time) into their negotiation of apprenticeship training plans.
- Industry developing innovative learning materials (and providing professional development for trainers in their use) that can be accessed and customised by RTOs to support the delivery of knowledge-based components. This could include assessment tools that can contribute to evidence of competency. Assessment tools for the new Certificate II qualifications are currently in development, to be made available to all providers as part of the Meat Processing Training Resources Project (see [Annual Activity Plan](#) for details).
- The three qualifications to be reviewed must more clearly specify the knowledge required for each unit and how it is to be applied in a workplace context.

Overall, the consultations highlighted the importance of flexible, blended delivery models that can adapt to different business contexts, while supporting consistent skill development.

4.3 The challenges businesses face in skilling the workforce

The most significant challenge identified across all consultations for the *AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)* is the difficulty in attracting and retaining apprentices, skilled workers and tradespeople. Employers consistently reported labour shortages, with some businesses unable to recruit any younger workers. One employer noted having "no 15–21-year-olds" in their workforce, highlighting a critical pipeline issue for skilled labour.

Demanding work hours and lower pay were identified as part of the deterrent effect, although findings suggest mature age apprentices are becoming more interested in retail butchery and smallgoods careers.

This challenge is compounded by broader labour market dynamics. In regional areas, industries such as mining offer significantly higher wages, making it difficult for butcheries to compete. One remote employer reported that entry-level workers in alternative industries can earn “around \$120K per year as cleaners,” drawing potential recruits away from trades and jobs in retail or agriculture.

Retention is also a major issue. Small businesses invest in training apprentices, with the risk of having them “poached” by larger or other food-based businesses. Apprentices who don’t complete their apprenticeship, but develop the full suite of skills, can also negotiate a comparable position to a trade-qualified person. This creates a potential disincentive for employers to invest in training, contributing to workforce instability. There was strong support, mainly from RTOs, for making butchery a licensed trade for this reason.

Another challenge is the declining attractiveness of retail butchery apprenticeships. RTOs reported that interest in apprenticeships has “dropped off” compared to previous decades, despite their importance as a primary pathway into the industry. Employers also expressed concerns about the duration and structure of apprenticeships, with some advocating for a four-year model to ensure adequate skill development and to provide a return to the business for the investment in training.

Workforce capability is further affected by language, literacy, and numeracy (LLN) challenges, particularly in smallgoods processing environments, which are employing overseas workers. Training providers and employers reported that low LLN levels impact both productivity and the risk of regulatory non-compliance, requiring additional support systems.

Finally, systemic challenges regarding industry perception and awareness continue to hinder VET engagement. The overall level of engagement in VET training appears to be quite low for artisan smallgoods makers, with a high reliance on informal and in-house training. When an industry lacks a visible culture of supporting formal qualifications, workers may become concerned that their VET achievements will have limited impact on their long-term career progression.

This issue was exemplified by a smallgoods business where, following a change in leadership, the new management remained unaware many of their frontline and management staff had previously attained formal VET qualifications. This lack of ‘qualification visibility’ means even when training has occurred, its value is often lost during business transitions.

For all three sectors, industry organisations have an important role in promoting career pathways and the value of formal training. Bodies such as the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) are instrumental in this space, using initiatives like trade skills competitions to raise the profile of the sector and demonstrate the high level of expertise required.

Beyond the workplace, external perceptions – particularly within the education system – present a significant barrier. Consultation feedback indicated that schools and career advisors often lack a comprehensive understanding of the benefits of vocational and trade qualifications, or the opportunity to build careers and businesses in trade-based industries. This knowledge gap often reinforces parental bias toward tertiary education over vocational pathways, directly influencing the career choices of young people.

To counter these views, the sector should leverage its growing public profile being and the media’s focus on the importance of meat in personal diets and the food industry. High-profile initiatives, such as the AMIC trade competitions and the Red Meat Ambassador program, are vital tools for promoting the high skill levels and diverse opportunities within the meat processing sector to a broader audience.

