



**MASTER BUILDERS**  
AUSTRALIA

# **FUTURE-PROOFING CONSTRUCTION: A WORKFORCE BLUEPRINT**

**April 2023**

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## Introduction

**The Australian workforce is facing critical shortages across industries and skill levels, hindering economic recovery and productivity growth. Attracting enough people to meet the demands of the coming decades is a major challenge, but policies around training and education, industrial relations, workforce development, and skilled migration offer opportunities to build a more productive labour force.**

Construction is the backbone of the Australian economy – everyone needs a roof over their head, infrastructure to get around, and commercial and community buildings to live their lives. With Australia's population projected to grow by over 50 per cent between 2022 and 2060, to reach nearly 40 million people, there will be a lot of building and construction work that needs to be undertaken and a significant workforce that will be needed to do this work.

Approximately 1.3 million people work in Australia's building and construction workforce.

**Master Builders estimates that workforce growth and replacement in the four years to November 2026 will mean the industry needs to attract around half a million workers.**

Most of these workers will be replacing the conservatively estimated 7.8 per cent of the workforce that exit the industry each year.

Ensuring our industry has the workers it needs for the significant task ahead means we need to attract new workers and we need to retain our current and emerging workforce. This paper outlines the workers and businesses of Australia's building and construction industry, what we will need in the coming years, and policy priorities for attracting, recruiting, and retaining workers for our industry.

# Who we are

## We are 1.32 million workers

One-in-ten Australian workers are employed in the building and construction industry. We are the third largest employing sector in Australia and have the second highest number of full-time workers at 1.15 million.<sup>1</sup>

## We are 445,253 businesses

One-in-six Australian businesses are in the building and construction industry. We are the industry sector with the most businesses. 98.7 per cent are small businesses and 60 per cent are sole traders.<sup>2</sup>



	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Workers	400,923	375,280	263,649	81,997	142,914	25,720	10,176	16,604
Workers %	30.4%	28.5%	20.0%	6.2%	10.8%	2.0%	0.8%	1.3%
Businesses	148,930	127,371	83,837	25,854	42,179	7,429	2,968	6,535
Businesses %	33.5%	28.6%	18.8%	5.8%	9.5%	1.7%	0.7%	1.5%

<sup>1</sup> ABS, 2023, Labour Force Australia Detailed, February 2023. Released 23 March 2023. Health is the largest employer (2.13m workers, 1.25m full-time) followed by retail (1.38m workers).

<sup>2</sup> ABS, 2022, Count of Australian Businesses including entries and exist, June 2018-June 2022. Released 25 August 2022.

# We are in need of workers

Building and construction businesses list worker shortages as their biggest issue. This includes attracting and recruiting staff as well as the availability of subcontractors and other service providers. Internet vacancy data for February 2023 indicates strong demand across many building and construction occupations, including over 4,000 online job advertisements for construction managers, and over 1,000 vacancies for carpenters, plumber and building labourers.<sup>3</sup>

The national Skills Priority List for 2022<sup>4</sup> identified **nearly half of trade occupations and nearly 40 per cent of professional roles in Australia in 2022 were in shortage**. Many occupations relevant to the building and construction industry are identified as in shortage, as shown in the table.

MANAGEMENT & PROFESSIONAL ROLES	TECHNICIAN & TRADE ROLES		OTHER ROLES
Construction Project Manager	Building Inspector	Plumber (General)	Contract Administrator
Project Builder	Construction Estimator	Airconditioning & Mechanical Services Plumber	Project Administrator
Engineering Manager	Civil Engineer Draftsperson	Drainer	Crane, Hoist or Lift Operator
Surveyor	Civil Engineering Technician	Gasfitter	Driller
Civil Engineer	Sheet Metal Tradesworker	Roof Plumber	Earthmoving Plan Operator
Quantity Surveyor	Metal Fabricator	Electrician (General)	Backhoe Operator
Structural Engineer	Pressure Welder	Electrician (Special Class)	Bulldozer Operator
Transport Engineer	Welder (First Class)	Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic	Excavator Operator
Electrical Engineer	Bricklayer	Electrical Linesworker	Grader Operator
	Stonemason	Technical Cable Joiner	Loader Operator
	Carpenter	Data & Telecommunications Cabler	Linemarker
	Joiner	Telecommunications Cable Joiner	Paving Plant Operator
	Floor Finisher	Telecommunications Linesworker	Road Roller Operator
	Painter	Telecommunications Technician	Home Improvement Installer
	Glazier	Landscape Gardner	Construction Rigger
	Fibrous Plasterer	Cabinet Maker	Steel Fixer
	Solid Plasterer	Fire Protection Equipment Technician	Structural Steel Erector
	Roof Tiler		Crane Chaser
	Wall and Floor Tiler		

<sup>3</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, 2023. Internet Vacancy Index, February 2023. Released March 2023.

<sup>4</sup> National Skills Commission, 2022. Skills Priority List. Released October 2022.

# Looking ahead

**The nature of work in the building and construction industry is evolving. Businesses are increasingly specialised. More and more building products are partially or entirely built off site. Workers are changing jobs more frequently. Technology is infiltrating the way tasks are done and processes are managed. Regulatory requirements are increasingly complex.**

As an industry, we need to be cognisant of this. Understanding emerging and future workforce skills needs is critical to ensuring the pathways into and within our industry are flexible to the changing and diverse needs of workers, businesses, and employers. We need to ensure training and education products and pathways are not only suitable for the jobs of today but are forward looking and flexible so our industry can develop the skills it will need for the future.

Vocational education and training (VET) reforms to establish Jobs and Skills Councils—which will have dual responsibility for workforce analysis and training product development—present an opportunity to better connect future looking workforce and skills analysis with the national training system.

Master Builders is a lead organisation establishing the Jobs and Skills Council for the built environment and is a founding employer member. To be known as BuildSkills Australia, this Council will commence operations in 2023 and bring together industry stakeholders with responsibility across the lifespan of our buildings and infrastructure. Bringing together design, construction, and building management into a single cluster has the potential to improve processes and result in better quality assets.

The workforce research and analysis of BuildSkills Australia will complement the work done by individual industry members and Jobs and Skills Australia to enhance sector-wide workforce planning and forecasting, improve understanding of current and emerging challenges and opportunities including the needs of the next generation of workers, industry growth and attrition, emerging occupations, skills requirements, and pathways.

These insights will inform the development and update of training products in the VET sector to ensure training, qualifications and pathways are up to date, flexible, and responsive to changing workforce, industry, and economic conditions.

Our industry workforce is growing, Jobs and Skills Australia projects that the building and construction industry will grow by over 66,000 workers (5.8 per cent) between November 2021 and November 2026.<sup>5</sup>

Master Builders analysis of ABS data on job mobility<sup>6</sup> conservatively estimates annual industry attrition at 7.8 per cent. This means that in 12 months' time 7.8 per cent of the current building and construction workforce will no longer be working in the industry. These workers may have retired, moved to a different sector, be unemployed, or out of the labour force.

