

Submission to Jobs and Skills Australia – CSOL Consultation 2025

From: Royal Perth Golf Club

Subject: Reinstatement of Sports Turf Manager/Trades Worker (Greenkeeping) on the Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL)

Club Profile

Our club, Royal Perth, was founded in 1895 and has been located in South Perth since 1908. We have 1200 playing and 400 non-playing members which we host 50,000 rounds of golf annually. The club employs 55 full-time equivalent staff across turf, golf operations, hospitality, and administration.

The course has hosted multiple national and state golf events as well as contributes significantly to our community by hosting multiple charity and local school events. Our course quality and member experience depends directly on having sufficient skilled turf staff.

Labour Market Challenges

Despite local advertising and recruitment efforts, we continue to face challenges recruiting the necessary qualified turf staff to maintain a full staff roster:

- In 2024, we advertised 4 turf positions and received only 1 suitable applicants, a skilled worker without working rights here in Australia.
- At present, 1 role remain unfilled, impacting our ability to upgrade and maintain the course to the standards expected by members and guests.
- During our busiest growing season (Spring through Autumn), we are forced to rely on unskilled casuals. These arrangements are unpredictable and stressful for our team environment.

Until October 2024, the option to sponsor permanent, qualified greenkeepers from overseas was an important component of our workforce strategy. The removal of turf roles from the CSOL has closed this pathway and left us unable to plan sustainably.

Operational Impact

Staff shortages directly affect course presentation and member experience:

- Reduced mowing, bunker raking, and irrigation monitoring has led to poor and inconsistent playing surfaces, over irrigating due lack of staff on hoses hand watering dry spots, weed infestation and poor Biodiversity management.
 - Planned course improvements and upgrades have been delayed due to insufficient labour capacity.
 - Hosting tournaments community events are at risk if course standards fall below competition requirements.
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Environmental Benefit of Golf Courses

Golf courses, when sustainably managed, can provide meaningful environmental benefits. Their expansive green spaces act as natural carbon sinks, with turfgrass, trees, and native vegetation absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, which helps improve local air quality. The vegetation also traps dust and particulate matter, reducing pollution in surrounding areas. Many golf clubs incorporate native plants and create habitats for birds, pollinators, and small mammals, enhancing biodiversity. Additionally, well-maintained courses can serve as green buffers in urban areas, cooling the local microclimate and reducing the overall carbon footprint by offsetting emissions.

Economic and Community Contribution

Our club generates an annual turnover of approximately \$5 million, supports 55 staff, and hosts 2 major charity events each year.

Since COVID, golf has continued to grow strongly in participation and plays a vital role in our local community and economy. Maintaining course quality is therefore not only a sporting matter but also critical to sustaining this growth and the economic activity it generates. Poorly maintained courses not only impact our members but also:

- Reduce visitor rounds and green-fee revenue.
- Threaten the overall viability of the club and our role in the community.

The loss of access to skilled overseas greenkeepers therefore has implications well beyond our club — it impacts sport, tourism, and community wellbeing.

Skills and Training

Turf management is a highly specialised profession requiring knowledge of:

- Agronomy and plant science.
- Irrigation systems and water conservation.
- Pest and disease control.
- Sustainability and environmental stewardship.

These are not interchangeable with general horticulture or unskilled labour. A qualified greenkeeper has unique expertise that cannot be substituted by casual or untrained staff.

While we are committed to training apprentices and developing local staff, the pipeline alone cannot meet current demand — particularly as experienced greenkeepers continue to leave the industry for other sectors.

Request

We urge Jobs and Skills Australia to reinstate Sports Turf Manager/Trades Worker (greenkeeping) roles on the Core Skills Occupation List. Doing so will:

- Provide clubs with a sustainable pathway to secure skilled staff.
- Support the quality and international reputation of Australian golf courses.
- Safeguard the economic and community contributions of the golf sector.
- Ensure clubs can continue to deliver safe, sustainable, and environmentally responsible facilities for their communities.