

Driving Industry Conversations – Understanding Outdoor Power Equipment Training Requirements

This document summarises discussions from Driving Industry Conversations – Understanding Outdoor Power Equipment Training Requirements on 13 July 2026. This summary captures the consistent themes raised across these sessions to inform training package reform and broader industry engagement.

What is Working Well

Participants agreed that the qualification continues to provide a solid foundation in traditional outdoor power equipment servicing, particularly for petrol-powered equipment and established servicing practices.

Other strengths identified included:

- Strong support provided by training organisations throughout apprenticeship and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) pathways.
- Consistency in qualification delivery across providers.
- A well-established technical foundation that has served the industry effectively for many years.
- Existing apprenticeship pathways that continue to support industry entry.

Emerging Industry Needs

A consistent message throughout the consultation was that the qualification needs to better reflect the rapid technological changes occurring across the industry. Priority areas for future training include:

Electrification

Participants highlighted the rapid growth of battery-powered equipment, including:

- Lithium-ion battery technology
- Charging systems
- Safe battery storage and transport
- Battery maintenance
- Safe handling and disposal practices

Many organisations reported that battery-powered products now represent a significant proportion of equipment sales, with continued growth expected.

Digital Diagnostics

The increasing use of:

- Electronic control units (ECUs)
- Computer-based diagnostics
- Diagnostic software
- Digital service information

This means, technicians now require much stronger digital literacy than in previous years.

Autonomous Equipment

The industry is beginning to adopt:

- Robotic lawn mowers
- Autonomous commercial equipment
- Smart connected technologies

Participants felt these technologies should begin to influence future qualification design.

Business and Customer Service Skills

One of the strongest themes was the need for apprentices to develop broader workplace capability beyond technical repair skills.

Unlike many automotive sectors, outdoor power equipment technicians particularly within small family businesses often undertake multiple roles including:

- Customer service
- Sales support
- Equipment diagnosis
- Workshop administration
- Point of sale operations

Participants recommended introducing training covering:

- Customer communication
- Explaining technical issues in plain language
- Basic business operations
- Computer literacy
- Workshop administration systems
- Use of diagnostic software

Qualification Design

Several participants suggested reviewing the overall structure of the qualification.

Discussion included:

- Updating outdated units of competency.
- Reviewing the balance between core and elective units.
- Removing content that is no longer widely used.
- Creating clearer pathways or specialist streams.
- Ensuring the qualification remains fit for modern workplaces.

There was also discussion around improving flexibility through:

- Hybrid delivery models
- Workplace-based assessment
- Block release options
- Greater use of online learning

Barriers to Apprenticeship Uptake

A number of common barriers were identified.

Seasonal Nature of the Industry

Many businesses experience significant fluctuations in workload throughout the year, making it difficult to commit to employing apprentices over a multi-year period.

Small Business Environment

The majority of outdoor power equipment businesses are small operations with limited staff. This creates challenges including:

- Difficulty releasing apprentices for training.
- Limited capacity during peak business periods.
- Financial risk associated with apprentice employment.

Competition from Other Industries

Participants noted increasing competition from mining, resources and other higher-paying industries, particularly in regional areas, making recruitment difficult.

Apprentice Retention

Businesses reported investing heavily in apprentices only to lose qualified staff to:

- Larger industries
- Higher-paying sectors
- Other automotive trades

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Participants discussed the challenges associated with experienced technicians gaining formal qualifications.

Although many technicians possess extensive industry experience, barriers include:

- Lengthy and complex RPL processes.
- Administrative burden.
- Limited perceived value of obtaining a qualification later in their career.

There was support for simpler and more accessible RPL pathways.

Industry Promotion

Participants identified a need to better promote careers within outdoor power equipment.

Suggestions included:

- Greater engagement with schools.
- Promotion through VET Delivered to Secondary Students (VDSS) and VET in Schools programs.
- Improved career awareness campaigns.
- Stronger collaboration between industry associations, training providers and Jobs and Skills Councils.

Many participants felt young people remain largely unaware of career opportunities available within the industry.

Delivery Models

Training providers discussed opportunities to improve delivery through:

- Block training models.
- Hybrid learning.
- Workplace assessment.
- Greater flexibility for employers.
- Potential shared apprenticeship arrangements between businesses.

These approaches may help reduce disruption to small businesses while maintaining training quality.

Overall Consultation Summary

The consultation reinforced that the Outdoor Power Equipment industry is undergoing significant technological change. While the current qualification provides a strong foundation in traditional servicing, participants agreed it requires modernisation to better prepare technicians for emerging technologies.

Key priorities identified were:

- Updating qualification content to reflect electrification, digital diagnostics and autonomous technologies.
- Embedding business, customer service and digital capability alongside technical skills.
- Improving qualification flexibility and delivery models.
- Reducing barriers for apprentices and experienced workers seeking qualifications.
- Increasing awareness of outdoor power equipment careers to strengthen the future workforce.

These insights will help inform future training package reviews and broader workforce planning activities to ensure qualifications remain relevant, contemporary and aligned with industry needs.

The views, claims, and recommendations in this summary are drawn from what was discussed during the Driving Industry Conversations consultations and do not necessarily reflect the official position of AUSMASA. They are presented to capture industry feedback and inform further discussion, not as AUSMASA policy.