

PLANT OPERATOR TICKET & LICENCE ROADMAP

What you actually need before you can start operating in Queensland — and where good candidates trip up.

"Do I need a ticket or a licence?" is one of the most common questions we hear from people moving into plant operation — and the confusion is understandable, because the three terms get used loosely on site. Here's the difference, and what sits in each tier.

TIER 1 — MANDATORY

LICENCE

A legal requirement to operate certain high-risk plant — cranes, forklifts, some earthmoving equipment — under a High Risk Work Licence (HRWL) issued by WHSQ. Non-negotiable, checked, and audited.

TIER 2 — SITE-SPECIFIC

TICKET

Often used interchangeably with "licence" in casual site talk, but usually refers to a competency card or VOC (Verification of Competency) that a specific employer or site requires on top of your licence.

TIER 3 — BASELINE

CERTIFICATION

Broader training — white card, first aid, site inductions — that sits alongside your licence/ticket requirements. Required everywhere, but doesn't replace them.

COMMON PLANT CLASSES AT A GLANCE

PLANT / ROLE	TYPICALLY NEEDS	WHAT TO HAVE READY
Mobile crane	HRWL	Class-specific High Risk Work Licence (WHSQ), current and matched to crane capacity
Forklift (high-risk classes)	HRWL	LF class High Risk Work Licence
Dogging / rigging	HRWL	DG or RB/RI/RA class High Risk Work Licence
Excavator	TICKET / VOC	Competency card matched to the specific tonnage class you'll be operating

The trip-up we see most: someone has a valid ticket for one class of machine and assumes it covers a similar one. It usually doesn't — different plant classes and tonnages need their own currency, verified separately.

COMMON PLANT CLASSES, CONTINUED

PLANT / ROLE	TYPICALLY NEEDS	WHAT TO HAVE READY
Dozer	TICKET / VOC	VOC or site-issued competency card for that machine class
Grader	TICKET / VOC	Site or employer-verified competency, current for the model in use
Loader / skid steer	TICKET / VOC	Competency card specific to loader class and attachment type
Roller / compactor	TICKET / VOC	Site-verified competency, current and machine-specific
All plant roles	CERTIFICATION	White card, general construction induction, site-specific induction

BEFORE YOU APPLY — QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Your **HRWL** (if your target role needs one) is current — check the expiry date, not just that you "have one."
- ☐ Your **ticket/VOC** matches the specific machine class and tonnage of the role you're applying for.
- ☐ Your **white card and inductions** are current and easy to produce on request.
- ☐ You can state clearly which classes you're ticketed for — not "excavators generally," but the specific tonnage range.
- ☐ If a ticket has lapsed or is close to expiry, you've got a plan to renew it before it becomes a problem mid-application.

WORTH KNOWING

If you're weighing up which tickets are worth investing in for where the work actually is over the next couple of years, that's a conversation we have constantly with people moving into plant operation. Different regions and project types draw on different plant classes — reach out any time and we'll talk it through honestly, whether or not there's a role on right now.

Regional and remote sites often value multi-class competency more than metro work does — being ticketed across two or three related machine classes tends to open more doors on FIFO/DIDO rosters than a single deep specialisation.

This roadmap is general guidance, not a substitute for confirming requirements with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) or your registered training organisation. Ticket and licence requirements can vary by site and by specific machine model — always confirm current requirements before starting a role. Source: WHSQ High Risk Work Licensing framework.