



To: Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

From: Wood Processors and Manufacturers Association of NZ (WPMA)

Date: 4 December 2025

Subject: **Trades and Technician Pathway – draft list of roles**

Contact for correspondence:

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Wood Processors and Manufacturers Association of NZ (WPMA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed 'Trades and Technician Pathway'.
- 1.2 As a leading statement we are very support of the proposed Trade and Technician roles as a pathway to residency for migrant workers within the wood processing and manufacturing industry. Having this option going forward for key industry roles will allow highly experienced migrant employees, which employers have spent time and investment in training and supporting, to remain in New Zealand.
- 1.3 The key roles on the 'eligible' list that we endorse are:
 - Saw Doctor;
 - Wood (Timber) Machinist and Other Woods Trades Worker NEC;
 - Paper Products Machine Operator; and
 - Fitter and Turner.
- 1.4 WPMA strongly recommends that Wood Machinist is moved from the 'Eligible Roles – Maybe List' to the 'Eligible List'.
- 1.5 WPMA recommends that the following additional roles are added to the 'Eligible List':
 - Timber Treatment Plant Operator
 - Senior Timber Treatment Plant Operator
 - Finger Jointer (differs from Joiner, which is on the eligible list)
- 1.6 These roles meet the 'Role requirements - Criteria' and are critical within the wood processing and manufacturing industry, where mills despite engaging closely with MSD and advertising for local New Zealand workers, are finding it hard to find suitable employees within parts of regional New Zealand.
- 1.7 Thank you for the work that you have done to take this initiative forward. We look forward to continue to work with you to enable outcomes that support economic growth and community resilience within our regions Please feel free to reach out to mark@wpma.org.nz or on 027 442 9965 as to any questions and/or additional discussion.

Trades to Technicians (draft list of roles) - Recommendations

Recommendations from the Wood Processors and Manufacturers Association of NZ (WPMA) are provided based on the proposals within the MBIE Consultation document 'draft list of roles for Trades and Technician Pathway'.

1. Use of NZQA Level 4 qualifications within the wood processing and manufacturing industry

1.1 At NZQA Level 4 (including Apprenticeship programmes), the main wood processing qualifications are:

- New Zealand Certificate in Solid Wood Manufacturing with strands in Laminating, Timber Drying (Kiln Operator), Timber Grading, and Timber Treatment.
- Sawmilling
- Timber (Wood) Machining
- Saw Doctor

1.2 These qualifications are a core part of training within the wood processing and manufacturing industry. Detail (provided by Competenz) is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 – Relative Qualifications (as provided by Competenz)

6 New Zealand Certificate programmes	3 Apprenticeship programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sawmilling Level 2• Sawmilling Level 3• Sawmilling Level 4• Timber Machining Level 2• Timber Machining Level 3• Timber Machining Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saw Doctoring Level 4• Sawmilling Level 4• Timber Machining Level 4

1.3 An overview of current activity of Wood Manufacturing qualifications delivered by training provider Competenz, includes 160 learners enrolled in Saw Doctoring, Saw Milling and Timber Machining qualifications. As highlighted Timber (Wood) Machinist has the highest learner numbers as to moving this role from the 'maybe' list to the 'eligible' list - See Table 2.

Table 2 - Learner Data

	Learner numbers	Saw Doctoring	Sawmilling	Timber Machining
2019	255	39	40	176
2020	201	46	32	123
2021	171	35	22	114
2022	288	51	30	207
2023	162	44	18	100
2024	160	33	19	108

2. Roles in the draft 'eligible' list

2.1 WPMA is supportive of the roles outlined within the proposed 'eligible' list. The key roles within our wider industry that we have raised prior to MBIE (INZ) being:

- Saw Doctor
- Wood (Timber) Machinist and Other Woods Trades Worker NEC
- Fitter and Turner

We do note the use of Wood vs Timber and for clarity purposes recommend that Timber is added in brackets or that Wood is replaced with Timber for the specified roles as per the ANZSCO and NOL job descriptions.

2.2 Based on industry feedback there are several roles that we recommend need to be added to the eligible list. These roles are:

- Timber Treatment Plant Operator
- Wood (Timber) Machinist (currently on the maybe list)
- Senior Timber Treatment Plant Operator
- Finger Jointer (differs from Joiner, which is on the eligible list)

Reasoning

2.3 WPMA has recently worked closely with StatsNZ on several roles to update them to the new National Occupation List (NOL). These roles are critical within the wood processing industry, where mills despite engaging closely with MSD and advertising for local New Zealand workers, are finding it hard to find suitable workers within parts of regional New Zealand.

2.4 We also strongly recommend that MBIE within the current AEWV review of eligible roles, also adds these roles to the AEWV list. The NOL description of the roles of Saw Doctor, Timber Treatment Plant Operator Sawmilling Operator, Senior Timber Treatment Plant Operator, and Timber Machinist are included within Appendix 1.

2.4 Our submission on the AEWV review in October 2024 highlights examples of the recruitment processes that employers within the industry have taken to recruit New Zealand workers as first port of call. This includes working closely with MSD regional staff. However, due to the specialist nature of the work (e.g. machinery, hazards, physical, shift hours) the roles are only suitable for a very small segment of the population, making it hard to find suitable employees.

