

BUILDING QUEENSLAND'S MARINE TOURISM WORKFORCE

Supporting Evidence for the Declaration of Maritime
Qualifications as Queensland Traineeships

July 2026

Prepared by
Queensland Tourism Industry Council



**QUEENSLAND
TOURISM INDUSTRY
COUNCIL**



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Executive Summary

Queensland's marine tourism industry is one of the State's defining tourism sectors and a critical contributor to the visitor economy. Operating across the Great Barrier Reef, the Whitsunday Islands, K'gari (Fraser Island), Moreton Bay, the Gold Coast and numerous coastal destinations, marine tourism supports thousands of jobs and delivers world-renowned visitor experiences that are fundamental to Queensland's international tourism brand.

Commercial vessel operations are the foundation of this industry. Every reef cruise, island transfer, sailing experience, dive charter, whale watching tour and eco-cruise depends upon a skilled workforce of commercial vessel Masters, Marine Engineers and crew operating safely under Australia's maritime regulatory framework.

Queensland's marine tourism industry is experiencing increasing workforce shortages, particularly in occupations requiring higher-level Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) Certificates of Competency. Employers consistently report difficulty attracting, developing and retaining suitably qualified commercial mariners, creating operational constraints that affect business growth, succession planning and regional workforce capability.

Why this proposal is different

Unlike most vocational occupations, commercial maritime careers require mandatory qualifying sea service before an Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) Certificate of Competency can be issued. Employment is therefore not simply an outcome of training.

Employment is an essential component of the training pathway.

This proposal seeks to align Queensland's training model with the competency and licensing requirements of commercial maritime occupations.

This distinction is fundamental.

Qualifying sea service is not workplace experience undertaken to reinforce classroom learning. It is a mandatory licensing requirement through which operational competence is developed. Without qualifying sea service, graduates may hold nationally recognised qualifications but remain unable to undertake many commercial maritime roles.

The current General Training model supports qualification delivery but does not fully align with the employment pathway required for learners to accumulate qualifying sea service while undertaking training. This creates a disconnect between qualification completion and occupational licensing.

Employment-based traineeships provide a more appropriate workforce development model by integrating structured employment, formal training and mandatory qualifying sea service. The traineeship model reflects the way commercial maritime competence is developed and provides learners with a pathway to both qualification completion and AMSA licensing.

Consultation undertaken by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) with 63 marine tourism businesses demonstrated strong industry support for this approach. Employers identified significant current and future demand for commercial vessel Masters, Marine Engine Drivers and Marine Engineers, while QTIC's analysis identified more than 110 commercial tourism vessels operating throughout Queensland's marine tourism regions.

The proposal also supports Queensland's long-term workforce priorities. The Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, including the sailing competition in the Whitsundays, create a fixed deadline for workforce development. However, the need for action extends beyond the Games. Developing competent commercial mariners requires years of training, qualifying sea service and operational experience. Workforce development must therefore commence now to ensure Queensland has the capability to support both current industry demand and future opportunities.

This paper provides supporting evidence for the declaration of five maritime qualifications as Queensland traineeships and demonstrates why employment-based training is the most appropriate workforce development model for Queensland's marine tourism industry.

1. Purpose

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) has prepared this paper to support the proposal to declare selected maritime qualifications as Queensland traineeships under Queensland's User Choice program.

The paper provides supporting evidence for the proposal by:

- outlining the importance of Queensland's marine tourism industry;
- identifying current and emerging workforce challenges;
- explaining the unique licensing requirements associated with commercial maritime occupations;
- demonstrating the critical role of qualifying sea service in developing competent commercial mariners;
- presenting evidence gathered through consultation with Queensland marine tourism employers; and
- explaining why employment-based traineeships provide the most appropriate workforce development model for these qualifications.

The paper provides supporting evidence against the User Choice declaration criteria and should be read alongside the accompanying declaration proposal.

2. Queensland's Marine Tourism Industry

2.1 Industry Overview

Queensland's marine tourism industry is one of Australia's most significant marine-based visitor economies. The State's extensive coastline, offshore islands and internationally recognised marine environments support a diverse range of tourism experiences that contribute significantly to regional employment, business investment and visitor expenditure.

