RFS

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Guidelines

2024

Document control

Release history

Version	Date	Author	Summary of changes
3.1	13-06-2017	Learning and Development	Electronic document ONLY. Printed copies cannot be version controlled
3.2	15-06-2017	Learning and Development	Added RPL webinar link
4.0	23-05-2024	Learning Design and Assurance	Structure, formatting and branding changes from earlier editions

Reviewed by

Business Unit	Date
Learning Design & Assurance	June 2024

Approved by

Endorsed by	Date
Learning Design Governance Group	11/6/24

Related documents

Document name	Version
RPL Candidate Guide	1.0
RPL Assessor Guide	1.0

Document name	Version
Service Standard 6.1.3 Training in the NSW Rural Fire Service	4.2
RFS Guide for Supporting Members with LLN Needs	1.0
Service Standard 1.1.7 Code of Conduct and Ethics	4.2
Service Standard 1.1.42 Respectful and Inclusive Workplace	2.0
Work Health and Safety Act 2011	2011 No 10
The National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011	2011
Vocational Education and Training Quality Framework	

Contents

01 | What is RPL?

1. Welcome

This guide is designed to assist candidates in collecting evidence utilising the recognition of prior learning (RPL) process to achieve the qualification the candidate has applied for. This formal process is based on evidence submitted by you, 'the candidate'.

1.1. What is recognition of prior learning?

Recognition is the process by which a person's existing skills and knowledge, regardless of how they have been acquired, are assessed and credited towards achieving unit/s of competency from national training packages, qualifications or accredited courses.

RPL is the acknowledgment of skills and knowledge obtained through learning achieved through formal learning, non-formal learning or informal learning.

Formal learning	– structured program of instruction
	– linked to an AQF Qualification or Statement of Attainment
	– examples include a certificate, diploma or university degree.

Non-formal learning	– structured program of instruction
	– does not link to an AQF Qualification or Statement of Attainment
	– examples include professional development workshop.

Informal learning	– often non-structured in a traditional sense
	– does not link to an AQF Qualification or Statement of Attainment
	– examples include experience on the job, social or leisure activities.

1.1.1. Do you have experience in a particular industry and/or job role/s?

Think about the industries you have worked in and the jobs you have held in the past, and make a list of your tasks.

– What were the tasks?

Think about your experience and the knowledge you have developed.

– What do you know?

Think about your experience and the skills you have developed.

– What can you do?

Think about how you might be able to prove your background and experience.

– Talk about the tasks and what you know and can do.
– Show documents that prove and confirm your background.
– Demonstrate how you can perform the tasks.
– Get a supervisor or somebody to confirm your background.

Have you done any other training or do you hold any qualifications?

If you think that you have experience in a particular industry and/or job role/s and you think you can prove it, then RPL might be the right fit for you.

1.1.2. Standards for RTOs

Provisions in the [Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015](#) require RTOs to offer recognition to all applicants on enrolment and ensure that the process is structured to minimise the time and cost to applicants.

If you apply for RPL and your application is successful, you could:

— Reduce or eliminate the need for any training in skills and knowledge you already have.
— Save time by not needing to attend any or a reduced number of classes and completing unnecessary work.
— Complete your qualification in a shorter time.
— Advance to a higher-level qualification in a shorter time if desired.

> **RPL must be made available to all members.**
>
> RPL allows members who already have the skills, knowledge and experience to be 'onboarded' more quickly, which is good for member morale and increases the Service's operational capability.

1.2. Service Standard 6.1.3 Training in the NSW Rural Fire Service

Training Standard — Section 5.3 and 5.4 Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer defines the procedures for recognition of qualifications and existing competency gained from previous experience or training.

An overview of the process for RPL is listed below:

1. The candidate contacts the Brigade Training Officer (BTO) or the Officer responsible for learning and development (L&D) requesting an RPL application for a course.

2. The BTO or the Officer responsible for L&D outlines the RPL process, including the assessment appeals process, provides the applicable RPL kit and unpacks the requirements with the candidate.

