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Dear Professor Glover

2025 Core Skills Occupations List Consultation

The Council of Small Business Organisations Australia (**COSBOA**) welcomes the opportunity to participate in Jobs and Skills Australia's 2025 Core Skills Occupations List (**CSOL**) Consultation.

Small businesses constitute 97.2% of all Australian businesses and employ over 5 million people. Despite their economic significance, small businesses continue to face disproportionate challenges in accessing skilled workers. COSBOA's Small Business Skills and Training Needs Survey identified that 56 per cent of members identified that there is a skills shortage in their industry that is moderately challenging with 13 per cent identifying an acute skills shortage.

The CSOL represents a critical opportunity to address persistent skills shortages that continue to hamper small business growth and productivity across Australia. For small businesses without dedicated human resource departments or migration specialists, the CSOL's accuracy and accessibility are particularly crucial, as it often represents their only practical avenue for addressing persistent skills gaps that cannot be filled locally.

COSBOA remains concerned that the 2025 CSOL continues to overlook crucial occupations and fails to reflect the lived experience of small business owners across diverse sectors. The methodology in determining average salary levels for certain occupations, such as restaurant and cafe managers, is destined to ensure that skills shortages remain.

The hairdressing and barber industry are facing an acute skills shortage due to the way the industry is set up. Apprenticeship requirements, a predominately female workforce, move towards sole-tradership, and lack of 'job-ready' workers have all impacted the skills shortage facing the industry. There is strong need for overseas qualified hairdressers and barbers in Australia. Similarly, there are professions within the restaurant and catering industry that continue to experience significant shortages.

Specifically, increases to the Temporary Skills Migration Income Threshold (**TSMIT**) from \$73,150 to \$76,515 continue to significantly impact the ability of small businesses to recruit skilled labour in industries and occupations where the average salary is lower than the TSMIT.

COSBOA remains committed to working constructively with the Department to ensure the CSOL fulfils its potential as a practical tool for addressing Australia's skills challenges. However, we emphasise that without significant improvements to both the list itself and the migration pathways it enables, the CSOL will continue to fall short of meeting the needs of the small businesses that drive Australia's economy.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with Jobs and Skills Australia to further discuss these recommendations and contribute to developing a CSOL that truly serves the needs of Australian small businesses.

