WAIHANGA ARA RAU
Construction and Infrastructure
Workforce Development Council

Access Systems Skills

Phase 1: Sector Findings

August 2025

Preface

We extend our thanks to everyone who provided their feedback and insights during Phase 1: Investigation of the Access Systems Skills project including

- SARNZ
- EWPA
- Vertical Construction Leaders Group
- CHASNZ
- WorkSafe
- SiteSafe
- Other companies
- Contractors
- Specialist technical and operator groups
- Education providers.

This was an opportunity for the Scaffolding, Industrial Rope Access and Elevated Work Platform sectors, along with stakeholders in the wider construction and infrastructure sector, and education providers, to tell us what the opportunities are to make sure that the design and delivery of qualifications and standards meet future skill needs.

The Access Systems Skills Steering Group has reviewed this report and endorsed the set of recommendations that will inform ***Phase 2: Review of qualifications and development of associated skill standards.***

Generative AI Statement

Microsoft Co-pilot was used to transcribe online meetings with stakeholders, and these outputs were reviewed to support the preparation of this report.

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Purpose

This report presents the findings of Waihanga Ara Rau's investigation into stakeholder's views on the relevance of current qualifications, unit standards and related delivery arrangements for the Scaffolding, Industry Rope Access and Elevated Working Platforms industries and provides recommendations for action.

It also summarises industry feedback about what is working well, what is not working, and what key opportunities can be addressed in the review and redesign process during ***Phase 2: Review of qualifications and development of associated skill standards*** and in the future implementation of training options that work for industry and learners.

Recommendations for Phase 2: Review and Development

Working alongside the Access Systems Skill Steering Group and subject-matter Technical Advisory Groups, Waihanga Ara Rau intends to:

Scaffolding		1. Develop skill profiles and align them to new or updated qualifications, 2. Remove duplicate content across qualification credentials, 3. Enhance the qualification pathway's strong focus on real-world application by prioritising practical skills, leadership, critical thinking and core knowledge, 4. Design skill standards to focus on the practical application of knowledge and focus on critical assessment evidence, 5. Review the duration of individual qualifications, and the education pathway as a whole, 6. Specify mandatory skills standards to support consistent national delivery, 7. Retain a New Zealand Apprenticeship model as the preferred qualification pathway for the Scaffolding industry, 8. Confirm ongoing alignment to the SARNZ administered Certificate of Competency (CoC) framework, and 9. Develop programmes and provide guidance for the reviewed suite of credentials reflecting specific industry preferences, and support transition to skill standards.
Industrial Rope Access		1. Develop skill profiles to clarify what skills and attributes are needed, 2. Consult with industry to further understand poor qualification uptake and preferred future options, and 3. Define fit-for-purpose training options that align to the voluntary CoC framework.
SHORT COURSES	Mobile Elevating Work Platforms (MEWPs)	1. Determine and define the skills required at various levels, including expected supervision and pre- and co-requisite requirements, 2. Develop new skill standards that focus on practical skills, group common equipment types together, remove duplication and offer greater flexibility, and 3. Develop delivery guidance for new skill standards to support national consistency and the transition to skill standards.
	Working at Heights (Harness, and Fall Arrest)	1. Consult with industry to understand skills needs for working at heights across diverse sectors, 2. Develop skills profiles that reflect baseline and specialised industry needs, clarify pre- and co-requisite requirements and supervision requirements, 3. Develop new skill standards that focus on practical skills and applied knowledge, and 4. Develop delivery guidance for new skill standards to support national consistency and the transition to skill standards.

Table 1: Recommendations

Background

In November 2024, Waihanga Ara Rau responded to several concerns raised by industry and training providers about Access Systems Skills unit standards and qualifications.

Key issues included challenges with training delivery, the suitability of training products, and gaps in training and available resources. These issues were further compounded by unknown implications from health and safety reforms, and the need for updates to industry-specific Best Practice Guidelines.

Waihanga Ara Rau's Short Course Training Project also identified a gap between the requirements of some existing Access System Skills unit standards and how they were being used. The project noted that there were opportunities for skill standards to better reflect and support learners, employers and industry, including a greater focus on practical skill acquisition and testing.

As a result, the Access System Skills Project was established to undertake a review of Scaffolding, Industrial Rope Access (including Working at Heights) and Mobile Elevated Work Platform (MEWPs) qualifications and unit standards.

The project was established with two phases:

Phase 1: Investigation

Phase 1 was designed to gather insights, experiences, and recommendations related to Access Systems Skills from key stakeholders. It also provided an opportunity to validate feedback received via the Short Course Training project about where there might be gaps that are not covered by existing standards. This discovery phase involved one-on-one conversations, site visits, and the collection of feedback from various sector meetings.

Phase 2: Review of qualifications and development of associated skill standards

Phase 2 covers a review of existing qualifications and standards—resulting in the development of new skill standards and revised credentials—and identifies any new developments required to meet industry needs, informed by the recommendations and priorities identified in Phase 1.