4.4 The emerging changes and opportunities for retail butcheries and smallgoods

The consultations identified a range of emerging challenges and opportunities driven by changing consumer expectations, technological advancements, and evolving business models.

4.4.1 Retail butchery

Consumer expectations are changing because customers are becoming more informed and demand greater transparency regarding traceability, provenance, and ethical production of the foods they are consuming. They are also seeking advice on cooking, nutrition, and product selection. As a result, retail butchers are now required to have a better understanding of their products and the ability to communicate this information effectively.

One of the most significant trends is the increase in demand for value-added products such as ready-to-eat meals and smallgoods. Retail butcheries are increasingly diversifying beyond traditional meat cuts and simple value-adds into areas such as cooking, smoking, dry ageing and meal preparation.

Digital transformation presents both opportunities and challenges. Businesses are increasingly engaging in online sales and social media-based marketing, requiring new capabilities in the business that are not traditionally associated with the trade. While these channels offer growth potential, they also require investment in training and systems, outsourcing or recruiting specialist staff.

4.4.2 Smallgoods

In the smallgoods sector, increasing regulatory requirements around food safety, allergens, and certification systems (e.g. halal and kosher) present both compliance challenges and market opportunities. For example, halal production requires strict separation of processes and equipment, adding complexity to production, but simultaneously opens access to growing markets. The demand for gluten free products is also an emerging market, and also requires separation of products through all processing stages, with full traceability of inputs and products.

Technological advancements are fundamentally reshaping the smallgoods sector. The rise of automation in large-scale processing environments is driving greater efficiency and product consistency while simultaneously evolving the workforce's skill profile. For workers in these environments, the focus at the AQF3 level is shifting from traditional manual and technical hand-skills toward process and systems monitoring. This transition necessitates a deeper underpinning knowledge base, as operators must now understand the systemic impact of automated equipment. Additionally, there is an increased requirement for interpersonal and coordination skills, particularly in managing integrated production lines and collaborating with others to ensure seamless operations.

At the same time, there is a resurgence of interest in traditional butchery and specialist smallgoods, particularly in premium retail markets. This presents an opportunity to reposition these sectors as skilled trades and attract a new demographic of workers who want to build careers in the food industry. For both retail butchers and traditional smallgoods makers, the priority is to preserve the integrity of traditional trade skills while evolving alongside new technologies and a more sophisticated consumer market.

4.5 The training required for the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors

Stakeholder consultations highlighted a clear consensus on the need to modernise training for the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors. To ensure the training package remains responsive to contemporary industry standards, the proposed reforms focus on enhancing technical proficiency, clarifying career pathways, and fostering greater integration between related processing sectors.

4.5.1 Retail butcher qualification

In retail butchery, the need to maintain core trade skills, including carcase breakdown, boning and slicing (with pre-requisite knife skills), was consistently raised. The advice on breaking down large carcasses, however, was conflicting.

- There was a widespread view that breaking down beef carcasses was an important skill which should be retained as a core unit in the revised qualification. This is seen as part of a resurgence in traditional butchery skills, partly driven by changes in meat retailing strategies for the large chain retailers but also reflecting consumer demand.
- The Brisbane consultation provided an alternate perspective, describing a clear differentiation between country and city-based butchers for breaking down beef carcasses as a work requirement for the trade. The meeting expressed the view that this reflects different supply arrangements in regional areas, the demand for processing owner's carcasses ('home kills'), and the different buying and lifestyle habits of rural and urban customers.
- Many butchery businesses across urban and regional areas buy boxed beef cuts and so don't break down beef carcasses. Butchers in Darwin and Broome said that all of their beef was sourced through wholesalers and was transported as boxed cuts from southern Australia and Queensland. This makes the purchase of whole carcasses non-viable for these retailers. Many urban-based butchers also opt for boxed cuts to reduce cold storage space and tailor their offering for popular cuts. Butchers are also required in food service industries and wholesalers where this task isn't practised.