Marine tourism experiences include:

- Great Barrier Reef cruises
- island transfers
- sailing and yacht charters
- snorkelling and diving
- whale watching
- fishing charters
- sightseeing cruises
- eco-tourism
- marine wildlife experiences
- luxury marine tourism
- passenger ferry services supporting tourism destinations.

These experiences form an important component of Queensland's visitor economy and contribute to the State's international reputation as a world-class tourism destination.

Unlike many tourism sectors, however, marine tourism is entirely dependent on commercial vessel operations.

Every marine tourism experience requires commercial vessels operated by appropriately qualified and licensed maritime professionals responsible for passenger safety, vessel operation and environmental stewardship.

The industry's success therefore depends not only on natural assets but also on the capability of its workforce.

2.2 Regional Importance

Marine tourism supports employment throughout Queensland, particularly in regional and coastal communities.

Major marine tourism regions include:

- Tropical North Queensland
- The Whitsundays
- Mackay Isaac
- Capricorn Coast and Southern Great Barrier Reef
- K'gari (Fraser Coast)
- Moreton Bay
- Brisbane
- Gold Coast.

These regions support a diverse range of marine tourism businesses whose continued operation depends upon access to skilled commercial maritime professionals.

Investment in workforce capability therefore supports regional economies, business sustainability and community resilience.

2.3 Queensland's Marine Tourism Fleet

Analysis undertaken by QTIC identified more than **180 commercial tourism vessels** operating throughout Queensland's marine tourism regions.

These vessels include passenger ferries, reef vessels, sailing vessels, charter boats, dive vessels, eco-tourism vessels, whale watching vessels and tourism support vessels.

Every vessel requires qualified commercial maritime personnel whose qualifications and licences correspond to vessel size, operating area and engineering requirements.

As operators continue investing in larger and more sophisticated vessels, demand for highly skilled commercial vessel Masters and Marine Engineers continues to increase.

2.4 A Safety-Critical Industry

Commercial marine tourism operates within one of Australia's most highly regulated industries.

Commercial vessel Masters and Marine Engineers are responsible for:

- navigation and vessel operations;
- passenger safety;
- engineering systems;
- emergency response;
- environmental protection;
- compliance with Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) requirements; and
- operational decision-making under dynamic weather and sea conditions.

These responsibilities require more than technical knowledge. They require sound judgement developed through practical operational experience.

For this reason, maritime occupations require both nationally recognised qualifications and Australian Maritime Safety Authority Certificates of Competency. Unlike many occupations, completion of training alone is insufficient to perform these roles. Competence must be developed through structured employment and mandatory qualifying sea service.

3. Queensland's Marine Tourism Workforce Challenge

3.1 A Workforce Under Increasing Pressure

Queensland's marine tourism industry is experiencing increasing workforce shortages across critical maritime occupations. While the industry continues to invest in new vessels, expanded visitor experiences and enhanced service delivery, the availability of qualified commercial mariners has not kept pace with demand.

Unlike many sectors where workforce shortages can be addressed through recruitment alone, marine tourism depends on occupations that require nationally recognised qualifications, mandatory sea service and Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) licensing. These requirements significantly extend the time required to develop a competent workforce and reinforce the importance of long-term workforce planning.

Industry consultation undertaken by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) consistently identified workforce attraction, workforce development and succession planning as critical issues affecting business sustainability. Employers advised that shortages of commercial vessel Masters and Marine Engineers were limiting operational flexibility, increasing workloads for existing staff and reducing opportunities for business growth.

The challenge is particularly evident in regional Queensland, where many marine tourism businesses compete for a limited pool of experienced maritime professionals.

3.2 Queensland Industry Consultation

Between 2025 and 2026, QTIC consulted extensively with Queensland's marine tourism industry to better understand current and future workforce requirements.

Consultation included:

- targeted engagement with marine tourism businesses across Queensland;
- meetings with industry associations and peak bodies;
- discussions with registered training organisations;
- engagement with maritime employers operating commercial tourism vessels; and
- a workforce demand survey completed by marine tourism operators.