2.5 To ensure that mills can operate the fall back is employing migrant workers. These migrant workers become an integral part of a business team, family and culture. Hence, we are very supportive of this proposal for Trades and Technicians that there will be a pathway that allows these highly experienced staff to remain in New Zealand permanently. This will support both growth in our economy and security within our communities. You can view our AEWV Review submission here

<https://wpma.org.nz/assets/Submissions/AEWV-Review-Phase-Two-wood-processors-and-manufacturers-association-submission-11-Oct-2024.pdf>

3. Roles on the draft 'maybe' list

- 3.1 As highlighted with this feedback, we strongly recommend that Wood (Timber) Machinist, which is currently on the 'maybe' list, is added to the Eligible List. The Learner Data provided by Competenz in Table 2 highlights that a solid number of workers are/have been undertaking training in the Wood Machinist role to Level 4. Other industry trainers are also training workers on site, but we have been unable to access this data.
- 3.2 We have a question as to the context of Chemical Plant Operator and whether this would be included as a component of the Timber Treatment Plant Operator? If so, we also recommend that this specialist role is added to the eligible list.

3. Additional Feedback

- 3.1 WPMA supports the working definition of Trades and Technicians, with the only point being that under manufacturing 'wood' could be expanded to 'wood products' as to also including such outputs as paper and pulp which are derivatives of wood (timber).

The Wood Processors and Manufacturers Association of NZ

About us:

The Wood Processors and Manufacturers Association (WPMA) was established in 2014 through a merger of the Wood Processors Association and the Pine Manufacturer's Association. We are a voluntary funded industry association with a strong focus on promoting wood as the heart of a future zero-carbon economy.

Our members are leaders in the New Zealand wood industry converting harvested logs into a wide range of products including sawn lumber, pulp, paperboard, panels, laminated products, mouldings, and engineered wood, through to the development of bioenergy solutions.

Total sales of industry products both domestically and globally in 2024 were approximately \$5 billion. The industry employs close to 30,000 staff, mostly in the New Zealand regions.

<https://www.wpma.org.nz/>

Appendix 1

323325 Saw Doctor

Definition:

Tahatū Link (TBA when available)

NZQCF Level 4 qualification, or at least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification (NZQCF Level 4/NOL Skill Level 3)

Saw doctors are skilled tradespeople who repair, maintain, and sharpen saw blades and cutting tools used in sawmills and wood manufacturing. Their work ensures machinery runs efficiently and safely.

Manufactures saw blades from blank sheets or strips of steel.

Levels and tensions bandsaws and circular saws used in wood manufacturing operations, calibrates saw benching machinery, and straightens and stretches steel in circular and band saws.

Operates hand and power tools, machines and mechanical equipment.

Mills, grinds, presses or sharpens cutting tools.

Manufactures and maintains the straightness and balance in all cutting tools and saw blades.

Uses hand skills to manipulate machines to sharpen saws and cutting tools so that they produce the required surface finish on sawn or milled products.

Maintains a range of mechanical parts on sawing machinery used in timber processing

711316 Timber Machinist

Definition:

Tahatū Link (TBA when available)

NZQCF Level 4 qualification, or at least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification (NZQCF Level 4/NOL Skill Level 3)

Timber machinists are responsible for the safe and efficient operation of timber machining plants and equipment. They will also be responsible for the maintenance of plant and equipment and will be capable of troubleshooting and making decisions to maintain productivity.

Accurately records timber movement documentation.

Sets up, operates, and maintains planers, band saws, and other timber-processing machines to cut, shape, and finish timber

Grinds and hones knives to precise profiles

Monitors production quality and maintains safety standards

Records timber movement and assists in packaging and dispatch.

Trains and cross-trains other team members

Maintains, setups and cleans machines

Maintains best practice tooling profile storage and replacement escalation

Ensures product is maintained, packaged and dispatched to the highest standards

Performs quality control for all timber processed

Exclusion

This occupation excludes the following:

Sawmilling Operator

712925 Senior Timber Treatment Plant Operator

Definition:

Tahatū Link (TBA when available)

NZQCF Level 4 qualification, or at least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification (NZQCF Level 4/NOL Skill Level 3)

New Zealand Certificate in Solid Wood Manufacturing (Level 4), including timber treatment strand; NZQA Unit Standard 738. Requires compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 and Resource Management Act 1991; Best Practice Guideline for the Safe Use of Timber Preservatives & Anti-sapstain Chemicals – V1 from the New Zealand Timber Preservation Council; Approved Code of Practice for Training Operators and Instructors of Powered

Industrial Lift Trucks (Worksafe); AS/NZS 1080.1:2012 *Timber – Methods of test – Method 1: Moisture content*. Extensive knowledge and understanding of working with treatment, preservation and drying systems, and understanding the principles, practices and safety requirements of those systems, and requires command of computational skills for effectively managing automated treatment plant systems. Oversees the day-to-day operations of a timber treatment plant including managing, monitoring and controlling the scheduled treatment processes, and ensuring compliance with safety or quality standards. Supports and actively contribute to the development of a comprehensive quality sampling plan to ensure compliance with treatment standards, and coordinates with external quality audit organizations to maintain alignment with the compliance program.

