

Recovery Vehicle Safety

Business Name:		ABN:
Business Address:		
Contact Person:	Phone:	Email:

THIS RISK ASSESSMENT IS APPROVED BY THE PCBU ON THIS PROJECT

Under the Work Health and Safety Regulation (WHS Regulation), a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) is required to ensure that a RISK ASSESSMENT is prepared before the proposed work starts.

Full Name:		
Signature:	Title:	Date:

CLIENT OR PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR DETAILS

Client:	SCOPE OF WORKS
Project Name:	
Project Address:	
Project Manager:	
Contact Phone:	
Date Risk Assessment supplied to Project Manager:	

SAMPLE

RISK MATRIX									
LIKELIHOOD	INSIGNIFICANT	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	CATASTROPHIC	SCORE	ACTION	HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS	
ALMOST CERTAIN	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE			<b>Elimination</b> Remove the hazard.	
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEED	<b>Substitution</b> Replace the hazard.	
POSSIBLE	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	3H HIGH	Review before work starts.	Isolation Isolate People from the hazard	
UNLIKELY	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	2M MODERATE	Ensure control measures in place.	<b>Engineering</b> Isolate the hazard	
RARE	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	1L LOW	Monitor and keep records.	Administrative Change	
								PPE	

  

Risk Rating & Required Action:	
<b>4A</b>	Stop work. The risk is intolerable. Eliminate the hazard or redesign the activity before proceeding. A Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) or higher-level authorisation is required.
<b>3H</b>	Review and approve additional controls for the task parts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.
<b>2M</b>	Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.
<b>1L</b>	Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.

  

Consequence Scale:			
Consequence	People (injury/illness)	Project / Assets	Compliance / Reputation
<b>Catastrophic</b>	Fatality or permanent total disability	project shutdown	Significant regulator intervention; criminal prosecution
<b>Major</b>	Serious injury/illness (hospital > 5 days)	critical delay	Improvement notice; major media coverage
<b>Moderate</b>	Medical-treatment injury; lost-time > 1 day	moderate delay	Minor breach; adverse client comment
<b>Minor</b>	First-aid only, no lost time	negligible delay	Isolated non-conformance
<b>Insignificant</b>	No injury	no schedule impact	Deviation caught and corrected on site

  

**Notes on Hierarchy of Controls:**  
Remember to apply controls in the preferred order shown by the coloured pyramid:

1. **Eliminate**
2. **Substitute**
3. **Isolate**
4. **Engineering**
5. **Administrative**
6. **PPE**

Always document **why** a lower-order control is accepted if elimination or substitution is not reasonably practicable.

*aligned with Safe Work Australia's Managing the risk of fatigue at work (2023) and ISO 45001:2018 clauses 6–8.*