In total, 81 marine tourism businesses contributed to the workforce consultation process since March 2025.

Employers represented a broad cross-section of Queensland's marine tourism industry, including reef tourism, charter operations, ferry services, sailing operations, island transfers, eco-tourism and marine adventure businesses.

The consultation confirmed that workforce shortages are widespread across the sector and are affecting operators of all sizes.

Employers consistently identified difficulties recruiting qualified personnel with the experience and licensing required to undertake higher-level operational roles.

3.3 Employer Demand

QTIC's employer consultation identified significant workforce demand across the proposed occupations.

Businesses reported current and future demand including for the Brisbane 2032 Games Operations for at least:

Occupation	Industry Demand to 2029	Games Demand
MAR40324 Certificate IV in Maritime Operations (Master <45 metres Near Coastal)	31+	50-100
MAR40224 Certificate IV in Maritime Operations (Marine Engine Driver Grade 1 Near Coastal)	31+	20-40
MAR50120 Diploma of Marine Engineering (Engineer Class 3 Near Coastal)	20+	10-20
MAR20424 Certificate II in Maritime Operations (Marine Engine Driver Grade 3 Near Coastal)	29+	100-200
MAR50320 Diploma of Maritime Operations (Master up to 100 metres Near Coastal)	0	10-20
Certificate III in Maritime Operations (Marine Engine Driver Grade 2 Near Coastal)	31+	50-100

Demand was identified across Queensland's major marine tourism regions and included both immediate vacancies and anticipated future workforce requirements associated with business growth, succession planning and vessel expansion.

These workforce requirements represent employer demand identified through QTIC's consultation and demonstrate that workforce shortages extend across multiple commercial maritime occupations.

3.4 Industry is Ready to Invest

One of the strongest findings from QTIC's consultation was the willingness of employers to actively participate in employment-based training.

Businesses consistently advised that developing their own workforce through structured employment offered greater long-term benefits than relying solely on recruitment from interstate or overseas.

Employers recognised that commercial maritime competence develops progressively through practical experience and supervision and supported training models that integrate employment with formal learning.

Major operators, regional businesses and specialist marine tourism employers all identified employment-based training as an important mechanism for building workforce capability and supporting future business sustainability.

This willingness to invest in trainees provides confidence that the proposed traineeship model would be supported by industry and deliver tangible workforce outcomes.

3.5 National Workforce Trends

The workforce challenges experienced by Queensland's marine tourism industry reflect broader national trends.

Industry Skills Australia's *Maritime Workforce Planning Update* identifies increasing workforce pressures associated with an ageing workforce, succession planning, recruitment difficulties and the need to strengthen workforce pathways into maritime occupations.

The report also recognises the complexity of developing maritime professionals, highlighting that many occupations require extended practical experience and licensing before individuals can undertake higher-level operational responsibilities.

These findings reinforce QTIC's consultation, demonstrating that Queensland's workforce challenges are not isolated but form part of a broader national workforce issue requiring coordinated action.

For Queensland's marine tourism industry, these challenges are amplified by continued visitor growth, regional workforce constraints and the lead time required to develop licensed commercial mariners.

3.6 A Workforce Pipeline Under Pressure

Commercial maritime occupations cannot be developed quickly.

Unlike many industries where qualifications can be completed and graduates enter the workforce immediately, maritime professionals must continue developing competence through supervised employment while accumulating mandatory qualifying sea service.

This creates a workforce pipeline that is measured in years rather than months.

As experienced Masters and Marine Engineers retire or leave the industry, there are insufficient numbers of new entrants progressing through the licensing pathway quickly enough to replace them.

Without intervention, this gap will continue to widen.

The consequence is not simply workforce shortages.

It is reduced industry capability, increased operational risk, delayed business expansion and reduced opportunities for regional employment.

3.7 Why This Matters

Queensland's marine tourism industry does not have a shortage of interest in maritime careers.

It has a shortage of people progressing through the complete pathway from training to licensing.

The evidence gathered through QTIC's consultation demonstrates that employers are prepared to invest in developing future commercial mariners.