Project scope

The scope of the Access Systems Skills Project extends to the following qualifications:

New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (General) (Level 3) [Ref: 3708]
New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (Proprietary Suspended) (Level 3) [Ref: 3709]*
New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (Trade) (Level 4) [Ref: 3710]
New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (Level 5) [Ref: 2363]*
New Zealand Certificate in Industrial Rope Access (Level 3) [Ref: 2358]
New Zealand Certificate in Industrial Rope Access (Level 4) [Ref: 2359]
New Zealand Certificate in Industrial Rope Access (Level 5) [Ref: 2360]

Table 2: Qualifications

*Please note for Phase 2, the review of the New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (Level 5) and the New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (Proprietary Suspended) (Level 3) and the development of associated skill standards will be completed by the Construction and Specialist Trades Industry Skills Board, where this work is not completed prior to 31 December 2025.

Standards by Domain (excluding Level 5):

- Suspended Scaffolding
- Elementary Scaffolding
- Intermediate Scaffolding
- Advanced Scaffolding
- Industrial Rope Access
- Power-operated Elevating Work Platforms

New development:

- New development to address any gaps we identify as part of our investigation.

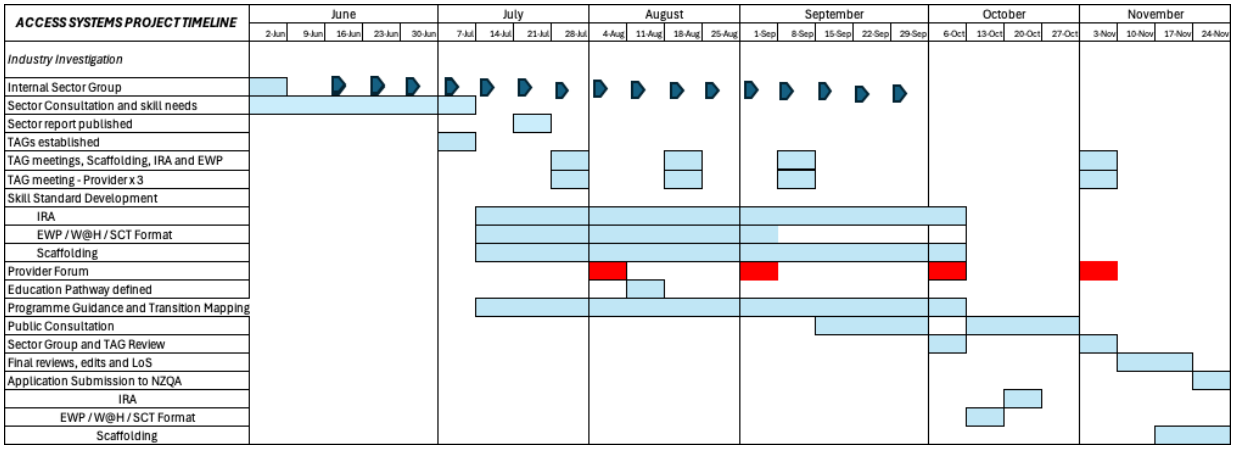
Industry and learner needs:

- New qualifications and skill standards that reflect industry needs around content, duration, design and the balance of theory and practical skills.

Timeframes

During Phase 1, industry stakeholders asked that the timeframe for the review and development work be extended, to allow sufficient time for industry engagement and prioritise qualification and standards with the highest usage.

Actions related to the review of selected Scaffolding, Industrial Rope Access, MEWPs and working and heights qualifications, associated unit standards and the development of associated skill standards, are intended to be completed by Waihanga Ara Rau in 2025.



Graphic 1: Project Timeline

Progressing Phase 2: Review of qualifications and development of associated skill standards

Phase 2 of the project will focus on working with industry and provider representatives to review and develop qualifications and skill standards to meet the future needs of the sector.

The structure of Phase 2 is broken into several workstreams:

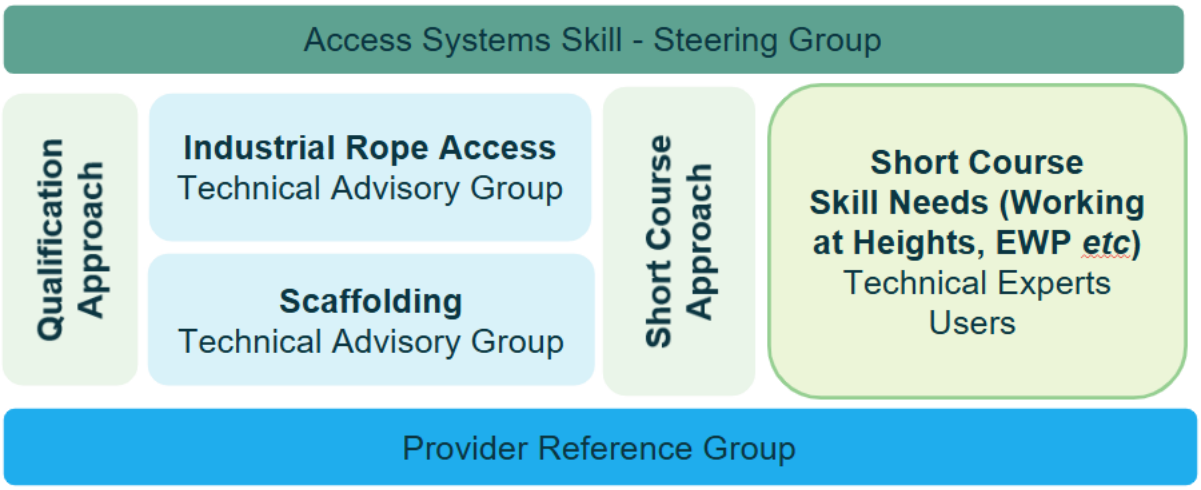


Diagram 1: Project Structure

The ***Access Systems Steering Group*** provides strategic direction, endorses key decisions and act as a conduit for sector feedback to ensure outcomes meet industry needs throughout the project.

The ***Access Systems Technical Advisory Groups (Scaffolding, Industrial Rope Access, and Short Course Skill Needs)*** are responsible for determining the specific skill needs and providing technical expertise to inform qualification, micro-credential and skill standard review and development. This workstream includes consideration of training and assessment mechanisms which support industries needs and preferences.

The ***Provider Reference Group*** aims to ensure the implementation of all skills align with the expectations from industry for training and assessment. In particular, industry wants to see qualifications and content that are right sized, strike a good balance between core theory and well-developed practical skills. This workstream includes consideration of how to best support the transition from existing qualifications and unit standards to any new credentials and skill standards listed because of this project.

Phase 2 workstreams commenced in July 2025. Wider industry consultation will occur throughout Phase 2 to signpost and seek feedback on proposals which allow adequate time to collate feedback and support transition.

SECTION 1 – SCAFFOLDING

Context

All scaffolding work must be undertaken by a competent person. Anyone who carries out scaffolding work including erection, alteration, repair or dismantling of a scaffold of which any part is 5 metres or more above the ground, must hold the appropriate class of certificate of competence (COC) for that type of scaffold. Scaffolding work above 5 metres is deemed a regulated profession, governed by WorkSafe New Zealand to ensure compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and managed by Scaffolding, Access and Rigging New Zealand Inc (SARNZ) through the issuance of Certificates of Competence (COC).

WorkSafe, in conjunction with SARNZ, maintain Good Practice Guidelines for the Scaffolding industry. When used in conjunction with SARNZ issued Certificates on Competence, they provide the industry with a robust framework for establishing and maintaining minimum expected levels of competence.

Qualification completions across the last five years for the scaffolding qualifications are shown in the table below.

Qualification	Completions				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (General), (Level 3)	90	102	109	146	139
New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (Trade), (Level 4)	51	75	73	99	116
New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (Suspended), (Level 3)	17	39	12	39	30
New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (Advanced), (Level 3)	1	17	29	24	29

Table 3: Scaffolding Qualifications (2020 – 2024)

Note: During the writing of the Phase 1 report, the Minister of Workplace Relations and Safety is consulting on changes that remove the requirement to hold a Suspended Scaffolding COC as a prerequisite to the Advanced Scaffolding COC. If approved, this change will come into effect on September 18th, 2025.

What we heard

- Feedback from the scaffolding industry was clear, robust, and overall, supportive of the existing qualifications.
- Many stakeholders commended the sector for improvements in work safety, were passionate about improving operator safety and the need for ongoing skills development.
- There is strong desire to retain and support consistent training and nationally delivery, including use of New Zealand Apprenticeships.
- Concerns were raised about programme length, over-durations, access to the right equipment and staff, assessment overload for learners and the impact on qualification uptake, particularly at higher levels.

- There are several opportunities to improve the relevance of the qualification pathways by:

  - → Increasing the focus on leadership and critical thinking skills, across the qualifications, and
  - → Removing duplication of content and create clear skill progression pathways.
- There are several opportunities to improve the relevance of assessment standards:
  - → Ensuring standards have a greater focus on practical skills and critical evidence,
  - → Assessments to focus on core competencies identified in skills profiles,
  - → Review the ongoing need for capstone assessment.
- There are several opportunities to improve the accessibility of the qualification pathways:
  - → Increasing access to on job assessment, and Recognition of Prior Learning opportunities,
  - → Addressing overall durations, and
  - → Increasing access to proprietary suspended scaffolding for related trades sector.
- There are several opportunities to improve the effectiveness of training and assessment including:
  - → Redesigning assessment materials to support potential use on job,
  - → Reducing assessment loads at block courses,
  - → Support learners with ESOL, literacy or numeracy needs, and
  - → Support tutors and verifiers to engage in professional development associated with assessment redesign and workplace assessment.
- Qualification and skill standard development must align to the SARNZ administered Certificate of Competency.