JOB STEP	POTENTIAL HAZARDS	IR	CONTROL MEASURES	RR
SPECIFIC WORK STEPS	HAZARDS THAT MAY ARISE	INITIAL RISK	SPECIFIC MEASURES TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO ELIMINATE OR CONTROL THE RISKS	RESIDUAL RISK
1. Governance, WHS Leadership & Legal Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of formal WHS governance for recovery vehicle operations</li> <li>Inadequate understanding of duties under WHS Act 2011 and WHS Regulation</li> <li>No clear accountability for WHS performance in recovery operations</li> <li>Failure to consult workers and other PCBUs involved in multi-PCBU recovery tasks</li> <li>Poor integration of vehicle recovery risks into overall organisational WHS management system</li> <li>Insufficient resourcing for safe plant, training, supervision and maintenance</li> <li>Inadequate monitoring of legal changes, Australian Standards and industry guidance</li> <li>Failure to enforce mandatory reporting, incident notification and corrective action processes</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a documented WHS management system that specifically covers vehicle recovery and roadside assistance operations, aligned with WHS Act 2011 and WHS Regulations</li> <li>Assign a senior manager as accountable officer for recovery vehicle safety, with clear KPIs and reporting lines</li> <li>Develop a legal compliance register including WHS legislation, Road Rules, Heavy Vehicle National Law (where applicable), and relevant Australian Standards (e.g. AS 2550, AS 1418, AS 4142, AS 1657, AS/NZS 4024 series)</li> <li>Implement a formal consultation network with recovery operators, mechanics and supervisors (toolbox talks, HSRs, WHS committees) for changes, compliant, procedures and technology</li> <li>Embed vehicle recovery risks into the organisation's WHS risk register, with scheduled review dates and executive sign-off</li> <li>Ensure appropriate budget allocation for compliant recovery vehicles, lifting and winching equipment, training, PPE and engineering controls</li> <li>Develop and enforce policies for shared duties with other PCBUs (e.g. tow contractors, bus operators, road authorities), including written WHS coordination and cooperation agreements</li> <li>Implement a legal and standards update process (e.g. annual review by WHS advisor) and update policies, procedures and training accordingly</li> </ul>	3H
2. Vehicle & Recovery Equipment Procurement and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procurement of recovery vehicles not fit for purpose for heavy, bogged, wedged or precariously positioned vehicles</li> <li>Inadequate design capacity of cranes, winches, tow frames and anchorage points for bus and heavy vehicle recovery</li> <li>Lack of rollover and crash protection features for recovery trucks operating on roadsides and uneven terrain</li> <li>Insufficient allowance for load restraint systems for damaged or disabled vehicles</li> <li>Poor ergonomics leading to manual handling and overreach when accessing winches and rigging gear</li> <li>Absence of engineered solutions for common tasks (e.g. snatch blocks, ground anchors, stabiliser legs, tilt trays)</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a formal procurement specification for recovery vehicles and equipment based on risk assessment, manufacturer guidance, and relevant Australian Standards for lifting, towing and winching</li> <li>Ensure recovery trucks are engineered and certified for intended loads (e.g. buses, coaches, heavy commercial vehicles, 4WDs) including safety factors for winching from mud, ditches and steep inclines</li> <li>Specify vehicles with modern safety features (e.g. ANCAP 5-star cab where available, ESC, rollover protection, airbags, reversing cameras, proximity sensors, work lights and beacon bars)</li> <li>Ensure all winches, cranes, tilt trays and tow systems comply with applicable Australian Standards and are supplied with design drawings, load charts and certificates of compliance</li> <li>Include stabiliser legs, outriggers and integrated anchoring systems to control vehicle movement during winching and lifting in precarious environments</li> <li>Design vehicle layouts to minimise manual handling and overreach, including slide-out storage, swing-down racks and mechanical aids for heavy recovery gear</li> <li>Standardise approved brands and models of chains, strops, slings, shackles, snatch blocks and ground anchors to ensure compatibility and rated capacity</li> <li>Provide dedicated, labelled storage compartments for rigging gear, with separation of damaged or quarantined equipment to prevent inadvertent use</li> </ul>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of non-compliant or sub-standard aftermarket recovery equipment</li> <li>• Inadequate provision for storage and segregation of recovery chains, slings, strops, hooks and shackles</li> </ul>			
3. Asset Management, Inspection & Maintenance Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate preventive maintenance of recovery trucks, winches, cranes and hydraulic systems</li> <li>• Failure of winch cables, ropes, chains or hooks due to unnoticed wear or damage</li> <li>• Hydraulic leaks or failures causing uncontrolled movement during lifting or winching</li> <li>• Unserviceable braking, steering, tyres or suspension on recovery vehicles</li> <li>• Lack of traceability for inspection status of rigging gear and lifting accessories</li> <li>• Informal repair practices leading to non-compliant modifications on tow assemblies and anchor points</li> <li>• No system to immediately remove defective plant and rigging from service</li> <li>• Poor record-keeping of maintenance, inspections and certifications</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a formal asset management program for all recovery vehicles and associated