To meet growth projections and replace workers that leave the industry Master Builders estimates that **486,000 workers** need to enter the building and construction industry between February 2023 and November 2026. Nearly half of the required workforce (229,000 workers) will be in technician and trade roles, the vast majority of which will enter the industry through a trade apprenticeship.

In addition to attracting new workers into the industry for current and emerging occupations, retaining existing workers and ensuring they can keep pace with evolving skills and knowledge is critical.

<sup>5</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, 2022. Employment projections. Last updated: 8 September 2022

<sup>6</sup> ABS, 2022. Job Mobility (6223.0), February 2022. Released: 24 May 2022

**This document outlines Master Builders key policy positions to ensure Australia's building and construction industry can maintain and grow its skilled workforce for the jobs of today, tomorrow and the future.**

## Attracting workers

- Addressing the bias and improving careers education
- Improving gender diversity
- Reframing the apprenticeship story
- The role of migration

## Recruiting workers

- Understanding the options and testing the waters
- Entering the industry
- Nurturing success in the early stages

## Train workers

- Improving quality by improving information
- Work-integrated learning pathways
- Enhancing education integration

## Retain workers

- Occupational licensing
- Embracing a culture of life-long learning
- Improving business acumen





## Attracting workers

- **Addressing the educational bias and improving careers education**
  - Careers education in schools should be up-to-date, unbiased and comprehensive
- **Improving gender diversity in the workplace**
  - Improving awareness and growing the pool
  - Women Building Australia
- **Reframing the apprenticeship story**
  - Earn while you learn
  - Challenging and inspiring
  - A lifetime of opportunities
- **The role of migration in construction**
  - Population growth drives construction activity
  - Australia's attractiveness
  - Simple and easy navigation
  - International recognition

## Addressing the bias and improving careers education

To attract people to the full suite of occupations Australia needs now and into the future, work is needed to address the bias pushing young people toward university at the expense of VET. Critically, this includes improving the quality of careers education in secondary and senior secondary schools.

In the 2019 Expert Review of Australia's VET System, the Hon Steven Joyce noted:<sup>7</sup>

**“Vocational education has been steadily losing the battle for hearts and minds with the university sector. Fewer young people aspire to undertake vocational education courses. Many consider VET as less prestigious and only for students who are of low academic ability.”**

It is disappointing that the perception of VET in young minds compares poorly to university. Especially as this does not match the experience and outcomes for those who do follow a VET pathway. In the building and construction industry trade apprentices compare favourably to higher education graduates in terms of satisfaction, employment and income.

The VET system is poorly understood and many young people feel they are not provided with a deep understanding of post-school options and are instead pushed toward university, while only 10 per cent of young people report facing no pressure at all.<sup>8</sup>

The impact of the bias in schools toward university pathways is compounded by the views and perceptions of parents. For young people, their most trusted career advice is from their parents (56 per cent), followed by the internet (42 per cent), teachers (42 per cent) and career advisors (40 per cent). The gap in unbiased and up-to-date careers education is contributing to the 43 per cent of young people who self-report having ‘no idea’ what they want to do when they leave school.<sup>9</sup> A major constraint on the quality of careers education in schools is a lack of funding and resources.

The Career Industry Council of Australia report that half of schools with a student population over 1,000 have less than \$3 per student to spend on careers education.<sup>10</sup> This is not acceptable.

Vocational and higher education are both integral parts of Australia's tertiary education system. But they are not equally valued. To level the playing field, we need to address the bias toward university, overcome misconceptions, and overhaul the quality, funding and availability of careers education in secondary and senior secondary schools.

## Recommendation

**Current and future secondary school students deserve the opportunity to learn about and pursue careers that they find motivating and rewarding, regardless of the educational pathway. Master Builders recommends addressing the entrenched bias toward university in our schools by improving the quality of careers education through a new federal, state and territory government National Partnership Agreement on Quality Careers Education. This new agreement needs to adequately fund and resource schools to deliver comprehensive, unbiased, and up-to-date careers education to secondary and senior secondary school students.**

<sup>7</sup> Joyce, 2019. Strengthening Skills: expert review of Australia's vocational education and training system

<sup>8</sup> Year13, 2017. After the ATAR: Understanding how Gen Z transition into further education and employment

<sup>9</sup> Year13, 2017. After the ATAR: Understanding how Gen Z transition into further education and employment

<sup>10</sup> Clarke, 2015. Careers education must be for all, not just those going to university



## Improving gender diversity in the workforce

In an environment of acute workforce shortages and recruitment challenges, the building and construction industry needs to ensure it can attract talent from the full suite of Australian workers.

Despite this acknowledgement construction continues to be male dominated. Just 13.3 per cent of workers in the industry are female. However, the split is not even across occupation groups. One in four professionals are female, while for machine operators it is one-in-31.<sup>11</sup>

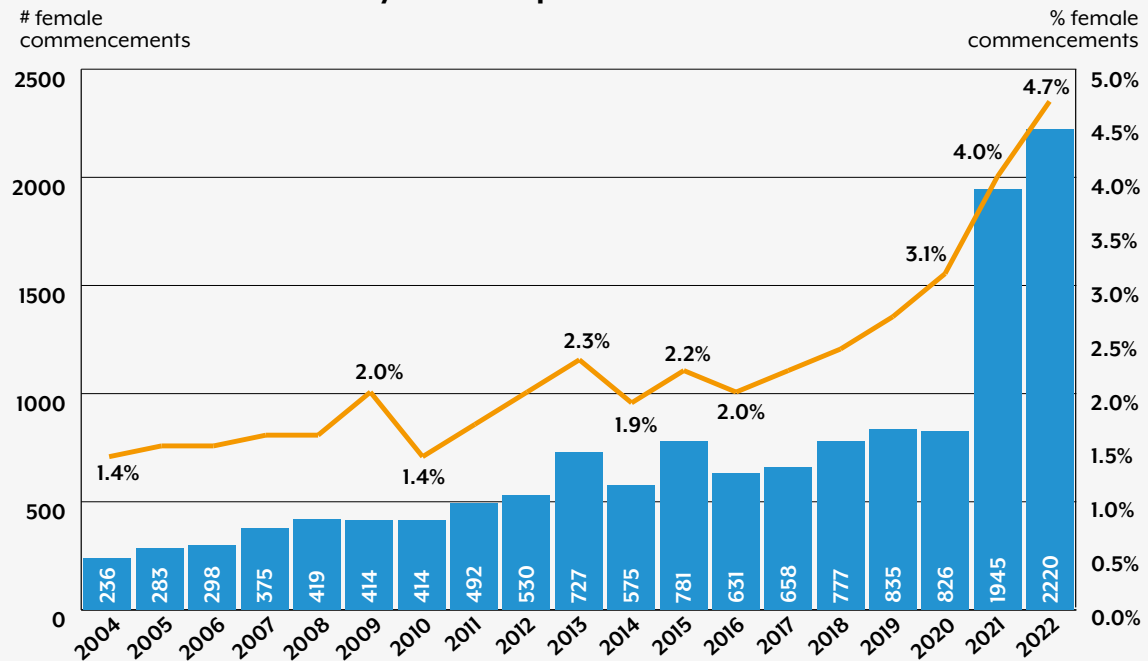
The low proportion of women in some occupation groups in the construction industry presents an opportunity to meet future workforce needs. To harness this opportunity the barriers to female entry and retention in the industry need to be addressed. These include perceptions around the physical demands of the work as well as unfavourable aspects of the workplace culture and its flexibility arrangements.

