



Submission by the Australian Council of Trade Unions to the
Fair Work Commission Degree-qualified professional
classifications review (AM2025/19)

– 22 August 2025

ACTU Submission, 22 August 2025

ACTU D. No 25 /2025

Contents

About the ACTU.....	3
The Review of Degree-Qualified Professional Classifications.....	3
Degree Qualified Classifications in Listed Awards.....	4
Airport Employees Award 2020	4
Ambulance and Patient Transport Industry Award 2020	6
Animal Care and Veterinary Services Award 2020	8
Architects Award 2020	9
Black Coal Mining Industry Award 2020.....	10
Book Industry Award 2020	16
Broadcasting, Recorded Entertainment and Cinemas Award 2020	18
Education Services (Post-Secondary Education) Award 2020.....	20
Education Services (Schools) General Staff Award 2020	24
Electrical Power Industry Award 2020	25
Higher Education Industry – Academic Staff – Award 2020	26
Higher Education Industry—General Staff—Award 2020	29
Hydrocarbons Field Geologists Award 2020	30
Legal Services Award 2020	31
Live Performance Award 2020.....	32
Local Government Industry Award 2020.....	33
Medical Practitioners Award 2020.....	34
Professional Employees Award 2020.....	35
Rail Industry Award 2020.....	36
State Government Agencies Award 2020.....	37
Surveying Award 2020	42
Water Industry Award 2020.....	43
Classifications Requiring Diploma Qualifications	44
Next Steps	47

About the ACTU

1. Since its formation in 1927, the ACTU has been the peak trade union body in Australia. It has played the leading role in advocating for, and winning the improvement of working conditions, including on almost every Commonwealth legislative measure concerning employment conditions and trade union regulation. The ACTU has also appeared regularly before the Fair Work Commission and its statutory predecessors, in numerous high-profile test cases, as well as annual national minimum and award wage reviews.
2. The ACTU is Australia's sole peak body of trade unions, consisting of affiliated unions and state and regional trades and labour councils. There are currently 36 ACTU affiliates who together have over 1.7 million members who are engaged across a broad spectrum of industries and occupations in the public and private sector. The ACTU has consulted with its affiliates in the preparation of the proposals contained in these submissions.

The Review of Degree-Qualified Professional Classifications

3. The ACTU welcomes the Fair Work Commission's decision to commence proceedings to consider work value variations to classifications in modern awards that require, as a minimum, an undergraduate university degree (professional classifications) and have pay rates that are not aligned with the C1(a) Benchmark rate.
4. The Commission's decision to commence the proceedings is an important and significant response to the statutory imperative for the elimination of gender-based undervaluation and the obligation to establish and maintain a safety net of fair minimum wages.¹ The decision to review professional occupations follows the Expert Panel's finding in the Annual Wage Review 2025 [2025] FWCFB 3500 that:

Professional occupations, considered as a whole, are majority female (55.4 per cent).⁹⁵ However, a much higher proportion – 69.7 per cent – of modern award-reliant professionals are female. This surpasses the threshold of 60 per cent female identified for feminised occupations in the Priority Awards Review decision and makes clear that the detriment of non-alignment with the C1(a) benchmark rate principally accrues to female professionals.²

5. Recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows the gender pay gap to have fallen to its lowest level since records began.³ The apparent momentum is encouraging and comes at a time when the recent important decisions of the Commission to remove gender

¹ Annual Wage Review 2025 [2025] FWCFB 3500 at paragraphs [78], [84] and [85].

² *Ibid* at [82].

³ Workplace Gender Equality Agency. (2025, August 14). *The ABS data gender pay gap*. Workplace Gender Equality Agency. Retrieved August 19, 2025, from <https://www.wgea.gov.au/data-statistics/ABS-gender-pay-gap-data>

undervaluation are bearing fruit. At 11.5% there remains however, a pressing need for the Commission to continue its work to root out gender-based discrimination in those parts of the award system where it has for decades been a weight on fairness, productivity and prosperity within Australia's workplace relations framework.

6. The Commission has previously adopted the following as a guiding principle:
7. The C1(a) benchmark rate identified in the Stage 3 Aged Care decision for a degree-qualified RN (currently \$1525.90 per week) should, as a minimum, apply to any classification for which a university degree is required (except at the entry level) in the absence of evidence justifying a different outcome on work value grounds.⁴The ACTU strongly supports that principle being adopted in these proceedings.
8. As outlined in the following section of these submissions, the award list identified by the Commission includes classification structures that *prima facie* do not appear to align with the C10 Metals Framework with respect to classifications requiring degree qualifications. Many of the degree qualified classifications are very significantly under the C1(a) Benchmark. We respectfully submit that it is time (beyond time) that the award reliant employees in these professional classifications had their skills properly recognised and their associated wage rates were properly determined in accordance with the long-standing principles that have applied to other workers in the award system.

Degree Qualified Classifications in Listed Awards

Airport Employees Award 2020

9. The *Airport Employees Award 2020* contains the following classifications for degree qualified employees that have wage rates *below* the C1(a) benchmark of \$1579.30 per week.⁵

Professional Engineering Classifications

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Professional Engineer Level 1 (Qualified Engineer)	
Pay Point 1	\$1325.06
Pay Point 2	\$1376.36
Pay Point 3	\$1426.52
Professional Engineer Level 2	\$1497.58

⁴ *Ibid* at [70].

⁵ The C1(a) Benchmark rates was identified as \$1525.90 per week by the Expert Panel in the AWR 2025 Decision. Applying the 3.5% awarded by the Expert Panel, the figure becomes \$1579.30.

Graduate Entry Classification

10. No graduate entry level is expressly provided for in the Professional Engineering classification stream.
11. Pursuant to clause A.4, a “Professional engineer” is an employee who possesses professional engineering qualifications. Further, a “Professional Engineering Qualifications” means qualifications that are recognised for membership of the Institution of Engineers Australia, also known as Engineers Australia and may include such other qualifications as may be recognised by the employer.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

12. The classification structure includes another 3 levels of Professional Engineer (Levels 3 to 5) which have weekly wage rates at or above the C1(a) Benchmark.

Administrative Services Classifications

13. The *Airport Employees Award 2020* also contains an administrative services classification structure which includes classifications where tertiary qualifications may be “required or desirable”. The relevant classifications that have wage rates below the C1(a) Benchmark appear to be as follows:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Administrative Services Officer Level 3	\$1239.94
Administrative Services Officer Level 4	\$1333.80
Administrative Services Officer Level 5	\$1454.26

Graduate Entry Classification

14. The classification stream does not have an express “graduate entry” level.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

15. The award has two relevant Administrative Services Officer classification levels with wage rates above the C1(a) Benchmark at Levels 6 and 7.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

16. The Commission has identified Professional Engineers Level 1 - 5. We submit such identification is appropriate given each of the Levels requires a minimum of a degree level qualification. While the Commission has also identified a “Qualified Engineer” Level 1, this does not appear to be a separate classification but another description of a Professional Engineer Level 1.⁶
17. The Commission has further identified the classification of Administrative Services Officer Level 3. The Administrative Services Officer Level 3 is described in cl.A.2.3 as the “first” level at a degree qualification may apply. Notably, it is the only classification in the administrative stream to expressly refer to a degree qualification however, Administrative Services Officers’ levels above that classification refer to “professional” skills. In the context of the Administrative Services Officer Level 3 being referred to as the “first” level at which a degree qualification may be required and the reference to “professional skills” it is reasonable to assume graduate level qualifications applying to the higher levels in this stream and that they should be included in the review, that is, in addition to Administrative Services Officer Level 3, Administrative Services Officer Levels 4 to 7.

