Newsletter for the Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Industry

July 2025

ISSUE 77

COOLCHANGE

In this issue

Federal budget 2025-26: Support for apprentices and employers

From 1 July 2025, the Australian Government is introducing expanded support for apprentices and their employers as part of the 2025–26 Federal Budget.

These initiatives aim to ease cost-of-living pressures and strengthen the skilled trades workforce, including in Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (RAC). Key measures include:

- **Extension of support payments**
  The Australian Apprentice Training Support Payment and Priority Hiring Incentive will continue through to 31 December 2025, offering financial stability for apprentices in priority trades and ongoing support for employers.

- **Increased Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHA)**
  To help apprentices who relocate for work, the LAFHA will increase significantly:
  - **1st Year:** from **$77.17** ➜ **$120/week**
  - **2nd Year:** from **$38.59** ➜ **$90/week**
  - **3rd Year:** from **$25.00** ➜ **$45/week**

  These rates will be indexed annually, ensuring they keep pace with inflation.

- **Increased disability wage support**
  Employers hiring apprentices with disability will now receive **$216.07/week**, up from **$104.30**. This payment will also be indexed annually to maintain its real value.

- **Permanent free TAFE**
  From January 2027, 100,000 free TAFE places will be funded annually, helping students access vocational training without tuition costs. This builds on nearly 600,000 enrolments since 2023.

These measures collectively aim to bolster the RAC workforce by providing financial support to apprentices and employers, ensuring the development of skilled technicians essential for Australia's infrastructure and environmental goals.

Future skills a hot topic according to survey

Earlier this year, 760 permit holders and other industry stakeholders provided feedback through the Department's survey on the permit scheme.

This included insights on skills needed to support the government's phasedown of HFCs and keep up with emerging refrigerants and technologies.

Here are some key takeaways:

- 55% of respondents feel current qualifications are appropriate for licence categories, while 38.5% feel they aren't (or only partly).
- 24% believe existing training courses could better address emerging equipment such as heat pumps.
- The most common barriers for seeking training are access or availability of training, cost, and time off the tools.

Hazardous refrigerants respondents had worked with:

	Responses	Result %
Low or mildly flammable refrigerants (e.g. R32, HFO)	378	48.5%
Highly flammable refrigerants (e.g. hydrocarbons)	228	29.2%
High pressure r efrigerants (e.g. CO_2)	106	13.6%
Toxic refrigerants (e.g. Ammonia)	68	8.7%

Many of you provided really helpful comments, including on:

- Adequacy of qualifications
- Elective vs core units of competency
- Need to improve awareness about alternative refrigerants
- Refresher courses, and the benefits of hands-on experience and online training
- Industry standards, procedures and information for using alternative refrigerants.

The ARC and the Department have used the survey responses and information that respondents provided when working with Jobs and Skills Councils to ensure qualifications give our trainees the right skills for the future. Together with reps from training colleges and industry, we have participated in technical advisory groups, workshops and reviews of training products to ensure that your feedback to us gets heard by those making decisions about our sector.

Recently, the Department raised with three Jobs and Skills Councils on the need to strengthen training on awareness and safe use of alternative refrigerants, to support the government's phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons.

In May 2025, Powering Skills Organisation announced it would **review the full UEE electrotechnology training package**, including air conditioning and refrigeration certificates II and III, with a focus on alternative refrigerants.

If you want to be involved, you can subscribe to updates or provide feedback here, or register for the UEE-HVAC-R technical advisory group.

Reminder: New cooling rules start 1 July 2025

From 1 July 2025, Australia will enforce new regulations banning the import and manufacture of small multi-head split air conditioning systems that use high global warming potential (GWP) hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

This is the next step in phasing out climate-damaging refrigerants under the *Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989*.

The ban targets systems with a refrigerant charge of 2.6 kg or less and a GWP over 750, including units not pre-charged at import. It applies to outdoor units for multi-head systems, including variable refrigerant flow (VRF) systems, used for indoor comfort cooling or heating.

This builds on earlier bans covering single-head split systems, portable units, and window/wall air conditioners. Most compliant systems now use R32 (GWP 675) or R-290 (propane, GWP 3). What businesses should do now:

- Check what refrigerants their systems use
- Update equipment plans,
- Switch to approved alternatives.