There are a wide range of initiatives being led by governments and industry to encourage more women into the building and construction industry, and in particularly into traditionally male dominated roles.

Initiatives such as Master Builders Australia's [Women Building Australia](#) program are helping to dispel misperceptions about the industry, encouraging more women into construction, sharing the stories of women in the industry, supporting retention through mentoring, and nurturing career progression and business resilience.

These efforts are translating into more women in construction training pathways. In the year to 30 September 2022, 4,576 females commenced a construction apprenticeship or traineeship, 8.3 per cent of construction commencements. 2,220 of these women commenced a trade apprentices, the highest number on record nearly four times the 20-year average to 2021 of 599.<sup>12</sup>

**Females commencing a construction trade apprenticeship, year to 30 September 2002-2022**



<sup>11</sup> ABS, 2023, Labour Force Australia Detailed, February 2023. Released 23 March 2023.

<sup>12</sup> NCVER, 2022. Apprentices and Trainees, September 2022.

# Women Building Australia

**Women Building Australia (WBA) aims to attract the best workers to the construction industry, regardless of gender, by promoting opportunities for women and employers and providing the information and support they need. WBA is an initiative of Master Builders Australia with funding from the Australian Government's Office for Women.**

## WBA Influencers & Ambassadors

The WBA Influencers and Ambassadors are tradespeople and industry leaders who understand and experience the realities of working in the industry, are successful, and have great passion for construction. These women are paving the way and supporting other women to join. Sharing their stories helps women outside the industry to understand what's possible and to see there are jobs and opportunities for them in construction.

## WBA Jobseeker Handbook

The Jobseeker Handbook assists women to understand the construction industry and its career opportunities. It highlights a wide range of industry roles – including what's involved, their entry pathway, salary, and demand – and features the stories of the WBA Influencers and Ambassadors.

## WBA Career Expos

WBA attends career expos around the country to educate female school students, career advisors, teachers and parents about careers and opportunities in construction. WBA actively encourages women to enter into and lead successful careers in the industry.

## WBA Mentoring

The WBA mentoring program provides women in construction with access to support, encouragement and advice from experienced individuals through a mentoring relationship. Mentoring is an excellent way to help women to build confidence and to participate and succeed in the industry.

## WBA business coaching

The WBA Business Coaching program provides training and coaching:

- Female business operators can access coaching from experienced business leaders offering tactical support to help navigate the key issues.
- WBA and MYOB have partnered to deliver free training to women running a construction business, covering topics such as cashflow, bookkeeping, clients and suppliers, payroll, revenue and compliance.

## Female led business register

The register highlights female owned/managed construction businesses. It assists people in the community that would prefer to engage a female to find the right woman for their job.



**Amanda Chhouk**  
Apprentice Carpenter  
VIC

For women interested in construction, Amanda says:

**"Put yourself out there and don't be afraid of taking that step to enter a career in the trades, trades can take you places you wouldn't imagine are possible."**

Reflecting on her apprenticeship in painting, Karly says:

**"Doing my apprenticeship was the best decision I ever made. It's never going to be easy but I assure you that it will all be worth it, the good and the bad."**



**Karly Gaffy**  
Qualified painter  
Melbourne



**Bailee Major**  
Founder  
B.Claire Carpentry  
SA

For women interested in construction, Bailee says:

**"Any women who wants to have a go, do it. Doesn't matter who you are, where you're from, if you've never been on the tools in your life; you just have to have a go! And if you find your niche within the industry don't be scared to go against the grain or social norm and get into it!"**



Master Builders encourages the Government to think outside the narrow lens of gender targets for individual projects to identify options that will grow the pool of female and other under-represented workers in the industry. For example, through the Australian Skills Guarantee or other initiatives the government could consider:

- incentivising medium and large employers to improve diversity across their whole workforce, not just the workers on a specific project.
- This approach reduces the likelihood of underrepresented workers being moved between projects to meet procurement targets, improving workforce stability and retention.
- Restricting the initiative to medium and large employers reflects the greater number and diversity of roles within these businesses and their organisational capability to support diverse employees and to meet reporting requirements.
- This approach could also be implemented to lift the proportion of males in female dominated roles, such as administrative support.
- including non-price criterion in tender documents that enable industry to propose options to attract more females into the building and construction industry and therefore to grow the pool of workers.
- For example, in Queensland there is a Tier 1 construction company that runs a school-based program for female students. Students are shown through the different stages and roles of construction projects to improve understanding and interest. This program is translating into women entering the industry.

### Recommendation

**Master Builders is concerned that targets for females on government funded projects will lead to employers competing over the same pool of workers (such as poaching female workers from private sector projects to public sector projects), rather than expanding the pool. The focus at the moment needs to be on growing the pool of female workers across the entire building and construction industry.**

## Reframing the apprenticeship story

Apprentice and trainee pathways are well established and operate successfully in the construction industry. Nearly 10 per cent of the 1.26 million people employed in construction are apprentices or trainees, the highest proportion of any industry in Australia.<sup>13</sup>

On 30 September 2022, 121,479 apprentices and trainees in-training were employed in the building and construction industry. This is three in every ten apprentice and trainees employed in Australia and significantly more than any other industry sector.<sup>14</sup>