In light of these differing commercial realities, this report suggests that treating beef carcase breakdown as a core unit could add unnecessary cost of training for these businesses and may be assessing a skill that is no longer required for many butchery workplaces. This topic will be discussed further with the Technical Committee during the training product development phase of the project.

The demand for ready to eat (RTE) meals raises the issue of the overlap between trade chefs and butchers. One high end butchery emphasised the importance of cooking and meal planning skills in their recruitment and training, reflecting its client market. Conversely, two other urban high-end butchers, and another remote butcher in north-west WA emphasised they employed chefs for those same work functions, and instead, wanted the butchers they employed to be competent in traditional butchery roles, with improved finesse in presentation.

To meet these changing customer demands, the traditional butchery skills covered in the current qualification must be complemented by updated units covering:

- customer service and food advisory skills
- product knowledge, including meat science, commercial cuts and cooking methods
- value-added production, such as ready-to-eat meals and charcuterie.

Employers also identified the need for training in digital skills, including online sales and social media marketing, although some stakeholders suggested that these may be more appropriate to a higher qualification level.

4.5.2 Smallgoods qualifications

In the traditional smallgoods sector, it was felt that the *AMP31016 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - Manufacture)* should be updated to explicitly address the technical requirements of:

- food safety and quality assurance, including processes for allergens and food certification systems
- batch processing and traceability
- Good Manufacturing Practice and regulatory compliance.

There was also seen to be a need to align training with legislation and regulatory guidelines, including the Guidelines for Safe Manufacture of Smallgoods and state-based regulatory requirements for food safety.

Stakeholders across both the retail butchery and traditional smallgoods sectors identified a clear requirement for business and management-focused training. Key areas for development include:

- costing, pricing, and profitability
- staff supervision and leadership
- business operations and planning
- product development.

To address these needs within the current project, stakeholders suggested incorporating relevant units into the Retail Butchery qualification or developing targeted skill sets. This would allow for greater elective choice, ensuring training plans can be tailored to specific job roles.

Additionally, there was support for the creation of a dedicated Certificate IV-level retail butchery qualification to provide a formal pathway into management. While the development of a Certificate IV falls outside the scope of the current project, this recommendation has been recorded for consideration in future training package reviews.

4.6 Summary of industry and RTO findings

The findings from industry and RTO consultations demonstrate that while current qualifications provide a solid foundation, they must be updated to align with contemporary industry practice and be flexible enough to support future workforce needs. By refining unit outcomes to better reflect job functions and improving the clarity of knowledge requirements, foundation skills, and assessment requirements, these reforms will ensure the training products accurately reflect modern job roles. These updates serve as a critical foundation for RTOs to deliver high-quality training and provide a clearer, more robust pathway for employees seeking long-term careers in the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors.

5. The Training Package Organising Framework (TPOF) 2025

The TPOF 2025 is the primary policy framework that governs the development, modification, and endorsement of all national training products. It integrates multiple previous policies into a single, cohesive set of rules to ensure the VET system remains responsive to industry needs.

This framework provides the mandatory design and process rules that must be adhered to during the current training product development phase for the *AMP Meat Training Package*. Compliance with the TPOF ensures that any proposed changes to these qualifications meet national quality standards and are eligible for formal endorsement.

The TPOF is structured into two core areas:

- **Product Requirements:** The overarching design rules and templates that must be followed when developing or modifying training products.
- **Process Requirements:** The mandatory steps for developing training package products and seeking their endorsement.

To ensure high-quality outcomes, the framework is underpinned by seven Qualification Development Quality Principles. These principles require that training products are informed by learner and industry needs, avoid duplication, and provide clear pathways for knowledge progression.