Ambulance and Patient Transport Industry Award 2020

18. The *Ambulance and Patient Transport Industry Award 2020* contains the following operational classifications for degree qualified employees that have wage rates *below* the C1(a) benchmark:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Senior Station Officer	1486.40	1495.70	1502.80
Station Officer/Team Manager ⁷ – Headquarters Or Branch With 10 Or More Staff	1396.20	1406.00	1412.70
Station Officer/Team Manager ⁸ – Branch With Less Than 10 Staff	1363.40	1372.50	1380.30

⁶ Cl.A.4.1 of the award.

⁷ This would appear to also include a Duty Team Manager on the basis they are a Team Manager and no other pay rate appears to be provided for the Duty Team Manager: see cl.A.1.11 & A.1.4 and cl.16.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Assistant Station Officer/Regional Relieving Officer	1326.90	1336.50	1344.30
Ambulance Officer	1250.10	1259.70	1266.70

Graduate Entry Classification

19. The award also contains a lower paid classification described as Student Ambulance Officer / Paramedic (SAO), for which there are 3 levels described in cl.A.1.2. The SAO may variously be:

- “(a) employed as such while undertaking the diploma or degree of Ambulance Paramedic Studies however titled;
- (b) an employee who has completed a diploma or degree in Paramedic Studies and who is completing the operational clinical requirements of the course;
- (c) a **graduate entry paramedic student** who is undertaking a one year Graduate Diploma of Ambulance Paramedic Studies (however titled in each State or Territory) and also who has a degree qualification in a related health area recognised by the employer; and
- (d) upon successful completion of the course a SAO will be appointed to the classification of Ambulance Officer/Ambulance Paramedic.” [bolding added].

20. The Student Ambulance Officer / Paramedic classification has the following wage rates below the C1(a) benchmark:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Student Ambulance Officer/Paramedic Level 3	1216.70	1229.70	1237.00
Student Ambulance Officer/Paramedic Level 2	1197.60	1206.30	1214.50
Student Ambulance Officer/Paramedic Level 1	1125.60	1134.40	1139.40

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

21. No wage rates for classifications requiring a degree in the award are currently above the C1(a) Benchmark in Year 1.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

22. In addition to the above classifications, the Commission has also identified classifications described as: Clinical Support Officer (CSO) [clause A.1.10]; Communications Officer [clause

A.1.13]; and Intensive Care Paramedic [clause A.1.3]. None of the 3 appear to have a separate wage rate however, are covered by the rates in the table above. The Communications Officer appears to be paid as an Ambulance Officer. While the Intensive Care Paramedic also appears to be paid as an Ambulance Officer, however is also paid a “paramedic skill allowance”. The Clinical Support Officer is described as an Intensive Care / Ambulance Paramedic.

Animal Care and Veterinary Services Award 2020

23. The Animal Care and Veterinary Services Award 2020 contains the following Veterinary Surgeon classifications for degree qualified employees that have wage rates *below* the C1(a) benchmark:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Veterinary Surgeon Level 1a	1240.70
Veterinary Surgeon Level 1b	1309.10
Veterinary Surgeon Level 2	1414.40
Veterinary Surgeon Level 3	1553.80

Graduate Entry Classification

24. Clause A.3.1 of the award provides that the “commencement level for a graduate veterinary surgeon” is Level 1A.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

25. The award has 1 Veterinary Surgeon classification level with a wage rate above the C1(a) Benchmark at Level 4.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

26. The Commission has identified only Veterinary Surgeon Level 1A. A Veterinary Surgeon is defined in cl.2 of the award as “a qualified veterinary surgeon who satisfies the statutory and professional requirements to practice in the State or Territory in which they practice (e.g. registration with the relevant State or Territory Veterinary Board)”. In that context and given that Level 1A is described as a “graduate”, it is reasonable to assume that all Veterinary Surgeons classifications, including Level 1A, 1B, 2, 3 and 4 require a degree qualification and should, appropriately, be considered.

Architects Award 2020

27. As shown in the table below, every classification in the Architects Award 2020 is for a degree qualified employee with a wage rate below the C1(a) benchmark:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 1—Graduate of Architecture	
Entry	1247.90
1st Pay Point	1313.90
2nd Pay Point	1379.80
Level 2(A)—Experienced Graduate of Architecture	
Experienced Graduate of Architecture	1442.70
Level 2(B)—Registered Architect	
Entry	1442.70
1st Pay Point	1487.30
2nd Pay Point	1532.00

Graduate Entry Classification

28. The classification of Level 1 – Graduate of Architecture is, self-evidently, described as a graduate level. However, a “Graduate of Architecture” should not be misinterpreted as a graduate holding a “Bachelor of Architecture” degree. Clause 2 of the award defines a Graduate of Architecture as “an employee who holds an Approved Qualification under the eligibility requirements for admission to the Architectural Practice Examination (APE) for registration as an Architect under Australian legislation.” In order to be admitted to the Architectural Practice Examination, an employee will generally need to have completed 5 years of study and hold a Masters degree.⁹ Practical experience may also be necessary.¹⁰

29. The award provides separate wage rates for a graduate of a Bachelor of Architecture in cl.13.5(c):

⁹ See Architects Accreditation Council of Australia. (2025, July). *Accredited Architecture Qualifications*. <https://aaca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Accredited-Architecture-Qualifications.pdf>.

¹⁰ See Architects Accreditation Council of Australia. (n.d.). *Architectural Practice Examination*. Retrieved August 9, 2025, from Architects Accreditation Council of Australia website: <https://aaca.org.au/architectural-practice-examination/>.

“Employees holding a Bachelor’s Degree with a pathway to a Master of Architecture will be paid the following minimum rate or percentage of the first year Graduate of Architecture rate of payment:

SERVICE	PERCENTAGE OF LEVEL 1—ENTRY RATE
1st Year Of Experience	85%
2nd Year Of Experience	90%
3rd Year Of Experience	95%

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

30. There are no classifications in the award above the C1(a) Benchmark.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

31. The Commission has identified only the classification of “Level 1 – Graduate Architecture”. The ACTU submits that all classifications in the award should be reviewed on the basis that they require a degree or higher qualification.

Black Coal Mining Industry Award 2020

32. The *Black Coal Mining Industry Award 2020* does not contain *any* classifications with pay rates the equivalent of, or above, the C1(a) Benchmark.

33. Classifications in Schedule B to the Award which *prima facie* would appear to require a degree qualification or higher are underlined in the table below.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Group D	1194.80
<u>Surveyor</u>	
Draftsperson	
Shotfirer	
Group E	1218.90

Leading Draftsperson	
Assistant Training Officer	
<u>Assistant Electrical And/Or Mechanical Engineer</u>	
Group F	1230.70
Senior Computer Operator	
Assistant Purchasing And Stores Control Officer	
Administrative Officer	
Group G	1295.60
<u>Chemist</u>	
Analyst And/Or Programmer	
<u>Environmental Scientist</u>	
Paymaster	
Purchasing Officer	
Stores Control Officer	
Personnel Officer	
Safety Officer	
Assistant To The Chief Clerk	
Group H	1310.80
Deputy	
Training Officer	
Mines Rescue Training Officer Level 1	
Mines Rescue Technical Officer Level 1	
Occupational Hygienist/Statutory Dust Sampler	
Group I	1331.20
Foreperson	
Senior Analyst And/Or Programmer	
Coal Preparation Plant Foreperson (Tasmania)	
<u>Commercial Officer</u>	

Assistant Accountant	
Chief Clerk	
Purchasing And Store Control Officer	
<u>Mine Surveyor</u>	
Planning Officer	
<u>Occupational Health Nurse</u>	
Mines Rescue Training Officer Level 2	
Mines Rescue Technical Officer Level 2	
Group J	1349.20
<u>Engineer</u>	
Assistant To The Chief Electrical And/Or Mechanical Engineer	
Open Cut Overseer	
<u>Chief Surveyor</u>	
<u>Metallurgist</u>	
<u>Senior Chemist</u>	
<u>Geologist</u>	
Assistant Undermanager	
Senior Foreperson	
<u>Accountant</u>	
Washing Plant Superintendent And/Or Supervisor	
EDP Supervisor	
Mines Rescue Training Officer Level 3	
Mines Rescue Technical Officer Level 3	
Group K	1379.70
<u>Senior Geologist</u>	
<u>Chief Geologist</u>	
<u>Chief Chemist</u>	

