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Jobs and Skills Australia

26 September 2025

Subject: Submission to Jobs and Skills Australia's Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List

NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW DCCEEW) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the 2025 Cores Skills Occupations List (CSOL).

NSW DCCEEW is the technical regulator of local water utilities in NSW. This relates to local government councils carrying out water supply and sewerage functions under [Division 2, Part 3, Chapter 6 of the NSW Local Government Act 1993](#) and water supply authorities carrying out water supply and sewerage functions under the [NSW Water Management Act 2000](#).

This submission seeks the addition of the occupation Team Leader/Supervisor – Wastewater and Water Operations to the CSOL.

Currently, the CSOL recognises:

- 732431 Wastewater or Water Plant Operator (Skill Level 4), and
- 149999 Specialist Managers nec –Water Treatment Facility Manager (Skill Level 1).

There is a significant occupational gap between these two categories. The absence of a recognised supervisory occupation fails to reflect the reality of workforce structures in the water sector and restricts workforce planning and migration pathways critical to addressing current shortages.

Occupational gap

Operators (Skill Level 4) perform frontline technical and process duties.

Managers (Skill Level 1) focus on strategic management, policy, and high-level compliance oversight.

Supervisory roles (Skill Level 2–3) bridge these levels, coordinating day-to-day operations, ensuring compliance, and providing leadership to operators.

These mid-tier roles are not captured within existing ANZSCO classifications, despite being critical in every water and wastewater treatment facility across Australia.

ANZSCO Skill level comparison

A significant occupational gap exists within the ANZSCO framework for water operations. At present, 732431 Wastewater or Water Plant Operator is classified at Skill Level 4, requiring VET qualifications (Certificate III/IV), while the 149999 Specialist Managers nec – Water Treatment Facility Manager is classified at Skill Level 1, requiring high-level strategic and managerial skills.

There is no recognition of mid-tier supervisory roles that sit between these levels, despite their critical function in coordinating operational teams, ensuring compliance, and supporting service delivery. This gap highlights a structural misalignment between the ANZSCO classification system and the reality of workforce structures in local water utilities (see Appendix A – ANZSCO Skill Level Comparison).

Career progression

Current career progression lacks the mid-tier supervisory role, skill level 2 - 3.

732431 Wastewater or Water Plant Operator

Skill level 4

- Dam or Reservoir Operator
- Water or Wastewater Networks Operator

149999 Specialist Managers nec

Skill level 1

- Water Treatment Facility Manager

243236 Water Engineer

Skill level 1

- Hydraulic Engineer (Civil)
- Water and Wastewater Engineer
- Water Resources Engineer

149399 Scientific and Environmental Managers nec

Skill level 1

- Water Resource Manager

Proposed occupation

The occupation proposed to improve career pathways, and more accurately reflect the water sector is the addition of Team Leader/Supervisor – Wastewater and Water Operations

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Typical duties:

- Supervising, training, and rostering water and wastewater operators.
- Coordinating daily plant operations and maintenance schedules.
- Ensuring compliance with water quality, environmental, and work health safety (WHS) regulations.
- Liaising between operators and senior management.
- Responding to emergencies and operational incidents.
- Supporting workforce development and technical competency progression.

Skill Level

Proposed Level: OSCA skill level 2 or 3.

Qualifications: Diploma or Certificate IV in Water Industry Operations, plus significant industry experience.

Common job titles

- Water Operations Supervisor
- Wastewater Team Leader
- Water/Wastewater Operations Coordinator
- Leading Hand – Water Operations

Distinction from existing occupations

Not equivalent to operators (SL4):

Supervisors carry leadership, compliance, and risk management responsibilities that go beyond technical operation.

Not equivalent to managers (SL1):

Supervisors do not control budgets, strategic planning, or executive-level reporting; their role is operational and team-focused.

Comparable occupations exist in other industries:

Construction Supervisors (3124) – distinct from trades and managers.

Workforce shortages and sector impact

The water sector faces well-documented workforce challenges:

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

- Ageing workforce – a significant proportion of supervisors and operators are approaching retirement.
- Recruitment difficulties – regional councils and utilities struggle to fill supervisory roles, leading to operational risk.
- Increasing compliance demands – regulators require stronger oversight at the supervisory level to safeguard public health and the environment.
- National skills shortage – water operations are consistently highlighted in workforce planning reports, but mid-tier roles remain invisible due to classification gaps.