Recommended actions

1. **Develop skill profiles to align them to new or updated qualifications.**
   - → Examples of this include supporting leadership and supervisory skills throughout the education pathway.
2. **Remove duplication of content across qualification credentials** especially within the Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications**.**
3. **Enhance the qualification pathway's strong focus on real-world application** by prioritising practical skills, leadership, critical thinking and core knowledge.
4. **Design skill standards to focus on the practical application of knowledge and focus on critical assessment evidence** to ensure that assessment is practical and adaptable to a range of contexts and methods.
5. **Reconsider approach to assessment evidence in skill standards** focusing on applied practical skills, critical thinking and core knowledge.
6. **Review the duration of individual qualifications, and the education pathway to** ensure this reflects industries expectations for progression.
7. **Specify mandatory skills standards** in each qualification to support consistent national delivery.
8. **Retain a New Zealand Apprenticeship as the preferred qualification pathway** and consider other funding eligibility throughout the review process.
9. **Confirm ongoing alignment to the SARNZ administered Certificate of Competency framework**.

10. Develop Programme Guidance for the reviewed suite of credentials to:

- → ensure the consistency of delivery models and content.
- → capture industry delivery preferences for training and assessment, including the need or use of the capstone assessment.
- → support flexibility in the assessment process without compromising quality and safety.
- → support transition from existing unit standards and qualifications to new credentials pathway and skill standards.

Detailed feedback - Scaffolding

Training access and uptake

- Industry is concerned about an aging workforce and the need to develop succession plans.
- Low qualification uptake is a concern, especially at suspended and advanced levels and represents a potential succession risk to the sector.
- Stakeholders commented that there is greater demand for training outside of Auckland and other major cities.
- Stakeholders emphasised that consistent national delivery is essential to meet industry needs. Concerns were raised about the sustainability of the current model. Future provision of training remains a key uncertainty.
- Perceived over-assessment and extended durations create a barrier for completion (over-duration learners noted during Phase 1), and a disincentive to learners to engage in further training.

Training delivery and assessment

- Block course delivery is strongly supported by stakeholders; however, it also led to high assessment loads on trainees.
- Some questioned why more on job assessment was not occurring and whether access to effective RPL could be developed.
- Strong preference to retain the New Zealand Apprenticeship model.
- Training needs to be a lot more flexible and adaptable to different environments and delivery aligned to needs.
- Securing skilled teaching staff was a challenge, especially for suspended and advanced qualifications.
- Concerns were raised about the relevance and quality of assessment tools. Some do not reflect best practice.
- Evidence collection relied on written submissions and assessor checklists offering little flexibility in approach.
- Concerns were raised about the cause(s) of over duration learners, and over-assessment.
- Providers questioned the intent and duration of the capstone assessments.

Learners

- The need to support learners with English as a second language or with numeracy and literacy needs was raised several times.
- Providers noted that some candidates were unprepared for training and at times lacked the necessary experience.

New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (General) (Level 3):

- **Strong industry support –** the qualification has broad support across industry, reflected in enrolment numbers.
- **Robust and practical content -** the content is robust and supports the development of strong practical skills.
- **High relevance –** the qualification is highly valued and seen as a comprehensive qualification, developing the skills needed to operate in a dynamic and at times challenging environment, equipping learners well for real-world skill application.
- **Alignment to sector preferences in terminology –** outcomes related to 'lead a team' and 'design and build' are highly valued by industry stakeholders.
- **Alignment to regulatory framework –** aligns well to the Elementary Scaffolding COC regulatory requirements, however, may not align to the new NZQA Level Descriptors**.**
- **Quality graduates –** industry is confident in the quality of graduates.

New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (Trade) (Level 4):

- **Strong industry support -** valued by industry to develop the skills and knowledge to operate with more complex scaffolding equipment and components (see *Content Considerations*), with a preference to maintain the New Zealand Apprenticeship model.
- **Content considerations –**
  - → Should include further training around "leading a team".
  - → Duplicates content in the New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (General) (Level 3).
  - → Some content requires review to align with industry requirements.
- **Perceptions that over-assessment**, and extended duration are creating a barrier for completion and are a disincentive to learners to engage in further training.
- **Alignment to regulatory framework -** is well aligned to the Intermediate Scaffolding COC regulatory requirements and NZQA Level Descriptors.

New Zealand Certificate in Scaffolding (Proprietary Suspended) (Level 3):

- **Industry support –** is supported by industry to develop the skills and knowledge involving design, calculations and complex components for proprietary suspended systems, a specialised skill set (see *Content Considerations*).
- **Content considerations –**
  - → Content focuses on proprietary systems so appealing to those outside the scaffolding industry.
  - → Need to review relevance and accuracy of technical content to align with industry requirements (including sound technical skills – calculations and loading factors).

- **Education pathway –** the pre-requisite of this qualification on the New Zealand Certificate in Advanced Scaffolding (Level 5) generated mixed feedback from stakeholders, with some seeing this as essential and others supported that it should be a standalone qualification pathway[1].
- **Delivery limitations –**
  - → Requires access to specialised equipment and/ or significant capital investment by providers.
  - → A limited number of specialist staff available who can train and assess programme requirements.
- **Alignment to regulatory framework –** is well aligned to the current Suspended Scaffold COC regulatory requirements.
- **Access and relevance** - with the removal of suspended scaffolding from the Advanced CoC, this qualification could be redesigned to support a wider set of users including those outside the scaffolding industry.