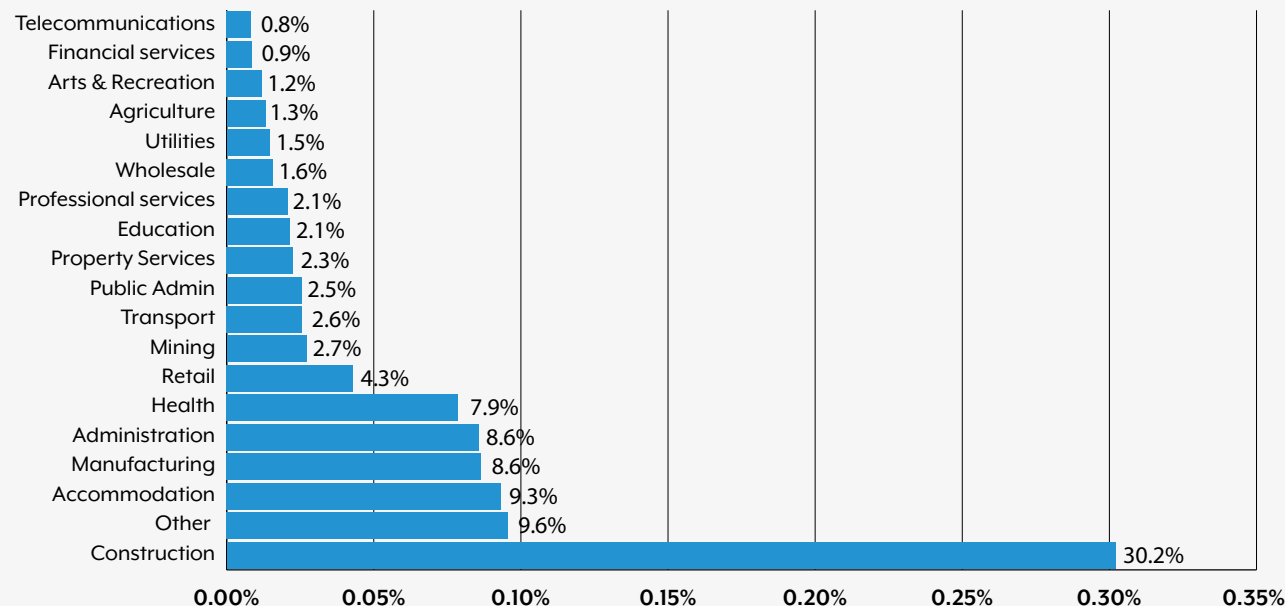
Despite apprenticeships being a well-established pathway into rewarding construction careers, employers are increasingly struggling to recruit suitable candidates and Group Training Organisations are reporting unprecedented numbers of employers waiting to host an apprentice.

The lack of quality, unbiased and up-to-date careers education in schools, as discussed earlier in this paper, is part of the challenge the industry faces in attracting the next generation of apprentices. In addition to this, there is a need to reframe the apprenticeship story and policy to be strategic and long-term.

Master Builders recommends governments, with input from industry and employers, research, develop and fund the implementation of a rolling apprentice commencement and retention strategy.

To promote the value and potential of Australian apprenticeship pathways to young people, their parents and careers advisors Master Builders advocates the National Careers Institute work with industry to develop a coordinated national apprenticeship campaign.

**Distribution of apprentices and trainees in-training by industry sector, 30 September 2022**



<sup>13</sup> ABS, 2022. Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, February 2023. NCVER, 2022. Apprentices and Trainees, September 2022.

<sup>14</sup> NCVER, 2022. Apprentices and Trainees, September 2022.



The perception that an apprenticeship means low wages and undesirable work is far too common, and it isn't true. This perception puts people off apprenticeship pathways. Young men and women need to be given the facts so they can make informed decisions.

2018 research by Year 13 reports:

**“Australian apprentices have the potential to graduate from training nearly \$150,000 financially ahead of university students when accounting for apprentice earnings and university debt. 64 per cent of young people said knowing this would make them consider an apprenticeship pathway more seriously.”<sup>15</sup>**

With university fees and student debt increasing and apprentice wages rising, the financial gap is widening. Recent analysis by Master Builders estimates a carpentry apprentice has the potential to graduate between \$198,135 and \$351,838 financially ahead of their university friends and be entering into a job with the same starting salary.

APPRENTICESHIP	UNIVERSITY
Earn while you learn (carpentry)*	Pay to study (built environment)**
Year 1: \$32,587-\$57,526	Year 1: \$8301 student fees
Year 2: \$33,517-\$68,549	Year 2: \$8301 student fees
Year 3: \$45,612-\$88,641	Year 3: \$8301 student fees
Year 4: \$53,213-\$103,917	Year 4: \$8301 student fees
Total earning potential over four years: \$164,931-\$318,634	Total student debt over four years: -\$33,204
<b>THE APPRENTICE ENDS UP BETWEEN \$198,135 AND \$351,838 FINANCIALLY AHEAD.</b>	
Average graduate earnings: \$63900***	Average graduate earnings: \$64700****

\*minimum is full-time Award rate for apprentice that has not completed year 12; maximum is union enterprise agreement in Victoria; both include tool, industry and travel allowance.

\*\*Student contribution in 2023 for built environment field of study. Actual contribution will be higher as fees are indexed each year.

\*\*\*NCVER, VET Student Outcomes 2022 for CPC qualification Cert II and above

\*\*\*\*QILT, Graduate Student Outcomes 2022 for built environment bachelor degree

<sup>15</sup> Year13, 2018. After the ATAR II: Understanding how Gen Z make decisions about their future.

In addition to the financial benefits of undertaking an apprenticeship, apprentices also report higher satisfaction and improved employment outcomes than university students.<sup>16, 17, 18</sup>

- 88.9 per cent of trade apprentices are satisfied with their apprenticeship, compared to 80.1 per cent satisfaction with training for university graduates, dropping to 74.4 per cent for engineering and 74.5 per cent for architecture and built environment fields of study.
- 91.5 per cent of trade apprentices are employed on completion, 92.0 per cent in occupations relevant to their training and 94.6 per cent report their trade skills as directly relevant to their work. By comparison, 72.2 per cent of university graduates gain full-time employment, of which 28.3 per cent report they are not fully using their skills or education in their employment.

The challenge in the current employment environment isn't the number of apprentice jobs available. It is attracting people to do an apprenticeship.

To help young people, their parents and advisers to understand the value and potential of an apprenticeship pathway the journey needs a rebrand:

- from low pay to **earn while you learn;**
- from non-academic to **challenging and inspiring;** and
- from dead end to **the beginning of a lifetime of opportunities.**

### Recommendation

To promote the value and potential of Australian apprenticeship pathways Master Builders advocates for the National Careers Institute work with industry, apprentices, and employers to develop a coordinated national apprenticeship campaign to dispel the myths and promote the value and potential of apprenticeship pathways to young people, the parents and career advisers.



<sup>16</sup> NCVER, 2020. Apprentice and trainee experience and destinations – time series 2008, 2010 and 2019; and

<sup>17</sup> NCVER, 2020. VET student outcomes 2019.

<sup>18</sup> QILT, 2020. 2019 Graduate outcome survey.

## The role of migration

Australia's population is growing, and the Federal Treasury expects that migrants will be the largest source of our population growth. Migration contributes to Australia's economic growth and helps offset some of the effects of an ageing population.<sup>19</sup>

The building and construction industry has a two-fold interest in ensuring an effective and attractive migration system. Firstly, the industry employs and is reliant on skilled migrants, particularly in civil engineering and construction management roles on major infrastructure projects. And, secondly, a healthy in-flow of international migrants drives demand for housing, community and commercial building activity, and civil infrastructure works.

Ensuring that Australia continues to be an attractive destination for permanent migrants, particularly skilled migrants, is critical. This will require governments to ensure the policy setting for our migration system are internationally competitive and our communities continue to be vibrant, cohesive and welcoming environments.

Australia is an attractive destination for international migrants and needs to maintain this status. In an environment of increasing competition for international talent Australia risks falling behind comparable countries, such as New Zealand and Canada, due to complexity, cost and delays in our migration system, and other governments taking pro-active steps to attract international talent to their shores.