<u>Senior Metallurgist</u>	
<u>Senior Engineer</u>	
Senior Open Cut Overseer	
Coal Preparation Plant Supervisor	
Undermanager	
Mines Rescue Training Coordinator	
Mines Rescue Senior Technical Officer	
Group L	1413.40
Production Supervisor	
<u>Chief Electrical And/Or Mechanical Engineer</u>	
Mines Rescue Assistant Superintendent	
Group M	1469.20
<u>Electrical And/Or Mechanical Engineer (In Charge)</u>	
Undermanager (In Charge)	
Mines Rescue Superintendent	

34. It may be that other occupations that have not been underlined also require degree qualifications. Notably, a recent Full Bench found that that the occupations in Schedule B of the award should not be construed narrowly.¹¹
35. Without undertaking a comprehensive review of the above classifications, the lowest paid relevant classification in the table, “Surveyor”, appears to be in Group D. A Surveyor is defined in cl.B.1 of the award as being:

“Surveyor means an employee holding a surveyor’s certificate of competency in accordance with the *Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999* (Qld) appointed by management to use surveying instruments”.
36. The Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health website advises that under the *Coal Mining Safety and Health Act 1999* (Qld) and *Coal Mining Safety and Health Regulation 2017*, persons who hold competencies for “Certifying Mine Survey Plan” must hold a

¹¹ *Kestral Coal Pty Ltd v. Lennox* [2025] FWCFB 114 at paragraphs [40] to [59].

registration as a surveyor under the Surveyors Act 2003 and must have the appropriate Mining endorsement.¹² To obtain registration as a surveyor with a mining endorsement requires a degree qualification.¹³ In this respect it can usefully be counterposed with the other 3 types of registration by the Queensland Surveyors Board: a Surveying Associate, Surveying Graduate and Surveyor.¹⁴

37. The Chemist and Environmental Scientist in Group G also appear to be likely to require a degree qualification. A Chemist is defined in the award as:

“an employee who is the holder of an appropriate qualification and is required to carry out testing, analysis and verification of results and may be responsible for the supervision and work of laboratory technicians, laboratory assistants and/or samplers on shift”.

38. A Chemist, as that term is used in the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ Occupation Standard Classification for Australia data (“**ABS OSCA data**”) is denoted a “Skill Level 1”,¹⁵ meaning a level of skill commensurate with an AQF Bachelor Degree or higher qualification. This would appear to suggest, at least *prima facie*, that an “appropriate qualification” for a Chemist is a Bachelor Degree or higher.

39. The occupation of Environmental Scientist is undefined in the Award. The ABS’s OSCA data however similarly describes “Environmental Consultants and Scientists” as being Skill Level 1.¹⁶

40. Without detailing each underlined occupation, we note that the other occupations underlined appear on their face sufficiently likely to require a degree qualification or higher to justify being included in the review.

Graduate Entry Classification

41. Determining what is the Graduate entry wage rate for the different professional occupations requires a more comprehensive examination of the award, however, the award gives express graduate entry pay rates for two sorts of graduates with no experience: “Engineering

¹² Commissioner for Resources Safety & Health. (2023, June). *Coal mining competencies*. Commissioner for Resources Safety & Health. Retrieved August 9, 2025, from <https://www.crsh.qld.gov.au/advisory-committees/mining-competencies/coal-mining-competencies>

¹³ Surveyors Board of Queensland. (n.d.). *Registration*. In Surveyors Board of Queensland. Retrieved August 9, 2025, from <https://sbq.com.au/registration/>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024-version 1.0). *244231 Chemist*. In OSCA – Occupation Standard Classification for Australia, 2024, Version 1.0. ABS. Retrieved July 19, 2025, from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/osca-occupation-standard-classification-australia/2024-version-1-0/browse-classification/2/24/244/244231>.

¹⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024-version 1.0). *2444 Environmental Consultants and Scientists*. In OSCA – Occupation Standard Classification for Australia, 2024, Version 1.0. ABS. Retrieved July 20, 2025, from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/osca-occupation-standard-classification-australia/2024-version-1-0/browse-classification/2/24/244/2444>

Graduates" and "Commercial Graduates". An Engineering Graduate is referred to in cl.B.2.3(a) as a "degree qualified Engineer entering the workforce without experience" while a Commercial Graduate is described in cl.B.2.3(b) as "an employee with a tertiary qualification in a commercial discipline entering the workforce without experience".

Engineering Graduates

CLASSIFICATION	% OF THE GROUP J – ENGINEER'S WEEKLY RATE	\$ PER WEEK
Graduate Engineer – Level 1	80	1079.36
Graduate Engineer – Level 2	86	1160.31
Graduate Engineer – Level 3	94	1268.25

42. Clause B.2.3(a) of the award provides that a graduate with no experience is to be classified as a "Graduate Engineer – Level 1". Such a graduate can then move up after 12 months to Level 2 and then after a further 12 months, to Level 3.

Commercial Graduates

CLASSIFICATION	% OF THE GROUP I – COMMERCIAL OFFICER'S WEEKLY RATE	\$ PER WEEK
Commercial Graduate – Level 1	80	1064.96
Commercial Graduate – Level 2	86	1144.83
Commercial Graduate – Level 3	94	1251.33

43. Clause B.2.3(b) of the award provides that a graduate with no experience is to be classified as a "Commercial Graduate – Level 1". Such a graduate can then move up after 12 months to Level 2 and then after a further 12 months, to Level 3.

44. Notably, the Graduate entry classifications are given wage rates per week that are comparatively only a little above the induction rate for an unqualified Mineworker.¹⁷

¹⁷ See the minimum rates in cl.A.4 of the award, the Mineworker – Induction Level 1 is paid \$1040.70 while the Mine worker Induction Level 2 is paid \$1060.70.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

45. There are no classifications in the award above the C1(a) Benchmark.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

46. The Commission's provisional list includes only "Degree qualified" graduate engineers and commercial officers in Groups J and J of the classification structure in Schedule B to the award. As the ACTU has outlined from paragraph [33] to [40] of this submission, the award contains a significant number of other professional classifications, including Surveyor (Group D), Chemist (Group G), Environmental Scientist (Group G), Mine Surveyor (Group I), Occupational Health Nurse (Group I), Senior Chemist (Group J), Geologist (Group J), Accountant (Group J), Metallurgist (Group J), Chief Surveyor (Group J), Senior Geologist (Group K), Chief Geologist (Group K), Chief Chemist (Group K) and Senior Metallurgist (Group K). These occupations should also be included in the review.

Book Industry Award 2020

47. All but one of the editor classifications in the *Book Industry Award 2020* require a degree qualification and have a wage rate lower than the C1(a) benchmark. The relevant classifications are provided below¹⁸:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Editors	
Level 1—Upon Commencement	1115.20
Level 1—After 6 Months	1185.40
Level 2—Grade 1	1247.80
Level 2—Grade 2	1278.90
Level 2—Grade 3	1341.80
Level 2—Grade 4	1412.30
Level 3—Grade 1 (Senior Editor)	1479.40
Level 3—Grade 2 (Senior Editor)	1546.80

¹⁸ See cl. A.1 of the award.

48. The *Book Industry Award 2020* also has a classification structure for book publicists. The first 4 classifications have wage rates lower than the C1(a) Benchmark. The relevant classifications and the associated wage rates are provided below.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Publicists	
Grade 1	1204.20
Grade 2	1277.10
Grade 3	1364.50
Grade 4	1435.90

49. Grades 1 and 2 for Publicists are described as requiring “professional knowledge and skills” gained through:

- (a) completion of an appropriate course of study in communications, journalism, art, design, public relations or marketing or a journalist, press photography or artist cadetship; and/or
- (b) experience in publishing, public relations, design marketing or in the media industry.

