

INDUSTRY PROFILE - Road Transport Furniture Removalists



**Transport, Postal &
Warehousing
Road Transport Furniture
Removalists**

ANZSIC: 4810

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1. Background

1.1 Industry Regulatory / Licencing Bodies

- The Department of Transport and Main Roads WA are the entities responsible for licensing and regulatory requirements in the road transport industry.

2. Workforce Opportunities and/or Challenges for Industry

2.1 Industry Overview

Please note this response relates to the Furniture Removalist Industry; please refer to the other Industry Profiles within the road transport series (such as Road Freight, Road Passenger, Furniture Removalists) or to the Postal, or warehousing and logistics Industry's profiles available on the LDSC website.

2.2 Industry opportunities and challenges

- This industry has an ageing workforce with many no longer being suitable for the manual aspect of the role. This will increase or sustain the demand for this occupation as these drivers begin to be medically retired from the role.
- As the delivery and courier driver roles are also undergoing labour shortage this will exacerbate the shortages being felt for Furniture Removalist occupations.
- Demand is mostly in the Perth area, as viability concerns continue to be present for small, regionally based operators (i.e. Goldfields-Esperance, and in the Northwest) who can no longer base work out of these areas and are now basing work out of head offices in Perth or on the East Coast. However, companies are still recruiting in regional locations such as Goldfields, with limited success.
- Industry is made up of a diverse workforce, with employers continually making efforts to increase workforce participation of under-represented groups such as indigenous, female or CaLD groups.
- Due to safety aspects related to the job, it is not practical for employers to hire learner drivers until they have obtained experience and competency, thus new graduates are not immediately employable.
- This occupation is continuing to experience both a skilling and labour shortage. Due to the significant pressures faced by businesses in sourcing and retaining drivers to these roles, many operators are having to return to a driving role to sustain their business. One large metropolitan operator even reported doing as many as three roles to cover the labour deficits being experienced by the undersupply of workers. This has created many burdens to employers, with many not able to manage this long term and potentially needing to consider if their business operations can continue to run (particularly for regional depots).
- Although historically seasonal upswings and work availability can impact staffing levels by up to 25%, businesses are reporting sustained surges in domestic and international furniture removal activity. As such, workforce levels have been maintained over the last few years, with activity only now showing
- Industry is supportive of the traineeship pathways for this role, However, they find that business pressures have made it difficult to take on trainees due to the need for experienced workers. They have also had difficulty attracting potential trainees through the (previously named) JobActive network and the school system due to a lack of interest in these careers and the physically demanding nature of the role. In some cases, organisations are oversaturated with applicants applying to meet Centrelink requirements and who are not genuinely seeking work; or who do not fit the criteria/licences needed to be employed. Industry has expressed interest in engaging with the newly revitalised Employment Service Provider network under the Department of Employment Workplace Relations, as well as schools with migrant/refugee or indigenous populations, and Working Spirit/RSL WA to engage Defence veterans to their industries.
- Due to the seasonal nature of the work, TAFE students, or students on break are often attracted to these roles temporarily whilst studying. However this cohort are usually studying other subjects.

- Viability concerns continue to be present for small, regionally based operators (i.e. Goldfields-Esperance, and in the Northwest) who can no longer base work out directly out of these areas. However, some companies are still recruiting in regional locations such as Goldfields, with limited success.

2.2 Supply and Demand for Workforce

- Demand for workers is state-wide however most larger organisations operate centrally from Perth, with workers deployed to service regional areas. These organisations often offer intrastate, interstate and international services to cover many areas of Australia. Small, medium and large operators in metropolitan areas and with regional networks (Goldfields-Esperance, Pilbara, Kimberly) and are all expressing difficulty in fulfilling roles, with one large business currently advertising for 10 Offsiders with no success.
- In regional centres job vacancies are being left unfulfilled with many operators having to resume driving roles to cover the deficit in their workforce. As the calibre of applicants for furniture removal roles is continuing to decline this has left some organisations unable to find staff to meet obligations for government or Defence contracts.

