



Monday 22nd September, 2025

Submission:

Jobs and Skills Australia - 2025 Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL) Consultations

This submission is provided on behalf of the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association (ASTMA), endorsed by the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the Association.

The Australian Sports Turf Managers Association is the peak national body representing Sports Turf Managers, Trades Workers, and professionals engaged in the management, maintenance, construction and presentation of sporting facility playing surfaces across Australia.

ASTMA strongly advocates for the inclusion of Unit Group 3425 – Sports Turf Managers and Trades Workers on the Core Skills Occupations List (CSOL) under the Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA). Specifically, we seek the inclusion of:

- 342531 – Sports Turf Manager
- 342532 – Sports Turf Trades Worker

In addition to these subcategories, it is essential that recognition extends to related occupation titles that fall within this group, including but not limited to: Golf Course Superintendent, Course Manager, Grounds Manager, Head Curator, Turf Manager, Qualified Greenkeeper, Greenkeeper, Foreman, Groundsman, Turfgrass Manager, Turf Tradesperson, Curator, Bowling Greenkeeper, and Agronomist.

The inclusion of these roles on the CSOL is necessary to address the critical and persistent workforce shortages faced by the industry, shortages that have been evident for many years and continue to significantly constrain the ability of employers to recruit suitably qualified staff.

The Importance of Sports Turf Occupations

Sports Turf Managers and Trades Workers play a pivotal role in Australia's sporting, recreation, and events landscape. Their work ensures that golf courses, stadiums, sports fields, racetracks, and community playing fields are maintained to the highest standards of safety, playability, and sustainability. These professionals combine expertise in agronomy, horticulture, environmental management, and modern turf technology to deliver surfaces that meet the demanding needs of both elite and community-level sport.

The scope and responsibility of these occupations extends far beyond general landscaping or grounds work. Turf professionals are required to:

- Manage and implement complex agronomic programs.
- Operate and maintain advanced turf maintenance equipment and technologies.
- Oversee staff and contractors responsible for large-scale sports facilities.
- Apply integrated pest management and environmental sustainability practices.
- Ensure that surfaces meet the safety and performance standards expected in elite competition.



The contribution of this workforce underpins Australia's reputation as a global sporting nation and supports significant economic activity in tourism, events, and recreation.

Workforce Shortages

For more than a decade, employers across the industry have faced ongoing difficulties in sourcing qualified Sports Turf Managers and Trades Workers. The situation has accelerated over the previous 3 to 4 years, indicating that these shortages are not temporary but structural, and unlikely to reverse in the short to medium-term without significant underlying structural change and investment.

Contributing factors to the current situation include:

- **Insufficient Domestic Training Output** – the number of graduates completing turf management qualifications falls well short of industry demand, and well short of comparative trade professional completions, with existing training providers also constrained by resource and enrolment limitations.
- **Demographic Pressures** – a large proportion of the existing workforce is approaching retirement age, with a clear (and increasing) gap of insufficient younger entrants to replace them.
- **Regional Challenges** – shortages are acute in regional and rural areas where local labour markets are limited, yet these areas host significant sporting and recreation infrastructure.
- **Skill Specialisation** – the highly specialised skills required in turf management cannot easily be sourced from adjacent occupations such as general horticulture, arborists, irrigation or landscaping - creating a unique labour market vulnerability.

The result is a chronic inability to fill vacant roles, delays in recruitment processes, and increasing pressure on existing staff. This impacts the quality of playing surfaces, increases operational risks, and limits the capacity of sport and recreation facilities to accommodate events and competitions at the required standard, or at all as is being witnessed at multiple community and elite sporting facilities throughout 2024 and 2025.

Alignment with JSA's Criteria for CSOL Inclusion

The inclusion of Unit Group 3425 in the CSOL is directly aligned with the assessment criteria outlined by Jobs and Skills Australia:

1. **Demonstrated Shortage** – persistent, industry-wide evidence of increasing job advertisements, unfilled vacancies and recruitment difficulties.
2. **Labour Market Relevance** – these roles are essential to the safe operation of Australia's expansive sporting and recreational infrastructure.
3. **Skill Level Appropriateness** – both the Sports Turf Manager and Sports Turf Trades Worker roles clearly sit within OSCA-defined skill levels and require qualifications and expertise not readily available in the wider labour market.
4. **National Impact** – shortages are evident in every state and territory, across metropolitan and regional areas, in facilities ranging from local community clubs to major international stadiums.

Why Inclusion Matters

Placing Sports Turf Managers and Trades Workers on the CSOL will provide employers with the ability to access skilled migration pathways to help alleviate shortages where domestic recruitment is not possible. This will:

- Ensure continuity in maintaining safe and high-quality sporting surfaces.
- Protect Australia's ability to host international tournaments, domestic competitions, and community sport.
- Support regional economies where sports facilities play a central role in community and tourism activity.
- Allow employers to recruit and retain staff in line with industry needs while continuing to develop local training and talent pipelines.

The Australian Sports Turf Managers Association strongly urges Jobs and Skills Australia to include Unit Group 3425 – Sports Turf Managers and Trades Workers, encompassing all associated occupation titles, on the Core Skills Occupations List.

The ongoing workforce shortages in this sector are severe, long-standing, and detrimental to the effective delivery of sport, recreation, and community events across the country. Inclusion on the CSOL will be a practical, impactful step to ensure that employers can access the skilled workforce necessary to support one of Australia's most visible and economically significant industries.

The Australian Sports Turf Managers Association and its members are willing to provide further information or participate in consultation to support this recommendation.

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Australian Sports Turf Managers Association

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] www.astma.com.au



Appendices

1. Jobs and Skills Australia (2025) - Occupation Data – May 2025, ABS Census of Population and Housing

Retrieved from: <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-and-industry/profiles/occupations/3623-greenkeepers>

- ABS, 2021 Census of Population and Housing based on place of usual residence.
- This is the distribution of employment by age group.
- The sum of age group percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

2. 2022 Golf Club Salary Census Report

2022 Golf Club Salary Census Report (2023), Golf Management Australia (GMA) and Golf Business Advisory Services (GBAS)

Retrieved from: <https://www.astma.com.au/services/hr-best-practice/wages-awards/>

3. ASTMA Sports Turf Management Industry Labour Assessment Survey

November 2025, Australian Sports Turf Managers Association