

## **Finalisation of the Review of the Fire Qualifications**

The Fire qualifications have been submitted to Government Skills Australia (GSA) on 21 October in preparation for endorsement. While there will still be opportunity for further national comment in the forthcoming weeks, the review of the Fire Qualifications by AFAC and the UFUA has been completed.

This review has been a joint AFAC and UFUA project, managed under a joint contract. While it has been a complex process, there has been close consultation and engagement with all AFAC member agencies and stakeholders.

While still complying with the significant policy changes in vocational education and training led by the Commonwealth and informed by decisions taken by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the review has sought to minimise the impact of change on registered training organisations delivering the Fire Qualifications.

## **Impetus for change and development of new units within the Fire Qualifications**

After considerable development and consultation, the Fire Sector material was endorsed as part of the PUA00 Public Safety Training Package (PSTP) Version 2 in 2002.

A new qualification for specialist fire investigation was added to the Fire Sector material in 2009 as part of the PUA00 PSTP Version 7.

In 2010, as part of the PUA00 PSTP Version 8 (subsequently changed to Version 8.1), the Fire Sector qualifications were revised to include new industry wide units of competency to support operations, and search and rescue for a range of specialist areas. Two new qualifications were developed for emergency communication centre operators and supervisors.

The impetus for the change to the existing Fire Sector material and the development of new material came from the need to review this material, particularly that which was endorsed in 2002 to ensure that the Fire Sector material continued to reflect current work requirements, government and community expectations.

Since 2002, there have been a number of major initiatives that have directly informed the review of the Fire Qualifications. Of these, three significant drivers have been:

- Recommendations from the Australian Government Report: *A Nation Charred: Inquiry into the Recent Australian Bushfires*, October 2003, House of Representatives Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires. The recommendations from this Report have led to the adoption of a common incident management system in 2005 by fire, land management agencies and emergency services. This recommendation and subsequent policy decision has directly informed the review and development of the command and control and operations units across the fire and emergency services qualifications.
- The establishment of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (BCRC) and the subsequent findings of the seven year research program. The BCRC, in conjunction with AFAC and numerous higher education and research institutions, has undertaken extensive global research into bushfire, community safety and risk management. Technology Transfer of research findings forms a key component of the BCRC and AFAC research adoption program and ensures that industry end users are the beneficiaries of this knowledge, that the findings are integrated into the Fire competency framework and the associated learning strategies and training are updated to reflect this new body of research.

While there have been a number of PhD students graduating through this research, the greatest beneficiaries of this Commonwealth and industry-funded research potentially are the

practitioners in the field; the majority of whom would access the competency based training. The research findings have identified areas within the Fire units where there are gaps and areas where modification or enhancements are required. Where this has occurred, the need has either been fully addressed in the review of the units, and in one case has identified the need for further work to develop the future fire management planners within the industry.

- The recommendations from The 2009 *Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Final Report* have directly informed additional work undertaken in the review of the Fire qualifications; significant developments have occurred in the area of public information and safety and in the review of all of the urban, wildfire and land management related units.

### **How the need for change and development of new units was identified**

As part of the Scoping for the Review of the PUA00 PSTP, AFAC undertook extensive research and analysis with national fire and emergency service agencies, AFAC working groups and the United Firefighters' Union of Australia (UFUA).

The Review of the Public Safety Training Package Research and Analysis Phase One – AFAC Report (9 November 2006) outlines the comprehensive process undertaken by the industry to identify and agree on gaps in the Fire Sector material in the PUA00 PSTP. The recommendations in this report formed a key component of the work to arrive at the revised Fire Sector material.

Notwithstanding, the recommendations in the report have been tested through further discussion and debate through the various projects established to address each identified need and with the UFUA. The review of the wildfire units, for example, has involved reviewing the findings of the BCRC programs to ensure that validated findings are embedded into the review of the wildfire and land management related units.

In addition to this AFAC Report additional work has been undertaken to address the other reports and recommendations as outlined previously.

### **Process for the development and change**

The Review of the fire qualifications has been managed by the Public Safety Industry Advisory Committee, via a Public Safety Training Package (PSTP) Project Steering Committee and under the auspices of Government Skills Australia (GSA). Phase I of the review of the PUA00 PSTP commenced in June 2006 and involved a training needs analysis, identification of industry requirements and preparation of a report confirming recommendations and agreed priorities.

In line with the findings of Phase I, and agreement with Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), Phase II has involved developing new qualifications for fire investigators, emergency communications operators and supervisors, submitted as part of Version 7 and 8.1, and in 2009 to 2011 reviewing, redrafting and developing new units of competency to meet identified gaps within the Fire Qualifications.

The methodology for the Review is based on the premise that extensive research and consultation is required within the industry.

Industry technical specialists at all times provide technical input into the development, review and validation of the units of competency. The development process has been managed by AFAC and the UFUA and included numerous national industry technical reference groups, several of which are already established as national cross-jurisdictional Committees, in the following areas:

- urban fire

- wildfire and land management
- urban search and rescue
- swift water rescue
- command and control
- community safety
- building fire safety
- aviation fire management
- learning and development.

Project briefs were developed for the review of each functional area (refer to attached sample project brief) and outlined the process undertaken and agreed to by AFAC and UFUA stakeholders.

The AFAC Learning and Development Group, Operations (Rural, land management and urban) were instrumental in developing, reviewing and commenting on all of the material.

The revised Fire Qualifications and units of competency were uploaded onto the AFAC Knowledge Web for comment for six weeks by all 35 agencies represented by AFAC.

The involvement of stakeholders in the process from the beginning of the project has been significant and is reflected in the quality of the final outcome.