Verifies that chemical titrations and spot tests as part of ongoing quality control measures have been conducted.

Supervises workers operating plant and machines, including kilns, to season, preserve and dry timber and wood utilising extensive knowledge and understanding of wood properties, wood stability/movement and factors affecting treatment, preserving and drying.

Ensures maintenance of plant and machine, including fans, vents and control systems, identifies and resolves operational or mechanical issues, and oversees process improvements and corrective actions or repairs.

Demonstrates high proficiency in spill response procedures, emergency evacuation protocols, and overall emergency preparedness including strict adherence by all staff to safety guidelines, and utilization of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times.

Trains team members and related staff in all aspects of technical and operational processes and procedures in relation to treatment, preservation and drying as well as quality and safety requirements.

Monitors that workers are keeping work areas clean and organised, and that chemicals and related materials are stored appropriately.

Responds promptly to alarms and emergency situations, taking necessary corrective actions.

Accurately completes relevant documentation and records in relation to productivity, quality, safety and performance, including logging operational data, observations, and testing results in both manual and digital systems.

712923 Timber Treatment Plant Operator

Definition:

Tahatū Link (TBA when available)

NZQCF Level 2 or 3 qualification, or at least one year of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification (NZQCF Level 2-3/NOL Skill Level 4).

New Zealand Certificate in Solid Wood Manufacturing (Level 3), including timber treatment strand; NZQA Unit Standard 738. Requires compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 and Resource Management Act 1991; Best Practice Guideline for the Safe Use of Timber Preservatives & Anti-sapstain Chemicals – V1 from the New Zealand Timber Preservation Council; Approved Code of Practice for Training Operators and Instructors of Powered Industrial Lift Trucks (Worksafe); AS/NZS 1080.1:2012 *Timber – Methods of test – Method 1: Moisture content*. Knowledge and understanding of working with high pressure heat drying systems, and understanding the principles, practices and safety requirements of heat generation, steam and high-pressure systems.

Operates plant and machines, including kilns, to season, preserve and dry timber and wood.

Prepares, and checks strength and volume of preservative or treatment solutions and impregnates wood with preservatives and retardants.

Assesses wood feedstock characteristics, including the ratio of heartwood to sapwood, to determine appropriate treatment schedules.

Supports and actively contributes to the development of a comprehensive quality sampling plan to ensure compliance with treatment standards.

Sets and adjusts kiln schedules based on timber species, thickness, and grade requirements, utilising knowledge and understanding of wood properties, wood stability/movement, and factors affecting drying.

Loads and unloads kilns, and operates kiln to dry wood.

Monitors temperature, humidity, and airflow to ensure optimal drying conditions, and uses moisture meters and sensors to track drying progress and final moisture content.

Checks moisture levels to determine drying endpoint and adjusts equipment and schedule as appropriate, using knowledge of the properties of wood and defects, and managing the properties and characteristics of wood in the drying cycle.

Conducts chemical titrations and spot tests as part of ongoing quality control measures.

Undertakes quality control processes to ensure wood has been treated and/or dried correctly without defects such as warping or cracking, and that end product meets required specifications.

Demonstrates proficiency in spill response procedures, emergency evacuation protocols, and overall emergency preparedness, and responds promptly to alarms and emergency situations, taking necessary corrective actions.

Adheres strictly to safety guidelines and utilize appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times, and manages storage of chemicals and related materials.

Accurately logs operational data, observations, and testing results in both manual and digital systems, and maintains documentation of kiln schedules, drying, cycles and timber batches, including taking log moisture readings and drying outcomes for traceability and quality audits.

May perform routine checks and maintenance on kiln equipment, fans, vents, and control systems.

711313 Sawmilling Operator

Definition:

Tahatū Link ??

NZQCF Level 4 qualification, or at least three years of relevant experience may substitute for the formal qualification (NZQCF Level 4/NOL Skill Level 3)

A sawmilling operator is responsible for operating and maintaining machinery that processes logs into timber products, ensuring safety, efficiency, and quality throughout the production cycle. A high competency in sawmilling machinery operation, optimisation type equipment, value and recovery skills is required.

Operate sawmill machinery: Includes head rigs, resaws, edgers, trimmers, and conveyors to cut logs into lumber of specified dimensions.

Feed and position logs: Use front-end loaders, cranes, or forklifts to move logs into place for processing.

Monitor and adjust equipment: Ensure machines are functioning correctly, make adjustments for optimal cutting, and perform minor repairs.

Inspect timber: Examine logs and lumber for defects like rot, splits, or warping; remove or trim as needed.

Grade and sort timber: Classify lumber based on size, quality, and intended use; record measurements and grades.

Operate kilns and treatment plants: Monitor drying and chemical treatment processes to meet product specifications.

Maintain safety standards: Follow strict health and safety protocols, including PPE use and hazard awareness.