50. *Prima facie*, an “appropriate course of study” leading to “professional knowledge and skills” is likely to, at the least, include degree qualified employees.

Graduate Entry Classification

51. For the editorial stream the entry point for graduates is expressly the “Level 1 – Trainee Book Editor”.¹⁹ For the book publicist stream the entry point is less clear, Grade 1 is the lowest applicable grade.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

52. The classifications likely requiring a degree qualification or higher with a wage rate above the C1(a) Benchmark are Editor (Senior) Level 3 – Grade 3 and Book Publicist Grades 5-7.

¹⁹ See cl.A.1.1 of the Award.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

53. The Commission has identified only 1 classification for review: Level 1 – Trainee Book Editor. It would appear however, that all classifications in the award are potentially degree level and could appropriately be reviewed.

Broadcasting, Recorded Entertainment and Cinemas Award 2020

54. Most (but not all) classifications in the *Broadcasting, Recorded Entertainment and Cinemas Award 2020* contain wage rates that are lower than the C1(a) Benchmark. While the very significant number of industry specific occupations likely require closer consideration to determine whether degree or higher qualifications are required, on the face of the award, at a minimum, several occupations would appear to require a degree in particular:

- (a) The occupation of Subtitling Editor, contained within Grade 15 of the award which “may require a degree” and has a wage rate of “\$1384.40”.
- (b) The occupation of Performer Class 2 includes a reference to a degree (to reduce the experience otherwise required). Wages for a Performer Class 2 vary however, including for example a weekly rate of \$1224.90 and for serial dramas or comedies where the employee is required for either 1-2 or 3 episodes of \$1224.90 and \$1760.80.
- (c) For the reasons discussed below, the occupation of Journalist under the award appears to contemplate at the least a degree qualification or equivalent. Under cl.13.6 of the Award, Journalists Grade 1 to Grade 5 have minimum wage rates below the C1(a) Benchmark.

Journalist Classifications

55. A Journalist Grade 1 must “have completed the training requirements of a cadetship or its equivalent and are gaining experience in a wide range of practical areas and/or undertaking additional training”. For the reasons below, it would appear that this, in effect, would require a Journalist Grade 1 to have training at least to the equivalent of a degree qualification.

56. A cadet is defined in cl.2 of the award as “an employee who is constantly or regularly in training in the collection of and/or preparation of material for television or radio news services and current affairs programs”.

57. Clause 12 of the award provides that cadets are paid the minimum weekly rates calculated as a prescribed percentage of the Journalist Grade 1 but are not to be less than an Entertainment Employee Grade 1 (\$922.70). The pay rates are as follows.

YEAR OF CADETSHIP	% OF JOURNALIST GRADE 1 (CURRENTLY \$1165.70)	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
1st	60	699.40 / 922.70
2nd	75 (874.30 / 922.70
3rd	90	1049.10

58. While clause 12 of the award does not expressly require cadets to have any formal qualifications the clause does refer to graduates. In particular, clause 12.2 provides:

“12.2 The period of cadetship is as follows:

- (a) For a cadet other than a graduate of an approved tertiary course, the period of cadetship must not exceed 3 years, provided that cadet training requirements are met.
- (b) **For a cadet who commenced cadetship as a graduate of an approved tertiary course, the period of cadetship must not exceed 12 months during which the cadet is to be paid at the appropriate percentage for a final year cadet.**
- (c) **A cadet who after 12 months' or more employment completes an approved tertiary course is to be advanced to the final year of cadetship.**
- (d) Periods of training in journalism on any newspaper or in any radio or television station are to be taken into account in calculating the period of cadetship.” [bolding added]

59. Given the Journalist Grade 1 must have completed a cadetship or equivalent, on the basis of the above, it would appear that the journalist must have relevant training to the level of graduate (or perhaps more likely) higher. Such a position, is consistent with the ABS OSCA data which classifies Journalists as Skill Level 1.²⁰

Graduate Entry Classification

60. There appear to be no non-training classifications that are expressly dedicated to graduate entry students.

²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024-version 1.0). 231332 Journalist. In OSCA – Occupation Standard Classification for Australia, 2024, Version 1.0: ABS. Retrieved August 10, 2025, from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/osca-occupation-standard-classification-australia/2024-version-1-0/browse-classification/2/23/231/2313/231332>

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

61. Several classifications have wage rates above the C1(a) Benchmark that may require a degree including: Performer Class 2 (see above) and Journalist Grades 6 to 8.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

62. The Commission has identified 2 classifications for review: Performers and Subtitling Editor. It would appear that other classifications are at least potentially relevant to the review, including all classifications in the Journalist stream.

Education Services (Post-Secondary Education) Award 2020

63. The *Education Services (Post-Secondary Education) Award 2020* in cl.16 contains three streams of classifications: Academic Teachers, Teachers and Tutors/Instructors and General Staff. It also has specific casual rates of pay for particular qualifications and tasks (for example, marking, technical demonstration, lecturing and tutoring (all of which on their face recognise preparation time in addition to the associated presenting)).²¹
64. An “academic teacher” under the award is an employee engaged to teach students, where a majority of the employee’s teaching work is in the delivery of units or programs which are at bachelor’s degree level or higher academic level.²²
65. A “teacher” under the award is an employee engaged to teach students where a teaching qualification is mandatory or required by the employer, and where the work required involves teaching a course of study or units of work recognised within or pursuant to the Australian Qualifications Framework or accredited by a relevant state or territory authority and which is neither the work of an academic teacher nor a tutor/instructor.²³
66. On the face of the award, it appears intended that both teachers and academic teachers may be required to have formal degree qualifications or higher.
67. The General Staff stream is populated by employees employed in a capacity other than as an academic teacher, a teacher or tutor/instructor and includes employees engaged in clerical, administrative, professional and technical work.²⁴

²¹ Cl.16.1(b) of the Award.

²² Cl 2 of the Award.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Academic Teacher Classifications

68. The *Education Services (Post-Secondary Education) Award 2020* contains the following *Academic teacher classifications* for degree qualified employees that have minimum wage rates *below* the C1(a) benchmark.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level A	
A.1	1262.50
A.2	1313.20
A.3	1363.70
A.4	1411.20
A.5	1449.10
A.6	1490.20
A.7	1531.30
A.8	1572.40

Non-Academic Teacher Classifications

69. All wage rates applying to non-academic teachers in clause 16.1(c) of the award are below the C1(a) benchmark, including those that require a degree level education pursuant to clauses B.1 to B.3. For non-TESOL teachers (i.e. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) different rates apply depending upon the number of years of the teacher's degree qualification: cl.B.3.1. For teachers employed in English language colleges or TESOL clause, different rates apply depending on formal qualifications, including degrees but also other language teaching related qualifications. The pay rates are as follows.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 2	1217.39
Level 3	1241.46
Level 4	1265.77
Level 5	1316.97
Level 6	1351.10
Level 7	1382.17

Level 8	1416.30
Level 9	1450.59
Level 10	1494.87
Level 11	1536.08
Level 12	1572.47

General Staff Classification

70. The *Education Services (Post-Secondary Education) Award 2020* contains the following General Staff classifications for degree qualified employees that have wage rates *below* the C1(a) benchmark.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 4²⁵	
4.1	1217.20
4.2	1265.30
Level 5	
5.1	1350.90
5.2	1415.30
Level 6	
6.1	1450.40
6.2	1535.80
Level 7	
7.1	1571.40

Graduate Entry Classification

71. The award provides a graduate entry classification for general staff at Level 4 (\$1217.20), cl.C.1.7(a) providing for the “completion of a degree without subsequent relevant work experience”. The lowest classification for non-academic teachers is the similarly paid Level 2 (\$1217.20). While the lowest classification for academic teachers is the slightly higher