New Zealand Certificate in Advanced Scaffolding (Level 5)

- **Industry support –** The qualification is generally supported by industry to teach components and systems that are complex or involve advanced scaffolding components representing the highest scaffolding qualification available in New Zealand.
- **Content Considerations –**
  - → This qualification should support technical, supervisory or leadership skills.
  - → Training on some highly specialised components be reconsidered in conjunction with SARNZ.
  - → The content is reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and aligned to the SARNZ Advanced Scaffolding CoC
- **Education Pathway –** the Proprietary Suspended Scaffolding qualification pre-requisite was questioned by several stakeholders. See note 1.
- **Delivery limitations –**
  - → Requires access to specialised equipment and/ or significant capital investment by providers.
  - → Ongoing competence on highly specialised scaffolding components was questioned where scaffolders do not have the ability to consolidate skills.
  - → Requires specialist staff who can train and assess programme requirements.
  - → Overall marketability of programmes leading to this qualification questioned due to speciality nature of skillset.
  - → Programme duration noted as very long and a disincentive.
  - → Some stakeholders were concerned that operators would not have an opportunity to apply some of their skills post training.
  - → Investment in the qualification was perceived to be low.

[1] The Minister for Workplace Relations is consulting on changes that may remove the requirement to hold a Suspended Scaffolding COC as a prerequisite to the Advanced Scaffolding COC effective 18 September 2025.

Scaffolding Unit Standards

- **Industry support –** the current standard suite is well understood by industry.
- **Alignment with industry practice -** several standards have been identified as not fit for purpose and/or so specialised **that they may never be required.**
- **Lack of usage on some standards -** not all standards within the existing domains have been used in recent years, particularly at Level 5.
- **Specific Unit Standard Feedback -**
  - → Unit Standard 20857 Prepare a scaffolding site for the basing out of scaffolding (Level 3, 5 credits) is covered more effectively elsewhere.
  - → Unit Standard 32877 Design, erect, and dismantle proprietary trusses (Level 4, 15 credits) has no completions in the last four years. Stakeholders commented on the use of prefabricated trusses as being a key factor in this unit not being used.
  - → Unit Standard 26607 Explain legislative requirements that apply to the design of suspended scaffolding (Level 3, 3 credits) was only used once in 4 years.

SECTION 2 – INDUSTRIAL ROPE ACCESS (IRA)

Context

The industrial rope access industry within New Zealand operates a **voluntary** certificate of competence scheme to support and guide expected skill needs across the sector. The scheme is run by Scaffolding, Access and Rigging New Zealand Inc (SARNZ) through the issuance of Certificates of Competence (COC). The Verification of Competency syllabus leading to the CoC is currently under review by SARNZ.

Developed in 2012 by the Department of Labour and the Industrial Rope Access Association of New Zealand, the Industrial Rope Access in New Zealand: Good Practice Guidelines provide guidance on industry practice for rope access activities.

The industrial rope access sector is divided into discrete areas, including geotechnical, construction and maintenance. Arboriculture and recreational climbing are not seen as part of the sector, although they share similar skills and equipment. Companies operating in the sector tend to be small and highly specialised. Operators work in very high-risk areas and in dynamic situations. The skills and attributes needed by operators were well understood by SARNZ.

Demand for operators is increasing and partly driven by:

- large complex infrastructure projects that require geotechnical work,
- complex building designs that require specialist installation work, and
- maintenance requirements for multi storey buildings.

Qualification completions are a concern. Completions within the industrial rope access qualifications for the last five years is shown in the table below.

Qualification	Completions				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
New Zealand Certificate in Industrial Rope Access (Level 3)	6	55	124	32	9
New Zealand Certificate in Industrial Rope Access (Level 4)	0	0	12	7	0
New Zealand Certificate in Industrial Rope Access (Level 5)	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4: IRA Qualifications (2020 – 2024)

What we heard

- The current qualifications do not have strong industry support. The primary factors behind this are:
  - → The presence in the market of an international certification scheme, that offers well respected training, that is internationally recognised. This training is quick (1 to 2 weeks), compact and allows trainees to progress to the SARNZ assessment test quickly. The cost of the course is not seen as a barrier.
  - → International certification schemes align to ICOP TC-102. The courses are designed to meet international standards. They have an awareness of NZ legal frameworks but are not assessed.

  - → The duration of study for domestic qualifications is much longer. Level 3 and 4 takes between six weeks to six months to complete. They do teach and assess against NZ legal frameworks and regulations.
  - → Historic concerns about the relevance and quality of teaching at Level 3.
- Sector feedback suggests that operators are more likely to train and be assessed under the international/SARNZ model which offers a more direct access to the CoC and in the case of international model, offers an internationally portable product that a number are using to work in Australia.

Recommended actions

1. **Develop skill profiles** to clarify what skills and attributes are needed. Align these to the pending changes in the SARNZ CoC and establish whether training in local context, legislation and regulations is a core requirement.
2. **Consult with industry to further understand poor qualification uptake and preferred future options**
   - → Consider the connection with other relevant training products such as first aid standards, and working at heights standards, voluntary COC requirements alignment (including updates following current review of the COC assessment syllabus) and internationally benchmarked courses.
   - → Establish if any qualifications are needed given current delivery of a well-respected international certification scheme.
3. **Define and agree on an industry-endorsed training pathway that aligns to the voluntary CoC framework** including an agreed mix of international certification, and formal NZQA-approved credentials and standards, and expected training and assessment requirements.