2.3 Technology

- The area of AI and it's impact on the assessment practices will need to be monitored. ChatGPT is a chatbot launched by OpenAI in November 2022 and has the ability to generate human-like text, making it capable of using natural language conversations. Due to this ChatGPT is having an impact on the Assessment space both at secondary schools and for those offering online learning in determining the authenticity of individuals work for assessment who may be using the AI to submit work not of their own making. Schools are looking for ways to mitigate these effects, with some planning to return to paper and pencil based assessments conducted in the classroom to ensure they are accurately assessing individuals understanding of concepts in their submitted work. This trend will need to be monitored to see how/if it affects the VET area. Within the UK they have also recognised the potential for students utilising ChatGPT with permission and if it may create biases in grading, as well as the possibility it could replace human instructors and how this may affect the fair grading and assessment of individuals work. Some National retailers are also investigating it's potential to provide training.
- In addition ChatGPT has also been identified as a possible area to assist in career planning. In particular it can Level up your job searches by targeting opportunities for career moves, assist in elevating résumés, and assist in preparing responses to interview questions. As not everyone has access to career resources this can be a hidden benefit of AI.
- Further there are concerns around the roll-out of such technologies (i.e. ChatGPT) and the lack of consultation, from both from a consumer/public perspective - large companies tend to trial new technologies on their customers without informing them (i.e. Kmart and Bunnings face recognition as an example). This has the potential to impact customers (i.e. customer experience/satisfaction) as well as workers (in regards to understanding how and when to utilise these technologies). These technologies are often introduced into workplaces without consultation with the workforce. The Award states there is a requirement for this to occur however, industry feedback has been that this is rarely enforced. Further this area will need to be monitored to ensure that workers gain the requisite skills to understand, interact with or use this technology. As well as to understand their rights if used in the workplace from an industrial relations perspective.

3.Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG)

- Due to the requirement for lower carbon emissions, industry is investigating how to incorporate electric or hydrogen fuelled vehicles into their fleets. Currently, the infrastructure does not exist in Australia to support Hydrogen refuelling. However, BOC and BP Australia have announced a new

agreement to build a hydrogen refuelling station at the bp Truckstop in Lytton, Queensland. It will be the first service station in Australia with hydrogen refuelling capability. This will need to be monitored as training and upskilling will need to be available for those interacting with this infrastructure.

- Within WA work is underway by the State government subsidise a new network of electric vehicle charging infrastructure throughout the state. The grants will meet about half the costs of buying and installing charging stations and associated software. The grant program is designed to maximise opportunities for daytime EV charging, promote off-peak EV charging, support the conversion of organisation fleets to EVs and, over time, stimulate a second-hand EV market. This will likely encourage a wider adoption of these vehicles for WA businesses over time.

4. Training and Education Needs

4.1 Current and Anticipated Training Needs

- The need for digital skills continues to be highly sought after in most TLI professions. Digitalization is the infusion of digital skills (though not necessarily higher-end software coding) into the texture of almost every job in the economy. As entry-level jobs continue to change these skills will become even more greatly sought after; such as familiarity with different dashboards and research skills (to find out how to access features of applications using common terminology and concepts across platforms). The need for digital academies which teach these skills will become greater, with generic terms and dashboards being taught which can be transferred across platforms, as opposed to understanding specific data software an/or systems.
- In addition, these efforts will also need to address those Australians who are excluded from digital life. As reported last year, according to the Community Colleges Australia (CCA) report training efforts need to be redoubled to ensure **the 1 in 4 Australians who are currently digitally “excluded”** and the 11% of Australians who are “highly excluded” from digital life are reached in order to close the “digital divide” that disproportionately impacts lower income people, regional and rural residents, and the less well-educated (particularly in light of COVID-19 impact to the workforce and operational requirements).
- For medium to larger organisations interaction with technology is required particularly as there has been a shift away from paper-based systems to digital platforms, requiring drivers to utilise some technology to enter data as required on handheld devices (i.e. tablets or scanners). This technology has allowed for greater visibility for the supply chain, with organisations able to offer their customers increased tracking capabilities for their products, or to identify and improve efficiencies within the supply chain (i.e. monitoring fuel consumptions, electrical systems or fatigue breaks). In addition, employers are also able to capture more data via telematics to assist with fatigue management, GPS tracing, asset maintenance and scheduling. Drivers are now required to have written communication skills and some rudimentary digital literacy to operate these features, however, most organisations are prepared to work with individuals and provide additional support and/or training to upskill their workers or new employees as required (i.e. for those with low LLN or CaLD backgrounds). In most cases, applicants only need demonstrate a basic understanding of these skills to apply.

