

Monday, 2 June 2025

POSITION PAPER/INITIAL INPUT FOR QLD PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION – Training in the Fire Safety Industry

OUTLINE

Fire safety training in Queensland encompasses a range of courses, from basic fire extinguisher use to specialised skills and certifications for professionals. These courses aim to equip individuals and workplaces with the knowledge and skills necessary to:

- Install,
- Maintain,
- Design, and
- Certification,

of fire systems for life safety, prevention of fires, respond effectively to emergencies, and comply with fire and life safety regulations.

TRAINING

Training in Queensland is offered in limited formats through limited RTOs associated with specific industry bodies and union based organisations.

Some types of training courses offered in Queensland include:

- Certificate II in Fire Protection Inspection and Testing,
- Certificate III in Fire Protection Control, and
- Certificate IV in Fire Systems Compliance.

amongst others.

TRAINING PROVIDERS

The Certificate IV in Fire Systems Compliance is only offered in full by two Registered Training Organisations in Queensland.

One of these is via the Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centre (PICAC) which was funded by the previous government. Publicly available data from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research shows only 45 people have completed this course in 2022 and 2023.

There is a significant shortage of spaces available at PICAC and priority is given to members affiliated with the centre. Training is made available free of charge to all fully financial members of Unions and affiliated organisations.

According to its own website, the Fire Industry Training organisation (an RTO) has a Board of Management and includes members from the Plumbing & Pipe Trades Employees Union, National Fire Industry Association, Fire Prevention & Fighting Industry, and a management team that manages the daily operations of the RTO.

This is a closed union shop arrangement, meaning many RTOs are discouraged from offering training in the fire protection industry as it makes it economically unviable for employers who are not associated with these Union and affiliated groups.

TRAINING SOLUTIONS

Training courses need to be available for use by the entire fire industry as a whole and not just those organisations that are economically tied to them. While in theory, the organisations running the facilities allow others to use them, the feedback from our FPA Australia membership is that when they try to access a course, they are told the facility is booked. This may be the case, however when accessed through affiliated organisations, placement is granted. This has been experienced by several organisations at the PICAC facility.

FPA Australia also believe an increase in availability of resources for fire industry courses for Certificate II, III, IV, Diploma, or short courses needs to be available to more RTOs rather than the closed shop which is currently available. The allotment of funding is currently limited to only a few RTOs and from our investigations, RTOs are either at capacity or have limited courses available.

Prior to 2020, the QBCC licensing allowed for Certificate II Fire Protection Inspection and Testing graduates to 'Test and Maintain' fire systems.

In 2021, the licensing was changed to an 'Install and Maintain' classification, which those Certificate II employees were barred from undertaking this 'Test and Maintain' portion of our industry.

This forced Fire Protection companies to employ Certificate III fire services and plumbing graduates to undertake testing and maintaining. This change caused a significant decrease in the number of personnel who were certified to undertake this scope of work, and as a result, increased the costs for building owners and contractors to employ people from a very limited pool of resources.

Under the current licensing scheme, a fire protection contractor may need to send out 3 technicians whereas prior to 2020, only 2 technicians may have been required.

OUTCOMES FOR DIVERSIFIED TRAINING

FPA Australia are proposing to allow those Certificate II personnel to undertake the same work as previously allowed, but also allow additional services to be undertaken where additional qualifications are completed.

FPA Australia foresee this as being an 'Advanced Certificate II' with the original Certificate II courses completed, with additional modules undertake, to grant the 'Advanced' certification, and

expand the scope by which the technician can work and perform their duties, while restraining their licenses from undertaking the full scope that a qualified Certificate III person can perform.

This same model can be expanded upon, to upskill Certificate III technicians to undertake some Certificate IV scope

This will enhance the productivity of the industry and reduce the costs to owners and employers.

SUMMARY

FPA Australia believe the outcomes from this diversified and expanded methodology, productivity will be enhanced.

If we are serious about upskilling and re-training as part of the process to increase the level of safety and acceptable standards of work in the fire industry, then we need to incentivise both the employers and employees in the industry and also start policing the industry at a higher level and standard than is currently being done.

We are possibly 2-3 year from the Olympic construction starting, and there will be limited technicians to undertake the current construction work, and also the construction of stadiums, accommodation, and infrastructure across all aspects of building, not only the fire industry.

The expansion of the licensing within this framework will be required.

Sincerely,



John Collie

Chief Executive Officer