Failing to follow the rules can lead to serious penalties, including fines and licence suspensions.

These changes support Australia's commitment to the Montreal Protocol and a cleaner, cooler future. For guidance or to report concerns, contact **ozonereporting@dcceew.gov.au.**

Natalie Churn from DCCEEW.

ARC Field Officers join World Refrigeration Day tour at Woolworths

ARC field officers recently joined the World Refrigeration Day (WRD) tours on 26th July at Woolworths, alongside representatives from DCCEEW, to explore the supermarket chain's transition to natural refrigerants.

The visit included a walkthrough of Woolworths' CO_2-based refrigeration plant, which is part of a nationwide upgrade to replace hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) with carbon dioxide, a refrigerant with significantly lower global warming potential.

The tour offered a valuable opportunity for field officers to engage directly with the technology and its application in commercial settings. It also highlighted the growing need for technicians skilled in working with these more complex systems, particularly in regional and remote areas.

Woolworths is not only improving the energy efficiency of its food refrigeration systems but also uses the CO_2 refrigeration systems for store heating and cooling, where possible. The shift reflects a broader industry trend toward sustainable and integrated HVAC&R solutions.

Technicians are encouraged to attend future WRD events, which are free and provide hands-on insights into emerging technologies and best practices in refrigeration and air conditioning.

ARC Chair Dr Greg Picker highlights developments in refrigerant issues at AutoCare 2025

At AutoCare 2025, held on 20 June, Australian Refrigeration Council (ARC) Chair Dr Greg Picker delivered a compelling presentation on the shifting landscape of refrigerant use and potential regulation.

With climate action gaining momentum globally, Dr Picker emphasised the vital role of regulatory change on new technologies and licensing in upholding safety, environmental responsibility, and industry professionalism.

A theme of the session was the future of the ARCTick licence, particularly in relation to mobile air conditioning (MAC) systems. With the ARCTick licencing scheme potentially phasing down over the next ten years as regulated substances are reduced and the sector transitions towards alternatives, Dr Picker emphasised that the scheme continues to play an important role in the changing MAC refrigerant context. He highlighted the increasing complexity of refrigeration systems in electric vehicles and the environmental and safety risks associated with refrigerants such as R1234yf.

Dr Picker underscored that a trained and licensed workforce is essential to ensure the safe handling and installation of refrigerants, especially as technologies evolve. The ARCTick licence remains a cornerstone of industry regulation, and its future will likely be shaped by the collective voice of the sector.

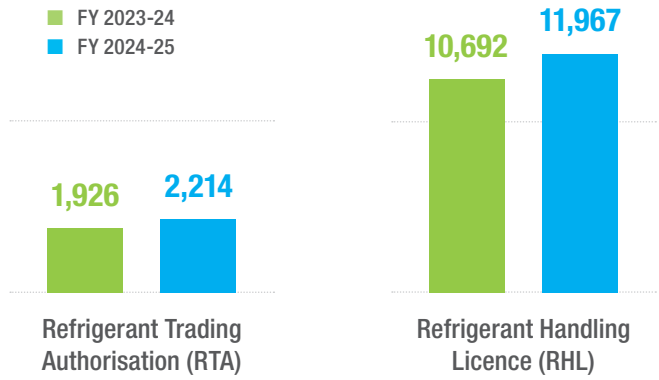
The briefing reaffirmed ARC's commitment to supporting a skilled, responsible, and future-ready refrigeration workforce.