4.2 Training Challenges and Opportunities

- Most of the training for this role is provided through skill sets as opposed to full qualifications due to the time taken to attain full qualifications when the majority of the workforce is seasonal.
- The high compliance and regulatory nature of the industry, such as Australian Consumer Law (ACL), as well as rapidly changing technology and data analytics software, has altered the nature of the role and highlighted the need for different skills sets. The financial ramifications of claims for damages under ACL, according to AFRA, can impact the next three to four removalist jobs. With margins already stretched, there is considerable reputational risk affiliated with social media comments that could also impact future work. Consequently, furniture removalists must be experienced and trained appropriately to manage jobs.
- There is limited interest by young people to join the industry which will result in an impending skill and labour shortage. It takes several years to progress through the relevant licences to become an

MC driver (having a truck licence is preferred) this also affects the number of younger workers who can be considered for roles.

- Individuals must be 18 years or older in order to gain their High-risk License and/or truck licences. IBT graduates and VET in School students may not be suitable until they have graduated high school. However, industry is investigating other pathways and training opportunities to start these students on careers within industry, with the hope they will attain the relevant licences as soon as they are at the appropriate age.
- The LDSC is currently investigating ways to work with industry, career advisors and VET coordinators to raise the awareness of these careers and pathways available, the entry level opportunities available to different cohorts and the feasibility of incorporating school-based programs (with a year 12 cohort) into industry.
- Certificate II in Terminal Operations has now become a School-Based Traineeship (SBT). This may allow industry to better engage with school-age students to attract them to careers in the furniture removal industry. As well as Certificate II in Supply Chain Operations, and Driving Operations. The LDSC is working with high-schools and industry to determine if there are any elements of training which can be offered to older cohorts to set them on a pathway into industry once they attain some of the relevant licences (upon turning 18 years old).
- The Road Transport Industry Advisory Group commented that the Year 9 Career Taster Program is pitched too low for industry's needs, as the most critical occupations within TLI require licences most students would be unable to participate in training opportunities until they are in at least year 12 (and/or turning 18). Instead industry would value a program that can offer these opportunities to an older cohort, particularly for those occupations such as truck driver, furniture removalist and officer roles which require licences).
- For those who have English as a second language, employers continue to highlight the need for better training to be incorporated around the following issues:
 - Clear communication/Articulation
 - Understanding Unique vocabulary association with the road users (i.e. terms and idioms unique to WA Drivers)
 - Cultural awareness and understanding – such as being able to ask for people to repeat questions, or challenging the perceived hierarchy to question decisions rather than immediately complying with instructions. Employers noted for some cultures, where obeying a hierarchy is seen as part of their culture, some employees may be reluctant to challenge unsafe decisions, or ask for instructions to be repeated for fear of reprisal (such as teasing)
- Although some of these concepts may be seen to be addressed in elements of the VET system, employers are noting that they don't fit the needs for drivers, particularly those drivers where English is a second language. This has created some safety issues, not just for bus drivers, but for truck drivers as well as some roles in warehousing and administration (i.e. forklift drivers) with employers expressing the desire for better training to be incorporated to address these issues and to provide confidence to challenge issues similar to that seen in Maritime or Aviation roles (i.e. "see something, say something"). These issues need to be addressed for both the new employee, as well as current employees.
- As companies move into more technology-based operations, assistance with training will be required to assist current staff, and an older workforce to transition into new work modalities. Those groups with low technical expertise/literacy may experience delays in training. In addition, those with low LLN skills may further compound this issue.

4.3 Career Pathways and Graduate Outcomes

- TLI33316 Certificate III in Furniture Removal, TIL22418 Certificate II in Furniture Removal are available as traineeships. The LDSC is aware that this RTO is no longer delivering these qualifications to employers in WA, although they have indicated they have plans to continue the training, employers have reported not been able to access training through them. Instead, employers in WA are utilising alternative pathways such as the Certificate III in Driving Operations, or Certificate III in supply chain which covers some elements needed for this sector.

