

Breaking Down Barriers – Training, Trades and the Future of Water Operators

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The role of the water industry operator has expanded well beyond traditional tasks. Today, operators manage asbestos assets, work in confined spaces, undertake gas detection, and operate increasingly advanced technologies. Despite these demands, the qualifications framework within the *National Water Training Package* has not kept pace with the complexity of the role.

This presentation will provide operators with a clear update on current discussions around the future of the National Water Training Package and the sector's call for a three-year apprenticeship model. This model reflects the volume of learning now required and creates a stronger, more recognised career pathway for operators.

Drawing on insights from the latest workforce skills snapshot, the session will also explore what is needed from key stakeholder groups to move forward: councils supporting training opportunities, regulators considering licensing alignment, RTOs addressing delivery and trainer shortages, commercial providers looking beyond short-term profit to support the long-term sustainability of the workforce, and operators themselves adding their voice to reform. By working together, these groups can break down silos, strengthen career recognition, and build a sustainable, future-ready workforce.