

Regulatory and/or Licensing Bodies

- Main Roads WA and the Department of Transport are the entities responsible for licencing and regulatory requirements in road transport, which covers furniture removalists. Furniture removal companies must also comply with Australian Consumer Law.ⁱ
- The Australian Furniture Removers Association (AFRA) is the official body of removals experts that helps regulate the removals industry by providing advice to Government.ⁱⁱ

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS AND WORKFORCE CHALLENGES:

1. Existing and anticipated supply and demand for skills:

- The operational capacity of businesses in WA have been negatively impacted as businesses struggle to retain workers during non-peak periods. Seasonal upswings and work availability can impact staffing levels by up to 25%.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Over the last 3 years businesses providing furniture removal services have grown from 5,800 to 8,400 nationally, with approximately 3,000 sub-contractors also providing these services. This accounts for approximately 20,000 employees nationally.^{iv}
- The high compliance and regulatory nature of the industry, Australian Consumer Law (ACL), as well as rapidly changing technology and data analytics software, has altered the nature of the roles and highlighted the need for different skills sets. The financial ramifications of claims for damages under ACL can impact the next three to four removalist jobs.^v
- 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. 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.^{vi}
- The decline in the WA economy has seen a reduction in demand for relocation services and this is estimated to be an approximate decline of 30% to 45% revenue for industry. The decline in revenue has resulted in a reduction of staff numbers (particularly for those with less training and experience).^{vii} The full economic impact of COVID 19 is yet to be determined to industry.^{viii}
- With the continual growth of the gig economy operators are aware of the potential impacts to their business operations as well as the smaller proportion of people who choose to move furniture themselves.^{ix}
- Some companies can no longer rely on a casual labor pool due to the high risk of losing experienced staff numbers. This has had an effect on operation costs.^x
- 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.^{xi} It should be noted university level qualifications are generally more aligned to logistics, business and accounting.^{xii}
- Members of AFRA require new entrants to have an understanding of TLID2018 Handling Furniture and Effects and TLID3048 Pack and Unpack Furniture and Effects to be employable. This is due to the impact of ACL on the furniture removal industry, as mistakes in these areas are highly detrimental and costly to businesses (particularly smaller operators).^{xiii}
- Typically, a commercial driver's license is usually 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 licenses (minimum of 5+ 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.^{xiv}

- Attitude vs aptitude continues to be an issue for industry with many applicants viewing the hours of work and the manual nature of tasks as undesirable. Regionally this is even more of an issue with many companies unable to find staff to meet obligations for government or Defence contracts.^{xv}
- This industry has an ageing workforce with many no longer being suitable for the manual aspect of the role. In some cases, organisations are oversaturated with applicants applying to meet Centrelink requirements and who are not genuinely seeking work.
- Some companies have had success with JobActive programs in finding applicants for part time or casual roles. These schemes provide financial assistance (for wages, uniforms and training) and assist in the recruitment and/or development of new or existing staff (i.e. for entry-level positions such as Offsiders).^{xvi}
- A Career Pathways Tool Chart has been developed by AFRA highlighting the different career pathways available within the industry. There is particular emphasis on how individuals can progress from entry level roles into other areas of the business (i.e. Removalist Offsider through to On Road Supervisor). It is anticipated this promotional tool may assist to create greater interest from school age students to enter into the industry.^{xvii}
- In addition, knowledge and understanding of Chain of Responsibility (CoR) is essential for the future workforce.^{xviii}
- **Truck Drivers (general)** – there continues to be a State and national shortage for this occupation. Experienced MC Truck Drivers continue to be in high demand, especially in small to medium companies who are competing with the larger companies for drivers. The skill requirements for Truck Drivers goes beyond the licensing component (i.e. Fatigue management, Chain of Responsibility, and understanding the impact of weight, and dimensions on different road conditions). For some regional companies, Drivers must also possess mechanical knowledge in order to maintain the vehicle for minor repairs. Small to medium companies both regionally and in metropolitan areas are also reporting high turnover rates due to the seasonal and sometimes inconsistent/irregular nature of work (i.e. changes to the frequency of shifts and shift durations).^{xix}
- **Schedulers (Fleet Manager / Operations Manager)** at the high level (i.e. Fleet Controllers) continue to be in high demand for current and future operations. In many organisations this person has greater responsibilities, works longer hours (often in 24/7 roles) with lower remuneration compared to other roles within the organisation. Due to the nature of the this role, there is also a high rate of burnout and turnover within industry. Typically, organisations recruit internally and develop people into the role where possible. This is usually desired as candidates bring with them a level of internal organisational knowledge making them better suited to the role than external candidates. There is a long lead time associated with training people to this role.^{xx}
- **Despatching and Receiving Clerk (low-level schedulers)** - there is high demand for this role. This occupation is viewed as the entry-level for Schedulers. For smaller organisations there is no differentiation between the low and high level of Scheduler, thus there is high competition with larger organisations who can offer career progression opportunities for these individuals. The role of Scheduler is critical to industry and business operations can be severely impacted by the loss of workers in this role. Schedulers at entry-level need relevant industry exposure as well as practical hands on skills to complement their application of theoretical knowledge.^{xxi}

Regional Concerns

- Regional operators are now basing work out of Metropolitan centres due to ongoing viability challenges as well as difficulties filling regional labour requirements. This will continue to place further strain on existing labour pool to fill workload requirements and in allocating resources and assets to jobs.^{xxii}

2. Emerging international, national or State training issues impacting your industry

- Certificate II in Terminal Operations as a school-based traineeship may allow industry to better engage with school-age children to attract them to careers in the furniture removal industry.
- There has always been a low uptake of Certificate II and III traineeships which has been made even worse by the advent of COVID-19.