BY THE NUMBERS

ARC Licence Scheme: FY 2024-25 in review

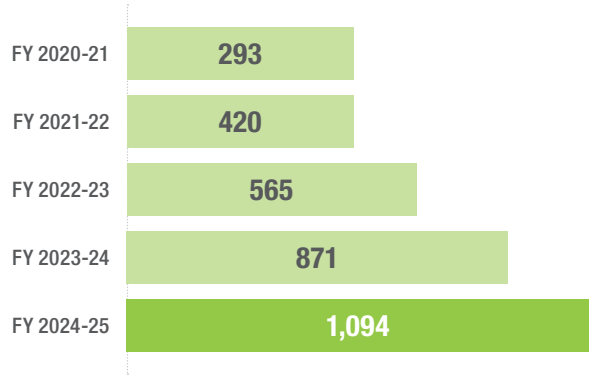
Permit Numbers

▲ 288 RTA
▲ 1,275 RHL
increase in permit numbers

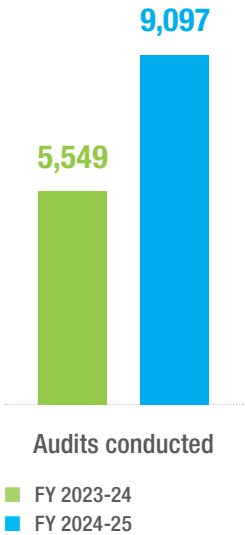


Current Licence Trends

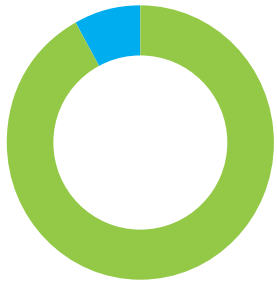
Growth of
Female
licence holders over the past 5 years



Field Engagement



92%
compliant within 90 days (FY 2024-25)



Summer Campaign

'Look for the tick' website visits achieve an all time high!

136K
website visits

13K
RHL licence checks

18K
authorised business searches

'Look for the tick' search function use

Scan the QR code to find out more

Carmelo Raiti

With 11 years of experience at the ARC, Carmelo Raiti serves as a Field Officer in New South Wales, drawing on his extensive background in the refrigeration industry.

Before joining the ARC, Carmelo worked as a Commercial Refrigeration Mechanic, HVAC Technician, and Service Manager.

He explains, "Having worked in the industry, I am able to provide advice and guidance on how to be compliant and answer questions regarding Codes of Practice, the Regulations, and Act." His expertise also helps him provide industry insights, offering "new ways to do things" and ensuring that RTA holders get the best advice.

Over the years, Carmelo has seen the industry evolve, particularly in its focus on environmental responsibility. "RTAs and refrigerant handlers are more aware of the environmental impact their actions and use of refrigerants can have," he says. He's proud of the industry's progress, adding, "The ARC has also played a role in educating the consumer and ensuring that they engage the services of appropriately licensed people."

Carmelo has also observed the increasing participation of women in the industry. He views this shift positively, noting, "The women who have joined the industry are paving the way for others and are role models for women thinking of joining."

What motivates Carmelo is the desire to ensure compliance and make a lasting impact. As he puts it, "It is important to look after the environment to ensure that future generations have a world they can enjoy and live in." He enjoys guiding professionals through audits and helping them understand compliance, adding that success in the industry is a "collaboration between the ARC and everyone in the industry."

Reclaim cylinders vs Pumpdown cylinders – the difference

FROM THE FIELD

When handling refrigerants, it's important to understand the different types of recovery cylinders, such as reclaim and pumpdown cylinders, and their specific roles in safe and compliant storage.

Reclaim cylinders are used for the sole purpose of returning used and/or contaminated refrigerant for disposal. Reclaim cylinders are not guaranteed to be clean and should not be used where the refrigerant is intended to be put back into a system. After reclaiming refrigerant from an air conditioning or refrigeration system, return the cylinder to your wholesaler. Under the Refrigerant Reclaim Australia (RRA) scheme, you'll receive a credit for each kilogram of recovered refrigerant. Note that your quarterly records should include the amount of refrigerant returned to the wholesaler for destruction.

Pumpdown cylinders are guaranteed to be internally clean. A pump-down cylinder is used for temporarily storing refrigerant recovered during system servicing or repairs. The same refrigerant can then be returned to the system. *The Australia and New Zealand Refrigerant Handling Code of Practice 2025* states in section 12 Refrigerant recovery, recycling, reclamation and disposal:

Clause 12.1 General

- Flammable scheduled refrigerants must be recovered into appropriately labelled cylinders.
- Flammable refrigerants must be recovered using equipment rated for use with the appropriate flammability grade (2, 2L or 3).
- Refrigerant cylinders used must be designed for the refrigerant in use.

