

September 2024

# Recommendations for the NSW mining industry from observations of the report for certificate of competence exams 2018 – 2013 and practising certificates

## Report on certificate of competence exams 2018 – 2023 and practising certificate numbers

The Resources Regulator presented [a report in February 2024](#) to the Mining and Petroleum Competence Board on the number of:

- exam candidates and pass rates for statutory functions in NSW for the years 2018-2023
- certificates of competence issued
- practising certificates held.

The Regulator and the Mining and Petroleum Competence Board are highlighting the report to obtain an industry-wide response to low exam pass rates and diminishing certificate numbers.

The report shows:

- a reduction in the number of practising certificates held:
  - in the 12 months between 28 March 2023 and 27 January 2024, the overall number of practising certificates reduced by 6.5% (from 3674 to 3432)
  - the only statutory function that increased its number of certificates in that period was deputy of an underground coal mine (increase of 4).
- Over the 5 year period from 2018-2023 there was a 33% reduction in the number of certificates of competence issued:
  - excluding the COVID-affected years of 2020 and 2021, the number of certificates of competence issued reduced each year since 2018
  - 186 certificates of competence were issued in 2018, 168 were issued in 2019, 144 were issued in 2022 and 123 were issued in 2023.
- The following statutory functions had low numbers of examination candidates in 2023:
  - Coal mines (not underground):
    - 4 candidates for mining engineering manager
    - 4 candidates for electrical engineer

- 1 candidate for mechanical engineer.
- Coal mines (underground):
  - 8 candidates for mining engineering manager
  - 3 candidates for electrical engineering manager
  - 8 candidates for mechanical engineering manager.
- Underground mines (other than coal):
  - 1 candidate for mining engineering manager (and no candidates for this function in 2022).
- Mines (other than underground or coal mines):
  - 3 candidates for quarry manager of mines other than underground or coal mines
  - 2 candidates for cable repair signatory (and no candidates for this function in 2021 or 2022).

The small number of candidates together with the reduction in numbers of practising certificates held and certificates of competence issued may negatively impact the availability of people to practise in statutory functions.

## Recommendations

In response to the report, the Mining and Petroleum Competence Board and the Regulator have identified 3 key areas for improvement to address the downwards trends regarding exam candidates, certificates of competence and practising certificates. These 3 key areas are:

- support more people to undertake exams and be certificate holders
- support individuals for higher exam pass rates
- support retention of practising certificate holders.

The table outlines recommended actions in each of the 3 key areas for stakeholders in the mining industry.

Recommendation	Representative organisations	Mine operators, contractors	Individuals	RTOs	Planned board and Regulator actions	
					Regulator	Board
<b>1. Support more people to undertake exams and be certificate holders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a sector and/or specific statutory function response</li> <li>Seek subsidies for pre-requisite qualifications</li> <li>Promote career pathways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workforce planning and training</li> <li>Sponsor/support candidates</li> <li><u>Refer Exams Learning Best Practice Guide: Employers</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in any mentoring and coaching activities</li> <li>Be an examiner when eligible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote pre-requisite qualifications, with any course fee subsidies obtainable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidance</li> <li>Educate to dispel myths around and promoting clarity around prosecuting holders and what holders are legislatively responsible for</li> <li>Ensure pre-requisites to sit are appropriate and flexible with appropriate resourcing for examinations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic plan to monitor and improve competence standards so they are appropriate</li> <li>Presentations to forums to raise awareness broadly within industry and stakeholder organisations</li> </ul>
<b>2. Support individuals for higher exam pass rates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support mentoring and coaching across industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentoring and coaching</li> <li><u>Refer Exams Learning Best Practice Guide: Employers</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek support from employers and others to sit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exam preparation to be part of completing a qualification or option</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective briefing sessions for each function</li> <li>Blueprinting of exams for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate pass rates &amp; any initiatives to improve</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Representative organisations	Mine operators, contractors	Individuals	RTOs	Planned board and Regulator actions	
					Regulator	Board
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Refer Exams Learning Best Practice Guide: Candidates</u></li> </ul>			consistency & appropriateness
<b>3. Support retention of practising certificate holders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop industry wide initiative to promote retention</li> <li>Promote career pathways to higher level functions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support holders to maintain their competence with provided learning opportunities</li> <li>Promote career pathways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentor individuals for higher level functions exams</li> <li>Utilise employer programs to maintain competence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide training and forums for maintenance of competence and recording</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Efficient process to support holders to maintain competence</li> <li>Make renewing a certificate as easy as possible</li> <li>Appropriate auditing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate practising certificate numbers ongoing to highlight issue</li> <li>Seek and support appropriate industry initiatives</li> </ul>

### Further information:

For clarification or correspondence with the Mining and Petroleum Competence Board, email [rr.secretariat@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rr.secretariat@regional.nsw.gov.au)

Specific enquiries for exams and practising certificates, [mca@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mca@regional.nsw.gov.au) or for general information the Resources Regulator [website https://www.resourcesregulator.nsw.gov.au/safety/certification](https://www.resourcesregulator.nsw.gov.au/safety/certification)

© State of New South Wales through the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development 2024. You may copy, distribute, display, download and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development as the owner. However, you must obtain permission if you wish to charge others for access to the publication (other than at cost); include the publication in advertising or a product for sale; modify the publication; or republish the publication on a website. You may freely link to the publication on a departmental website.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (August) and may not be accurate, current or complete. The State of New South Wales (including Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development), the author and the publisher take no responsibility, and will accept no liability, for the accuracy, currency, reliability or correctness of any information included in the document (including material provided by third parties). Readers should make their own inquiries and rely on their own advice when making decisions related to material contained in this publication.