3. The candidate collates an evidence portfolio as required by the applicable RPL kit (refer to the candidate's RPL kit to confirm the submission process).

4. The candidate submits a portfolio of evidence as per the applicable RPL kit instructions.

5. The assessor assesses the candidate's evidence portfolio submission:

    a. using the RPL assessor kit and following instructions, meeting required timeframes

    b. using the rules of evidence and principles of assessment to determine competency

    c. completing the outcomes feedback section within the RPL assessor kit outlining the next steps if not yet competent (to support candidate reassessment)

    d. advising candidate of RPL assessment outcome.

> **Not sure?**
>
> When in doubt about anything training-related, refer to Service Standard 6.1.3 Training in the NSW Rural Fire Service in the first instance. You can download Service Standard 6.1.3 by visiting OneRFS.

1.3. Recognition strategies

The Learning Design and Assurance team are responsible for determining the systems that govern how training is conducted in the NSW RFS. A part of that responsibility is to ensure that the NSW RFS assessment methodology is sound and meets the required training package standards. NSW RFS assessment methodology ensures all recognition strategies can be supported, including:

- third-party evidence
- supporting documentation
- assessment on demand

- direct observation
- recognition interview (questioning)
- work samples.

1.3.1. RPL assessment methodology

The assessment design process undertaken by the Learning Design and Assurance team ensures assessors have rigorous assessment tools that allow them to make well-informed assessment decisions, including deciding on an RPL application.
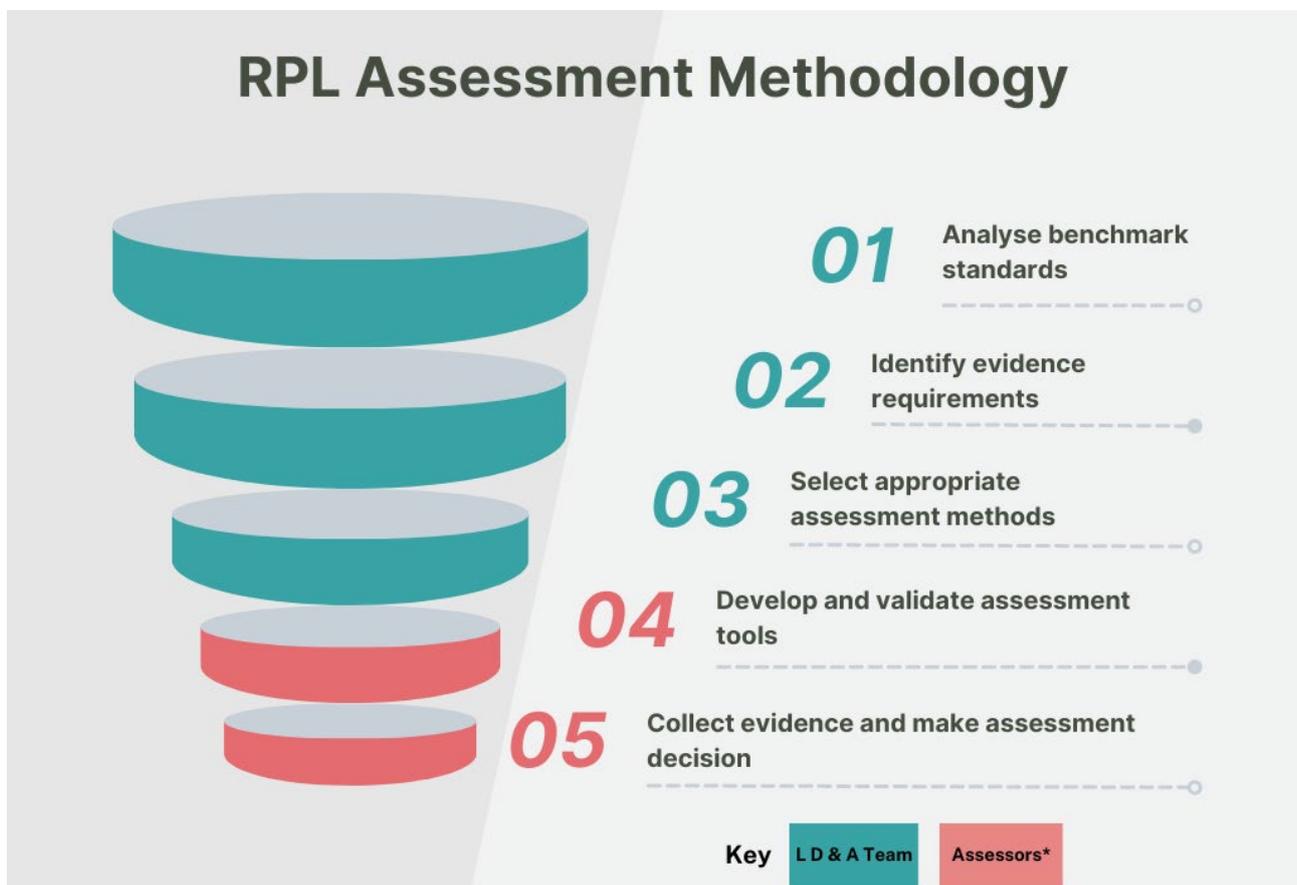
RFS Assessment Methodology