²⁵ Cl.C.1.7 of the award.

paid Level A.1 (\$1262.50). Neither of the teaching classifications are expressly graduate entry.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

72. There are no non-academic teaching positions above the C1(a) Benchmark. Of the academic teaching classifications, the following are above the C1(a) Benchmark.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level B	
B.1	1635.70
B.2	1683.10
B.3	1730.60
B.4	1778.10
B.5	1825.50
B.6	1873.00
Level C	
C.1	1920.40
C.2	1967.90
C.3	2015.30
C.4	2062.80
C.5	2110.20
C.6	2157.60

73. The following are general staff classifications that may require a degree qualification and have minimum wage rates that are above the C1(a) Benchmark:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 7.2	1664.80
Level 8	1769.40
Level 9	1870.80

Classifications Identified by the Commission

74. The Commission has identified only 2 classifications, Teaching and Research Academic staff – Level A and Research Academic Staff (including creative disciplines) - Level A. If consideration is to be given to all classifications requiring a degree qualification, a broader range of classifications should be reviewed, including academic teaching Levels B and C, non-academic teaching Levels 2 to 12 and General Staff classifications Levels 4 to 9. The review of wage rates may also be required to examine the more particular aspects of what appears a uniquely tailored pay and classification structure, for example the casual rates that include preparation time etc.

Education Services (Schools) General Staff Award 2020

75. The *Education Services (Schools) General Staff Award 2020* contains the following classifications for degree qualified employees that have wage rates *below* the C1(a) benchmark.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 5	
5.1	1223.60
5.2	1282.20
Level 6	
6.1	1328.20
6.2	1418.50
Level 7	
7.1	1460.10
7.2	1507.00
7.3	1553.60

Graduate Entry Classification

76. The entry point for graduates who have completed a degree but who do not have any subsequent relevant work experience is Level 5.²⁶

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

²⁶ Cl.8.5.1 of the award.

77. There is only 1 classification requiring a degree with a wage rate above the C1(a) Benchmark, the Level 8 which has a minimum weekly wage rate of \$1691.90 and requires “postgraduate qualifications or progress towards postgraduate qualifications and extensive relevant experience”.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

78. The Commission has identified classifications Levels 5 to 8; this appears to capture all degree qualified classifications.

Electrical Power Industry Award 2020

79. The *Electrical Power Industry Award 2020* contains the following classifications for degree qualified employees that have wage rates *below* the C1(a) benchmark:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Pay Level 5	
Professional/Manager/Specialist Grade 5	1273.60
Pay Level 6	
Technical Grade 6	1376.60
Pay Level 7	
Technical Grade 7	1479.50
Professional/Manager/Specialist Grade 7	1479.50

Graduate Entry Classification

80. The *Electrical Power Industry Award 2020* does not expressly deal with graduate entry employees.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

81. The following classifications that may require a degree qualification that have minimum wage rates that are above the C1(a) Benchmark:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Pay Level 8	
Professional/Manager/Specialist Grade 8	1582.60
Pay Level 9	1685.80
Pay Level 10	
Professional/Manager/Specialist Grade 10	1788.80
Pay Level 11	
Professional/Manager/Specialist Grade 11	1890.00

82. Notably, no classification description is provided for Pay Level 9.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

83. The Commission has identified only the Professional / Managerial / Specialist Grade 5. The review should involve other classifications. Whilst only Grade 5 refers expressly to possessing qualifications required for an employee's discipline (for example accounting, engineering, human resources, information technology, science, management or other relevant discipline)²⁷, the remainder of the Professional / Managerial / Specialist levels, that is Grade 7, Grade 8, Grade 10 and 11, refer to "professional skills", "professional work", and "professional employees" (cls.A.4.1 to A.4.5). Further, their placement within the stream above Grade 5 is strongly suggestive of a requirement for a degree qualification for those professional employees within the cohort.

84. Both the Technical Grade 6 and 7 also refer to degree qualifications in cls.A.2.6 and A.2.7 respectively and should be included in the review.

Higher Education Industry – Academic Staff – Award 2020

85. All classifications in the *Higher Education Industry - Academic Staff – Award 2020* require a degree qualification or higher. The following classifications have pay rates below the C1(a) Benchmark.

²⁷ Cl. A.4 of the award.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level A	
1	1262.70
2	1313.30
3	1363.80
4	1411.30
5	1448.90
6 *	1490.30
7	1531.40
8	1572.40

Graduate Entry Classification

86. A teaching and research academic classified at Level A “will normally have completed 4 years of tertiary study or equivalent qualifications and experience and may be required to hold a relevant higher degree”.²⁸ While Level A.1 is the lowest classification where a 4 year degree is required, the level is not expressed in terms of graduate entry.
87. A research academic (inclusive of creative disciplines) classified at Level A “will typically conduct research/scholarly activities under limited supervision either independently or as a member of a team and will normally hold a relevant higher degree”.²⁹

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

88. The following classifications that may require a degree qualification that have minimum wage rates that are above the C1(a) Benchmark:

²⁸ Cl.A.1.1 of the award.

²⁹ Cl.A.2.1 of the award.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level B	
1	1635.50
2	1683.00
3	1730.50
4	1778.00
5	1825.50
6	1873.00
Level C	
1	1920.50
2	1968.00
3	2015.10
4	2062.60
5	2110.10
6	2157.60
Level D	
1	2236.70
2	2300.10
3	2363.20
4	2426.70
Level E	2774.40

Classifications Identified by the Commission

89. The Commission has identified only Teaching and research Academic Staff – Level A and Research Academic Staff (including Creative Disciplines) – Level A. If the review is to cover classifications requiring a degree qualification or higher, it should include all levels in the award (as well as the casual rates in cl.16.4A). Whilst a reference to degree qualifications is not expressly stated within the classification descriptors for the higher levels, in the context of the requirements of Level A, the coverage of the award and cl.14.4 which provides “[a]n academic appointed to a particular level may be assigned and may be expected to undertake

responsibilities and functions of any level up to and including the level to which the academic is appointed or promoted”, it is, respectfully, clear that all classifications should be considered in any review of classifications requiring a degree or higher.

Higher Education Industry—General Staff—Award 2020

90. The *Higher Education Industry – General Staff – Award 2020* has the following classification levels that require a degree qualification or higher and are lower than the C1(a) Benchmark.

CLASSIFICATION	LEVEL	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
HEW 5	Level 5.1	1228.54
	Level 5.2	1254.00
	Level 5.3	1270.72
	Level 5.4	1296.18
	Level 5.5	1321.64
HEW 6	Level 6.1	1353.18
	Level 6.2	1378.64
	Level 6.3	1400.68
	Level 6.4	1426.14
HEW 7	Level 7.1	1455.02
	Level 7.2	1486.18
	Level 7.3	1516.96
	Level 7.4	1547.74

Graduate Entry Classification

91. The HEW 5 level is a graduate entry classification, applying to a “Graduate (i.e. degree) or professional, without subsequent work experience on entry (including inexperienced computer systems officer), administrator with responsibility for advice and determinations, experienced technical officer”. ³⁰

³⁰ Cl.A.2.5(b) of the award.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

92. The following classifications that may require a degree qualification that have minimum wage rates that are above the C1(a) Benchmark:

CLASSIFICATION	LEVEL	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
HEW 8	Level 8.1	1584.98
	Level 8.2	1634.76
	Level 8.3	1684.16
	Level 8.4	1733.56
HEW 9	Level 9.1	1786.38
	Level 9.2	1835.78
	Level 9.3	1885.56
HEW 10	Level 10.1	1888.6

Classifications Identified by the Commission

93. The Commission has identified HEW Levels 5 to 10 as requiring a degree. The ACTU agrees with that identification.

Hydrocarbons Field Geologists Award 2020

94. All classifications in the *Hydrocarbons Field Geologists Award 2020* appear to require a degree qualification or higher. All classifications appear to have wage rates potentially below the C1(a) Benchmark; however, the calculation of rates is dissimilar to most other modern awards, being comprised of an “annual retainer” and the payment of various allowances.³¹