5.1 Recent reform changes

The 2025 TPOF introduces significant shifts in qualification design, moving away from a "one size fits all" approach toward a differentiated system. These changes were not in place when the qualifications currently under review were originally written and must now be integrated:

- **Differentiated Unit Templates:** Developers can now choose between two templates for units: Template A (Elements and Performance Criteria) or Template B (Application of Skills and Knowledge).
- **Qualification Purpose:** Qualifications are now designed based on their specific intent (e.g.: for a specific occupation versus broader career pathways), which dictates the level of specificity required.
- **ACSF Mapping:** There is a mandatory requirement to explicitly identify and map foundation skills –including those aligned with the Australian Core Skills Framework – within qualifications and skill sets.

5.1.1 Unit of competency template options

Under the 2025 framework, developers can choose between two distinct templates. This choice allows qualifications to be genuinely flexible and fit for purpose by using the template that best suits the nature of the skills being described.

- **Elements and Performance Criteria (EPC):**
 - **Focus:** Generally used for structured, task and function-specific training.
 - **Application:** Ideal for when clearly defined steps are needed. It is often a 1:1 match to a specific work function.
- **Application of Skills and Knowledge (ASK):**
 - **Focus:** A broader, more flexible unit format that focuses on transferable knowledge and skills.

- Application: Likely applicable across multiple tasks or functions rather than a single linear process.

A single qualification can contain any combination of these unit types. This means we can maintain the rigour of task-specific EPC units for technical requirements (like knife skills or food safety) while using ASK units for broader professional capabilities or transferable industry knowledge.

5.1.2 Qualification Purpose

Under the TPOF, the first step in developing or updating a qualification is to determine its Purpose. This involves answering two fundamental questions:

- What is the qualification for?
- Who is going to use it, and how?

The TPOF describes qualifications on a continuum that ranges from occupation-focussed (for clearly defined job roles), through industry-focussed (applying to multiple job roles across an industry), to pathways or foundational qualifications (which support generic, highly transferable skills and are not tied to specific job functions).

Guiding design decisions

The identified Purpose acts as the anchor for the entire qualification. It shapes every design decision that follows, including:

- the required breadth and depth of knowledge
- the appropriate balance of core and elective units
- the selection of unit templates (EPC vs. ASK) to ensure the content matches the intended outcome.

By establishing a clear Purpose at the outset, we ensure that the qualification is fit-for-purpose and provides learners with the specific level of technical rigour or flexibility required by their target sector. This alignment is formally tested and refined through the Qualification Purpose Matrix.

5.2 The Qualification Purpose Matrix

The Qualification Purpose Matrix is a diagnostic tool developed by Skills Insight to determine the exact intent and focus of a qualification. It moves beyond theoretical definitions by examining a qualification across five distinct perspectives to ensure it is fit-for-purpose and technically sound.

Rather than forcing a qualification into a single "box," the Matrix allows stakeholders to plot requirements along a continuum:

- **Specific (occupation-focused):** Leading to clearly defined or regulated job roles.
- **Related (industry-focused):** Supporting transferable skills across a single industry or industry cluster.
- **Broad (pathways/foundational):** Focused on cross-sectoral capabilities, further study, or foundational learning.

5.2.1 Application in the development cycle

The Matrix is a flexible tool that can be utilised at any stage of the training product development life cycle. Most commonly, it is used during initial pre-development research (such as this Workforce Functional Analysis report) to provide a "current snapshot" of a qualification.

During the formal development phase, the tool is used again with the Technical Committee, this time through the lens of what the qualification *needs to become* to meet industry requirements. Comparing the "current snapshot" against the "future vision" provides a clear indicator of where the substantive design work must occur. The tool can also be used as a checking and tracking mechanism throughout the drafting process to ensure the emerging product remains aligned with its intended purpose.

5.2.2 The five areas of examination

To build a complete profile of a qualification, the Matrix evaluates five key areas:

1. **Occupational outcomes:** Identifies the specific job roles or work functions the qualification is designed to prepare a learner for.
2. **Knowledge and skill breadth:** Determines how wide or narrow the learning content is – from deep specialist expertise to broad, cross-functional capabilities.
3. **Learner mobility and transferability:** Examines how easily graduates can apply their skills in other roles, industries, or future study pathways.
4. **Licensing and regulatory requirements:** Identifies whether external laws, industry standards, or formal registrations shape the design and assessment of the qualification.
5. **Delivery pathways and context:** Explores where and how the learning is most likely to occur, such as through structured apprenticeships, on-the-job training, or classroom-based models.