Detailed feedback – Industrial Rope Access

Training access and uptake

- Future training needs remains uncertain. Only one provider is currently delivering at qualification level in the industrial rope access space.
- There is a perception that learners completing international short courses can fast-track access to work, comparative to programmes leading to the IRA New Zealand Certificate qualifications (see below for further information).
- Historic concerns regarding quality of delivery and assessments at Level 3 and availability of international benchmarked training courses has impacted willingness from stakeholders to promote the qualification(s).
- A current review of the SARNZ CoC is unlikely to result in a major shift in training.

Perceptions of International Certifications and NZQA Qualifications

International Certification

- Internationally benchmarked, a well-known and trusted brand.
- Certification increases worker mobility.
- Offers a quick training to work pathway.
- Supported by several NZQA approved and private providers.
- Content of course is set internationally, provides little context to NZ market.
- Training allows direct application to SARNZ for CoC assessment test.
- The need to support learners with English as a second language or with numeracy and literacy needs was also raised several times.
- Unlikely to include NZ legislation as curricula set internationally.

NZQA Qualifications

- Nationally benchmarked. May provide some worker mobility via NARIC and international agreements. Ie Trans-Tasman.
- Current duration periods are significantly longer than international models.
- Supported by three providers, only one is active in qualification completions.
- Structure is set nationally, has NZ context.
- The need to support learners with English as a second language or with numeracy and literacy needs was also raised several times.
- Qualifications and content currently under review.

The New Zealand Certificate in Industrial Rope Access (Level 3)

- **Low industry support –** generally not supported by stakeholders to obtain required basic on-rope vertical skills resulting in many accessing non-NZQA accredited training as an accelerated route to skills assessment and employment. Some trainees select individual unit standards rather than completing a full qualification. The current qualification is not seen as attractive to the market due to historic concerns regarding quality of delivery and assessment, and, more importantly, the study duration comparative to international certification schemes.

- **Alignment to SARNZ voluntary COC requirements -** the qualification aligns with the current SARNZ Certificate of Competency for a Level 3 Rope Access Operator. Feedback was received to support incorporating the Level 3 CoC practical skills assessment into this qualification. This would be a positive step.

The New Zealand Certificate in Industrial Rope Access (Level 4)

- **Low industry support –** stakeholders were generally more supportive of the Level 4 qualification, though this is not reflected in uptake. Employers are electing to put employees through the SARNZ assessment test or international training courses.
- **Alignment to SARNZ voluntary COC requirements -** the qualification aligns with the current SARNZ Certificate of Competency for a Level 4 Rope Access Technician. Feedback was received to support incorporating the Level 4 CoC practical skills assessment into this qualification.

New Zealand Certificate in Industrial Rope Access (Level 5)

- **Low industry support –** is generally not supported by industry, supported by the fact that this qualification is not being delivered at present. Lack of usage can partly be attributed to low enrolments in other qualifications earlier in the education pathway. Stakeholders expressed a preference for this qualification to be retained in some form. Alignment to international best practice would make this more attractive.

Industrial Rope Access Unit Standards

- **Alignment with industry practice -** several standards have been identified as not fit for purpose and/or do not reflect current industry best practice.
- **Lack of usage on some standards -** not all standards within the existing domain have been used in recent years or have relatively low usage.

SECTION 3 – MOBILE ELEVATED WORK PLATFORMS (MEWP)

Context

The use of mobile elevated work platform sector spans several industries. They are used extensively in the construction, power transmission, building maintenance, hire industry and event management sectors.

WorkSafe and the Department of Labour in conjunction with the Elevated Work Platform Association developed Best Practice Guidelines for the use of MEWP in 2014 which outline safe work practices on the use of and maintenance of MEWPs.

The quality of training and having a nationally agreed base line of skills is much more important to industry.

Completion data across the last five years for the elevated work platform unit standards is shown in the table below.

Unit Standards	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
23960 Assess the worksite, prepare and operate a scissor lift elevating work platform (EWP) (Level 3, 3 credits)	8,049	11,703	14,281	17,828	16,786
23961 Assess the worksite, prepare and operate a truck-mounted elevating work platform (EWP) (Level 3, 4 credits)	324	341	362	482	519
23962 Assess the worksite, prepare and operate a self-propelled boom lift elevating work platform (EWP) (Level 4, 5 credits)	6,924	10,096	12,745	15,431	14,589
23963 Assess the worksite, prepare and operate a trailer-mounted elevating work platform (EWP) (Level 3, 4 credits)	1,149	1,656	1,644	1,986	1,783
23964 Assess the worksite, prepare and operate a vertical lift elevating work platform (EWP) (Level 3, 2 credits)	531	820	819	634	786
23966 Describe types of elevating work platforms (EWPs), and industry requirements for their use (Level 3, 2 credits)	8,479	12,165	14,806	18,356	17,308
Total	25,456	36,781	44,657	54,717	51,771

Table 5: MEWP use (2020 – 2024)

What we heard

- Feedback from stakeholders using mobile elevated work platforms supported the use of these standards for initial skill acquisition, as well as a mechanism for industry-driven refresher training.
- Industry need training that is highly practical, responsive, delivered nationally, supports core skills development and can be delivered in short course format.
- Employers rely on trusted providers to carry out their training. Levels and credits are of little interest to industry. The quality of training and having an agreed baseline of skills is much more important to industry.
- A greater focus on practical skills would be welcomed.