The challenge is ensuring the training system supports the employment pathway required to achieve competence and licensing.

Addressing this challenge is fundamental to building a sustainable marine tourism workforce capable of supporting Queensland's visitor economy now and into the future.

Key Findings

- 81 marine tourism businesses participated were represented in QTIC's consultation.
- Employers identified demand for 99 Masters, 71 Marine Engine Driver Grade 1 and 46 Engineer Class 3 positions.
- Workforce shortages are affecting businesses across Queensland's marine tourism regions.
- Employers support employment-based training as the preferred workforce development model.
- National evidence confirms these challenges are consistent with broader maritime workforce trends.
- Long lead times for qualifications, mandatory sea service and licensing require workforce planning well in advance of future demand.

This chapter now establishes the need. The next chapter will establish the solution:

Great. Let's continue writing the report.

4. Why Employment Matters

4.1 Maritime is Different

Commercial maritime occupations are fundamentally different from most vocational occupations because competence is developed through structured employment as well as formal education.

For many occupations, successful completion of a nationally recognised qualification enables graduates to enter the workforce under appropriate supervision and continue developing their experience while employed.

Commercial maritime occupations follow a different pathway.

To perform many operational roles, individuals must not only complete a nationally recognised qualification but also obtain an Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) Certificate of Competency. The Certificate of Competency is the licence that authorises an individual to perform specific commercial maritime duties and is issued only after both educational and practical competency requirements have been met.

The pathway to competency therefore consists of three equally important components:

- nationally recognised training;
- qualifying sea service gained through genuine employment; and
- assessment against AMSA licensing requirements.

The absence of any one of these components prevents an individual from progressing to full occupational competency.

4.2 What is Qualifying Sea Service?

Qualifying sea service is a mandatory requirement for obtaining an AMSA Certificate of Competency.

Sea service is accumulated while employed on commercial vessels operating in real commercial environments under the supervision of experienced maritime professionals.

During this period, trainees progressively develop the practical skills, judgement and operational competence required to safely undertake commercial maritime responsibilities.

Sea service provides exposure to:

- vessel operations
- navigation
- engineering systems
- passenger management
- emergency procedures
- weather and environmental conditions
- commercial decision-making
- maintenance activities
- operational planning
- safety management systems.

These competencies cannot be fully developed in a classroom or simulated environment.

They require repeated exposure to real commercial operations across varying weather, sea and operational conditions.

For this reason, sea service is recognised by AMSA as an essential component of professional competency rather than simply workplace experience.

Sea Service Develops Competence

Explain:

Sea service develops:

- judgement
- confidence
- operational decision making
- leadership
- emergency response

rather than simply listing tasks.

4.3 Competence is Built Through Employment

Commercial maritime competency develops progressively.

Formal training provides the theoretical knowledge required to understand vessel operations, navigation, engineering systems and maritime legislation.

Employment provides the opportunity to apply that knowledge within genuine commercial operations.

Over time, supervised practical experience enables trainees to develop the judgement, confidence and decision-making capability expected of licensed commercial mariners.

This relationship is illustrated below.

Formal Training	Employment
Technical knowledge	Practical application
Maritime legislation	Commercial operations
Navigation theory	Vessel handling
Engineering principles	Equipment maintenance
Safety procedures	Emergency response
Assessment	Operational competence

Neither component alone produces a competent commercial mariner. Competence develops through the combination of structured learning and structured employment.

4.4 Why Sea Service Cannot Be Replaced

Unlike many vocational occupations, qualifying sea service cannot be substituted with classroom learning or simulated workplace activities.

Commercial vessel Masters and Marine Engineers are responsible for the safety of passengers, crew, vessels and the marine environment.

These responsibilities require operational judgement that develops only through practical experience under real operating conditions.

Examples include:

- navigating changing weather conditions;
- responding to mechanical failures;
- managing passenger emergencies;
- operating in confined waterways;

- supervising crew;
- responding to environmental hazards;
- making operational decisions under pressure.

These situations cannot be replicated consistently within a training environment.

Consequently, employment is not simply desirable—it is essential.