1.3.2. Training and assessment strategies and RPL templates

All RFS courses have Training and Assessment Strategies, which specify how training and assessment will be carried out and include references to each course's corresponding RPL assessment tools to allow assessors to determine RPL assessment outcomes.

The RPL Candidate Application resources are in the relevant Training Resource folder located in the G-drive under Course Masters.

The RPL Candidate Guide contains the following templates:

— RPL Candidate Application
— RPL Document Portfolio
— RPL Third-Party Report.

RPL Templates

— The RPL Candidate Guide is purpose-built to facilitate the effective processing of RPL. Should a member ask for RPL, please provide them with the RPL Candidate Guide and explain that their evidence must correspond with the items listed.
— The RPL Assessor Guide provides assessors with instructions explaining the RPL process, instructions for using it and recommendations for conducting RPL.
— Using the RPL templates ensures that the correct parameters have been set to assess any evidence submitted by the RPL candidate.

02

Evidence portfolio

2. Evidence Portfolio

2.1. Compiling an evidence portfolio

Once considered eligible for RPL, you will be required to compile an evidence portfolio to demonstrate:

1. your knowledge, skills, and experience claims
2. the currency of the competency claims being made
3. the relevance of the evidence to the competency areas of the claims.

It is recommended you provide as much supporting evidence as possible while ensuring it is relevant to the competency areas of the RPL application. Adopt the policy of 'less is more', which is about the quality and relevance of the supporting evidence rather than the quantity.

2.1.1. Relevant qualifications

– Transcript of any relevant qualifications that may have been completed, including:
  – USI VET Transcript
  – Statement of Attainment
  – Certificate or Diploma
  – Degree, Graduate Certificate, Master's Degree, Doctorate.

2.1.2. Supporting documentation

Supporting documentation submitted **must not** be older than two years. Evidence you may add to your portfolio may include, but is not limited to:

– copies of any statements, references or articles about your employment or community involvement
– documents that you may have produced as part of a job/work role, community involvement or previous study that may include, but not be limited to:
  – assignments
  – completed work products
  – awards
– details of professional development activities and participation as relevant to the competencies listed in the RPL application
– letters of validation supporting individuals in their previous job and/or community roles
– any other relevant information an individual believes supports the claims of experience being made.

Important

Before submitting supporting evidence, please check it carefully to ensure it is:

– complete
– referenced to the relevant competency areas — do not leave it to the assessor to make assumptions as it may impact the RPL outcome

– is presented in a logical way for the assessor to follow.

> **Supporting documentation submitted <u>must not</u> be older than two years.**
>
> The supporting documentation listed above should also be signed by a Justice of the Peace (where photocopies are being provided).

