

Briefing Paper: Fire Protection Licencing in QLD

In response to the 'Building Fire Safety in Queensland Budget Accommodation Report', which was released after the Childers backpacker hostel fire of June 2000, the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991 (QBCC Act) was amended to include a contractor licencing scheme for the installation, maintenance or certification of a fire protection system for a building. An occupational licencing scheme which supplemented the contractor licencing scheme, was implemented in 2010.

Today, Queensland has the most detailed and mature fire protection licencing system in Australia and is often the reference point used by other States. Queensland fire protection licencing is for contractors and workers that cover fire protection design, installation, certification, maintenance and service activities. An example of the scope of the Queensland fire protection licencing scheme is that only a trade qualified sprinkler fitter who has completed the Certificate III apprenticeship and who knows what is required to properly install, maintain, service and inspect and test high rise apartment buildings and other commercial, industrial and public access buildings' fire sprinkler systems is licensed to do so.

Who is required to hold a licence?

Any person (including an employee or someone working under a subcontract arrangement) who personally performs or supervises fire protection work is required to hold an appropriate licence.

3 different licences - one of the following licences must be held to be able to personally carry out or supervise fire protection work:

- A fire protection occupational licence issued under the QBCC Act that authorises the licensee to personally carry out the work (as an employee or sub- trade contractor only);
- A contractor's licence issued under the QBCC Act that authorises the licensee to personally carry out the work (under contract for a builder or consumer); or
- A licence, registration or authorisation under an Act, other than the QBCC Act, that authorises the person to personally supervise or carry out the work (for example, an occupational licence issued under the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 or the Electrical Safety Act 2002).

12 unique Fire Licence classes with defined scope of works

- Passive fire protection – fire doors and shutters;
- Passive fire protection – fire collars, penetrations and joint sealing;
- Passive fire protection – fire and smoke walls and ceilings;
- Special hazard suppression systems;
- Sprinkler and suppression systems - reticulated water based;
- Fire pumps;
- Fire hydrants and hose reels;
- Portable fire equipment and hose reels (hose reels down stream of stop cock only);
- Fire detection, alarm and warning systems;
- Emergency Lighting;
- Emergency procedures; and
- Fire safety professional.

To apply for a fire occupational licence, applicants must meet the relevant technical qualification requirements. Each licence class has a defined scope of work and the applicant must provide evidence of successful completion of all of the stipulated units of competency connected with that class of licence.

The licencing system is underpinned by the Certificate IV qualification in Fire Systems Compliance. This qualification was specifically developed under the direction of the Queensland Government as the technical qualification necessary for the Certification license and is a formally registered Queensland Government accredited course registered with ASQA (The Australian Skills Quality Authority).

Because of the niche market that is fire protection in Australia, there is a limited market for qualification delivery. The Certificate IV Fire Systems Compliance qualifications as well as other license linked qualifications are currently being delivered at the Service Trades College in Queensland by experienced and qualified trainers. In 2015, the College celebrated 11 years of producing job-ready graduates who go on to enjoy long and successful careers in the major construction sector. The College proudly achieves a 90% apprenticeship completion rate, which is well above the national average completion rate of 55%. Students from other states can also enrol and are able to complete most of their training through correspondence.

Fire Protection licensing is administered by the Queensland Building and Construction Commission (QBCC). More information can be found here:

https://www.qbcc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/Fire_Protection_Occupational_Licensing_Booklet.pdf