INDUSTRY WORKFORCE PRIORITIES:

Strategic directions, policies and priorities for industry

- Industry continues to explore opportunities for ways to promote careers within Furniture Removal to attract and retain new workers to the industry.^{xxiii}

Industry Impacts Caused From COVID-19

- Affecting all industries, a series of temporary Award and leave benefits were announced offering unpaid pandemic leave and offering annual leave flexibility to employees affected by COVID-19. This assisted employers to maintain staff levels for jobs that were under hiatus or seeing reduced trade. The new measures ended on 30 June 2020.^{xxiv}
- Hygiene and disinfection protocols have been implemented internally by companies. AFRA have identified furniture removalists as having significant risks due to the requirement for them to enter people's homes.^{xxv}
- Once restrictions are lifted furniture removal companies anticipate they will see a rapid flood of increased demand for services (particularly as accounts have been put on hold and not cancelled).^{xxvi}
- There will be a need to quickly train and familiarise people to ensure they can start work as soon as possible to deal with this potential spike in demand for their services.^{xxvii}
- Companies will seek to source workers who have been previously stood down and older workers who have been trained previously to re-enter industry and fill gaps.^{xxviii}
- In furniture removal, international removals have reduced significantly between countries. It is unclear how long this will last. There has been a heavy reduction in budget revenue with international trade most heavily affected at the beginning of the pandemic (for some companies this trade accounts for nearly 50% of all business activity). Interstate and Defence contracts have also reduced resulting in some retrenchments and reduction in hours worked. International trade is now showing small signs of recovery.^{xxix}
- Along with retrenchments and changes in hours of work, most companies have been able to remain viable and operational with the use of the JobKeeper payments.^{xxx}
- Client requests are down by almost 60% for some companies with little to no new leads. As a result, companies have implemented innovative practices to reduce the risk of infection to clients/staff such as using video conferencing to undertake furniture removal surveys for clients. This option has provided a small buffer in allowing companies to meet their obligations for new quotes and will remain as an option once restrictions are lifted to ensure they remain competitive.^{xxxi}
- Industry continues to experience difficulties in finding drivers nationally. This role is viewed to be highly skilled with drivers required to undertake a variety of tasks beyond driving (i.e. load/unload). The Driver Exchange Program was viewed as a potential resource to replace any workers stood down during the pandemic.^{xxxii}

Impacts to Training and Delivery

- Within furniture removal training has stopped. Once demand resumes skills sets are seen as vital for the rapid upskilling of workers for existing employees and to replace those let go due to COVID-19.^{xxxiii}
- Skills sets which may assist the furniture removal industry to recover would include: introduction to industry, pack and unpack, handling furniture effects, and developing operations knowledge (i.e. paperwork, forklift etc).^{xxxiv}
- 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.^{xxxv} Those groups with low technical expertise/literacy may experience delays in training. In addition, those with low LLN skills may further compound this issue.^{xxxvi}

Jobs in Demand and Training Required

- The Federal Government recently announced JobTrainer package will assist industries to develop their workforce by providing retraining and upskilling opportunities for people to enter industries currently surging as well as helping skilled workers to enter the furniture removalist industry.^{xxxvii}
- COVID-19 specific training would be well regarded by the Furniture Removalist industry to provide a standardised approach. This skill set would need to consider entering people's homes, handling goods, disinfection of cabs, and appropriate use of PPE. ^{xxxviii}
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- i News.com.au, Source: <https://www.news.com.au/national/moving-hell-australian-backyard-furniture-removal-businesses-thriving-at-consumers-expense/news-story/494a1d6d504a62dd54174ddc60bf8db>
 - ii Australian Furniture Removers Association (AFRA), last accessed 31 July 2018, source: <http://afra.com.au/>
 - iii Industry Consultation 2020
 - iv Industry Consultation 2020
 - v Industry Consultation 2020
 - vi Industry Consultation 2020
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 - viii Industry Consultation 2020
 - ix Industry Consultation 2020
 - x Industry Consultation 2020
 - xi Australian Industry Standards (AIS) <http://www.australianindustrystandards.org.au/training-packages/transport-and-logistics-training-package/>
 - xii Industry Consultation 2020
 - xiii Australian Trucking Association, 2020, Trucking industry welcomes JobTrainer Package; Media Release, Scott Morrison, 2020, JobTrainer Skills Package for Economic Recovery and Growth
 - xiv Industry Consultation 2020
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 - xxiv Australian Trucking Association, 2020, Trucking industry welcomes JobTrainer Package; Media Release, Scott Morrison, 2020, JobTrainer Skills Package for Economic Recovery and Growth
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 - xxxi Australian Trucking Association, 2020, Trucking industry welcomes JobTrainer Package; Media Release, Scott Morrison, 2020, JobTrainer Skills Package for Economic Recovery and Growth
 - xxxii Australian Trucking Association, 2020, Trucking industry welcomes JobTrainer Package; Media Release, Scott Morrison, 2020, JobTrainer Skills Package for Economic Recovery and Growth
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 - xxxix Australian Trucking Association, 2020, Trucking industry welcomes JobTrainer Package; Media Release, Scott Morrison, 2020, JobTrainer Skills Package for Economic Recovery and Growth