5.2.3 Engagement and research process

To ensure the research for the Retail Butcher and Smallgoods qualifications were grounded in industry requirements, the Qualification Purpose Matrix was used as a core engagement tool.

Stakeholders at workshops in every state were asked to consider the three proposed qualifications against the five areas of the Matrix. Participants provided a rating for each area – positioning the qualifications along the TPOF continuum – and provided qualitative comments to support their selections.

Informing future development

The data gathered through this national engagement provides a "current snapshot" of how industry views these qualifications. These outcomes, which are detailed in the qualification-specific sections later in this report, will be presented to the Technical Committee at the commencement of the development phase. By comparing this stakeholder feedback with the "future vision" required by industry, the Committee can make informed, deliberate design decisions regarding qualification structure and unit selection.

5.2.4 Overall Matrix observations

Analysis of the stakeholder feedback across the five dimensions of the Matrix reveals a clear distinction between the intended purposes of the Butchery and Smallgoods qualifications. While all three sit within the occupation-to-industry-focused range of the Qualification Purpose continuum, their specific design requirements vary to meet different sector needs.

Occupational outcomes



The focus of this area is to clarify the specific job roles or work functions a qualification prepares a learner for, essentially answering the question: "What can someone do with this qualification?"

Research and stakeholder feedback indicate three distinct directions for the qualifications in this project:

- **AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher):** Positioned as occupation-focused, requiring high technical specificity.
- **AMP31016 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - Manufacture):** Positioned as industry-focused, covering a broader range of job functions.
- **AMP30916 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods - General):** Positioned as industry-focused, with an emphasis on broader learner mobility.

Knowledge and skill breadth

This area defines the scope of learning content, determining whether a qualification focuses on deep, specialist expertise or a mix of broader and general skills.

Overall, the matrix results indicate a balanced requirement across the meat sector. While technical and task-specific skills remain the priority, stakeholders increasingly identified a need for broader knowledge to reflect industry changes and ensure workers can adapt to new technologies and processes.

Learner mobility and transferability

This area examines how easily graduates can apply their skills in other roles, industries, or future study pathways.

- Industry-centric portability: Stakeholder responses consistently support strong mobility within the meat industry "ecosystem" rather than broad, cross-sector transferability.
- Internal portability: Feedback emphasised that while skills should be transferable across retail, smallgoods, and processing roles, the qualification purpose statements must clearly reflect these different industry applications.

Licensing and regulatory requirements

This area identifies whether external laws, industry standards, or formal registrations shape the design and assessment of a qualification. Under the TPOF, strong regulatory control typically necessitates more prescriptive units and limited flexibility.

A key jurisdictional factor is the South Australian context, where formal training is a legislative requirement for smallgoods producers. Ongoing dialogue with state-based food safety regulators is required to ensure national consistency for the updated qualifications.

Delivery pathways and context

The Matrix results strongly confirm that all three qualifications are primarily suited to workplace-based skills acquisition. Stakeholders consistently indicated that training should remain focused "on the job," ideally within an apprenticeship or trainee model of employment (apprenticeships or traineeships).

5.2.5 Additional considerations

While the Qualification Purpose Matrix captures the industry's perception of the current qualifications, several technical and regulatory factors must also be addressed to ensure the new products are compliant with the TPOF 2025 and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

1. Qualification structure and AQF alignment

A primary challenge identified for this review is the structural design of the *AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)*. Currently, this qualification is packaged using a 'staged' approach that mirrors a delivery progression from Certificate I through to Certificate III.

