



MASTER BUILDERS
A U S T R A L I A

Submission to Jobs and Skills Australia Core Skills Occupation List
2025

A Better, Safer and Fairer Building and Construction Industry

September 2025



WHO WE ARE

Master Builders is the nation's peak building and construction industry association, which was federated on a national basis in 1890. Master Builders' members are the Master Builder State and Territory Associations. Over 130 years, the Master Builders network has grown to more than 32,000 businesses nationwide, including the top 100 construction companies. Master Builders is the only industry association representing all three sectors: residential, commercial, and civil construction.

The Master Builders network also delivers vocational education and training through its network of registered and group training organisations across Australia. This includes trade qualifications in building and carpentry as well as ongoing professional development training.

Membership with Master Builders is a stamp of quality, demonstrating that a builder values high standards of skill, integrity, and responsibility to their clients.

Master Builders' vision is for a profitable and sustainable building and construction industry.

CORE SKILLS OCCUPATION LIST 2025 RESPONSE

Master Builders welcomes Jobs & Skills Australia's (JSA) Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) process and the opportunity to provide sector-specific input. The building and construction sector is strategically critical to Australia's economic security, social wellbeing and our ability to deliver the Government's housing and net zero objectives. That strategic role depends on an integrated workforce spanning land, design, trades, technical specialists and the vocational education system.¹

The 2024 Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL) Review introduces a Core Skills Stream Salary Threshold of \$73,150 per annum (indexed annually from 1 July 2024) for employer-sponsored Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT) applicants. This threshold aligns with the average annual earnings (\$97,344 for both full time and part time) of construction workers in Australia.

Without reform to the regulations (*Migration Regulations 1994 - Reg 2.72*) governing the application of this measure to ANZSCO Major Group 3 (Technicians and Trade Workers), potential building and construction industry participants miss out on expedited pathways.

Master Builders recognises that while the CSOL is a useful short-term tool for retrospectively identifying current and emerging occupations for skilled migration purposes, it has inherent limitations in a rapidly evolving workforce. This is particularly true for the housing and construction sector, which has experienced significant cultural, technological, and innovative changes even in the past year.

The CSOL's prescriptive, point-in-time approach cannot fully capture the dynamic nature of workforce demand. Relying on short-term indicators, such as current shortages, to inform long-term migration decisions risks locking the system into addressing yesterday's problems rather than preparing for the workforce Australia will need tomorrow.

Master Builders suggests that the government should set strategic boundaries to ensure migration supports long-term structural needs rather than reacting to short-term fluctuations.

Within this context, ensuring the construction workforce can meet both current and future demand requires a clear understanding of the sector's critical occupations and the roles they play in delivering housing, infrastructure, and broader economic objectives.

Australia's future prosperity is closely tied to the capacity and productivity of its building and construction industry. The sector is central to delivering housing, particularly under the National Housing Accord, where governments and industry have committed to constructing 1.2 million well-located homes over five years. Achieving this target will require sustained and immediate workforce growth across a wide range of construction occupations.

The industry is also pivotal to achieving Australia's legislated net-zero emissions by 2050 and interim reduction targets. New dwellings must meet higher energy efficiency standards under the National Construction Code, and millions of existing homes will require upgrades to insulation, glazing, heating and cooling systems, and electrification. Meeting these objectives will demand unprecedented numbers of skilled tradespeople, technicians, surveyors, assessors, and site supervisors.

Beyond housing and energy transition, construction underpins broader national priorities. Health, education, defence, and infrastructure investment programs all rely on a reliable supply of skilled tradespeople and construction managers to deliver the facilities and assets essential to these sectors.

¹ [Master Builders Australia Construct your Career | Ultimate Career Guide to Jobs in Building and Construction](#)

At the same time, the industry faces systemic workforce pressures, including chronic shortages across core trades, declining apprenticeship completion rates, demographic challenges, and the cyclical nature of construction work. Retention gaps further exacerbate these pressures, with many workers leaving before establishing long-term careers. In this context, skilled migration acts as an essential complement to domestic training, providing a mechanism to address persistent workforce shortfalls rather than a substitute for homegrown talent.

Master Builders recommends, as part of the future review of the CSOL, that Government considers whether the current model is fit for purpose for the future needs of the economy.