equipment, including OEM-specific service intervals and regulatory requirements</li> <li>• Develop detailed inspection schedules for winches, wire ropes, synthetic ropes, chains, shackles, lifting beams, spreader bars and tow frames with frequencies based on usage and risk</li> <li>• Use digital maintenance management system to track service intervals, defects, repairs, certifications and other service issues for each asset</li> <li>• Ensure precise inspection checklists are mandatory for drivers and operators, supported by a mobile app or paper system with escalation pathways for defects</li> <li>• Engage competent persons to perform periodic thorough examinations and load testing of cranes, winches and lifting systems in accordance with relevant Australian Standards</li> <li>• Standardise tagging and colour-coding of rigging gear to show inspection status, SWL/WLL and next use date</li> <li>• Develop and enforce procedures for isolating, tagging-out and quarantining defective plant and gear until repaired or disposed of</li> <li>• Prohibit unauthorised repairs or modifications to critical components (e.g. welding on tow points, modifying hooks) and require engineering approval for any design changes</li> </ul>	2M
4. Competency, Licensing & Training Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient formal training in recovery operations, especially for truck bus and heavy vehicle recoveries</li> <li>• Lack of competency in winching theory, load angles, snatch block use and dynamic load effects during recovery from mud or slopes</li> <li>• Inadequate training in assessing vehicle stability on embankments, soft shoulders and precarious locations</li> <li>• Drivers operating recovery vehicles without appropriate class of driver's licence or high-risk work licence where required</li> </ul>	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No assessment of competency for new or transferred workers before undertaking unsupervised recovery tasks</li> <li>Failure to provide refresher and scenario-based training for high-risk recovery situations (e.g. bus over edge, wedged vehicles under structures)</li> <li>Inconsistent training in roadwork/roadside safety, including traffic control principles and working around live traffic</li> <li>Limited training in communication protocols with emergency services, road authorities and other PCBUs</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
5. Journey Management & Task Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unplanned responses to call-outs leading to rushed decisions and unsafe route selection</li> <li>Recovery vehicles dispatched without adequate information about vehicle type, load, location and condition</li> <li>Inadequate planning for remote or regional recoveries with limited support services</li> <li>Recovery tasks scheduled without regard for driver fatigue or day/weather conditions</li> <li>Lack of consideration of road grades, bridge limits and access for recovery units</li> <li>No structured process to classify recoveries by risk level (e.g. simple tow vs complex bus recovery on embankment)</li> <li>Failure to plan back-up support for high-risk recoveries (e.g. second recovery vehicle, additional rigging, traffic control)</li> <li>Poor integration between dispatch systems and WHS risk controls</li> </ul>	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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6. Site Assessment, Risk Assessment & Permit Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery tasks commenced without formal on-site risk assessment</li> <li>Failure to identify unstable ground conditions such as mud, soft shoulders or collapsed pavements</li> <li>Inadequate assessment of overhead hazards (powerlines, trees, bridges, structures) during winching or lifting</li> <li>No structured process to assess stability of stranded or wedged vehicles prior to attachment</li> <li>Lack of permit or authorisation for high-risk activities (e.g. work near live traffic, energy sources or rail corridors)</li> <li>Poor consideration of environmental conditions (rain, wind, visibility) affecting recovery method selection</li> <li>Inconsistent communication of site-specific risks to all personnel on scene</li> <li>Failure to coordinate with emergency services incident command in multi-agency events</li> </ul>	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M
7. Traffic Exposure & Roadside Work Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposure of workers to live traffic during roadside recovery and repair</li> <li>Insufficient delineation between traffic and work area, particularly on high-speed roads</li> <li>Poor placement of recovery vehicles leading to secondary collisions</li> <li>Lack of coordination with traffic controllers, police or road authorities during major incidents</li> <li>Inadequate lighting and visibility of work zones at night or in poor weather</li> <li>No standardised approach to setting up safe approach and departure paths for clients and passengers from broken down vehicles</li> </ul>	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery operations obstructing lanes without appropriate approvals or controls</li> <li>Failure to consider heavy vehicle traffic, buses and oversized loads passing the scene</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
8. Winching, Rigging & Load Control Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorrect selection or configuration of winching and rigging gear for load and angle of pull</li> <li>Failure of ropes, cables, chains or anchor points under load, causing snap-back or uncontrolled movement</li> <li>Lack of standardised recovery points on target vehicles, leading to use of unsuitable attachment locations</li> <li>Improper use of snatch blocks and multi-line rigging creating excessive side loads</li> <li>Inadequate control of dynamic forces when freeing bogged vehicles from mud or soft ground</li> <li>No systematic method for establishing and enforcing exclusion zones during tensioned winching</li> <li>Insufficient monitoring of load, line tension and vehicle movement during complex recoveries</li> <li>Inconsistent communication between operator, spotter and other workers around moving vehicles</li> </ul>	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