Feedback from a construction sector employer in Victoria:

*"It's easier and quicker to go to other countries. I have just lost a guy from Chile as he can go to Canada much easier than here. I can't blame him as the hoops we have had to jump through here are painful."*

Australia's migration system is complex, expensive, slow and slow. **Action is needed to ensure Australia's migration system is simpler with lower costs, quicker processing, better employment outcomes, and clearer pathways to permanency.**

Australia's migration system is also plagued by reactive decision making.

### Recommendation

To provide certainty and instil confidence, Australia needs a longer-term approach to migration planning. The Department of Home Affairs should work with the Centre for Population and Jobs and Skills Australia to develop a rolling ten-year migration plan.

<sup>19</sup> The Treasury, 2021. 2021 Intergenerational Report. [https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-06/p2021\\_182464.pdf](https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-06/p2021_182464.pdf)

Publishing information on migration intake and composition provides potential migrants and their employers with assurance that levels will not suddenly change, and governments at all levels will be able to improve infrastructure planning such as land releases and rezoning to better meet population needs.

Options to ensure the system remains flexible to emerging needs could be incorporated into the system. For example, Australia's ten-year rolling migration plan could provide indicative levels for years four-to-ten; minimum size and composition for years two and three with levels able to be increased to meet emerging needs, and set size and composition for the coming year.

## Recommendation

**In addition to simplifying the visa system and improving planning, Master Builders advocates for:**

- **Improved recognition of comparable international qualifications and experience, particular for trades.** Trades recognition assessment processes are marred by lengthy delays. Where it is established that a particular country's standards are comparable or exceed Australian requirements a trade recognition assessment should not be required. This has the potential to speed up processes, reduce red tape and costs, and make Australia a more appealing destination for these workers.
- **Expansion of graduate visa eligibility.** Australia's tertiary education system is highly regarded, making us a popular destination for international students. At present, many permanently leave Australia after graduating. This represents a leakage of valuable skilled labour from our economy. To encourage more Australian educated international graduates to remain in Australia the range of qualifications eligible for graduate visas should be expanded to include Certificate III and above qualifications and the visa term extended to four year.
- **Reforms to English language requirements for skilled visas so they are commensurate to the level of English required for the occupation or class of occupations.** Building and construction employers have identified that functional English would be a more appropriate level for many construction occupations, particularly trades.





In addition, we note concerns with international study pathways for Certificate III trade qualifications that should be addressed. At present foreign nationals are not able to undertake an apprenticeship in Australia. However, they can complete a Certificate III trade qualification and depending on course duration apply for a visa upon completion.

However, employability in their chosen trade is inhibited as they lack the experience gained through an apprenticeship resulting in visa holders working below their education level as a labourer, in a different industry, or being unemployed. This outcome is not beneficial for the visa holder, Australian employers, or income tax revenue. Feedback from an employer in Victoria's construction industry:

**“With kids from another country, why can't we put them through an apprenticeship like the locals? They get sponsored, go to training, and the other days they work on the job. This would give them the skills they need and businesses the workers they can't get... This is more beneficial to all.”**

## **Recommendation**

To determine the viability of an apprenticeship visa pathway and the attractiveness to both employers and migrants, an apprentice visa should be piloted. Under the proposed pilot, neither the apprentice nor the employer would be eligible for government funded apprentice incentives or course subsidies, and the apprentice would have the same work rights and conditions as Australian apprentices. The apprentice visa could be expanded to also include trainees studying a Certificate III or above and paid cadets.

## Recruiting workers

- **Knowing what's out there and testing the waters**
  - Understanding the options and testing the waters
  - Improving work-readiness
- **Entering the industry**
  - A good fit for both parties
  - Employer incentives
  - Improving resources by digitising processes
  - Identifying needs at the outset
- **Nurturing success in the early stages**
  - Assessing needs
  - Pastoral care and mentoring
  - Supportive employers and supervisors





## Knowing what's out there and testing the waters

Young people, and those considering a career change, need access to information on what's available, the opportunity to test the waters to find pathways that match their interests and aptitudes, and to understand what it means to be work-ready and to develop these skills. While this section is framed around pre-recruitment for apprentices it is also relevant for people exploring other pathways.

Apprenticeships are a key entry pathway into skilled trade occupations in the building and construction industry. Undertaking an apprenticeship allows the participant to reap the benefits of formal training while gaining practical work experience and earning a wage. As apprenticeships combine work and training over a period of three-to-four years it is important that apprentice candidates understand what is involved in the apprenticeship, have realistic expectations, and are work ready before committing to a training and employment contract.

### Understanding the options:

Discussed earlier in this paper, students need access to comprehensive, unbiased and up to date careers education that enables them to explore career pathways that align with their interests, motivators and abilities. Improving the quality of careers education in schools is a reform necessary to achieve this.

### Testing the waters

Each prospective apprentice is unique, and each has differing levels of experience, knowledge and aptitude. Similarly, each construction trade is different. Some trades have a higher level of physicality than others, similarly some require more complicated maths, or greater safety awareness, or more communication skills.

Prospective apprentices should have access to a range of opportunities to explore the options available and to assess how these options fit with their interests and aptitudes.

Opportunities to explore potential career pathways – for example work experience or try-a-trade days – can assist prospective apprentices to cement their understanding of an industry or occupation, build confidence, and develop realistic expectations of the work involved before committing to a four-year training contract. It also shows a potential employer that they have initiative, have explored their options, and know they want to do an apprentice.

### Being work-ready

Employers in the construction industry look for apprentice candidates with broadly similar attributes, these include:

- motivation and interest in the industry;
- work ethic and an understanding of what it means to work;
- communication and basic social skills;
- a good attitude to safety;
- a willingness to observe, learn and follow directions;
- realistic expectations of the physicality, type and hours of work; and
- a driver's licence (or being on the way to getting one).

Prospective apprentices that are not yet work-ready may benefit from a pre-vocational program or a pre-apprenticeship.

## Recommendation

**Master Builders recommends the development of an apprentice work-readiness assessment tool.**

## Entering the industry

Once a prospective apprentice has explored their options, tested the waters, and decided on the right trade for their interests and aptitudes it is time to find an employer and enter the industry.

### A good fit for both parties

Improving the apprentice-employer match will reduce attrition and boost completions.

Group training organisations (GTOs) have a commercial incentive to carefully match their apprentices and host employers. A poor match requires additional resources, such as more engagement by field officers to resolve issues or having to find a new host/apprentice if the relationship breaks down. Typically, GTOs do this well and they have higher completion rates to show for it.

### Recommendation

**A successful apprentice-employer relationship requires a good fit for both parties and this should be explored during recruitment. Tools and resources should be developed to help apprentices and employers to identify and understand what they are looking for in the employment relationship and how to seek out these qualities.**

### Employer incentives

For work integrated learning pathways, it is not just about an apprentice looking for an employer. The business case also needs to make sense for the employer. The initial years of an apprenticeship come at a cost to the employer – the costs and resources to recruit, train, supervise and pay an apprentice outweigh their contribution to the business bottom line. Many small employers engage apprentices not for the economic return, but to give back to and ensure the longevity of the industry and their trade.