2.2. Third-party evidence

Third-party evidence is used to gather and verify information about an individual's experience, work knowledge and skills in a job role/s. Third-party evidence could include:

– information from a supervisor or manager that outlines:
  – how long they have supervised you
  – what your responsibilities were (i.e., list of duties)
  – what skills or competencies you successfully performed while carrying out your duties
  – further contact details of the person providing the report (i.e., phone number or email address)
  – signature of the person providing the report.

> There should be an appropriate balance between third-party evidence and evidence from other sources. Third-party reports must always be verified and followed up on by phone or email.

2.3. Applicant quick reference guide

2.3.1. Steps for RPL success:

– Speak to your BTO or Officer responsible for L&D and discuss your evidence.
– Read the Evidence Summary template for the course applicable to your RPL application and start thinking about the types of evidence you do and do not have (refer to p. 13).
– Start compiling evidence and continue to seek guidance from your BTO, the Officer responsible for L&D or your assigned Assessor Advocate.
– Use the tools in this guide to compile evidence that shows you have current skills.

Make sure your supporting evidence relates to the skills and knowledge that are needed for the qualification!

2.3.2.Strong vs weak evidence

Strong evidence	Weak evidence
– You can give explanations or demonstrations of how to do parts or all of something, and you can answer specific questions	– Assurances you can do it — 'I've been doing it for years', or evidence by exception — 'I must be working safely I've still got all my fingers!'
– References, preferably on letterhead, signed and dated by a member who is competent in the subject matter for which you are seeking recognition	– Personal references with general character comments rather than specific examples of what you have done
– Performance reviews/appraisals relevant to what you are seeking recognition for	– Job descriptions/position descriptions that are not signed off by a supervisor to say you completed all the skills to a suitable level
– Supervisor's reference detailing tasks you performed	– Journals and diary entries not supported by a third party
– Emails and minutes of meetings attended by you that provide proof of work undertaken	– Unauthenticated work samples that you cannot prove are your own work
– Recently produced work samples and proof that you have produced them	– Unauthenticated pictures, videos or photographs of work or products
– Authenticated and dated photographs or videos of work samples in progress	– Old work samples — not current examples
– Evidence that provides a picture of consistent performance over time	– Copy of an organisation's policies and procedures with no evidence of how you applied them
– Evidence from a similar qualification at the same level or higher than you are seeking recognition for, listing skills and knowledge covered in the qualification	– A resume with no other supporting documentation
	– Evidence from a different qualification level (e.g., from a Level 1 when you are seeking a Level 3 qualification)

> **!** If your evidence is weak, but you still feel you have the skills and knowledge to be deemed competent, ask your Officer responsible for L&D for 'assessment on demand'.

03 | Alternative assessment pathways

3. Alternative Assessment Pathways

3.1. Assessment on demand

Where you believe you have the knowledge and skills necessary but lack documented evidence, you can discuss this with the assessor and request 'assessment on demand'.

Assessment on demand allows members to complete the assessments prescribed within the Assessment Guide of the relevant course without taking part in the learning in the lead-up to assessment.

3.2. Direct observation or challenge test

Where an assessor determines there are gaps within a member's RPL evidence, they can discuss with them the option of demonstrating their skills within those areas.

Often, this is in areas where evidence is weak or the assessor needs clarification that the member knows NSW RFS procedure (relevant particularly for members applying for RPL from kindred emergency services agencies).

Direct observation could include:

— arranging to observe a member 'on the job'
— simulating a realistic environment for the member to demonstrate skills
— a challenge test where part of an assessment is undertaken and observed by the assessor.

3.3. Recognition interview

A recognition interview should ideally be performed after the assessor has reviewed all the member's RPL evidence. The recognition interview gives the assessor an opportunity to ask further questions where evidence is weak and discuss items that need clarification.

WATCH IT NOW! Go to the Case Studies section on page 22 and watch a selection of recognition Interviews.

3.3.1. Work samples

Work samples could include:

— reports (i.e., risk management reports, incident reports)
— written plans (i.e., training plans)
— recorded briefings or debriefings.

04 | RPL process

4. RPL Process

All workbooks attached to RFS courses have a section outlining that RPL is available to all members. Trainers and assessors should discuss this workbook section and answer any questions you may have.