In the interim, within the existing framework, Master Builders' response to this consultation is structured in three parts:

1. Acknowledge JSA's 2024 CSOL occupations relevant to construction and housing
2. Identification of additional targeted occupations that must be included in the 2025 CSOL to ensure the workforce system is complete, responsive, and future-ready.
3. Considerations for improving the CSOL to be future-focussed and supportive of labour market behaviours

CONTINUATION OF EXISTING CSOL CONSTRUCTION-RELATED OCCUPATIONS

Master Builders supports the continued inclusion of core construction occupations. These form the backbone of housing and infrastructure delivery and are critically important to Australia's future prosperity. Occupations such as **Building Inspectors (312113)**, **Surveying or Spatial Science Technicians (312116)**, **Architectural, Building and Surveying Technicians nec (312199)**, **Civil Engineering Draftspersons (312211)**, **Civil Engineering Technicians (312212)**, **Civil Construction Leading Hands (312431)**, **Construction Site Supervisors (312432)**, and **Construction Estimators (312114)** are essential for site set-out, statutory approvals, civil works, quality control, and cost estimation. Without these roles, projects cannot progress from design to delivery, and housing supply targets under the National Housing Accord cannot be achieved. These occupations are also vital to implementing low-energy and Net Zero-compliant designs.

Equally important are mechanical, electrical, electronic, and HVAC trades, including **Electronic Engineering Technicians (312412)**, **Electrical Engineering Draftspersons (312311)**, **Electrical Engineering Technicians (312312)**, **Mechanical Engineering Draftspersons (312511)**, **Mechanical Engineering Technicians (312512)**, **Industrial Electricians (381233)**, **Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics (342111)**, **Electrical Linesworkers (342211)**, **Technical Cable Jointers (342212)**, **Electronic Equipment Trades Workers (342313)**, **Electronic Instrument Trades Workers, General (342314)** and **Special Class (342315)**, **Cablers (Data and Telecommunications) (342411)**, **Telecommunications Cable Jointers (342412)**, **Telecommunications Linesworkers (342413)**, and **Telecommunications Technicians (342414)**. These occupations underpin the decarbonisation of buildings, electrification of heating and cooling, and deployment of smart building and energy systems. They also support off-site manufacture, maintenance, and grid-interface works, with demand amplified by NCC 2025 requirements and jurisdictional Net Zero programs.

Metal, fabrication, and structural trades, including **Sheetmetal Workers (322211)**, **Metal Fabricators (322311)**, **Welders (First Class) (322313)**, **Fitters (General) (323211)**, **Fitters and Turners (323212)**, **Fitter-Welders (323213)**, **Metal Machinists (First Class) (323214)**, and **Metal Fitters and Machinists nec (323299)**, are essential for structural frames, prefabrication, modular construction, and low-carbon materials manufacturing. The ability to scale domestic prefabrication and strengthen local supply

chains depends on these skilled occupations. **Automotive Electricians (321111)** are also relevant where electrification of equipment is required.

Core building trades and finishers, such as **Bricklayers (331111)**, **Stonemasons (331112)**, **Carpenters and Joiners (331211)**, **Carpenters (331212)**, **Joiners (331213)**, **Floor Finishers (332111)**, **Painters (332211)**, **Glaziers (333111)**, **Plasterers (Wall and Ceiling) (333211)**, **Renderers (333212)**, **Roof Tilers (333311)**, **Wall and Floor Tilers (333411)**, **Concreters (371231 / 821211)**, **Cabinetmakers (394112)**, **Builder's Labourers (821111)**, **Fencers (821311)**, **Building Insulation Installers (821411)**, and **Structural Steel Construction Workers (821611)**, are directly responsible for delivering homes. These trades provide the fundamental material and labour inputs, with thermal envelope trades being critical to both building durability and achieving Net Zero energy targets. Many of these occupations are already classified by JSA as in shortage or in the retention-gap cohort, and Master Builders can provide workforce vacancy, apprenticeship, and employer survey data to reinforce their CSOL status.

Specialist trades in plumbing, mechanical services, gasfitting, drainage, roof plumbing, and fire protection, including **Airconditioning & Mechanical Services Plumbers (334112)**, **Drainers (334113)**, **Gasfitters (334114)**, **Roof Plumbers (334115)**, **Plumbers (General) (334116)**, and **Fire Protection Plumbers (334117)**, are indispensable for building safety and functionality. These roles are also pivotal in retrofit and new-build projects aligned with electrification programs and Net Zero initiatives.