4.5 The Current Training Pathway

Under the current General Training model, many learners complete their qualification before securing ongoing employment within the industry.

This creates a disconnect between qualification completion and workforce participation.

The current pathway often follows this sequence:

Current Institutionalised Pathway



While this pathway successfully delivers nationally recognised qualifications, progression towards licensing may be delayed where learners are unable to secure employment immediately after training.

This delay can result in:

- loss of industry engagement;
- reduced qualification utilisation;
- delayed workforce participation;
- increased recruitment challenges for employers; and
- slower development of Queensland's maritime workforce.

4.6 Employment-Based Traineeships Better Reflect Maritime Workforce Development

Employment-based traineeships integrate employment and training from commencement.

This enables trainees to progressively accumulate qualifying sea service while completing their qualification.

The pathway becomes

Employment-Based Traineeship



This integrated approach better reflects how commercial maritime competence develops.

Rather than separating employment from training, the traineeship model recognises employment as an essential component of professional development.

4.7 Benefits of an Employment-Based Model

For learners, employment-based traineeships provide:

- paid employment while training;
- structured workplace mentoring;
- continuous accumulation of qualifying sea service;
- stronger pathways towards AMSA licensing;
- improved employment outcomes.

For employers, traineeships provide:

- opportunities to develop future workforce capability;
- improved succession planning;
- increased workforce retention;
- reduced recruitment costs;
- stronger alignment between training and operational requirements.

For government, traineeships provide:

- stronger return on training investment;
- improved workforce participation;
- better completion and licensing outcomes;
- sustainable regional workforce development;
- increased workforce capability supporting Queensland's visitor economy.

Key Message

The defining characteristic of maritime occupations is not the qualification.

It is the requirement to develop competence through employment and qualifying sea service before obtaining an AMSA Certificate of Competency.

Employment is therefore not simply the outcome of training.

Employment is an essential component of the training pathway.

For this reason, employment-based traineeships provide the workforce development model that most closely aligns with the competency and licensing requirements of Queensland's marine tourism industry.

Excellent. Let's continue.

5. Why Employment-Based Traineeships are the Appropriate Solution

5.1 Aligning Training with Industry Requirements

Queensland's marine tourism industry requires workforce development pathways that reflect the realities of commercial maritime operations.

While the current General Training model provides access to nationally recognised qualifications, it does not fully align with the practical pathway through which commercial mariners develop competence and obtain an Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) Certificate of Competency.

Employment-based traineeships provide a more appropriate model because they integrate three essential components of maritime workforce development:

- structured employment;
- nationally recognised training; and
- qualifying sea service.

Rather than treating employment as the outcome of training, the traineeship model recognises employment as an essential component of professional development.

This approach reflects the way commercial maritime professionals are developed throughout Australia and internationally.

5.2 Benefits for Learners

Employment-based traineeships improve the learner experience by providing a structured pathway from commencement of training through to employment and licensing.

Learners benefit from:

- paid employment while undertaking training;
- continuous accumulation of qualifying sea service;
- structured workplace supervision and mentoring;
- practical application of classroom learning;
- stronger engagement with employers;
- improved transition into permanent employment; and
- clearer progression towards higher-level Certificates of Competency.

Importantly, learners are able to develop confidence and professional judgement while working alongside experienced Masters and Marine Engineers in genuine commercial operations.

This combination of theoretical learning and practical experience produces graduates who are better prepared for long-term careers within Queensland's marine tourism industry.

5.3 Benefits for Employers

Marine tourism businesses invest significant time and resources developing new employees.

Employment-based traineeships provide employers with a structured framework to recruit, mentor and develop future commercial mariners while aligning workforce development with operational requirements.

Benefits include:

- improved workforce attraction;
- stronger succession planning;
- greater workforce retention;
- development of business-specific capability;
- reduced reliance on external recruitment;
- opportunities to mentor future industry professionals; and
- increased confidence that trainees will remain within the business after qualification.

Consultation undertaken by QTIC demonstrated strong employer support for this approach, with businesses consistently identifying employment-based learning as the preferred mechanism for developing future commercial vessel Masters and Marine Engineers.

