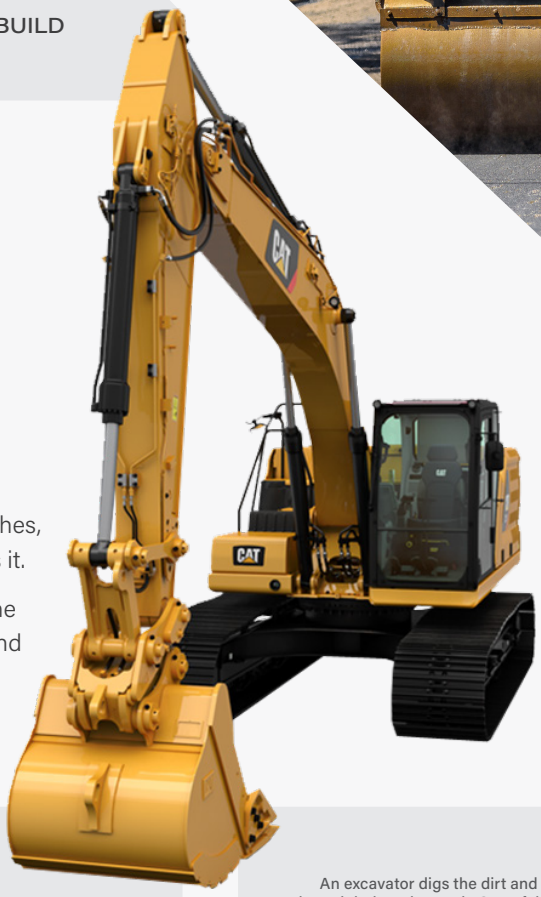
ROADS AND PAVEMENTS CAREERS | QUEENSLAND

WHAT'S A PLANT OPERATOR?



NO UNI. NO DEBT. YOU DRIVE THE BIG MACHINES THAT BUILD QUEENSLAND AND GET PAID FROM DAY ONE.



FIRST UP — WHAT EVEN IS 'PLANT?

BIG MACHINES BUILD THE ROAD. YOU DRIVE THE MACHINES.

"'Plant' is just the industry word for the big machines. Excavators, loaders, rollers, graders, dozers, bobcats. If it digs, pushes, lifts or flattens, it's plant. A plant operator is the person who drives it.

You sit in the cab, work the controls, and make it happen. That's the job. You turn up on site, climb into a machine, and shape the ground the road is built on. New machine, new day. You start on the smaller gear and work your way up to the big stuff.

NOT JUST DIGGING HOLES

Modern machines run on GPS and computers. They guide the blade to the millimetre. This is high-tech gear, and operating it well is a real, paid skill — not just brute force.

An excavator digs the dirt and loads it straight into the truck. One of the first machines you'll learn to run.

THE PAY

GOOD MONEY, FAST

Start around $55k–$70k while you train. Qualified operators earn $75k–$95k. On the big machines, with overtime and away work, some clear $120k+.

TIME & SKILLS

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN

No uni. No student debt. Get paid from day one while you complete a nationally recognised Certificate over about 2 years. In Queensland, if you're under 25, the government covers your training.

WHAT YOU NEED

A LICENCE AND A WHITE CARD

A driver's licence and a White Card to start. No Year 12 needed, no degree. You earn your machine tickets on the job — one machine at a time.

WHERE COULD A CAREER IN ROADS TAKE YOU?

FURTHER THAN YOU THINK.

WANT IN?

Scan the code. See real jobs near you. Come chat at the booth, we'll tell you exactly where to start.

A CAREER THAT GROWS WITH YOU.

Nobody starts on the biggest machine. You start small, learn one machine, then the next. Every ticket you earn is worth more money. Keep going and you run the crew, then the whole site.

TRAINEE OPERATOR / LABOURER Day one, no experience needed	**$55–$70K**
QUALIFIED PLANT OPERATOR Certificate done, running machines solo	**$75–$95K**
LEADING HAND / SENIOR OPERATOR Biggest machines, guides the crew	**$95–$115K**
SITE SUPERVISOR / FOREMAN Runs the site, signs off the work	**$120–$160K+**

*Salary ranges are indicative of industry salary ranges as of August 2026.

BUILD STUFF THAT LASTS

Drive on the roads you helped build. From the Bruce Highway upgrade to the roads into Brisbane 2032.

NEVER STUCK AT A DESK

Outdoors, new site, new machine, no two days the same. Away jobs pay extra on top.

SKILLS THAT TRAVEL

Your machine tickets work right across Australia and the work is booming. We need around 300,000 more construction workers by 2027.

From there it keeps going; plant manager, project supervisor, or run your own earthmoving business. Some operators even cross into surveying or civil engineering later, with credit for what they already know.



IS THIS YOU?

TICK THE ONES THAT SOUND LIKE YOU.

- [ ] You'd like to run excavators, loaders and rollers
- [ ] You've got good spatial sense: depth, distance and angles
- [ ] You want to see what you built at the end of the day
- [ ] You'd take a worksite over an office any day
- [ ] You want good money and no uni debt

TICKED THREE OR MORE? THIS COULD BE YOUR JOB.

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