One of the most successful initiatives under the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System was Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements. The initiative encouraged employers to hire apprentices by off-setting some of the costs associated with their employment. Employers received a 12-month 50 per cent wage subsidy (up to \$7000 per quarter) for hiring an apprentice between October 2020 and June 2022. By making it less costly to employ an apprentice, the program allowed for more new entrants to be drawn into the industry. In the construction industry commencements rose by around 80 per cent. More workers in construction means more homes, community and commercial buildings, and civil infrastructure can be built to support Australia's prosperity.

While we are grateful that the current wage subsidies for apprentices exists (10 per cent in year one, 10 per cent in year two, and five per cent in year three), restructuring the wage subsidy to provide a 30 per cent wage subsidy in year one and no subsidy in subsequent years will likely provide greater incentive to employers to hire an apprentice, thereby making a more significant contribution to the intended policy objective for a comparable government investment.

### Recommendation

**Master Builders recommends restructuring the wage subsidy to provide a 30 per cent wage subsidy in year one with no subsidy in subsequent years.**



### Improving sign-up services

Training contracts are coordinated through Australian Apprenticeship Support Network providers (AASNs) who also assist with onboarding information and supporting in-need apprentices. Unfortunately, feedback from across the country is less enthusiastic about the proficiency with which this is done. There are two key areas of concern – timeliness and quality of information.

- On timeliness, we are aware of employers having to follow up with their AASN multiple times to get training contract paperwork finalised and the process taking months. Some AASNs have even encouraged employers to use the first months before the training contract is signed as a pseudo probationary period saying they will back-date the apprenticeship if it goes ahead. In the meantime, the employer, the apprentice and, if applicable, their guardian are not getting any information or support in the critical initial months of placement.

- The quality of the information provided by AASNs to employers and apprentices on sign-up can be superficial (e.g. pay the apprentice, make sure they go to training, the end) and can come across as meeting the needs of a government process rather than the needs of the employer and apprentice. Given the key reasons apprentices cite for discontinuing are employment related onboarding information and resources should include setting behaviour and communication expectations and how to resolve conflicts.

A lack of resources is likely a key reason for training contract delays and poor-quality onboarding information. Digitising training contract sign-up processes and enabling contract management via an online portal either nationally or by state training authorities could improve the situation by addressing delays and enabling AASNs to better allocate their resources. The digital process could also step the employer and apprentice through their role, responsibilities and obligations prior to signing and be followed up with digital onboarding resources. Further, the digital system could be used to provide ongoing touch points with the both the employer and the apprentice. This could leverage the successful apprentice text message pilot in New South Wales and be expanded to employers to nudge them to check in with their apprentice's well-being and training experiences.

### Recommendation

**Master Builders recommends development of a digital apprenticeship platform to improve the efficiency of apprentice training contract execution, provide apprentices and employers with resources and information, and free up AASN resources to provide better support to apprentices and employers.**



## Nurturing success in the early stages

The early stages of an apprenticeship are the most tenuous. The apprentice is finding their feet, it may be their first job, they may be nervous and need support to build their confidence. There can also be a disconnect in the expectations of the employer and the apprentice. As discussed earlier improving the work readiness and having realistic expectations (particularly in the first year) will greatly assist to address this disconnect.

### Recommendation

To nurture success in the early stages of the apprenticeship journey, Master Builders advocates for the development of an apprentice support assessment tool and accompanying resources to assist apprentices, their employers, training providers and support networks to identify areas where additional support would be beneficial to maximising the likelihood of success and funding the delivery of initiatives that provide said support.

The tool could also assist to assess aptitude, learning style, and communication style and additional support could, for example, take the form of assistance to further foundation skills, modifications for neuro diversity, or reasonable adjustments for assessments.

Pastoral care can benefit apprentices, is a core element of the GTO model, and likely one of the main reasons that GTOs have higher completion rates than small employers. Having external support, such as a mentor or a GTO field officer, can assist an apprentice to build their confidence, address issues earlier, and seek guidance and support when needed. Outside of the GTO environment the provision of mentoring and pastoral care can be ad hoc and while usually beneficial is dependent on time-limited grants from governments or training funds.

### Recommendation

**Master Builders recommends an ongoing government funded national mentoring program for apprentices with care given to appropriately matching mentors and mentees, particularly for under-represented cohorts.**

The employer and/or supervisor has a critical role in supporting the apprentice. The level of workplace support available to apprentices can vary significantly depending on the size and therefore resources of the employer's business. Large employers have established resources and policies to support an apprentice such as human resources personnel, workforce development strategies, and codes of conduct. Small employers, on the other hand, are less likely to have these resources and therefore may need additional assistance.

In the building and construction industry nearly 70 per cent of apprentices are employed in a small business, while only six per cent are with large employers.<sup>20</sup> A key challenge to lifting the quality of apprentice supervision and support is getting employers and supervisors to self-identify their skills needs and to address them. Options to integrate better education and support for employers, particularly small employers, when they sign-up an apprentice and in the critical first months need to be identified.

In addition, resources and training should be developed to assist new supervisors to understand their role and provide practical strategies to build the skills they need.

### Recommendation

**Master Builders recommends a pilot, similar to the NSW Government apprentice wellbeing text message pilot, be undertaken sending messages to first year apprentice supervisors with practical tips such as checking in and links to resources.**

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<sup>20</sup> NCVER, 2022. Apprentices and Trainees, June 2022





## Train workers

- **Improving quality in VET by improving information**
  - **Publicly available information on training providers will improve quality by enabling students to make informed decisions, incentivising training providers to strive for excellence, and assisting governments to direct funding for training delivery**
- **Work integrated learning pathways**
  - **Students with opportunities to integrate work with study have better employment outcomes**
  - **Universities should provide more students across more faculties for opportunities for work-integrate learning**
- **Enhancing education integration and recognition in Australia**
  - **VET-HE-VET – need to improve recognition so that workers with either a university or a VET qualification can move between the tertiary education sectors as their career and aspirations motivate them to do so**





## Improving quality by improving information

VET is central to skills and knowledge development in the building and construction industry, more so than any other sector in Australia. A VET qualification is the highest level of education attained for over 600,000 building and construction workers. This is 54 per cent of the total workforce and 80 per cent of workers that have a post-school qualification.<sup>21</sup>

Ensuring the VET sector delivers high quality training that is occupation and industry relevant and valued by employers, and the Australian population more broadly, is critical to meeting current and future workforce needs in the building and construction industry.

Disappointingly, VET and vocational pathways are undervalued in Australia and on a downward trajectory when it comes to status and perception. This is despite vocational education leading to rewarding and well-paying occupations and careers that are essential to Australia's ongoing prosperity.