4.1. Steps in the RPL process

There are up to seven steps in the RPL process—depending on your specific circumstances—and your assessor will guide you through them.

If at any point you are not sure about the process, we are here to help, so please reach out to your Officer responsible for L&D.

7 STEPS IN THE RPL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This will outline the steps that will take place in the RPL process

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7
					OPTIONAL STEP	
APPLICATION	GET READY	COMPETENCY CONVERSATION	PRACTICAL TASK DEMONSTRATION	THIRD PARTY REPORTING	FILLING GAPS	GET QUALIFIED

The section below provides more details about the steps that will occur in the RPL process. It provides information about your role in the process and what your assessor will do.

STEP 1

APPLICATION

You

- Read this guide.
- Complete the RPL Application Form.
- Use the Document Portfolio to collect examples of "living" documents related to actual work tasks (documents that are in use or have been used) by you.
- Send the form to your Officer responsible for L&D for review.

We

- Send you the application documents to help you decide if you would like to apply for RPL.

STEP 2

GET READY

You

- Review this 'Guide' to go over what is required and reflect on your background and any information you may have provided.

We

- Have an assessor review your application documents.
- Contact you to clarify any information and/or let you know if RPL is right for you.
- Assists with selecting units for RPL and arranges enrolment.
- Helps you plan the next steps.

STEP 3

COMPETENCY CONVERSATION

You

- Have a chat with your assessor about your experience in more detail.
- Describe your existing knowledge and skills and any examples of documents that might be relevant.

Assessor

- Invites you to have a 'competency conversation'. This is like a chat where they will ask you questions about your experience, knowledge, and skills.
- Will use a bank of questions /scenarios and check off your experience against unit requirements.
- If needed, will plan your practical demonstration.

STEP 4

PRACTICAL TASK DEMONSTRATION

You

- If needed, you will show your assessor your skills by 'doing'.
- Will perform the tasks needed to show your assessor your skills.

Assessor

- Will contact you about what they need to see you do, and when and where this will occur.
- Will observe you as you perform the task/s needed, take notes/record this.

STEP 5

THIRD PARTY REPORTING

You

- Provide your assessor with the completed document from a supervisor/workplace representative that can confirm your experience, knowledge, skills.

Assessor

- Provide you with a document that a supervisor/workplace representative can complete.
- Will contact your supervisor/workplace representative to chat about their report.

STEP 6

OPTIONAL STEP

FILLING GAPS

You

- Might do some training to fill in any gaps in your experience.

Assessor

- Will let you know if there are any gaps in your experience/skills/knowledge and what training or additional evidence is required.

STEP 7

GET QUALIFIED

You

- Get Qualified!
- Your RPL Process is finalised.

Assessor

- Assessor will finalise the RPL Process.
- You will be notified of the outcome.
- You will be certified for any relevant units of competency.

4.2. Making assessment decisions based on evidence

Making the assessment decision involves the assessor in making judgements.

Judgement has been defined as:

> *The process of comparing sufficient evidence of participants' achievements with the required performance criteria and making a decision as to whether the necessary competence has been demonstrated.*

4.3. Assessment of evidence stages

Assessing the evidence occurs in two stages:

– comparing the evidence against the criteria for assessment
– making the decision as to whether the necessary competence has been shown.

4.4. Rules of evidence

Your RPL assessor will evaluate your evidence by asking if it is:

Valid:

– Does it relate directly to the unit of competency?
– Does it demonstrate the relevant underpinning skills and knowledge?
– Does it reflect the four dimensions of competency and the key competencies?
– Is it appropriate to the relevant AQF descriptor?

Sufficient:

– Does the evidence address all the critical aspects of evidence identified in the unit of competency?
– Does the evidence address all the requirements of the Evidence Guide, including the specific evidence requirements listed?
– Does the evidence cover the full range of performance identified in the unit?
– Does the evidence show competency over a period of time and in different contexts?
– Does the evidence include different forms of evidence?