- **Impact of the stages:** The current structure relies on a significant number of units with outcomes indicative of AQF Levels 1 and 2. While qualifications often include units with varying outcome levels to reflect a specific job role, the overabundance of lower-level units in this instance has created an imbalance. This results in a qualification where the culmination of outcomes does not clearly align with the AQF Level 3 standard.
- **Structural solution:** To meet TPOF standards, the project must focus on streamlining. This involves ensuring that the Certificate III qualifications are clearly defined by outcomes indicative of the target AQF level, providing a distinct differentiation from entry-level products like the *AMP20426 Certificate II in Meat Retailing*.

2. Managing potential duplication and content overlap

The 'staged' structure of the current qualification, which spans outcomes across multiple AQF levels, may be a contributing factor to the duplication of content identified by some stakeholders. It is possible that by covering similar processes at different levels of complexity across the three stages, the qualification includes units with overlapping requirements, potentially leading to repetitive assessment.

- **TPOF requirement:** A core principle of the 2025 reform is the removal of unnecessary duplication across training products to improve system efficiency and clarity for learners.
- **Development focus:** During the development phase, the Technical Committee will work to identify whether these overlaps exist and, if so, look to remove them. The focus will be on ensuring each unit describes a discrete function or requirement at an appropriate level for the job role. This will aim to simplify training plans and ensure that learners are not required to be assessed on similar content multiple times.
- **Completion burden:** With a requirement of 44 units, the Retail Butcher qualification has a relatively high unit count. RTOs have identified that a qualification of this size creates significant administrative and compliance challenges. By ensuring the qualification is comprised of units that are strictly relevant and free of avoidable overlap, the development team can ensure that delivery time is used effectively, outcomes align with industry expectations, and the training process is streamlined for all stakeholders.

3. Integration of superseded and common units

Several units frequently used across these qualifications – including the five core "common" units (Hygiene, QA, WHS, Communication, and Industry Overview) – were recently reviewed and published in February 2026.

- **Code updates:** All references to these and other superseded units must be updated to ensure the qualifications remain current.
- **Equivalence and suitability:** Where a replacement unit has been deemed "Not Equivalent," the project team will consult with the Technical Committee and stakeholders through Broad Consultation to determine whether the new version remains appropriate for inclusion. This process will ensure that updated units continue

to reflect the specific skills and knowledge required for the Retail Butcher and Smallgoods sectors.

5.3 Proposed unit development methodology

This report proposes a unit development methodology for qualifications that are occupation and industry-focused, providing a conceptual framework for how this could operate in practice. The suggested approach involves redrafting rather than simply 'updating' specific units. This requires a holistic analysis of work performance to identify the fundamental skills, knowledge, and job functions required across the suite.

By mapping these discrete skills and knowledge to identify high levels of commonality, the developer can pinpoint duplication and determine where existing units can be merged or where new units are required. This deep-dive approach ensures that if a set of skills and knowledge has multiple applications across different sectors, they can be consolidated into a single, robust unit. The Application of Skills and Knowledge (ASK) unit template is particularly suited to this design, as it provides the necessary flexibility to accommodate broad industry applications within a single unit without losing technical integrity.

5.3.1 Case study: functional alignment

The key functional areas and units for *AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)* (refer to Appendix 2) serve as a conceptual exemplar. In this model, the skills and knowledge from the current qualification are aligned to functional areas, with new areas added to reflect emerging industry needs.

The proposed process involves deconstructing current units and combining that data with fresh industry input. This provides a clear evidence base to guide the Technical Committee in identifying the most appropriate unit template (either TPOF Appendix A or Appendix B unit template) for the required outcomes. This approach will also help to identify units applicable across other meat processing sectors or those that can be imported to suit specific job roles. The intended outcome is a suite of units with reduced duplication, accurate AQF alignment, and improved efficiency for both delivery and administration.

5.3.2 Redesign and streamlining

While industry and RTO consultation generally supported the current scope of the Retail Butcher and Smallgoods Manufacture qualifications, this proposed methodology aims to redesign and streamline the products to reduce complexity. This should result in simpler, more transparent training plans for employers, RTOs, and learners.