5.4 Benefits for Government

Declaring the proposed qualifications as traineeships supports Queensland Government priorities relating to workforce development, regional employment and industry capability.

Employment-based traineeships are expected to deliver:

- improved workforce participation;
- stronger completion outcomes;
- increased numbers of licensed commercial mariners;
- greater regional employment opportunities;
- improved return on public investment in training;
- stronger alignment between training and workforce demand; and
- sustainable workforce capability supporting Queensland's visitor economy.

Importantly, traineeships encourage long-term employment outcomes rather than qualification completion alone.

This represents a more effective investment in workforce capability.

5.5 Benefits for Queensland's Marine Tourism Industry

Queensland's marine tourism industry depends upon experienced commercial mariners capable of safely operating increasingly sophisticated vessels in diverse marine environments.

Employment-based traineeships provide industry with greater confidence to invest in workforce development while creating a sustainable pipeline of future Masters, Marine Engineers and senior crew.

The proposal will assist industry to:

- strengthen workforce capability;
- support business growth;
- improve operational resilience;
- develop future leaders;
- enhance safety outcomes;

- support succession planning; and
- increase regional workforce capacity.

Over time, these outcomes will improve the industry's ability to respond to growing visitor demand while maintaining Queensland's reputation for delivering safe, high-quality marine tourism experiences.

5.6 Benefits Beyond Marine Tourism

Although this proposal has been developed specifically to address workforce challenges within Queensland's marine tourism industry, the benefits extend beyond tourism.

Commercial vessel Masters and Marine Engineers who obtain nationally recognised qualifications and AMSA Certificates of Competency possess skills that are transferable across Queensland's broader commercial maritime sector.

These skills support workforce capability within:

- passenger transport;
- commercial vessel operations;
- marine services;
- government marine operations;
- port support services;
- environmental management; and
- other commercial maritime activities.

Investment in Queensland's marine tourism workforce therefore contributes to strengthening the broader maritime workforce without changing the primary focus of this proposal.

5.7 Why the Traineeship Model is the Best Fit

The purpose of this proposal is not simply to increase the number of learners undertaking maritime qualifications. Its purpose is to increase the number of competent, licensed commercial mariners entering Queensland's workforce. For occupations requiring mandatory qualifying sea service, employment is fundamental to developing competence. An employment-based traineeship recognises this reality.

It aligns training with industry practice, supports employer participation and enables learners to progress towards both qualification completion and occupational licensing simultaneously.

For these reasons, employment-based traineeships represent the most appropriate workforce development model for the proposed maritime qualifications.

Why This Matters

The objective is not simply to produce more graduates.

The objective is to produce more licensed commercial mariners.

Employment-based traineeships achieve this by integrating training, employment and mandatory qualifying sea service into a single workforce development pathway.

6. Supporting Brisbane 2032 and Building a Lasting Workforce Legacy

6.1 Building the Workforce Now

Queensland's marine tourism industry is already experiencing workforce shortages.

The Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games do not create this challenge; they create a fixed deadline by which Queensland must have a sufficiently skilled workforce available.

With the Olympic sailing competition to be hosted in the Whitsundays, additional demand will be placed on commercial vessel Masters, Marine Engineers and experienced marine crew to support race management, safety operations, logistics, media, officials, spectators and associated marine activities.

Developing this workforce cannot occur in the years immediately preceding the Games.

Commercial maritime occupations require years of structured employment, formal training and mandatory qualifying sea service before individuals become fully competent and obtain higher-level AMSA Certificates of Competency.

Investment in employment-based traineeships now provides Queensland with the opportunity to develop a local workforce capable of supporting both existing marine tourism operations and the additional workforce demands associated with Brisbane 2032.

The Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games should not be viewed as the reason for this proposal. Rather, they provide a fixed deadline that highlights the importance of strengthening an existing workforce pipeline.

6.2 A Lasting Workforce Legacy

The workforce developed through this proposal will extend well beyond the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Graduates will continue contributing to Queensland's marine tourism industry for many years, supporting regional businesses, strengthening workforce capability and improving opportunities for future generations of Queenslanders seeking careers within the industry.