Current:

– Does the evidence demonstrate that you can apply the competency in your current work?
– Does the evidence reflect work carried out by you over a period of time? The assessor must be confident that you can still perform to the standard demonstrated by the evidence.

Authentic:

– Is each piece of evidence clearly identifiable as your own work?
– Does the applicant present qualifications, references and licences signed off as a certified copy of the original by a Justice of the Peace?

- Are verbal or written accounts of what you can do supported by actual evidence, such as work examples and products?

4.5. Dimensions of competency

Dimensions of competency relate to performance on the job in a range of conditions.

Task	–	the ability to perform individual tasks
Contingency	–	the ability to cope with unexpected problems in accordance with the appropriate AQF level of response required
Managing	–	the ability to plan and organise a number of different tasks to achieve the goal/outcome
Environment	–	the ability to deal with issues related to the specific work environment
Transfer	–	the ability to adjust or develop the competency to suit new situations
Job/role	–	the ability to deal with the responsibilities and expectations of the work environment.

05 | Case studies

5. Case Study Examples

5.1. Credit transfer — Safe Working on Roofs (SWR)

Kelly has been a member of the State Emergency Service (SES) for 10 years, has recently joined her local NSW RFS brigade and is eager to get out there with her fellow team members. Kelly completed her Safe Working on Roofs qualification with SES within her first few years of service and she's been an active member ever since, regularly attending medium- to large-scale incidents.

Watch video	Safe Working on Roofs (SWR) – Recognition Of Current Competency

https://goo.gl/rmdxgq

5.2. Assessment on demand — Off Road Driving (ORD)

Chelsea holds a medium rigid licence and has been a part of a 4WD club ever since she got her licence five years ago. She partakes in yearly courses with the club and has extensive driving experience across diverse terrains, including the desert, rainforest and water crossings. Chelsea's senior deputy captain has been taking her out in the Cat 1 to practice her Off Road Driving skills, and Chelsea is confident that after a few more lessons, she would like to request an assessment on demand.

Watch video	Off road driving (ORD) – Assessment on demand

https://goo.gl/rmdxgq

5.3. Recognition interview — Breathing Apparatus Operator (BAO)

Troy has been a member of the NSW RFS Helensburg brigade and has worked at a busy station with Fire and Rescue for eight years. Troy is BA qualified in his current paid role and is keen to have the qualification recognised by the RFS.

Watch video	Breathing Apparatus Operator (BAO) – Competency conversations

https://goo.gl/rmdxgq

06 | Appendices

Appendix A — RPL Application Form (Sample Only)

Personal Details

Title	Mr Given Name Tom	Surname	Little
Address	22 Howards Road	Suburb	Browns Creek
State	NSW Postcode 2008	Phone/Mobile	0444 323 213
Email	Tom.little@mail.com.au	Date of Birth	12-10-1980

Do you have any special needs, e.g. disability, language assistance? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, please provide details of the special needs so that we can assist you.

Employment Details

Are you currently employed?	☒ Yes ☐ No	Job Role	Drover
Name of Employer	Outback droving services	Dates of Employment	Jan 2000 - Current
I have attached a CV/Resume/Position Description (please attach if available)	☒ Yes ☐ No		

Relevant Experience and Knowledge in the Industry

(RPL recognises that you may have gained valuable skills and knowledge in paid and unpaid working roles.)

Organisation	Outback droving services	Main Tasks
Job Title	Drover	Stock management
Dates	Jan 2000	
Organisation	Woolworths	Main Tasks
Job Title	Night fill	Packing shelves
Dates	1998 - 2000	

Qualifications and Training (List below any formal or informal training you have undertaken. If formal, list the code/title of the qualification).

Title of the qualification/course	Details about the qualification/course	Year of completion
SIR30207	For an individual to be competent in retail operations and/or supervision with the need to apply discretion and judgement.	1998

USI Number (if you have one) BRZFGRNGT

Please ensure that you attach all relevant documentation to this application, for example:

— CV/Resume/Position Description

— Copies of qualifications and training records and results

— Any other documentation in support of your application

Candidate Name	Tom Little		
Signature	*Tom Little*	Date	22-02-2024

OFFICE USE ONLY			
Received by		Date	
Candidate Suitable for RPL Interview	☐ Yes ☐ No	Date Candidate Notified	
Notes			

Appendix B — RPL Document Portfolio (Sample Only)

Please use this document to collect and record documents provided during the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process.