In the 5-year Productivity Inquiry Interim Report, the Productivity Commission noted that

**“information to guide student choice has improved in higher education, but remains deficient in VET”.<sup>22</sup>**

This lack of information is a key barrier to lifting perceptions of the VET sector.

The current regulatory approach to the VET sector assesses RTOs against minimum standards but does not have a mechanism to identify and reward providers that exceed these standards. RTOs that are subject to a regulatory decision, for example a partial suspension of their scope of training, are publicly identified on [myskills.gov.au](https://myskills.gov.au) with a link to the details of the decision on [training.gov.au](https://training.gov.au).

In addition to information on regulatory decisions, student choice between RTO providers is limited to a narrow range of indicators – primarily cost, duration, location, and delivery model. None of these indicators provide students with information on the quality of trainers or facilities, on student satisfaction or on student employment or salary outcomes.

Improving access to information on VET training quality and outcomes at the RTO level will assist students and governments to make more informed decisions, and incentivise RTOs to strive for excellence:

- Students (and their advisers) will have the information they need to identify the strengths and weaknesses of particular RTOs and therefore to make more informed decisions about the training provider and course that best meets their needs, aspirations and aptitudes.

<sup>21</sup> ABS, 2022. Education and Work, Australia, May 2022. Released November 2022

<sup>22</sup> Productivity Commission, 2022. 5-year Productivity Inquiry: From learning to growth. Interim report, pp. 79.



- RTO performance will be more transparent, leading to greater accountability and an incentive to deliver higher quality training.
- Governments provide significant investment in RTOs to deliver VET training. Achieving value for this investment is critical. Improving information on RTO quality and training outcomes will assist governments to better align funding decisions with measures of quality that align with their policy priorities and jurisdictional needs.

Further, information on quality at the RTO level will provide greater assurance to industry and governments, paving the way for less prescriptive, more flexible, and more responsive training products that are better able to meet current and emerging training and skills needs.

Additionally, publicly available information on RTOs and training outcomes will assist to shift the dial of perception in favour of the VET sector by showing that VET graduates achieve comparable levels of satisfaction and employment outcomes as university graduates.

In the higher education sector, the ComparED ([www.compared.edu.au](http://www.compared.edu.au)) website draws on the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) database to provide public information by institution and qualification on student experience, skills development and employment outcomes. This resource also enables comparison between institutions and with the national average.

Similar information for the VET sector is collected by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER). This includes a range of measures covering student satisfaction, skills development, and employment outcomes. However, this information is not published at the RTO level. This can and should change.

Initially this should draw on existing data from the NCVER and over time could be expanded to include data from the Australian Skills Quality Authority, the Unique Student Identifier database and other sources.

## Recommendation

**Master Builders recommends information on training quality and outcomes be made publicly available at the RTO and qualification level to ensure students and their advisers can make informed decisions, to incentivise RTOs to strive for excellence, to inform government funding decisions, and to improve perceptions of the VET sector.**







## Work-integrated learning pathways

Work integrated learning pathways—including apprenticeships, traineeships and cadetships—are critical to ensuring the building and construction industry has a pipeline of skilled workers. Master Builders is a strong advocate of these pathways and ensuring they are inclusive and fit for purpose now and into the future.

Work-based learning is central to the VET system, not only through apprenticeships and traineeships, but also through work-oriented institutional training and work placements. At the heart of the VET system is the philosophy of learning through doing. Work-oriented learning is embedded in some university pathways, such as placements for medical and teaching students, however, traditionally has not been widespread in other fields of study. However, this is changing, and a greater emphasis is being placed on practical as well as theoretical learning within the higher education sector. University graduates that have industry experience are more likely to gain employment in jobs relevant to their field of study.

There is a systemic shortage of construction managers and civil engineers in Australia. In February 2023, online job advertisements for these positions numbered 4,337 and 2,896, respectively,<sup>23</sup>

both occupations are listed as in shortage nationally and in every state and territory,<sup>24</sup> and are projected to grow by more than 10 per cent between 2021 and 2026 (10.2 per cent and 13.4 per cent, respectively).<sup>25</sup> University is the primary domestic pathway into these occupations. Increasingly the proportion of these students that complete their studies through paid-cadetships or participation in work placements or internships will likely improve graduate employment outcomes in relevant occupations and assist to address workforce shortages.

## Recommendation

**Master Builders encourages higher education institutions to provide more students across more faculties with the opportunity to gain real world experience as part of their qualification and to offer flexible study pathways that enable students to complete their qualification as part of a paid cadetship.**

<sup>23</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, 2023. Internet Vacancy Index, February 2023. Released: 22 March 2023

<sup>24</sup> National Skills Commission, 2022. 2022 Skills Priority List. Released: 6 October 2022

<sup>25</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, 2022. Employment Projections. Last updated: 8 September 2022.

## Enhancing education integration

A well-functioning, responsive and connected tertiary education system is fundamental to Australia's current and ongoing success. With the nature of work changing and workers increasingly needing to upskill throughout their careers it is more critical now than ever before that seamless pathways between vocational and higher education are established.

At present there is no robust system of credit transfer between VET and higher education. Each higher education and VET provider determines which courses and providers they will recognise and what level of credit transfer will be granted. This is often done on a case-by-case basis. This lack of coordination creates red tape and delays and where prior learning isn't recognised can add costs and duplicative learning requirements for students.

Requiring students to undertake duplicative education and training can lead to frustration and is demotivating. For example, a second year carpentry apprentice in NSW with a Bachelor in Architecture recently reflected to Master Builders on their experience of attending TAFE:

**"I found when I started TAFE it was a real battle just getting motivated to go because I felt like it was a waste of my time. I wasn't really learning anything. I understand that other people haven't done this before and it's helpful for them. But, for myself, I felt there was no point to it. I tried to get recognised prior learning, RPL, but couldn't because none of my courses exactly crossover to the carpentry courses. There are times when I sit an exam, I'll do it in 10 minutes and then be sitting there for the next two hours."**

**– Carpentry apprentice, male, 22**

Going from higher education to VET, students with pre-existing skills or knowledge have limited mechanisms to progress through their training more quickly. Units of competency have requirements for both practical skills and theoretical knowledge and both must be demonstrated for a learner to be deemed competent. While this appears a sound concept it creates challenges for people with pre-existing knowledge as the training system doesn't provide sufficient flexibility to grant recognised prior learning for just the knowledge component of a unit of competency.

### Recommendation

**Master Builders recommends exploring mechanisms to better integrate VET and higher education and to formalise credit transfer arrangements at the whole-of-system level.**



With more and more jobs needing post-school qualifications and people increasingly dipping in and out of formal education throughout their working lives there is a strong need to improve consistency and connectedness in Australia's tertiary education system. The lack of consistency in how VET and higher education systems operate creates unnecessary challenges for people that use both sectors. There are different funding and student loan arrangements, different approaches to micro credentials and recognised prior learning, and different Federal Government Ministers and Departments.