Recommended actions

1. **Determine and define the skills required** to be recognised at which levels. This includes providing further clarity around supervision levels (see diagram 2) associated with MEWP use, pre-and co-requisite skills (including harness and fall restraint[2]), and any new areas required to meet future skill needs.
2. **Develop new skill standards** to focus training and assessment of key practical skills, group common equipment types together where appropriate, avoid duplication of assessment and offer greater flexibility in delivery and assessment approaches.
3. **Develop programme guidance** for new skill standards to:
   - → ensure the consistency of delivery models and content
   - → clarify expectations around pre- or co-requisites requirements.
   - → capture industry delivery preferences for training and assessment
   - → support transition from existing unit standards to new credentials and/or skill standards.

Work Ready: Has been on a training course, has some knowledge and skills. Can apply to familiar contexts under supervision

Work Capable: Holds **Work Ready** skills, knowledge, some on job experience, and has been assessed by a work capable person to undertake defined work duties or tasks.

Work Competent: Verified work competency, assessed by a competent assessor against set criteria, often within a regulated profession.

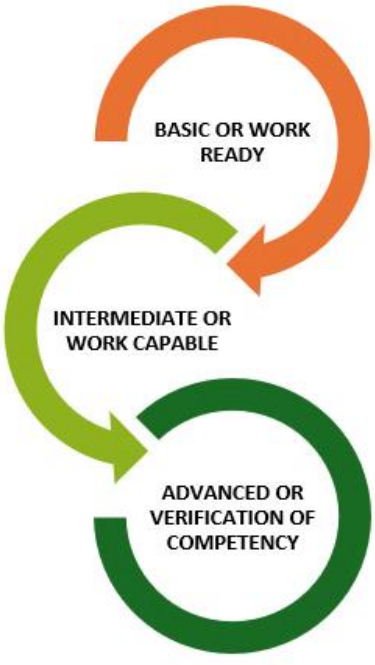


Diagram 2: Skills Development

[2] Best Practice Guidelines for Mobile Elevating Work Platforms, subsection 3.3 refers to both fall restraint and fall arrest systems and devices. During Phase 1 industry identified fall restraint as the preferred approach.

Detailed feedback – MEWPs

Areas for clarification

- Stakeholders confirmed that, in practice, operators are expected to be supervised and reassessed across a range of work situations and machine types before working unsupervised. This aligns with Best Practice Guidelines. However, some misinterpretation exists where the unit standard is taken as evidence of broad competence.
- There is stakeholder disagreement about the use of harness and fall arrest and/or fall restraint devices when operating MEWPs.
- The MEWP Association strongly support the revision of these unit standards, noting that a parallel revision of the Best Practice Guidelines would be welcomed.
- Wider industry stakeholders are looking for skill standards to substantively reflect or improve on current delivery models.
- Refresher training involving repeated enrolment in unit standards was seen as mechanistic and lacked flexibility.

Current usage

- All unit standards are in active use, with four standards proving particularly popular and widely adopted by a large group of providers.
- MEWPs allow operators to access sites to undertake ancillary work activities. As such they are considered enabling skills.
- Training develops work ready skills that allow operators to use MEWPs with limited supervision in common situations.
- Current unit standards are widely used by providers for both new operator training and refresher training (though some dissatisfaction for this purpose), typically delivered in short-course formats. Current unit standards include explicit exclusions for horticulture and electricity supply.

Delivery and assessment

- Existing unit standards assess core knowledge and work-ready skills across separate machine types. Unit Standard 23966 is currently listed as a prerequisite for other MEWP standards. Delivery of this unit takes around four to four and a half hours and is predominantly class based. Assessments generally require written answers.
- Scissor, Boom, and theory training are often combined into a single-day event.
- Scissor, Boom, Vertical, Truck and Trailed unit standards are taught outside, on worksites or at provider venues.
- Practical skills training and assessment occurs quickly. Assessments tend to be carried out on flat ground, in controlled contexts which may not reflect actual work situations.
- While stakeholders generally support the short-course delivery model, they emphasised the need to strengthen the practical component of training and assessment.
- Some providers are exploring the use of digital evidence collection to improve flexibility of training and assessment.
- Course delivery should focus on practical skills and be hands on as much as possible and support trainees who have literacy needs. Training events should maximise available time.
- Highly experienced trainers are essential due to the target audience. Some providers are developing online or mobile tools to support delivery.

- Some providers are delivering integrated training and assessment across theory and practical which has been well-received by industry.
- Providers noted that trainee numbers and access to MEWPs was a key factor in effective delivery. This was particularly true in short course format.