9. Remote, Isolated & Precarious Location Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers operating alone in remote or poorly accessible locations during recovery tasks</li> <li>Limited mobile coverage preventing effective communication or emergency calls</li> <li>Difficult terrain (steep slopes, embankments, soft ground, water crossings) increasing risk of vehicle rollover or entrapment</li> <li>Delayed emergency response times in regional and remote areas</li> </ul>	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate planning for access and egress routes for recovery vehicles and personnel</li> <li>Environmental hazards such as heat, cold, wildlife or flooding conditions</li> <li>No formal system for location tracking and welfare checks for field staff</li> <li>Recovery vehicles becoming stranded or bogged while attempting to access incident sites</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
10. Fatigue, Scheduling & Fitness for Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extended shifts and irregular hours due to 24/7 call-outs and emergency recoveries</li> <li>Insufficient rest breaks leading to impaired judgement during complex winching and lifting tasks</li> <li>Driving long distances between recovery jobs without structured fatigue controls</li> <li>Workers undertaking physically demanding recovery tasks while already fatigued or unfit</li> <li>Night work and circadian rhythm disruption, particularly on high-speed road networks</li> <li>Limited management oversight of subcontractor fatigue management systems</li> <li>No formal process to manage use of drugs, alcohol or medications that impair performance</li> <li>Cultural expectations of 'can-do' responses leading to workers accepting unsafe workloads</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	2M
11. Contractor, Subcontractor & Multi-PCBU Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistent WHS standards between principal contractor, tow operators, and specialist recovery providers</li> <li>Poor coordination between recovery organisations, bus companies, fleet managers and road authorities</li> </ul>	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of clarity over who controls the site and makes safety decisions during multi-agency recoveries</li> <li>Inadequate induction of subcontractor personnel into site-specific and organisational recovery procedures</li> <li>Subcontractors using non-compliant or poorly maintained plant and rigging equipment</li> <li>Communication failures during handover between primary responders (e.g. roadside assistance) and heavy recovery teams</li> <li>No systematic review of subcontractor WHS performance and incident history</li> <li>Conflicting instructions issued to workers from different PCBU's on site</li> </ul>		<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
12. Communication, Navigation & Information Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unreliable communication between dispatch, operators and other parties during critical recovery tasks</li> <li>Inadequate navigation leading to inappropriate access, low clearances or weight restricted structures</li> <li>Failure to communicate changes in plan or emerging hazards to all personnel on site</li> <li>Over-reliance on mobile phones while driving or operating equipment, increasing distraction risk</li> <li>Incomplete or inaccurate information passed from call-takers to field staff</li> <li>No central repository for technical information about vehicle types, lifting points and manufacturer recovery instructions</li> <li>Lack of standardised radio or verbal communication protocols during dynamic winching operations</li> </ul>	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language barriers or literacy limitations affecting comprehension of instructions or documentation</li> </ul>			
13. Emergency Preparedness, Incident Management & First Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of clear procedures for responding to incidents involving recovery vehicles and equipment</li> <li>Insufficient first aid resources for injuries resulting from snap-back, crush or entrapment events</li> <li>Delayed or ineffective emergency response due to poor location information or communications</li> <li>Recovery operations exacerbating initial incidents (e.g. worsening vehicle instability, causing fuel spills)</li> <li>Inadequate planning for fire, hazardous materials or battery-related risks (including EVs and hybrids)</li> <li>No structured debriefing and learning process following serious incidents or near misses</li> <li>Failure to notify regulators of notifiable incidents as required under WHS legislation</li> <li>Psychological impact on workers exposed to traumatic incidents without support systems</li> </ul>	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M
14. Documentation, Procedures, Auditing & Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery operations conducted based on informal practices and undocumented know-how</li> <li>Procedures not reflecting current equipment, technology or legal requirements</li> <li>Workers unable to readily access or understand relevant procedures and guidance on site</li> <li>Lack of systematic auditing of compliance with WHS procedures for recovery tasks</li> </ul>	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	1L