Finally, management, maintenance, and estimation occupations, including **Construction Project Managers (133111)**, **Project Builders (133112)**, **Maintenance Planners (312911)**, **Metallurgical or Materials Technicians (312912)**, and **Mine Deputies (312913)** ensure projects remain on schedule, materials are appropriately selected, life-cycle planning is integrated, and overall construction resilience is maintained. These roles are already recognised on the CSOL, and Master Builders supports their continued inclusion.

These occupations should continue to be recognised not as prescriptive points on a list, but as part of a responsive, employer-validated system. By the time employers turn to the CSOL, local labour markets have already been tested, and the need for migration is established. Ensuring these core and emerging construction occupations remain on the CSOL supports long-term workforce sustainability, housing delivery, and Australia's broader economic and social objectives.

OCCUPATIONS TARGETED FOR CONSULTATION

Master Builders strongly recommends that the following occupations currently on the targeted for consultation list be included on the CSOL. Together, these occupations form an integrated network of occupations critical to housing and construction in Australia. Delivering housing and Net Zero requires integrated teams. Occupations that enable land release, ensure regulatory compliance, supervise and instruct, perform critical specialist tasks (waterproofing, concreting), or lift workforce capability (VET & adult literacy teachers) must be included in CSOL so employers can reliably sponsor temporary skilled workers while domestic training capacity scales.

Planning, surveying and design

- **241133 Urban Designer:** urban design shapes density, transport-oriented development and the feasibility of low-energy precincts; urban designers help translate government housing targets into buildable precincts and are central to deliverable higher-density housing.
- **241232 Engineering Surveyor; 241234 Land Surveyor; 312135 Surveying Technician:** accurate surveying is the gate that unlocks subdivision, title creation and buildable lots. Without

surveyors, site constraints delay starts and increase developer risk. Surveying capacity is a clear enabler of housing supply at scale.²

- **241931 Building Surveyor:** building surveyors are essential for compliance, NCC verification and timely occupancy approvals; they directly affect time-to-market for dwellings and complex apartment projects.³

Materials, engineering professionals and technicians

- **243133 Materials Engineer; 243999 Engineering Professionals nec; 313999 Engineering Technicians nec; 312131 Architectural Technician; 312199 Building and Landscape Designers and Technicians nec; 312232 Energy Assessor:** these roles are essential for material selection (including low-carbon alternatives), structural performance, and verifying energy performance. Energy assessors in particular are central to implementing NCC 2025 energy provisions and retrofit programs; materials engineers support low-carbon concrete/steel strategies. Inclusion ensures employers can sponsor specialists to accelerate low-emission construction and quality control.⁴

Site supervision, leading hands and quality control

- **312431 Civil Construction Leading Hand; 312432 Construction Site Supervisor; 312114 Construction Estimator:** supervisors and leading hands translate design into safe, productive site practice. A shortage in these roles creates downstream bottlenecks (delays, rework, safety incidents). Estimators are crucial to accurate cost forecasting and procurement (including for low-carbon materials).

Trades that are small but critical

- **369933 Waterproofer:** waterproofing is essential for building durability, preventing moisture-related damage, and protecting occupant health. Skilled waterproofers ensure the long-term performance of energy-efficient building envelopes, making them critical to achieving both durability and Net Zero performance outcomes.
- **371231 Concreter:** concrete is one of the three fundamental construction materials (the three elements being concrete, steel, and timber). Concreters enable foundations, slabs and structural elements; shortages here directly stall new builds. Concreting is both highly specialised on-site work and increasingly linked to low-carbon concrete techniques that require specialist skills.

Additional electrical/mechanical trades closely aligned to existing CSOL occupations

- **381232 Electrical Fitter; 381233 Industrial Electrician:** these occupations are closely related in skill content to Electrician (General) (341111), which is already on the CSOL. The operational difference is small while the labour market pressure is similar. Excluding them while including Electrician (General) would create arbitrary gaps. JSA's methodology already recognises occupational family spillovers; therefore, Master Builders asks for consistent treatment.

