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26 September 2025

Jobs and Skills Australia

Subject: Inclusion of Sports Turf Managers in the 2025 Occupation Shortage List (OSL)

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to formally advocate for the inclusion of *Sports Turf Managers* (greenkeepers) on the *Commonwealth Shortage Occupation List* (CSOL) and their inclusion in the 2025 *Occupation Shortage List* (OSL). Sports Turf Managers play a critical role in maintaining golf courses to the high standards expected by members, visitors, and the wider community. However, the industry is experiencing a significant and persistent shortage of qualified greenkeepers, which threatens the sustainability of golf facilities in NSW.

The Workforce Shortage Challenge

The shortage of qualified greenkeepers has been a long-standing issue in NSW and across Australia. Anecdotal evidence and regular communication within our 368 members have highlighted the ongoing and increasing difficult issue with labour shortages within our golfing industry. Industry data also highlights the scale of this challenge. A recent survey conducted by *Australian Sports Turf Management Association* (ASTMA) concluded the summary below. The full results of the survey are attached for detailed reference:

2024 Sports Turf Management Industry Labour Assessment Survey Nov/Dec 2024

- In the past 12 months, approximately 2,100 job vacancies were recorded across the industry (based on ASTMA and Seek job postings).
- The fulfilment rate for greenkeeper roles stands at 70%, leaving a shortfall of around 600 unfilled positions.
- A 2023 member survey found that over 65% of golf facilities were operating below their required turf management staff levels.
- New South Wales alone accounts for approximately 35% of national job vacancies, with an estimated 735 open positions and 220 remaining unfilled.

For years, many NSW golf clubs have relied on sponsoring overseas greenkeepers to help fill this skills gap. Removal of greenkeepers from the CSOL has significantly disrupted this recruitment pathway, leading to operational challenges and declining maintenance standards in golf courses across NSW.

The Broader Benefits of Golf

The importance of golf courses extends far beyond recreation and sport. According to the Australian Golf Industry Council's 2023 report (attached for reference) the industry provides substantial economic, social, and environmental contributions, including:

- **Economic Impact:** Golf generates \$3.3 billion annually in total benefits and contributes \$10.3 billion in household expenditure, supporting 27,800 full-time equivalent jobs.
- **Health and Social Benefits:** Golf improves the physical and mental well-being of 3.5 million Australians, saving the healthcare system an estimated \$49 million annually.
- **Environmental Contributions:** Golf courses provide \$890 million in environmental benefits per year, including urban cooling, biodiversity support, and stormwater management.

The Need for Sports Turf Managers on the OSL

Without qualified greenkeepers, golf courses face severe risks to their maintenance and operational viability. The current workforce shortages impact not only the aesthetics and playability of courses but also the ability of clubs to function as valuable community assets. Furthermore, many of NSW's leading golf course superintendents originally entered the country through sponsorship programs and have since made significant contributions to the industry and their local communities.

Given these challenges, we strongly urge *Jobs and Skills Australia* to recognize the critical shortage of sports turf managers and recognise the occupation shortage on the OSL. Doing so will support the golf industry's sustainability, protect the economic and environmental benefits it provides, and ensure the long-term viability of NSW and Australia's golf courses.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your commitment to addressing workforce shortages and look forward to your support for sports turf managers in their inclusion the OSL.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature Block]