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate data collection on incidents, near misses and unsafe conditions</li> <li>• No structured process to review and update risk assessments as operations evolve</li> <li>• Overly complex or generic documentation not tailored to vehicle recovery risks</li> <li>• Failure to verify that corrective actions from audits and incidents are implemented and effective</li> </ul>		<div style="background-color: black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>	

SAMPLE

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE – CALL 000 FOR EMERGENCIES**

Ensure to have an Emergency Management Plan in place as well as adequate numbers of trained first aid staff with easy access to fully stocked first aid kits, rescue equipment, material safety data sheets, adequate access to emergency communication equipment and fire-fighting equipment suitable for all classes of fire and ignition sources.

**LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES**

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND CODES OF PRACTICE. DELETE THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES FOR ANY STATE THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE

**Queensland & Australian Capital Territory**

Work Health and Safety Act 2011  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011  
 Legislation QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/work-health-and-safety-laws>  
 Codes of Practice QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>  
 Legislation ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>  
 Codes of Practice ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

**Victoria**

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004  
 Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017  
 Legislation VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/occupational-health-and-safety-act-and-regulations>  
 Codes of Practice VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/compliance-codes-and-codes-practice>

**New South Wales**

Work Health and Safety Act 2011  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2025  
 Legislation NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/legal-obligations/legislation>  
 Codes of Practice NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/list-codes-of-practice>

**Western Australia**

Work Health and Safety Act 2020  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022  
 Legislation Western Australia: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/legislation>  
 Codes of Practice WA: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/codes-practice>

**Northern Territory**

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011  
 Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulation 2011  
 Legislation NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-safety-laws>  
 Codes of Practice NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

**Safe Work Australia Links**

Law and Regulation (All States): <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/law-and-regulation>  
 Model Codes of Practice: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/resources-publications/model-codes-of-practice>

**South Australia**

Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)  
 Legislation for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/resources/legislation>  
 Codes of Practice for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/workplaces/codes-of-practice#COPs>

**Model Codes of Practice**

- Managing noise and preventing hearing loss at work
- Confined spaces
- Labelling of workplace hazardous chemicals
- Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace
- Welding processes
- First aid in the workplace
- Managing the risk of falls at workplaces
- Hazardous manual tasks
- Managing the risk of falls in housing construction
- Managing electrical risks in the workplace
- Demolition work
- Excavation work
- Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination
- Managing the work environment and facilities
- How to manage work health and safety risks
- Managing risks of plant in the workplace
- Construction work

**Tasmania**

Work Health and Safety Act 2012  
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Act 2012  
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012  
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional) Regulations 2012  
 Legislation for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>  
 Codes of Practice for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Details of permits, licenses or access required by regulatory bodies (add or delete as required):

- Permits from local council
- Authorisation to commence work
- Any required documents.