Candidate Name	Natasha Orange		
Signature	*Natasha Orange*	Date	22-02-2024

OFFICE USE ONLY

Assessor Name	Sandra Golden		
Signature	*Sandra Golden*	Date	30-02-2024

Document number	Document title or brief description The following table provides a guide to recommended documentation in support of a claim for RPL.	Unit of Competency	Is it attached? (If NO, assessor to indicate if sighted)	
1.	**Current CV/Resume** ☒ Links role to relevant unit requirements ☒ Shows relevant industry experience ☒ Evidence of performing as a level 2 Operations Officer	PUAOPE023	☒ Yes	☐ No
2.	**Current Job Description** ☒ Links role to relevant unit requirements ☒ Supports the RPL application ☒ Evidence of determining job requirements for a level 2 Operations Officer	PUAOPE023	☒ Yes	☐ No
3.	**Relevant Qualification** ☐ Is a 'certified' copy ☐ Links to relevant unit requirements ☐ Supports the RPL application	PUAOPE023	☐ Yes	☒ No
4.	**Relevant Certificate** ☐ Is a 'certified' copy ☒ Links to relevant unit requirements ☒ Supports the RPL application	PUAOPE023	☒ Yes	☐ No
5.	**Statement of Attendance** (professional development that aligns with units of competency) ☐ Is a 'certified' copy ☐ Links to relevant unit requirements ☒ Supports the RPL application	PUAOPE023	☒ Yes	☐ No

6.	**Policies or Procedures** ☒ Policies or Procedures related to performing Incident Management tasks ☒ Policies or Procedures related to legislative requirements	PUAOPE023	☒ Yes	☐ No
7.	**Establish command and develop operational structure** ☒ Evidence of you obtaining an initial briefing from the Incident Controller and confirming the Incident Controllers intent ☒ Evidence of you establishing a command of operations function to achieve objectives and tasks, in accordance with the requirements of a Level 2 incident ☒ Evidence of you applying the principles of span of control and management of objectives to operational resources ☒ Evidence of you accounting for geographic and functional requirements when delineating sectors ☒ Evidence of you forming strike teams, task forces or units from allocated resources ☒ Evidence of you allocating incident management team roles and responsibilities	PUAOPE023	☒ Yes	☐ No
8.	**Contribute to development of the Incident Action Plan** ☒ Evidence of you monitoring and reviewing the Incident Action Plan (IAP) during the operational period ☒ Evidence of you providing input to the incident objectives and operational strategies ☒ Evidence of you developing the operations component of the IAP and complementary plans, in accordance with organisational policies, procedures, safe work practices, industrial awards and agreement ☒Evidence of you establishing and documenting the need for logistical support	PUAOPE023	☒ Yes	☐ No

Appendix C — RPL Third-Party Report

THIRD-PARTY EVIDENCE	
Unit of Competency	
Third-party name (Person providing this evidence)	
I am aware of the requirements for completing this report and confirm that I am willing to take part in the process of obtaining evidence.	☐ Yes ☐ No
Organisation	
Email	
Phone number.	
Qualifications List any qualifications that you hold that relate to the industry, workplace tasks or units listed.	
Experience Outline your experience describing your ability to verify the requirement.	
Candidate Name (Person you are reporting on)	
Relationship to Candidate (e.g., supervisor, line manager)	

Workplace Task Criteria - Comment on the knowledge and skills of the Candidate in relation to the workplace task/behaviour.

(tick the correct response where yes = performed to required standard on a regular basis; no = did not yet perform to required standard on a regular basis).

1. Establish command and develop operational structure	☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Contribute to development of the Incident Action Plan	☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Manage operations	☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Establish communications	☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Participate in Incident Management Team	☐ Yes ☐ No

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