Content considerations

- Industry would like to see more practical skills tested.
  - → Scissor and Vertical, indoors with limited turn radius and within a set work area.
  - → Stakeholders noted that common pre-start, shut down and fault reporting elements were in each standard.
- Providers commented on the potential to redesign the skill standards to reduce duplication, simplify the assessment approach and place greater emphasis on applied skills rather than theory. The review should reframe indicative content and assessment design to focus on use of the MEWP.
- Several stakeholders felt a consolidation of the unit standards is necessary e.g. unit standards 23960 and 23964 cover very similar skills.
- Some stakeholders commented on the range of machine sizes and work environments that MEWPs operate on and note that current training only focuses on typical work situations.
- Suggested the inclusion of secondary guarding and new iconography symbols
- Assessment evidence for Unit Standard 23966 relies heavily on written material.

SECTION 4 – WORKING AT HEIGHTS

Context

Working at Heights was split off from the Industrial Rope Access (Workstream 2) in late July to reflect its typical delivery model and realigned with Short Course Skills (Workstream 3).

Within the context if this report, Section 4 - Working at Heights covers any work where there is a risk of falling and where management of that risk involves the use of a harness and fall restrain or fall arrest systems.

Further guidance is contained in WorkSafe - Best Practice Guidelines for Working at Heights in New Zealand (2019), page 20, section 6.5, including specific reference to unit standards 23229 and15757, which have gained popularity as components of various national qualifications and through short course training.

Completion data across the last five years shows heavy use.

Unit Standards	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
US 15757, Use, install and disestablish temporary proprietary height safety systems when working at height (Level 3, 4 credits)	4,976	7,187	7,965	9,158	8,359
US 23229, Use safety harness system when working at height (Level 3, 4 credits)	12,372	17,493	20,226	23,739	22,409
Total	17,348	24,680	28,191	32,897	30,768

Table 6: Working at Height use (2020 – 2024)

What we heard

- Working at Height unit standards are popular; however, many consider the levels and credits to be too high.
- There are varying views on the content and skills levels required by operators, particularly in relation to operators who regularly work at heights, and those who occasionally work at heights.
- Industry need training that is highly practical, responsive, delivered nationally, supports core skills development, demonstrates current competency and can be delivered in short course format.
- Employers rely on a limited number of trusted providers to carry out their training. Levels and credits are of little interest. The quality of training and having an agreed baseline of skills is much more important to industry.
- Changes to working at heights would have to be signposted to WorkSafe so that any changes were understood in relation to current best practice guidelines and their subsequent interpretation.

Recommended actions

1. **Consult with industry** to understand skills needs for working at heights **across diverse sectors.**
2. **Develop skills profiles** that reflect baseline and specialised industry needs, including expected supervision levels.
3. **Develop new skill standards** that focus on practical skills and applied knowledge.
4. **Develop delivery guidance for new skill standards** to support national consistency and the transition to skill standards.

Detailed feedback to date

Areas for clarification

- Stakeholders had differing views of the unit standard content. Some felt it was too detailed and onerous, others felt it was not aligned properly.
- All agreed that a review of content was necessary and that broad sector engagement was crucial. Clarifying key skill needs across the unit standards is a key issue.
- Industry stakeholders are looking for skill standards to substantively reflect or improve on current delivery models.
- The question of ongoing competency was raised. Do regular and irregular users have differing needs for refresher training?

Current usage

- Working at Heights is, by definition, a high-risk activity requiring effective training and ongoing verification of competency. Usage of these unit standards was largely driven by their inclusion in the Working at Heights Best Practice Guidelines.
- Current unit standards are used by providers for both new operator training and refresher training (though some dissatisfaction with that purpose), typically delivered in short-course formats. Approach to supervision post training differs.
- Five specialist PTE providers deliver 75% of training in these unit standards.
- Industry favour delivery of the two units within a single training event. Waihanga Ara Rau has provided guidance around delivery expectations for these two units.
- Training is typically delivered off site. Class sizes vary.
- Current guidance is that the units are suitable for Gateway use in schools but that was not universally endorsed.

Delivery and assessment

- While stakeholders generally support a short-course delivery model, they emphasised the need to strengthen the practical component of training and assessment.
- Delivery should carefully balance effective use of time with learner needs, especially around ESOL and literacy/numeracy needs.
- Some stakeholders advocate for minimum duration hours.
- Training and assessment occur quickly. Typically, over two days.
- Assessments tend to be carried out in highly controlled environments, which may not reflect actual work situations.

- Assessments need to be more flexible and reflect sector context.
- Highly experienced trainers are essential due to the high-risk work activities.
- Trainee numbers and availability of specialist equipment/workstations were key factors in effective delivery.

Content considerations

- The content of the unit standards should be significantly reviewed to ensure it aligns to best practice, prioritises practical skills and supports key skill attainment.
- The review should also consider assessment design.
- Several technical comments have already been received, including:
  - → 23229 - Risk assessment process should also include identifying the risks and the necessary controls.
  - → Reframe working at heights to **manage risk when using harness-based fall protection**, better reflecting the actual context and situation.