Graduate Entry Classification

95. The graduate entry point in the award is a “Trainee Mudlogger” who is “a person who has been awarded the degree of Bachelor of Science in Geology (or in another relevant earth science) who is employed to perform mudlogging/formation evaluation duties for the first

³¹ See cl.12 of the Award.

time".³² The award provides that the minimum wage for a Bachelor of Science is \$ 63,801 per annum³³, which can be converted to a weekly rate of approximately \$1,222.37.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

96. As noted above, the wage rates for employees under the award appear less straightforward than other modern awards in that they involve retainer rates, substantial allowances and estimated annual earnings. The Senior Mudlogger, the Competent Mudlogger (with a Bachelor of Science in Geology), the Competent Mudlogger (with a Bachelor of Science in Geology) and the Data Engineering are all classifications which have an "estimated annual earnings" of near the C1(a) Benchmark or above.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

97. The Commission has identified the classifications of Trainee Mudlogger, Competent Mudlogger, Senior Mudlogger and Data Engineer, which would appear to cover all classifications in the award. The ACTU agrees with the identification.

Legal Services Award 2020

98. The *Legal Services Award 2020* has 1 classification that expressly requires a degree level qualification. The classification has a pay rate below the C1(a) Benchmark:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 5—Law Graduate	1233.20

Graduate Entry Classification

99. The graduate entry classification is the Level 5 – Law Graduate classification.³⁴

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

100. There are no classifications requiring a degree that are paid above the C1(a) Benchmark.

³² Cl.10.1 of the Award.

³³ Cl.12.1 of the Award

³⁴ Cl.A.6.1 of the award.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

101. The Commission has identified the classification of Level 5 – Law graduate. Given the Level 6 – Law Clerk is higher paid (although still lower than the C1(a) Benchmark and has on its face “[a]n indicative training and vocational educational level for this level” of “Associate Diploma at TAFE or **tertiary level (or equivalent)**”,³⁵ consideration may be given in the context of an examination of the history of the award as to whether it too should be included.

Live Performance Award 2020

102. The *Live Performance Award 2020* has 1 classification that expressly requires a degree qualification. The Production and Support Staff Level 8 employee “is an employee who has obtained a relevant tertiary qualification together with extensive theatrical experience or equivalent skill and competence acquired through extensive theatrical experience”.³⁶ Production and Support Staff Level 8 are employed at Level 10 under the award and currently entitled to a weekly pay rate of \$1250.00. Such a rate is less than the C1(a) Benchmark rate and similar to the C5 (Diploma) rate in the *Manufacturing and Associated Industries and Occupations Award 2020*.

Graduate Entry Classification

103. There appears to be no graduate entry classification.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

104. There are no classifications requiring a degree that are paid above the C1(a) Benchmark.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

105. The Commission has identified the Production and Support Staff Level 8 classification as requiring a degree qualification. The ACTU agrees that the identified classification is the only express mention of degree qualification.

106. Without having carefully examined the history of the award, in the context of the high level of female performers within some occupations within the industry,³⁷ the ACTU wishes to note

³⁵ Cl.A.7.1(f) of the award.

³⁶ Cl.A.10.2 of the award.

³⁷ For example, Professional Dancers and Choreographers are reportedly 72% female and are classified as requiring Skill Level 1 - see Jobs and Skills Australia. (n.d.). *Dancers and Choreographers* (ANZSCO 211112). Data: Occupation and Industry Profiles, Jobs and Skills Australia. Retrieved August 14, 2025, from <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-and-industry-profiles/occupations/211112-dancers-and-choreographers>.

that it would appear at least *prima facie* surprising if the skill level requirements for a range of other performance classifications in the industry were not, in reality, equivalent to those obtained in a degree level qualification. To take one example, a Company Dancer Level 7 has a minimum weekly wage of \$1438.40, over \$100 lower than the C1(a) Benchmark, and while the award does not refer to a degree qualification, the level of skill required is notable:

- (a) **A minimum of 8 years full-time professional experience** or substantially equivalent, as defined, with advanced dance skills, interpretative skills and dramatic and presentational skills.
- (b) **Ability to understudy and perform major roles** and/or character roles on a regular basis or in the case of contemporary companies performing ensemble-based repertoire, to perform solo or perform with a high degree of artistry as a member of the ensemble.
- (c) As required, demonstrate excellent partnering skills (either sex).
- (d) Demonstrate a high degree of professionalism in all that they do and at least one of the following as agreed between the employer and the employee:
 - (i) Recognition that they possess **a special quality of performance and interpretation of roles, such recognition to come from 2 of the following sources—industry peers, colleagues, media;**
 - (ii) Demonstrate and provide leadership.³⁸ [bolding added]

107. While the movement of wages for professional dancers is unlikely to move the statistical dial on the gender pay gap, it is hard to accept that such skills are not, at the very least, the equivalent of degree level.

Local Government Industry Award 2020

108. The *Local Government Industry Award 2020* has the following classification levels that require a degree qualification or higher and are lower than the C1(a) Benchmark.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 7	1250.10
Level 8	1350.80
Level 9	1445.10

³⁸ Cl.A.14 of the award.

Graduate Entry Classification

109. Level 7 of the award applies to employees whose “skills and knowledge needed are beyond those normally acquired through the completion of secondary education alone and normally acquired through completion of a degree with little or no relevant work experience ... ”.³⁹

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

110. The following are classifications that may require a degree qualification and have minimum wage rates that are at or above the C1(a) Benchmark:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 10	1579.40
Level 11	1781.00

Classifications Identified by the Commission

111. The Commission has identified Levels 7, 9, 10 and 11 for the review. We submit that it would appropriate that Level 8 also be included on the basis that it requires employees at that level to have supplemented “base level professional qualifications with additional skills training”.⁴⁰

Medical Practitioners Award 2020

112. All classifications in the *Medical Practitioners Award 2020* require a degree qualification or higher. The following classifications have payrates below the C1(a) Benchmark.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Intern (First Post Graduate Year)	1219.62
Resident Medical Practitioner	
Resident Medical Practitioner - Pay Point 1	1294.83
Resident Medical Practitioner - Pay Point 2	1346.98
Resident Medical Practitioner - Pay Point 3	1360.08

³⁹ Cl.A.7.6 of the award.

⁴⁰ Cl.A.8.6 of the award.

Registrar	
Registrar Pay Point 1	1473.25
Registrar Pay Point 2	1533.67

Graduate Entry Classification

113. While it is not described as graduate entry, the lowest paid classification, the classification of Intern is “a medical practitioner in the first postgraduate year of clinical experience”.⁴¹

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

114. The remainder of the wage rates in the award apply to employees who are required to hold a degree and whose wage rates are above the C1(a) Benchmark. The employees range from Registrar Pay Point 3 (\$1603.62) through to Director of Medical Services (\$3059.38).

Classifications Identified by the Commission

115. The Commission has identified that all classifications require a degree and several postgraduate requirements. The ACTU agrees that all classifications require at least a degree and that most classification require additional vocational training.

Professional Employees Award 2020

116. All classifications in the *Professional Employees Award 2020* require a degree qualification or higher. The following classifications have payrates below the C1(a) Benchmark.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 1 Graduate Professional—Pay Point 1.1 (3 Year Degree)	1222.84
Level 1 Graduate Professional—Pay Point 1.1 (4 Or 5 Year Degree)	1254.38
Level 1 Graduate Professional—Pay Point 1.2	1275.28
Level 2 Experienced Professional/Quality Auditor/Experienced Medical Research Employee	1442.90
Level 3 Professional/Senior (Lead) Quality Auditor/Experienced Medical Research Employee	1576.62

⁴¹ C.12.1 of the award.