A new approach to tertiary education is needed. We live in an interconnected world and its time Australia's tertiary education silos joined in. Students need to be at the centre of the tertiary education system—not governments, nor institutions—and able to move seamlessly between VET and higher education. Government policy and decision makers need to acknowledge that the two parts of our tertiary education system are treated differently and therefore valued differently by the Australia people.

**Decisive action is needed to genuinely place equal value on VET and higher education.**



## Retain workers

- **Occupational licensing**
  - **Workforce mobility**
  - **National consistency**
- **Embracing a culture of life-long learning**
  - **Changing regulatory environment, new products and technology necessitate ongoing and career-long learning**
  - **A Certificate III is the beginning of the journey**
  - **Short courses enable workers to keep working while pivoting to new roles**
- **Improving business acumen**
  - **Business owners wear many hats and are often time and cash poor. Keeping on top of the business and its administration is a tough gig**
  - **Regulatory reform is needed to reduce complexity, simplify language and ensure the cumulative burden is managed**
  - **Assisting businesses to embrace technology and improve digital capability leads to enhanced productivity**



## Occupational licensing

People move interstate for a wide range of personal, work, and family reasons. Workforce mobility is linked with improved productivity and enables the flow of workers to respond to the ups and downs of business demand and economic conditions. Unfortunately, workforce mobility in Australia's construction industry is hampered by inconsistent state and territory occupational licensing regimes and a lack of mutual recognition. This is exacerbating workforce shortages and reducing productivity, leading to delayed projects and increased costs.

Master Builders supported the 2018 recommendations in the Shergold-Weir Building Confidence Report to create a nationally consistent occupational registration framework which would enable states and territories to reduce inconsistencies in licensing and registration and create a minimum benchmark for the construction industry across Australia. Similarly, Master Builders supported the Automatic Mutual Recognition of occupational licensing reforms in 2021 and highlighted the need for these processes to be developed together. Unfortunately progress on these reforms has stalled and as such so have the potential productivity and efficiency gains.

### Recommendation

**The Federal Government should reinvigorate the national registration framework for building practitioners and incentivise state and territory governments to fully implement automatic mutual recognition reforms across all licensed occupations.**

In addition, the geographic mobility of construction workers, and the broader Australian workforce, is inhibited by the continued existence of inefficient taxes like stamp duties. Stamp duties have the effect of penalising workers who sell their home in one place in order to take up more suitable jobs in another location. In this way, stamp duties deprive both businesses and workers of mutually beneficial opportunities. More broadly, these taxes also prevent labour market interactions which could help match demand and supply more closely.

### Recommendation

**Settings in the tax system which obstruct labour mobility, including stamp duty, need to be identified and tackled.**



## Embracing a culture of life-long learning

Lifelong learning, also known as continuing professional development (CPD), is a well established and accepted practice in many industries and occupations, for examples doctors and teachers. However, the traditional view in construction that completing a qualification or an apprenticeship is all you need for a long and successful career remains surprisingly pervasive.

Australia's building and construction industry is evolving and many registered occupations, such as engineers and building surveyors, now have mandatory CPD requirements to maintain their registration. The pace the regulatory change, new product innovations, and technological advancements are placing pressure on the broader industry to embrace lifelong learning. Today, a Certification III is the beginning of the journey.

To remain competitive businesses need to constantly adapt and innovate and they need to support their employees to do the same. The willingness and ability to maintain skills, upskill and reskill is part of the modern working environment for both employers and employees.

In today's setting of skills and labour shortages employers and employees are working together to identify novel solutions for doing more with less while concurrently upskilling for the future. Courses and short qualifications through formal education channels and training credentialed by professional and industry bodies present opportunities for workers to gain valuable new skills without extended time away from the job.

Similarly, these shorter training programs offer the opportunity for workers to pivot within an industry sector enabling them to transition into a different, but related role without needing time out of the workforce to undertake a full qualification. In the construction industry this pathway is particularly important as it enables workers as they age to move from more physical roles on the tools to occupations that are easier on the body, such as estimating and scheduling.

### Recommendation

**Master Builders encourages industry participants to actively engage in further training to maintain occupational currency and to move into new roles. We also support mandatory continuing professional development for licensed occupations and value the use of unaccredited training to upskill the industry and respond quickly and effectively to emerging and niche skills and knowledge needs.**





## Improving business acumen

Construction has more small businesses than any other sector in Australia. One in every six Australian businesses are in the building and construction industry, and 98.7 per cent of these businesses are small, that is they have zero to 19 employees.<sup>26</sup> Many small business operators, particularly in the construction industry, are great at their trade, but not so much when it comes to the regulatory and administrative side of running their business.

Reducing the complexity and time spent by businesses on regulatory obligations and administrative tasks frees up time for the money-making activities. The less resources dedicated to regulatory activities the more resources – time, money and mental capacity – available for other business pursuits. This equals greater productivity. A business that can do more work makes more revenue, pays more tax, employs more people and pays higher wages.

Employment requirements, tax requirements, business registration, building standards, as well as licensing and other regulatory requirements are complex and use inconsistent language. These requirements are on top of administrative tasks such as marketing, business planning, and scheduling. While larger businesses have teams of people to look after their finance, human resources, legal,

procurement, strategy, and marketing functions, small business owners do not – small business owners wear all these hats while also, and critically, needing to do the revenue raising component of their business.

## Recommendation

**To improve business productivity, especially small business productivity, Master Builders calls on the Government to simplify regulatory requirements. Repealing unnecessary regulation, removing the technical jargon in favour of simple English, and ensuring Regulator Impact Statements assess the cumulative burden of regulation on small business will go a long way to freeing up some of the limited resources small businesses have.**

<sup>26</sup> ABS, 2022, Count of Australian Businesses including entries and exits, June 2018-June 2022. Released 25 August 2022

Additionally, in the building industry there are regulated Australian Standards that businesses must comply with under the National Construction Code. Businesses, however, cannot access these standards without a significant financial outlay. To improve access and ease of use, regulated standards should be available free of charge.

In addition to regulatory and administrative work, businesses continue to struggle with cost pressures, workforce shortages and economic uncertainty. Greater adoption and use of digital technologies has the potential to improve business systems, operational productivity and workplace tracking and communication, as well as reduce operating costs over the medium and longer term.

Businesses with fewer employees are typically time poor and undertake little or no assessment of their performance and overall management capability – a critical determinant in the adoption of best practice. Unsurprisingly with more small businesses than any other sector, MYOB research found that digitisation has taken little or no hold in around 20 per cent of construction businesses. They estimate that improving the digital capabilities of this cohort could provide a return on investment of around 25 to one.

### Recommendation

**Master Builders advocates for government incentives to assist small businesses to improve their management capability, harness digital opportunities and improve their digital skills, and for assertive action to ensure small businesses know how to access these incentives.**

### Recommendation

**The support available for employees through the Technology Investment Boost and the Skills and Training Boost is welcomed. Productivity outcomes could be further enhanced by ensuring sole traders, partnerships and small business owners are also eligible for these initiatives.**









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