- This role is viewed to be highly skilled with drivers required to undertake a variety of tasks beyond driving (i.e. load/unload). The TLI Transport and Logistics Training Package contains the only nationally recognised qualifications for Furniture Removal occupations. However, there are no mandatory qualifications needed to attain the position of furniture removalist and the uptake of VET qualifications by industry remains low State-wide. Industry preference for licencing remains dominant so organisations can ensure drivers gain the relevant experience needed as opposed to staff attaining formal qualifications.
- Typically, a commercial driver's license is necessary for the entry-level pathway. Most drivers possess a Medium Rigid (MR) licence, then progress to Heavy Rigid (HR) before attaining the Multi Combination (MC) licence. There is a long lead time to get the required licence/s (minimum of 2+ years) and age restrictions are in place due to insurance obligations. Some contracts, such as those for Defence or State Government, mandate that staff must be appropriately trained to a certain level in order to complete those jobs. *Please refer to 7331 Truck Driver (general) response for more information on the requirements for heavy vehicle drivers.*
- Most of the training for this role is provided through skill sets as opposed to full qualifications. This is due to the time taken to attain full qualifications when the majority of the workforce is seasonal. Industry prefers the use of skill sets as being more responsive to meeting industry's needs and to quickly upskill workers to take on roles with faster turnaround times. State government is currently investigating potential pathways and funding for skill sets/micro credentialing to be used for industry. Industry views this as a positive step to assist with the costs of professional development for their staff, as well as an incentive for future applicants to apply for careers within industry.
- The new job-ready Heavy Vehicle Driving Operations Skills set may offer industry a way to ensure new recruits to industry have gained some of the necessary experience to operate in these roles once they have obtained the necessary licence/s either prior to, or after employment. Once expanded to other regional centres, this skill set will be particularly relevant for regional centres who currently have limited, or no access to driver training in regional areas such as the Great Southern, or Northwest areas, and is creating additional financial costs for regional companies to pursue formal training pathways. Industry anticipates this may help alleviate some pressures and are looking forward to the State-wide rollout.

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6. Industry Consultation:

Regular industry consultation is undertaken by the LDSC through the Road Transport Industry Advisory Group (IAG), the Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), LDSC Annual RTO Forum, the LDSCs Board of Management (BoM) meetings, regional consultations, participation in industry advisory committees, teleconferences, email and social media and the use of online surveys.

Participation in group and individual meetings varies year on year. Comprising: the Road Transport IAG (41 members; 18 small, 8 medium, 15 large organisations located in the metropolitan and regional areas of WA covering organisations in the freight, passenger, and on-demand transport area); the Furniture Removalist IAG (comprising 10 members of the Furniture Removalist Industry; 4 National, 6 small to medium); the Mobile cranes IAG (14 organisations comprising small medium and large operators in the Metropolitan, Goldfields-Esperance, northwest and southwest regions); the Warehousing and Logistics IAG (comprising 10 members made up of small, medium and large organisations, located predominantly in the Metropolitan area with depots or service provision and facilities in the Southwest and Northwest); and the RTO IAG (we invite 120 RTO Comprising small, medium and large private and public training providers). Please note, Industry union and association members are also invited to provide feedback.

Continued and ongoing contact is made throughout the year via emails, newsletters, surveys (our most recent State of the Industry Survey had 89 industry respondents: across all industries under the LDSC remit. This data has also been included in these responses); and other channels by the LDSC to members and non-members of the Road Transport IAG and RTO IAG networks.

In addition, participating organisations for the Road Transport and the Warehousing and Logistics sector included **many small, medium and large companies** with interests in Freight and passenger transport, local Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCIs) across WA, **Industry Associations** (i.e. Crane Industry Council of Australia (CICA WA), Australian Furniture Removalists Association (AFRA), the Ride Share Drivers Association of Australia (RSDAA), WA Country Taxi Operators Association, Western Roads Federation (WRF) Transafe WA, Livestock and Regional Transport Association (LRTA), iMove, Freight and Logistics Council WA, Australian Trucking Association; The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILTA), Freight and Transport (FT Alliance), and Supply Chain And Logistics Association of Australia (SCLAA)); **Unions** (i.e.. the Transport Workers Union (TWU)); Maritime Union of WA, CFMEU WA, Crane and Industry Council Australia (CICA) the **licensing/regulatory body for Road** (i.e. Main Roads WA, Worksafe WA); **Local and Commonwealth Government Departments** (i.e. the Department of Transport, Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities, and Defence West, the Western Australian Defence Industry Workforce Office (WADIWO), Road Safety Commission); and the **WA Industry Training Council Network** and **Registered Training Organisations** (RTOs).