Graduate Entry Classification

117. The Graduate Entry wage rates are at Level 1, Pay Point 1. The rates vary depending on the length of the degree.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

118. The following classifications require a degree qualification and have minimum wage rates that are at, or above, the C1(a) Benchmark:

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 4 Professional/Experienced Medical Research Employee	1778.40
Level 5 Experienced Medical Research Employee	2142.40

Classifications Identified by the Commission

119. The Commission has identified that all classifications are degree level or above. The ACTU agrees.

Rail Industry Award 2020

120. The *Rail Industry Award 2020* has the following classification levels that require a degree qualification or higher and are paid lower than the C1(a) Benchmark.

CLASSIFICATION	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 3 Rail Worker (Cap)	1088.20
Level 4 Rail Worker (Cap)	1136.40
Level 5 Rail Worker (Cap)	1233.20
Level 6 Rail Worker (Cap)	1321.80
Level 7 Rail Worker (Cap)	1402.30

121. "CAP" for these classifications means clerical, administration and professional employees.⁴² The descriptor for Level 6 Rail Worker (CAP) does not expressly refer to a degree qualification however sits between two classifications that do require graduate level classifications.⁴³

Graduate Entry Classification

122. The Graduate Entry wage rate is Level 3, which is stated to "include university graduates within their first and second year post graduation with no prior industry relevant experience".⁴⁴

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

123. The Level 8 Rail Worker (CAP) has a requirement for a degree qualification and has a wage rate currently very marginally above the C1(a) Benchmark at \$1579.40. The Level 9 Rail Worker (CAP), which is the top classification in the stream, does not expressly refer to a requirement for a degree qualification.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

124. The Commission has identified Levels 3 to 8 (CAP) as requiring a degree qualification. The ACTU agrees, although given the skills attached to Level 9 (CAP) and its position in the classification structure there is a reasonable case for it also to be included in the review.

State Government Agencies Award 2020

125. The State Government Agencies Award 2020 divides employees into 4 classification streams:

- (a) Administrative Stream
- (b) Technical Stream
- (c) Professional Stream
- (d) General/Field work stream.

⁴² Cl.15.1 of the award.

⁴³ See the first table in Schedule A to the award.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Administrative Stream

126. Within the Administrative Stream the first classification associated with “tertiary qualifications is Administrative Officer Grade 4 which cl.A.1.4 provides “... is the first level where tertiary qualifications may be required or desirable”. There is no further express reference to qualification in the grades Administrative Officer Grades 5 to 8 however, in the context of cl.A.1.4 it appears reasonable to conclude that the higher levels may require tertiary qualifications.

Professional Stream

127. Determining which classifications require a degree qualification in the *State Government Agencies Award 2020* is made more difficult by the lack of definition or description of the subclassifications in the Professional Stream or the associated “Work Value Levels”. *Prima facie*, it would appear that the Professional Stream, consisting, as it does, of Legal Officers, Engineer/Scientist and Information Technology Officers, is largely populated by classifications requiring a degree qualification or higher. However, pursuant to clause A.3.1, the Professional Officer Grade 1 does not require “formal qualifications or experience”. Conversely, clause A.3.2 provides that a Professional Officer Grade 2 must have “sound professional knowledge gained through satisfactory completion of an appropriate course of study at a recognised tertiary institution”. In the context of “*professional knowledge gained*”, such a course would appear likely to be the equivalent of a degree qualification or higher. By Professional Officer Grade 5, the award expressly refers to post-graduate qualifications: “the professional officer may be required to possess post-graduate qualifications for some specialist positions”.⁴⁵

Technical Stream

128. The technical stream does not contain any classification with an express reference to degree qualifications. Notably however, the classification Technical Officer Grade 5 requires an employee “to possess a tertiary level education at diploma level (or equivalent) and possess relevant experience”.⁴⁶ The Technical Officer Grade 6 then requires “a sound theoretical knowledge, through satisfactory completion of an appropriate course of study and/or gained wide experience in relevant technical activities”.⁴⁷ No express guidance is provided as to the appropriate course of study.

⁴⁵ Cl.A.3.5 of the award.

⁴⁶ Cl.A.2.6 of the award.

⁴⁷ Cl.A.2.7 of the award.

General/Field work stream

129. The General/Field work classifications do not go beyond the AQF equivalent of trade qualifications.⁴⁸

130. On the basis of the above, it would appear that the following classifications **may** require a degree qualification or higher and are lower than the C1(a) Benchmark.

Administrative Officer Stream

CLASSIFICATION	WORK VALUE LEVEL	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Grade 4	A	1274.45
Grade 4	B	1296.47
Grade 4	C	1317.97
Grade 5	A	1368.28
Grade 5	B	1387.22
Grade 5	C	1409.35
Grade 6	A	1466.14
Grade 6	B	1493.98
Grade 6	C	1522.18

Professional Officer Stream

Information Technology Officer

CLASSIFICATION	WORK VALUE LEVEL	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
ITO 2	A	1368.28
ITO 2	B	1399.89
ITO 2	C	1434.59
ITO 2	D	1466.14
ITO 3	A	1535.94
ITO 3	B	1577.58

⁴⁸ Cl.A.4.3 of the award.

Legal Officer

CLASSIFICATION	WORK VALUE LEVEL	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
LO 2	A	1534.33
LO 2	B	1555.26
LO 2	C	1576.30

Engineer / Scientist

CLASSIFICATION	WORK VALUE LEVEL	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
ES 2	B	1362.09
ES 2	C	1387.22
ES 2	D	1412.38
ES 3	A	1458.05
ES 3	B	1493.98
ES 3	C	1518.52
ES 3	D	1566.05

Graduate Entry Classification

131. No graduate entry classification is expressly described in the award.

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

132. The Classifications requiring a degree qualification that have associated wage rates above the C1(a) Benchmark are contained in the tables below.

Administrative Officer Stream

CLASSIFICATION	WORK VALUE LEVEL	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Grade 7	A	1591.82
Grade 7	B	1619.32
Grade 7	C	1647.23
Grade 8	A	1763.77
Grade 8	B	1812.26
Grade 8	C	1860.71

Professional Stream

Information Technology Officer

CLASSIFICATION	WORK VALUE LEVEL	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
ITO 3	C	1619.32
ITO 4	A	1710.34
ITO 4	B	1763.77
ITO 5	A	1860.71

Legal Officer

CLASSIFICATION	WORK VALUE LEVEL	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
LO 2	D	1597.30
LO 3	A	1692.73
LO 3	B	1717.16
LO 3	C	1741.52
LO 4	A	1846.22
LO 4	B	1886.02
LO 5	A	1958.05

Engineer / Scientist

CLASSIFICATION	WORK VALUE LEVEL	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
ES 4	A	1619.40
ES 4	B	1647.23
ES 4	C	1692.73
ES 5	A	1773.97
ES 5	B	1818.91
ES 5	C	1863.75

Classifications Identified by the Commission

133. The Commission identified the following as being classifications which required a degree qualification: Administrative Officer Grade 4, Technical Officer Grade 5, Professional Officer Grade 2, Professional Officer Grade 3 and Professional Officer Grade 5. The ACTU submits

that the Administrative Officers Grade 5 to 8 should also be included for the reason given at paragraph [126] above, together with Professional Officer Grade 4 on the basis that cl.A.3.4 provides that such an employee must have “Sound theoretical knowledge”, and this knowledge “may be gained through the satisfactory completion of an appropriate course of study, and/or wide experience in a professional activity”. In the context of the classification structure, the ACTU submits that it would appear unlikely that the course referred to was not a degree qualification or higher.

Surveying Award 2020

134. The *Surveying Award 2020* has the following classification levels that require a degree qualification or higher and are lower than the C1(a) Benchmark.

