

Crane licensing review

In May 2021, work health and safety (WHS) ministers agreed to Recommendation 33 of the 2018 Review of the model WHS laws (the 2018 Review) to review high risk work (HRW) crane licence classes to ensure they remain relevant to contemporary work practices and equipment.

Between May and June 2022, Safe Work Australia sought stakeholder views on, and evidence of, problems with current crane HRW licensing and potential solutions, through the release of a discussion paper.

Safe Work Australia received more than 70 submissions from business, unions, industry associations, WHS regulators and individual workers across the construction, transport postal and warehousing, manufacturing and mining industries. Most submissions were [published online](#)

The vast majority of submissions identified problems with the current high risk work licensing framework. Common issues raised during public consultation included:

Training of crane operators in dogging work

Many stakeholders support requiring a crane operator to have work experience as a dogger, before obtaining any crane licence. The suggestion is that practical experience working alongside a crane improves a worker's competency to operate a crane safely.

Work experience requirements for crane operators

Many stakeholders are concerned that crane licences allow workers to use cranes with little prior practical experience, particularly for higher capacity slewing mobile cranes.

A common suggestion was to require workers to operate a crane under a provisional licence and complete a number of supervised operating hours (recorded in a logbook), before being able to obtain a full licence. Some submissions also suggested that workers be required to spend time operating lower capacity cranes before being eligible to obtain a higher capacity crane licence.

Encompassment

Under the model WHS Regulations, mobile crane licences follow a hierarchy and are 'encompassed', so the holder of a 'higher' level licence may also operate all other cranes lower down the hierarchy. Encompassment allows the holder of any slewing mobile crane licence to operate a non-slewing mobile crane, a vehicle loading crane and a reach stacker.

Many stakeholders support removing encompassment because they suggested it was reducing crane safety. They suggest that the current licence training for slewing cranes does not provide workers with the required competencies to use non-slewing cranes, vehicle loading cranes, and reach stackers safely.

Telehandler licensing

Many stakeholders support introducing a telehandler-specific high risk work licence. They suggest the current licensing approach is not providing workers with the competencies they need to operate a telehandler safely. Stakeholders also pointed out that the current approach to licensing telehandler operations is difficult for businesses to comply with because different licences are required for different telehandler operations, and there is no consistent national approach.

Organising crane licence types by their operating characteristics

Some stakeholders support changing crane licence classes to focus on fundamental differences in crane design and function, rather than lifting capacity or the number of powered operations.

Suggestions for new licence types

In addition to telehandlers, new specific high risk work licences were suggested, including for side loaders, straddle carriers, mobile harbour cranes and vessel mounted cranes.

Safe Work Australia Members' agreement to consider model WHS Regulations changes

In September 2022, Safe Work Australia Members agreed to consider changes to the model WHS laws to address the issues raised through the public consultation.

Safe Work Australia will now engage with the Office of Best Practice Regulation on any regulatory impact analysis that is required and develop options for changes to crane licensing.

Ongoing consultation

Any regulatory changes to the model WHS Regulations for crane licensing will require further consultation.

Updates on opportunities to provide input, and other progress updates, will continue to be posted on [Safe Work Australia's crane licence review webpage](#).

Safe Work Australia has formed a crane licence review working group to provide technical advice and guidance throughout its consideration of regulatory changes. The working group consists of representatives from:

- each state and territory WHS regulator
- the Australian Council of Trade Unions
- the Australian Industry Group
- the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and
- the Crane Industry Council of Australia.

Further information

For more information please contact highriskwork@swa.gov.au.