



## **‘Say What You Are’ Occupation Reporting Guide – 2026 Census Queensland Water Industry Edition**

### **1. Introduction**

The **2026 Census** collects information about employment to help governments, industries and communities understand Australia’s workforce and plan services for the future.

The Census asks people about their employment, including:

- **Q42 – What is the person’s occupation?**
- **Q43 – What are the main tasks that the person usually performs in that occupation?**
- **Q45 – What best describes the industry or business of the employer?**
- **Q46 – What are the main goods produced or services provided by the employer’s business?**

These responses are used to classify jobs into Australia’s official occupation classification system. How water professionals describe their work directly affects how the water sector appears in national workforce statistics.

Clear, specific descriptions help ensure the water industry is accurately represented.

### **Why Accurate Occupation Reporting Matters**

Accurate Census responses help:

- identify **skills shortages**
- support **training investment**
- improve **workforce planning**

- strengthen **sector advocacy**
- inform **government policy and funding**.

Small wording differences can significantly influence how occupations are classified.

For example:

Operator → **Water Treatment Plant Operator**

Manager → **Water Infrastructure Asset Manager**

## 2. Recommended Job Titles

### Aligned to ABS Occupation Classifications.

The Census requires a full occupation title, not a generic label. Below are recommended water industry job titles aligned to typical ABS occupation groupings.

Generic Title	Recommended Water Industry Title	Likely Skill Group
Operator	Water Treatment Plant Operator	Technicians & Trades Workers
Operator	Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator	Technicians & Trades Workers
Operator	Water Network Operator	Technicians & Trades Workers
Technician	Water Network Maintenance Technician	Technicians & Trades Workers
Engineer	Water Process Engineer	Professionals
Manager	Water Infrastructure Asset Manager	Managers
Analyst	Water Quality Data Analyst	Professionals
Supervisor	Wastewater Operations Supervisor	Technicians
IT Officer	Water Utility Systems Administrator	ICT Professionals
Compliance Officer	Water Regulatory Compliance Officer	Professionals

### Avoid Generic Titles

Avoid writing only:

- Operator
- Manager
- Technician
- Supervisor
- Worker

These titles are too broad and may lead to inaccurate occupation classification.

### 3. Water Industry Case Studies

These examples show how water sector professionals can respond clearly to the Census employment questions.

#### Case Study 1 – Water Treatment Plant Operator

##### Scenario

An employee works at a council water treatment plant responsible for ensuring safe drinking water production.

##### Recommended Census Response

##### Occupation (Q42)

Water Treatment Plant Operator

##### Main Tasks (Q43)

Operate and monitor water treatment processes, conduct water quality testing, maintain treatment equipment and ensure compliance with drinking water standards.

##### Industry (Q45)

Water Supply and Sewerage Services

##### Goods / Services (Q46)

Provision of treated drinking water and operation of municipal water treatment facilities.

#### Case Study 2 – Water Network Maintenance Technician

##### Scenario

A council technician works across the water distribution network maintaining pipelines and responding to network faults.

##### Recommended Census Response

##### Occupation

Water Network Maintenance Technician

##### Main Tasks

Inspect and maintain water pipelines, repair leaks, service valves and hydrants and respond to water supply faults.

##### Industry

Water Supply and Sewerage Service

## **Goods / Services**

Operation and maintenance of municipal water distribution infrastructure.

## **Case Study 3 – Multi-Role Council Worker**

### **Scenario**

In smaller regional councils, employees often perform multiple operational roles.

For example, a worker may:

- operate water treatment plants
- drive rubbish collection trucks
- mow parks and roadside areas
- assist with general council maintenance.

### **Recommended Approach**

The Census asks about **the main job and main tasks usually performed**, so responses should reflect the **primary function of the role**.

If the worker's main responsibility is water treatment operations:

#### **Occupation**

Water Treatment Plant Operator

#### **Main Tasks**

Operate and monitor water treatment processes, conduct water quality testing and maintain plant equipment. Secondary duties include operating waste collection vehicles and undertaking council maintenance activities.

#### **Industry**

Water Supply and Sewerage Services

#### **Goods / Services**

Provision of drinking water and wastewater services.

### **Alternative Approach – Evenly Split Duties**

If duties are evenly shared:

#### **Occupation**

Council Works Operator (Water and Waste Services)

#### **Main Tasks**

Operate water treatment facilities, drive waste collection vehicles and undertake general council infrastructure maintenance.

## Key Principle

When workers perform multiple roles:

- 1) Identify **the primary function**
- 2) Use an **occupation title reflecting that function**
- 3) Describe additional duties in the **task description**

## 4. Writing Effective Task Descriptions

The Census instructions ask respondents to “**give full details**” when describing tasks.

Strong task descriptions include:

- systems operated
- infrastructure managed
- technical processes undertaken
- regulatory responsibilities
- operational activities.

### Strong Task Writing Formula:

**Action + System/Asset + Purpose**

Example:

Monitor **SCADA** systems to optimise treatment performance and ensure compliance with drinking water quality standards.

## 5. Best-Practice Reporting Guidance

### DO

- ✓ Use a full occupation title
- ✓ Include “Water” or “Wastewater”
- ✓ Describe tasks clearly
- ✓ Focus on the primary role
- ✓ Describe the industry clearly

## **DON'T**

- X Use internal job codes
- X Write only “Manager” or “Operator”
- X Leave task descriptions vague
- X List only the employer’s name
- X Assume the Census will infer technical detail

## **6. Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q1. My internal job title is different. What should I write?**

Use a title that reflects your **main duties**.

Example:

“Level 3 Technical Officer” →

**Water Network Maintenance Technician**

### **Q2. I manage multiple functions. What should I focus on?**

Describe the **primary function you manage**.

Example:

**Water Infrastructure Asset Manager**

### **Q3. I work in IT for a water utility. What should I write?**

Example:

**Water Utility Systems Administrator**

Describe systems supported, such as operational or billing systems.

### **Q4. I work from multiple sites. Does that matter?**

No. Occupation relates to the **function you perform**, not your location.

### **Q5. I run my own water services business. What should I write?**

Describe:

- your occupation
- your business type
- the services you provide.

## 7. Quick Reference

### Top 10 Water Industry Occupation Titles

For Census responses, these titles are recommended:

- 1) Water Treatment Plant Operator
- 2) Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator
- 3) Water Network Operator
- 4) Water Network Maintenance Technician
- 5) Water Process Engineer
- 6) Wastewater Operations Supervisor
- 7) Water Infrastructure Asset Manager
- 8) Water Quality Data Analyst
- 9) Water Regulatory Compliance Officer
- 10) Water Utility Systems Administrator

### Choosing the Right Occupation Title

Ask yourself:

- 1) What task do I spend most time doing?
- 2) What system or infrastructure do I work with?
- 3) What service does my work support?

Your occupation title should reflect those answers.

## 8. Closing Message

By clearly describing what you do, you help ensure Queensland's water workforce is accurately represented in national statistics. Small improvements in wording can significantly improve classification accuracy.