



8 August 2024

Statistics New Zealand

By email: occupations@stats.govt.nz

Tēnā koe

RE THE FUTURE OF OCCUPATION CLASSIFICATIONS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND CONSULTATION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on Statistics New Zealand's consultation on the future of occupation classifications in Aotearoa New Zealand. Engineering New Zealand (formerly IPENZ) is the largest professional body for engineers in New Zealand. We support over 23,000 engineers in shaping a better New Zealand. This submission reflects the views of Engineering New Zealand. We have encouraged our members to provide their own submissions on topics that pertain to their specific interests or areas of expertise.

Our response

Engineering New Zealand welcomes Statistics New Zealand's commitment to improving New Zealand's occupational classification system. Our submission provides high-level comments, focussing on the needs of engineers in New Zealand.

A robust classification system is important for accurately identifying and responding to the needs of the engineering workforce in New Zealand. We acknowledge that this information is used for many purposes, however the focus of our submission is on opportunities to further tighten the classification system to ensure it provides the most up to date and precise picture of the engineering workforce. There is currently a skills shortage within the engineering profession and accurate and up to date information is essential for us to understand and help address this situation. We also touch on alignment with Australia.

Clearer and more distinct occupational classification categories are needed

The broad use of the title "engineer" in ANZSCO is an issue. Currently, this allows anyone to claim the title, including tradespeople with licenses and certificates who do not have a Washington¹, Sydney² or Dublin³ Accord accredited degree. Consequently, when census data is collected, many individuals self-identify under engineering codes regardless of their qualifications, leading to

¹ Washington Accord is an international agreement between bodies responsible for accrediting engineering degree programmes. <https://www.internationalengineeringalliance.org/accords/washington>

² Sydney Accord is an international agreement between bodies responsible for accrediting engineering technology academic programmes. <https://www.internationalengineeringalliance.org/accords/sydney>

³ Dublin Accord is an international agreement establishing the required educational base for engineering technicians. <https://www.internationalengineeringalliance.org/accords/dublin>

inaccurate counts on the amount engineers New Zealand has. This makes it impossible to determine the actual number of qualified engineers in New Zealand, both domestically trained and from overseas, making efforts more difficult to assess the extent of skills shortages and address diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues.

The unclear nature of the current occupational classification codes becomes apparent when looking at the reported number of mechanical and civil engineers reported in the 2013 and 2018 censuses. Between these periods, we understand anecdotally that census results indicate that the number of mechanical engineers increased in the region from 3,800 to 12,200 and civil engineers from 4,300 to 8,400. We assume this increase reflects a growing trend of individuals from non-engineering professions – such as trades and machine operators– self-identifying as engineers.

This blurring of distinctions between engineers and tradespeople does not help with our understanding of the true engineering workforce landscape in New Zealand. As such, we recommend that Statistics New Zealand develop clearer and more distinct categories to help individuals select the most appropriate codes for their qualifications and roles. If these distinctions are addressed, we can better understand the engineering workforce landscape and allow for more targeted interventions to mitigate skills shortages and better advocate for DEI issues in the profession.

Alignment with Australia

While some alignment with Australia’s classification system might offer benefits, we agree with your sentiment that it is not essential to remain jointed due to the distinct nature of our workforce landscapes. For these reasons, we are inclined to support option 1. New Zealand faces distinct challenges and opportunities in its engineering sector, such as specific environmental considerations and infrastructure needs. An independent, flexible classification system would allow for these nuances to be captured quickly, as well as account for emerging technologies and evolving roles in New Zealand’s engineering landscape. Prioritising adaptability will better represent New Zealand’s workforce and help address contextual issues.

Conclusion

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to Statistics New Zealand’s consultation on the future of occupational classifications in Aotearoa New Zealand. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Nāku, nā



Richard Templer

Chief Executive