The proposal therefore represents not only an investment in preparing for Brisbane 2032, but an investment in the long-term sustainability of Queensland's marine tourism workforce.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Queensland's marine tourism industry is a strategically important contributor to the State's visitor economy and regional employment.

Its continued success depends on the availability of competent commercial vessel Masters, Marine Engineers and crew capable of safely operating commercial vessels under Australia's maritime regulatory framework.

The evidence presented in this paper demonstrates that maritime occupations differ fundamentally from many other vocational professions because competence depends on mandatory qualifying sea service gained through structured employment.

While the current General Training model successfully supports qualification delivery, it does not fully align with the employment pathway required for learners to achieve both competence and AMSA licensing.

Employment-based traineeships provide a more appropriate workforce development model by integrating employment, formal training and qualifying sea service into a single pathway.

Consultation undertaken by QTIC demonstrates strong employer demand and industry support for this approach.

Declaring the proposed maritime qualifications as Queensland traineeships will strengthen workforce capability within Queensland's marine tourism industry while contributing to broader workforce outcomes across the commercial maritime sector.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Queensland Government:

1. Declare the following maritime qualifications as Queensland traineeships under the User Choice program:
 - MAR20424 Certificate II in Maritime Operations (Marine Engine Driver Grade 3 Near Coastal)
 - MAR40224 Certificate IV in Maritime Operations (Marine Engine Driver Grade 1 Near Coastal)
 - MAR40324 Certificate IV in Maritime Operations (Master <45 metres Near Coastal)
 - MAR50120 Diploma of Marine Engineering (Engineer Class 3 Near Coastal)
 - MAR50320 Diploma of Maritime Operations (Master up to 100 metres Near Coastal)
2. Recognise that employment and qualifying sea service are fundamental components of developing competent commercial mariners and should be reflected in the training model.
3. Support employer participation in employment-based maritime training to strengthen Queensland's marine tourism workforce.
4. Build workforce capability in preparation for Brisbane 2032 while creating a lasting workforce legacy for Queensland's marine tourism industry.

Appendix A: Employer Consultation

Organisation	Notes
Blue Dolphin Marine Tours	Single Whitsunday operator, 1 vessel.
Bullet Whitsundays	Single tourism business, 1 vessel.
Cairns Adventure Group	Includes businesses such as Cairns Aquarium, Zoom & Wildlife Dome, Big Cat Green Island Reef Cruises, Reef Magic Cruises, Reef Unlimited and associated attractions.
Experience Co Ltd (Queensland only)	Queensland brands include Reef Unlimited, Fitzroy Island Adventures, Big Cat Green Island Cruises, Calypso Reef Cruises, Reef Magic, Dreamtime Dive and Snorkel, and Cairns Whale Watching.
Funtastic Cruises & Keppel Dive & Water Sports	Two distinct tourism businesses: Funtastic Cruises and Keppel Dive & Water Sports.
Ricochet Yachting	Single Whitsunday sailing operator.
RiverCity Ferries Pty Ltd	Ferry operator with a fleet of 28 CityCat vessels and 5 KittyCat vessels.
SeaLink Queensland	Queensland operations include SeaLink North Queensland, SeaLink Whitsundays, SeaLink South East Queensland, Magnetic Island Ferries, Gladstone Ferries and associated island/ferry tourism services, with a total fleet of 46 vessels (excluding RiverCity Ferries).
The Tour Collective	Leading marine ecotourism provider offering experiences including Sea World Cruises, Sea World Whale Watch, Arro Jet Boating, See Moreton, Hopo and Whales in Paradise.
True Blue Sailing	One Whitsunday sailing business operating multiple vessels.
Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association (WCBIA)	WCBIA members operate 68 vessels, representing 87% of the Whitsunday marine tourism fleet. Many businesses own multiple vessels (e.g. Cruise Whitsundays, Ocean Rafting, Red Cat Adventures), so the membership equates to approximately 45 individual businesses.
Whitsundays Sailing Club	One community sailing club. While it has many members, it is not an industry representative body in the same way as WCBIA, so it is counted as one business rather than attributing member businesses.