Unit development will prioritise the inclusion of cross-sector meat processing units and cross-industry units where applicable to enhance transferability. Furthermore, the proposed redesign of the *AMP30916 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods – General)* presents an opportunity for development to be directly informed by a contemporary job and task analysis of industry workplaces.

5.4 Proposed qualification development summaries

The following summaries provide an overview of the proposed development directions for each of the three qualifications within the scope of this review. These profiles translate the high-level findings from the research and stakeholder engagement phases into specific design recommendations.

The purpose of these summaries is to provide the Technical Committee with a conceptual framework for the redesign of each product. They outline the intended occupational alignment, key structural recommendations, and the regulatory or delivery contexts that must

be addressed to ensure the qualifications meet the requirements of both the TPOF 2025 standards and the modern Australian meat industry.

5.4.1 AMP30815 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher)

Purpose and occupational alignment

The research and stakeholder feedback strongly position this qualification as **occupation-focused**. It is intended to prepare learners for highly specific job roles, primarily as retail and wholesale butchers or butchery specialists within food service providers.

Stakeholders emphasised that the qualification must remain trade-specific and technically rigorous to protect the trade identity. While the core outcome remains the "retail butcher," there is a clear recognition that the role has evolved to require broader knowledge of modern retail practices, customer service, and value-adding techniques.

Key design recommendations

To align with the **TPOF 2025** standards and industry expectations, the following structural adjustments are suggested for consideration by the Technical Committee:

- **Refining technical depth:** The design should maintain a prescriptive structure with limited elective choice to ensure graduates can independently perform the full range of butchery functions, including carcass breakdown, portioning, and product presentation.
- **Addressing AQF alignment:** A priority for development is moving away from the current 'staged' approach. The new structure should reduce the overabundance of Level 1 and 2 units, ensuring the culmination of skills clearly aligns with the **AQF Level 3** standard.
- **Streamlining unit count:** With a current count of 44 units, the qualification carries a significant "completion burden". Development should focus on removing unnecessary duplication and repetitive assessment to improve efficiency for RTOs and learners.
- **Incorporating industry breadth:** Recommendations include integrating stronger retail communication skills and offering targeted electives, such as smallgoods making, to reflect diverse enterprise needs.

Delivery and regulatory context

- **workplace-centric learning:** Feedback confirms this qualification is best suited to an apprenticeship or traineeship model focused on "on-the-job" skills acquisition.
- **Internal portability:** The structure should support horizontal mobility within the meat industry "ecosystem," allowing butchers to transition into related sectors like smallgoods with recognised prior learning.
- **Regulatory standards:** While no specific occupational licensing applies nationally, the design must continue to embed robust food safety and WHS requirements. There is strong industry sentiment for using the qualification to raise professional standards and formal recognition.

5.4.2 AMP30916 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods – General)

Purpose and occupational alignment

The AMP30916 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods – General) is more broadly **industry-focused** than the other two qualifications. It is intended for production workers or leading hands in large-scale processing environments where job roles are often process-based rather than focused on a single traditional trade. The primary goal is to prepare learners for multiple related roles, emphasising process monitoring, safety, and quality systems.

Key design recommendations

Initial research and low survey participation suggest this qualification requires a significant redesign to ensure it aligns with its intended purpose. Suggestions for the Technical Committee include:

- **Emphasis on transferability:** The structure should provide a high degree of transferability to align with other food processing sectors and allow movement across different functions within a processing plant.
- **Operational core:** Recommendations for core units focus heavily on hygiene, QA and food safety systems, WHS, and team leadership.
- **Elective versatility:** Unlike the more prescriptive Retail Butcher model, this qualification requires a wide range of electives to reflect the diverse rotation of tasks and responsibilities in large manufacturing settings.
- **Pathway clarity:** Development should focus on how this qualification supports learner mobility within an employing organisation, improving job security and further investment in skills.

