

Driving Industry Conversations – Next Generation Marine in VET

This document summarises discussions from Driving Industry Conversations – Next Generation Marine in VET on 20 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 for marine technicians, particularly through the strong relationships between training providers and industry.

Key strengths identified included:

- Strong collaboration between TAFE, industry bodies and employers
- High quality delivery by experienced teaching staff
- Positive industry confidence in graduates
- Introduction of a split-cohort training model, allowing apprentices to specialise in commercial or recreational marine sectors during later stages of training
- Growing awareness of marine mechanical careers through industry promotion and school engagement activities

Opportunities to improve the qualification

The strongest message throughout the consultation was that the qualification requires a comprehensive review to better reflect the realities of modern marine servicing.

Key opportunities included:

Increase marine-specific content

Participants noted that many core units are generic automotive units, allowing technicians from other automotive sectors to gain recognition without sufficient marine-specific capability.

Suggestions included:

- Increase the number of marine-specific core units
- Reduce reliance on generic automotive competencies
- Strengthen propulsion, cooling, electrical and marine systems content
- Ensure graduates demonstrate genuine marine capability

Review qualification structure

Participants suggested:

- Reviewing the entire qualification rather than making minor updates
- Considering additional pathways and specialisations
- Developing post-trade pathways such as marine electrical specialisations
- Introducing flexible skill sets and short courses

Better reflect emerging technology

Technology was identified as the fastest-changing area affecting the industry.

Priority areas included:

- Digital diagnostics

- CAN bus communication systems
- Advanced marine electronics
- Integrated vessel systems
- GPS and networked technologies
- Modern propulsion systems

Participants acknowledged that while electrification should be considered, current industry demand remains centred on internal combustion technology and marine electronics.

Foundation skills and employability

Industry highlighted that technical competence alone is insufficient. Employers would like greater emphasis on:

- Communication skills
- Customer interaction
- Completing job cards and documentation
- Researching technical information
- Workplace professionalism
- Problem solving

These employability skills were considered essential for modern technicians.

Marine electrification

Participants discussed the future role of battery electric propulsion. The general consensus was:

- Electric propulsion remains an emerging market
- Current applications are mainly small portable outboards and commercial trials
- Battery weight and operating range remain significant limitations
- Hydrogen is also emerging as a potential pathway

Rather than embedding extensive EV content into the Certificate III immediately, participants suggested:

- Monitoring industry adoption
- Developing future skill sets or elective pathways
- Ensuring the qualification can be updated as technology matures

Barriers to learner participation

Several barriers affecting apprentice numbers were identified.

Lack of regulation

The absence of licensing or mandatory qualifications means many employers can employ technicians without requiring formal training

Participants felt greater industry recognition of qualifications would encourage apprenticeship uptake

Regional access

Travel requirements were identified as one of the largest barriers, particularly in New South Wales where apprentices travel to Ultimo for training.

Suggestions included:

- Regional delivery locations
- First-year local delivery before transitioning to metropolitan campuses

- Greater flexibility for apprentices from regional communities

Industry awareness

Participants believed many young people are unaware that marine mechanical careers exist.

Improved promotion through:

- Schools
- Careers events
- Work experience
- School-based pathways was identified as essential

Career pathways

Young people increasingly ask what opportunities exist after completing a Certificate III.

Participants recommended developing clearer progression pathways including:

- Advanced qualifications
- Marine electrical specialisations
- Leadership opportunities
- Business and management pathways
- Manufacturer training
- Ongoing professional development

Providing visible career progression was seen as important for attracting new entrants.

Future Direction

Participants strongly supported the approved review of the Marine Mechanical project and welcomed the opportunity to contribute through the Technical Committee process.

There was broad agreement that the review should:

- Modernise the qualification
- Increase marine-specific content
- Improve flexibility
- Better reflect technological change
- Strengthen industry relevance
- Future-proof the qualification while maintaining strong foundational mechanical skills

Overall Summary

The consultation demonstrated strong industry support for the Marine Mechanical qualification while highlighting a clear need for significant modernisation. Participants emphasised the importance of strengthening marine-specific competencies, improving access for regional learners, enhancing employability skills, and ensuring the qualification keeps pace with rapidly evolving technologies. The upcoming qualification review was widely welcomed as an opportunity to build a more contemporary, flexible and industry-responsive training package that supports both current workforce needs and future technological developments

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.