WAGE GROUP	CLASSIFICATIONS	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 8	Surveyor Technician II / Graduate Entry Professional Surveyor 3 year degree	1224.90
Level 7	Survey Technician III / Graduate Entry Professional Surveyor 4 year degree	1250.10
Level 6	Surveyor Level I	1283.50
Level 5	Surveyor Level II	1350.80
Level 4	Surveyor Level III	1384.40
Level 3	Surveyor Level IV	1445.10

Graduate Entry Classification

135. Level 7 and Level 8 of the award are expressly the graduate entry levels for 3 and 4 year degrees respectively (cl. A.15).

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

136. The weekly wage rate for Level 2 of the award is set at the C1(a) Benchmark of \$1579.40, while Level 1 is above the Benchmark, currently at \$1781.00.⁴⁹

Classifications Identified by the Commission

137. The Commission has identified “Professional Surveyor” as a classification requiring a degree qualification. Cl.4.2 of the award defines “Professional Surveyor” as “an employee qualified to carry out professional surveying duties as defined. The term Professional surveyor will include Graduate surveyor and Licensed/Registered surveyor and other Professional surveyors whose field of surveying does not require formal registration.” The term therefore appears to cover a number of classifications. The ACTU submits that Levels 8 to 1 are relevant to any review of degree qualified employees.⁵⁰

Water Industry Award 2020

138. The *Water Industry Award 2020* has the following classification levels that require a degree qualification or higher and are lower than the C1(a) Benchmark.

CLASSIFICATIONS	MINIMUM WEEKLY RATE (\$)
Level 7	1250.10
Level 8	1350.80
Level 9	1445.10

Graduate Entry Classification

139. Level 7 is expressly a graduate entry level.⁵¹

Classifications Requiring a Degree Above C1(a) Benchmark

140. Level 10 also requires a degree level qualification or higher and is currently at the C1(a) Benchmark of \$1579.40.

⁴⁹ Cl.17 of the award.

⁵⁰ Cl.A.7 to A.5 of the award.

⁵¹ Cl.A.7 of the award.

Classifications Identified by the Commission

141. The Commission has identified Levels 7, 9 and 10 as being classifications which require a degree qualification. Level 8 should also be included. Level 8 applies to “professionals/specialists positions” and requires “base level professional qualifications with additional skills training”. In that context it appears intended to cover employees who are required to have a degree qualification.

Classifications Requiring Diploma Qualifications

142. In addition to reviewing degree-level professional occupations, the Commission has also sought comment on whether there are classifications in the identified awards for which a diploma qualification is required but which are not aligned with the equivalent level in the C10 Metals Framework, and if so, whether that classification should form part of the review.

143. In the table below the ACTU has identified classifications in the identified award for which a diploma qualification is required, together with the corresponding wage rate. Under the C10 Metals Framework a Diploma of Engineering is classified at the C5 classification and has the nominal relativity of 130%. The current award weekly wage rate for the C5 classification is \$1250.10.

AWARD	DIPLOMA CLASSIFICATION	WEEKLY RATE
Airport Employees Award 2020	Technical Services Officer Level 10	\$1,647.68
Ambulance And Patient Transport Industry Award 2020	Ambulance Attendant	\$1,241.00
Animal Care And Veterinary Services Award 2020		
Architects Award 2020		

Black Coal Mining Industry Award 2020		
Book Industry Award 2020		
Broadcasting, Recorded Entertainment And Cinemas Award 2020	A diploma may affect progression by way of experience (cl.E.2.2). A diploma may be required for A Technician, Audio, Lighting, Master Control, On-Air Presentation or Videotape employee.	If required - allowance of \$19.23.
Education Services (Post-Secondary Education) Award 2020	General Staff Level 3.1	\$1,128.50
	General Staff Level 3.2	\$1,185.10
Education Services (Schools) General Staff Award 2020	Level 4.1	\$1,128.60
	Level 4.2	\$1,185.20
Electrical Power Industry Award 2020	Technical Officers Grades 4 – 5 refer to “post trade or technical qualifications”.	\$1,186.00 / \$1,290.50
	Technical Officers Grades 6 and 7 refer to “post trade, technical or degree”.	\$1,395.00 / \$1,499.10
Higher Education Industry – Academic Staff – Award 2020		

Higher Education Industry – General Staff – Award 2020	Higher Education Worker Level 4.1 ⁵²	\$1,168.90
	Higher Education Worker Level 4.2	\$1,190.50
	Higher Education Worker Level 4.3	\$1,212.20
Hydrocarbons Field Geologists Award 2020		
Legal Services Award 2020		
Live Performance Award 2020		
Local Government Industry Award 2020	Level 6	\$1,228.80
	Level 7	\$1,250.10
Medical Practitioners Award 2020		
Professional Employees Award 2020	The definition of Graduate Engineer and Experienced Scientist refer to a “degree or diploma” (cl.2.2 & 2.4) however describe diploma in terms consistent with a degree.	

⁵² The HEW Level 4 classification requires in cl.A.2.4(a)(i) of the award “a diploma level qualification **with relevant work related experience**”. Notably, there does not appear to be a classification for a diploma without such experience”. HEW Level 3 refers to a worker who is yet to complete a diploma: see cl.A.2.3(a)(ii).

Rail Industry Award 2020	Level 3 (Clerical, Administrative & Professional) refers to “an associate diploma or equivalent”, as well as graduate entry.	\$1,088.20
State Government Agencies Award 2020	Technical Officer Grade 5	\$1,417.19 / \$1,443.64
Surveying Award 2020	Level 7 – Surveying Technician Level III	\$1,250.20
Water Industry Award 2020	Level 6 (Diploma or Advanced Diploma)	\$1228.80
	Level 7 (Diploma with considerable work experience)	\$1250.10

144. The ACTU submits that for awards where weekly wages for classifications with diploma level qualifications are below the C5 rate, it is appropriate that the rates be reviewed as part of the gender undervaluation review.

Next Steps

145. The Commission has prioritised degree-qualified classifications in its examination of award gender undervaluation at least partly on the basis that “the principles stated in the Priority Awards Review decision set out a relatively straightforward path to addressing the classifications and awards in question”. The ACTU agrees and sees merit in the Commission investigating where agreement is possible between interested parties to individual awards as to a pathway forward.

146. On that basis, the ACTU submits that there would likely be value in the programming of conferences, on an award-by-award basis, where interested parties may express a view as to how any review of professional classifications may be most practically and expeditiously progressed. Such award specific conferences could consider, for example:

- (a) Whether for the particular award the subject of the conference, there is agreement that the C1(a) Benchmark should, as a minimum, apply to any classification for which a university degree is required (except at the entry level).
- (b) If the parties contend that an arbitral process has been previously undertaken with respect to the professional classifications that would justify the current relativity with the C1 rate in the C10 Metals Framework. Given the potential exigencies placed on the parties if there are multiple substantive reviews, the ACTU submits that it would be useful if the Commission, where appropriate, were able to offer research assistance in providing an historical outline of how the wage rates for professional classifications in the respective awards were determined, consistent with the approach taken as it did in the Gender Undervaluation Priority Awards Review Stage 2 Report.⁵³
- (c) If there is no agreement around benchmarking, whether the parties are able to identify any other work value reasons why classifications for which a university degree is required should not, as a minimum, be paid the C1(a) Benchmark.
- (d) Whether any party is likely to seek the opportunity to bring evidence seeking to justify a different outcome to the C1(a) Benchmark on work value grounds.
- (e) If there is agreement with respect to paragraph (a), where there is agreement as to any proposed variation of specific pay rates in the award, including how to deal with current internal relativities?
- (f) Where for the particular award the subject of the conference the classification structure also contains a classification that requires a diploma and has pay rates less than the equivalent of C5 of the Metals Framework, whether there is any agreement as to a proposed variation of those rates of pay?

⁵³ Fair Work Commission, “Stage 2 Report: Gender Pay Equity Research”, 4 April 2024 (Stage 2 Report).

address

ACTU
Level 4 / 365 Queen Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

phone

1300 486 466

web

actu.org.au
australianunions.org.au