Impact if not addressed:

- Increased risk of water contamination or wastewater overflows.
- Non-compliance with NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), NSW Health and Safe Work NSW regulations.
- Reduced service reliability in regional and remote communities.
- Loss of experienced supervisory staff without adequate replacement pathways.
- Ongoing workforce shortages in regional and remote communities.

Supporting evidence

Industry demand: Local Government and utility job advertisements frequently call for Water/Wastewater Supervisors and Team Leaders, indicating clear recognition of the role across the sector.

- Industry bodies: The Australian Water Association, NSW Water Directorate, and Local Government NSW have highlighted water workforce gaps at the supervisory level.
- Training pathways: The National Water Training Package (NWP) provides Certificate IV qualifications that prepare workers for supervisory roles, demonstrating sector alignment.
- Regulatory context: Supervisory oversight is explicitly required under state-based water safety, EPA and WHS frameworks.

The NSW Local Water Utility Workforce Composition Report provides comprehensive analysis of workforce needs across local water utilities in NSW. The report highlights challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled personnel, particularly at supervisory and mid-tier operational levels, which are critical to ensuring compliance and service continuity. This evidence supports the case for recognising Team Leader/Supervisor – Wastewater and Water Operations as a distinct occupation within the CSOL (see Appendix B).

Recommended classification

It is recommended that the occupation Team Leader/Supervisor – Wastewater and Water Operations be recognised on the CSOL as a distinct role, either through:

A new OSCA occupation, or

Inclusion within an existing category (e.g., 312999 Building and Engineering Technicians nec), with recognition of water/wastewater supervisory roles.

Conclusion

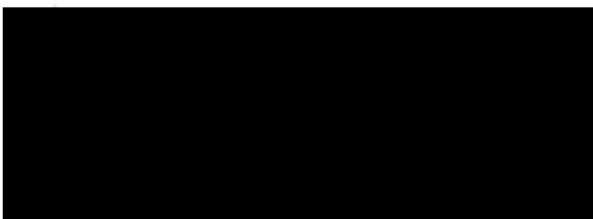
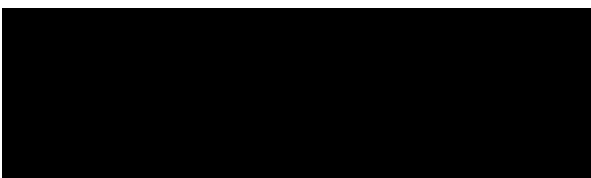
The absence of a recognised supervisory occupation in water and wastewater operations represents a critical workforce classification gap.

Inclusion of Team Leader/Supervisor – Wastewater and Water Operations in the CSOL will:

- Provide an accurate reflection of workforce structures.
- Enable targeted workforce development and migration pathways.
- Strengthen Australia's ability to address skills shortages.
- Safeguard essential public health and environmental outcomes.

NSW DCCEEW recommends the recognition of this occupation within the CSOL. Permission is given to publish this submission on Jobs and Skills Australia website.

Yours sincerely,

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Appendices

Appendix A

ANZSCO Skill Level Comparison

Skill Level	Typical Qualification	Experience Substitution	Typical Occupations
1	Bachelor degree or higher (e.g. university degree, postgraduate)	At least 5 years of relevant experience may substitute; in some cases, relevant experience plus on-the-job training required.	Professionals (e.g. engineers, teachers, accountants, doctors)
2	AQF Diploma or Advanced Diploma, or Associate Degree	At least 3 years of relevant experience may substitute; sometimes both qualification and experience are required.	Technicians, paraprofessionals (e.g. medical lab technicians, ICT support techs, engineering techs, draftspersons)
3	AQF Certificate IV, or AQF Certificate III (with at least 2 years on-the-job training)	At least 3 years of relevant experience may substitute; sometimes both training and experience required.	Trades and advanced operators (e.g. chefs, electricians, plumbers, plant mechanics)
4	AQF Certificate II or III	At least 1 year of relevant experience may substitute.	Community/personal service workers, clerical/admin workers, sales workers, machinery operators (e.g. aged care workers, office administrators, truck drivers, water/wastewater plant operators)
5	AQF Certificate I or compulsory secondary education	May require short on-the-job training.	Elementary workers/labourers (e.g. cleaners, farm hands, factory process workers, kitchenhands)

Appendix B

NSW Local Water Utility Workforce Composition Report