Housing policy and social capability roles

² [The nuts and bolts of the Australian Construction industry | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

³ [NCC 2025 worked examples \(public comment welcome\) - DCCEEW](#)

⁴ [Energy efficiency | ABCB](#)

- **411634 Housing Officer:** housing officers support allocation, tenancy management and interface between construction delivery and social/affordable housing programs; their inclusion supports the social outcomes of housing supply and is consistent with the CSOL's remit to support sectors of national significance.

Vocational education and adult foundation skills

- **252231 Vocational Education Teacher; 259931 Adult Literacy / Numeracy Teacher:** the VET pipeline and adult foundation skills underpin every element of the construction workforce. NCVER shows completion and attrition issues among apprentices; NAPLAN/PISA and national reporting demonstrate that many young Australians and adults do not meet desirable literacy/numeracy standards. Investing in VET teachers and adult literacy instructors is a direct workforce intervention: better training outcomes, higher apprentice completion, and improved employability. Without targeted inclusion and support for these educators, domestic pipeline constraints will persist, and migration will be a recurring necessity rather than a complement.^{5 6 7 8}

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS FOR A RESPONSIVE SKILLS AND OCCUPATIONS SYSTEM

Government commitments under the National Housing Accord and to a Net Zero economy are generating unprecedented demand for skilled construction workers, yet the industry continues to face long-standing workforce shortages, declining apprenticeship completions, and high attrition rates. The current CSOL methodology, however, is retrospective and point-in-time, relying on short-term indicators that cannot reliably capture the dynamic nature of workforce demand. This creates a risk that migration settings respond to yesterday's problems rather than preparing for tomorrow's needs.

Master Builders Australia recommends that the CSOL should not be treated as a prescriptive, stand-alone tool. Its retrospective nature and reliance on limited labour market data mean it can underrepresent emerging occupations and fail to reflect rapid technological, cultural, and innovative changes in the housing and construction sector. Using the CSOL in isolation risks misaligning skilled migration with long-term structural workforce needs.

Instead, a sector-based approach would better align migration settings with national priorities such as housing supply and the clean energy transition. This approach could be underpinned by a straightforward occupational density analysis, which measures the ratio of an occupation's employment within a given industry to its prevalence across the wider economy. By highlighting which occupations are disproportionately employed in priority industries, occupational density provides a robust evidence base for identifying priority occupations.

Practical steps must be taken to ensure the CSOL remains functional for employers and the industry. Accordingly, the 2025 CSOL should:

- Retain essential construction occupations already identified in the 2024 list, including bricklayers, carpenters, plumbers, surveyors, project managers, and electrical and mechanical trades, which form the backbone of housing delivery and the built environment.

⁵ [NCVER New Apprentice and trainee data 2025](#)

⁶ [Historical time series of apprenticeships and traineeships in Australia from 1963 to 2024: infographic](#)

⁷ [PISA 2022 Results \(Volume I and II\) - Country Notes: Australia | OECD](#)

⁸ [Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment](#) (Foundation Skills)

- Include targeted occupations highlighted in this submission, such as urban and building surveyors, energy assessors, civil construction supervisors, concreters, waterproofers, electrical fitters, vocational education teachers, and adult literacy instructors. These occupations are critical for approvals, compliance, technical specialisations, site leadership, and workforce pipeline development. Their inclusion ensures employers can reliably sponsor temporary skilled workers while domestic training capacity scales.

Beyond the immediate 2025 list, Master Builders recommends a shift towards a guidance-based, stewardship model for future CSOL iterations. The government should set strategic boundaries to support long-term structural workforce needs, while employers validate actual labour shortages through the recruitment and sponsorship process. This model recognises the interdependence of construction, training, and Net Zero delivery, allowing the CSOL to remain responsive to emerging occupations, technological change, and evolving workforce pressures, rather than being narrowly prescriptive or reactive.

The construction workforce operates as an integrated system: land supply, planning, surveying, design, project management, trades, finishers, and educators all interlock. If any component is missing, housing targets slip, costs rise, and Net Zero outcomes are delayed.

A 2025 CSOL that reflects both immediate workforce needs and a broader stewardship model will ensure Australia can deliver the homes, infrastructure, and sustainable buildings required to underpin every other sector of the economy, while building a more resilient and future-ready domestic workforce.