Clause 12.2.3 Recovery Cylinders

- Cylinders used for recovery must conform with AS 4484, AS 2030.1 and AS/NZS 1200.
- Refrigerant must not be recovered into an out-of-date recovery cylinder, i.e. the current date must not be later than the expiry date of the most recent test station stamp on the cylinder.
- The designed maximum safe working pressure of a refrigerant cylinder determined in accordance with AS 2030.5 must not be exceeded in any filling operation, no matter how temporary.
- Cylinders must only be used within the application for which they are designed. The recovery cylinder must be appropriate for the refrigerant being recovered.
- A2/A2L refrigerant must be recovered into A2/A2L specific cylinders with the correct design pressure ratings.

The Australian Automotive Code of Practice 2008 states in section A.6 Recovery, recycling and re-gas equipment:

Clause A6.9

Cylinders containing reclaimed refrigerant must be clearly marked, either:

- 'Reclaimed; non-contaminated - safe for re-use', or
- 'Reclaimed contaminated; not to be re-used' and must be returned to an authorised refrigerant supplier for disposal.

Clause A.6.10

Extreme care must be taken to ensure the refrigerant recovery cylinders are not filled to beyond 80% capacity. Any cylinder used for recovery should incorporate a device that automatically shuts down the recovery equipment to prevent the cylinder from overfilling. It is recommended these inbuilt devices be checked regularly for accuracy.

ARC presents new Code of Practice at RefCon 2025

At AIRAH's RefCon 2025, representatives from the ARC, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and AIRAH came together to present the updated **Australian and New Zealand Refrigerant Handling Codes of Practice 2025**.

The session focused on the revision process of these important codes, driven by an evolving industry landscape and new environmental standards. The panel discussed the technical review and stakeholder consultation process and highlighted key issues raised in the public comment draft.

RefCon 2025 brought together global experts to discuss the latest trends, challenges, and innovations shaping the future of refrigeration. The ARC's participation underscored our ongoing commitment to supporting industry professionals and promoting a safe, sustainable, and compliant HVAC&R sector.

ARC attends FMA net zero summit

The ARC's Chief Operating Officer, Susie O'Neill, attended the 2025 FMA Net Zero Summit in Melbourne, which brought together professionals from the facilities management and climate sectors.

The event highlighted the growing impact of climate-related financial disclosure requirements, expected to directly affect more than 6,000 businesses and many more through supply chains. Discussions explored the implications for the HVAC&R sector, including increased equipment demand, reduced lifespan, and rising maintenance costs.

Speakers also addressed embodied carbon, with Grimshaw Architects and NABERS sharing strategies for regenerative design and decarbonisation. Innovations in indoor air quality were showcased by Steril-Aire, while AG Coombes presented a successful electrification retrofit of 101 Collins Street in Melbourne, achieving a 15% reduction in energy use. The summit underscored the significant role and opportunity for the RAC sector in driving climate innovation and supporting Australia's transition to net zero.

What's on

27-28 August 2025

ARBSQLD - ARBS

BCEC, Brisbane. Watch over 90 exhibitors, as they showcase the latest products, connect with the ARC and other industry leaders including, and discover new and innovative solutions in heating, ventilation, air conditioning, refrigeration and building services. Details at **https://www.arbs.com.au/arbsqld/**.

29 August 2025

REDARC Factory Tour, Training Session and ARC Awards Dinner

REDARC, Adelaide. Join REDARC managing director Anthony Kittel for an exclusive tour of Australian advanced manufacturing at its best, a training session facilitated by VASA, networking and dinner, and annual Australian Refrigeration Council Award for Refrigerant Management (mobile sector). Details at **https://vasa.org.au/book-online/redarc2025/**.

10 September – 5 November 2025

AIRAH Apprentice Awards

WA – 10 September **| NSW –** 18 September **| QLD** – 2 October
VIC – 30 October **| SA –** 5 November

AIRAH is celebrating Australia's top apprentices and recognising industry leaders at its Member and Apprentice Awards. Details at **https://awards.airah.org.au/events/**.

8 October 2025

RWTA Brisbane Networking Drinks – RWTA

Queensland Cricketers Club, Brisbane, QLD. Join RWTA networking evening in Brisbane to mingle, unwind, and enjoy a great evening of networking with colleagues. Details at **https://www.rwta.com.au/events-source/brisbane-networking-function-8oct25**.