Delivery and regulatory context

- **blended and workplace delivery:** While primarily workplace-focused, the design must be flexible enough to support blended delivery models and ensure equity of access for learners who may need off-the-job simulations to bridge gaps in equipment access.
- **Compliance focus:** Stakeholder feedback suggests that mandatory training for this level should focus heavily on the monitoring and application of food safety and hygiene systems—the "compliance" aspect of the role.
- **Regulatory consistency:** Similar to the Manufacture qualification, this product is part of the South Australian regulatory framework, and ongoing dialogue with state regulators is essential for national consistency.

5.4.3 AMP31016 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods – Manufacture)

Purpose and occupational alignment

The AMP31016 Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods – Manufacture) is positioned as **industry-focused**, though it retains a very clearly defined occupational identity. Stakeholder feedback indicates that this qualification should cater to skilled smallgoods makers working in traditional, retail, or specialised production environments. While it requires deep technical

expertise, it sits slightly further along the TPOF spectrum than Retail Butcher because it must support diverse manufacturing roles across different enterprises.

Key design recommendations

To ensure the qualification is fit-for-purpose under the TPOF 2025 framework, the following development suggestions are noted for the Technical Committee:

- **Balancing core and flexibility:** The structure should feature a strong technical core covering essential production processes while allowing for elective specialisations in specific products or development techniques.
- **Technical breadth:** Beyond processing skills, there is an identified need for broader knowledge in production operations, workflow, and systems compliance.
- **Sector mobility:** The design should incorporate common units that allow for horizontal mobility, enabling graduates to transition between Retail Butcher and value-adding contexts within the meat industry "ecosystem".
- **Clarifying outcomes:** The qualification description should reflect the autonomy required to plan and carry out production while monitoring product consistency and quality assurance systems.

Delivery and Regulatory Context

- **Workplace-based learning:** This qualification is primarily suited to workplace-based skills acquisition, ideally through an apprenticeship or traineeship model.
- **South Australian legislative requirements:** A critical regulatory factor for this product is that formal training remains a legislative requirement for smallgoods producers in South Australia. The updated qualification must continue to meet these specific jurisdictional needs.
- **Food safety integrity:** Embedding robust food safety and national food processing standards is considered non-negotiable by industry stakeholders.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this report confirms that while the retail butchery and smallgoods sectors are evolving, the national training products must be updated to keep pace. Shifting consumer expectations regarding specialised dietary requirements, meat science and digital engagement, alongside the operational needs of large-scale industrial processing, provide a clear case for refining the current qualification structures.

This review has identified that a key factor in VET engagement is the flexibility of the training products. To support continued industry participation, the redevelopment of these qualifications should address the assessment burden reported by RTOs and ensure that packaging rules allow for meaningful contextualisation in the workplace.

The findings and conceptual frameworks outlined in this report will serve as a foundation for the Technical Committee. By using this information during the training product development phase, the Committee can ensure the updated products are practical, attainable and fit for purpose. Across all three qualifications, the design of qualifications and units must:

- maintain technical integrity and industry alignment to job functions
- support mobility within the meat processing sector
- enable RTOs to provide flexible delivery and contextualisation of training to the workplace
- provide clear pathways for progression and specialisation
- comply with the requirements of the TPOF 2025.

If the VET system is to effectively support the meat industry through ongoing workforce shortages, these qualifications must be agile enough to meet the needs of both small businesses and industrial processors. Implementing these reforms will help ensure national training remains closely aligned with industry practice and supports the sector's long-term skills capability.

Appendix

Appendix materials are included in the accompanying zip folder.

- **Appendix 1** The Qualification Purpose Matrix methodology
- **Appendix 2** Exemplar of key functional areas and units for AMP30815
- **Appendix 3** Stakeholder surveys
 - Butchery business survey
 - Butchery trade survey
 - Smallgoods business survey
 - Smallgoods trade survey
 - RTO survey