Appendix I – Broader migration issues

The construction sector is already one of the most migrant-reliant industries in Australia. Around 24 per cent of the 1.37 million-strong construction workforce is foreign-born, compared with 27 per cent across the economy overall.

Yet, this reliance is not evenly distributed. Only 2.8 per cent of construction workers arrived in the last five years, a smaller share than in other industries. This shows that while construction depends heavily on migrants, it is not drawing strongly from recent arrivals, which reflects systemic barriers in the visa, licensing and skills recognition system.

At the same time, there is significant under-utilisation of skilled migrants who are already here. More than 18,000 permanent migrants in Australia hold qualifications in building and construction but are working below their skill level, largely due to slow, expensive and fragmented recognition of overseas skills and licensing. This also includes misalignment between recognition of qualifications and licensing offshore – prior to arriving in Australia – and enabling access to the workforce they seek to enter when onshore. If these workers were activated into the industry, Master Builders analysis demonstrates they could contribute around 30,000 additional homes towards Housing Accord targets over the next five years.

Over the past five years, about 45 new homes were completed per 100 tradies each year on average. The implications of this for new housing supply are obvious: for every 1,000 newly recognised tradies we'll get an extra 400 new homes per year – or 2,000 more homes over a five-year period.

This mismatch is critical in the current context. The Government has committed to building 1.2 million homes under the National Housing Accord by 2029, at the same time as legislated Net Zero commitments require a rapid expansion of energy-efficient new builds and large-scale retrofits. JSA's own analysis shows the sector will need around half a million additional workers in the coming years to meet these targets. Yet the apprenticeship system is faltering, with in-training numbers down to 112,000 in 2024 and commencements falling by 7 per cent year-on-year.

Migration is therefore not a substitute for training but a complementary and critical mechanism:

- It allows employers to fill urgent gaps in core trades such as bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing, concreting, waterproofing and electrical services.
- It buys time for domestic reforms in education, training and licensing to take hold.
- It supports regional delivery where local training pipelines are weakest.
- It enables faster uptake of new construction methods and low-emissions technologies.

Solutions beyond the CSOL:

- **Construction-specific visa pathway:** Create a dedicated **Construction Skills Pathway** visa (modelled on Canada/New Zealand/UK) to attract qualified tradespeople. This would be an uncapped, fast, cost-effective route to permanent residency with mutual recognition of equivalent overseas trade qualifications. Existing employer-sponsored visas should also be made cheaper and quicker to process.

This would also make Australia a more attractive destination for skilled workers in global competition, while maintaining strong standards through accredited recognition and targeted integrity checks. Importantly, this pathway would not displace domestic training efforts, but complement them, providing immediate relief to labour shortages while the apprenticeship

and VET systems rebuild capacity to deliver the long-term workforce needed for the Housing Accord and Net Zero transition.

- **Simplify skill and license recognition:** Streamline the certification process for qualified migrants. Mutual recognition of comparable qualifications (via international MRAs) should be expanded so many foreign-trained tradespeople can avoid costly reassessments. Support nationally accredited gap-training courses for common trades (e.g. carpenters/bricklayers), reduced English-language requirements for non-licensed trades, and aligned national licensing to allow easier interstate and overseas skilled entry. These measures would get skilled migrants onto worksites faster and improve industry efficiency without compromising Australian standards.
- **Lower costs and levies:** Cut migration-related taxes on employers. In particular, it urges removing or reducing the Skilling Australia Fund (SAF) levy on sponsoring businesses (especially small and regional builders). Lower levies and fees would reduce the cost of hiring foreign-trained workers, helping keep construction costs down.
- **Education/training pathways:** Expand trade-related visa programs. For example, making better use of the government's **Job Ready** program to train international students in construction trades, building their skills and making them job-ready graduates. Additionally, widening the Graduate Visa to cover all Cert III+ qualifications in construction fields will help to grow the future skilled pipeline domestically.
- **Pathways to permanency for existing workers:** Make it easier for skilled building workers already in Australia to gain permanent residence. Ensure clear and enticing PR pathways, fast-tracking migrants who have construction qualifications and work in the industry. This would help retain valuable labour in a sector that already enjoys nearly one quarter of workers born overseas (and 2.8% arriving in the last five years).