

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

WOMEN IN BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION

- › To bring more women into building and construction, change must continue. Master Builders recommends action is taken to:
 - › Enhance existing programs to provide networking and mentoring opportunities for young women.
 - › Promote good culture and safety practices – there is no room in the building and construction industry for bullying, harassment, assault, suicide, misogyny, racism, discrimination or gender-based violence.
 - › Give young women access to unbiased careers education and information, including the opportunity to try different trades and get time on the tools.
 - › Remove the bias towards higher education and give young women the same opportunities as their male counterparts to pursue trade apprenticeships if they choose to do so.
 - › Make the balance between motherhood and a trade career easier to strike.
 - › Direct more funding towards programs, education, facilities, information, and forums that promote building and construction careers to women, and support them on the journey, and strive for equality.
 - › Provide parents with information to help them understand and support their children in pursuing construction careers.

APPRENTICES IN BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION

- › Governments, with input from industry and employers, research, develop and fund the implementation of a rolling apprentice commencement and retention strategy.
- › To promote the value of Australian apprenticeship pathways to young people, their parents and careers advisors, Master Builders advocates for a coordinated national apprenticeship campaign that focuses on bringing more people into building and construction training.
- › Government should invest heavily in programs that give potential apprentices a clear and practical understanding of what their apprenticeship, and future career pathways could be like.
- › Government should address the bias toward university, and invest in campaigns that overcome misconceptions, and also overhaul the quality, funding and availability of careers education in schools.
- › The apprenticeship incentive system should award commencement and completion bonuses to apprentices and their employers, as well as a wage subsidy throughout the apprenticeship.
- › All incentive payments should be tax-free, and a continuous employment bonus post-qualification might apply for apprentices and employers who continue their journey together.
- › Government should fund the cost differential so that hosting an apprentice through an industry-run Group Training Organisation like those in the Master Builders network costs the same as employing directly.
- › Government should fund the difference between employing a junior and an adult in an effort to incentivise more businesses to take on adult apprentices in building and construction.
- › Government should provide incentives to apprentices to encourage them to complete their Certificate IV. This should be in the form of an incentive payment upon completion of a Certificate IV in a building and construction trade, and/or a complete fee subsidy for the final year of study.
- › Government should fund a pilot program to support work experience placements in building and construction.
- › Government must ensure that, although TAFE is important, it is not the only beneficiary of funding or flexibility and, for example, should afford industry-run Registered Training Organisations (RTO) like those in the Master Builders network the benefit of self-accreditation.
- › Microcredentials should be properly funded and recognised by governments.
- › All Modern Awards enable flexible work arrangements and practices that are otherwise a barrier to, or disincentive for entry for apprentices.
- › Government should invest in maintaining the Jobseeker Handbook but also developing an online, interactive resource that helps students, parents and careers advisors alike get an in-depth, realistic and relevant understanding of what a career in building and construction looks like.

SKILLED MIGRANTS IN BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION

- › The Australian immigration system must better prioritise the skilled workers who are needed to support the economy and meet construction and infrastructure goals.
- › Appropriately skilled migrants must be better targeted and the process through which people can apply for particular visa streams should be made clearer.
- › Government must invest in creating a simpler visa system with lower costs, quicker processing times, better employment outcomes, and clearer pathways to permanency.
- › Government should remove or reduce the Skilling Australians Fund levy, especially in regional areas and for small businesses.
- › Migrants skilled in building and construction must be included in the scope of the Core Skills Occupation List.
- › Government must prioritise the processing of construction occupation visas, especially if any of those are included in the future Skills in Demand visa Core Skills stream.
- › All levels of government should invest in pilot programs that make it easier for skilled migrants to come to Australia and also for businesses to employ them.
- › All levels of government must ensure that migration pilots can be successful.
- › The Job Ready Program is better utilised by Government to support international students in trades to become skilled and able to join the building and construction workforce.
- › Government must develop a Construction Skills Pathway visa, similar to those in Canada, New Zealand and the UK that will ensure skilled migrants can apply for cost effective, fast visas that will provide options for permanency and embrace mutual recognition of comparable, or better, trade qualifications from other jurisdictions.
- › Existing employer sponsored visa pathways must become more affordable and have faster processing times.
- › Comparable, or better international qualifications must be identified and exempt from hefty skills assessment processes. Mutual recognition agreements (MRA) could be used to exempt migrants with comparable qualifications from needing a detailed skills assessment.
- › BuildSkills Australia should work with industry and Government to develop a pilot for a gap training course for plumbers, carpenters and bricklayers who have qualifications from comparable jurisdictions and are seeking to work in Australia.
- › English language standards for skills assessments should be reduced to 4.5 or 5.0 for migrant workers in non-licensed trades.
- › Migrants with qualifications and work experience from a comparable jurisdiction should be exempt from skills assessment requirements and processes via MRAs.
- › Government and industry should provide simpler and more accessible coaching for migrants on how to find a job in the industry – the higher education space is an example of success in providing support to international students.
- › All levels of government must work together to streamline occupational licensing requirements and ensure internationally comparable qualifications or requirements are quickly recognised without the need for long skills recognition processes.
- › Government should ensure pathways to permanent residency are clear and enticing for skilled migrants already in the country who have building and construction qualifications and experience. Fast-track these people to permanent residency if they are working in building and construction.
- › Government should expand eligibility for the graduate visa and graduate visa extension to all Australian Qualifications Framework Certificate III and above qualifications.
- › Provide free or low-cost skills assessments to people in the country on humanitarian or partner visas and who have building and construction qualifications and experience.
- › Government should reinvigorate the national registration framework for building practitioners and incentivise state and territory governments to implement automatic mutual recognition reforms across all licensed occupations.

LIFELONG LEARNING IN BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION

- > Government should provide financial incentives to apprentices to encourage them to complete their Certificate IV.
- > Industry participants must engage in continuous training and learning to maintain occupational currency.

BUSINESS ACUMEN IN BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION

- > BuildSkills Australia must ensure that building and construction training packages are fit for purpose and not only teaching people how to be skilled in their trade, but also how to run a business.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION

- > Government should ensure that the Fair Work system operates to support and enhance the goals of community, industry and government, and not act contrary to them or make them difficult to achieve.
- > In recognition of the unique structure and culture within the building and construction industry and its workforce, the Federal Government should move swiftly to establish a dedicated specific building and construction industry regulator with sole responsibility for enforcement of those industry specific laws, underpinned by strong investigation, compliance and enforcement powers. To achieve this, Governments must adopt the recommendations of Master Builders blueprint for positive industry change detailed in Breaking 'Building Bad'.
- > Workplace laws should avoid unnecessary restrictions on the way people work, including the right to be an independent contractor and for employer and employees to implement work arrangements that suit their needs – not the needs and unreasonable demands of unions.
- > Government should commit to genuinely preserving freedom of association laws, reconsider laws that give unions more say or more rights than ordinary everyday workers, and make sure right of entry rules are strengthened and properly enforced.
- > The Fair Work system should better recognise the needs of small business and encourage them to take on new workers, and actively support business and job growth instead of inhibiting it.
- > Bargaining laws require significant improvement to better help workers and business quickly and effectively put in place arrangements without ineffective red-tape and lengthy delays.
- > Abandon all changes negatively impacting the building and construction industry in the Fair Work Amendment Closing Loopholes Bill and Secure Jobs Better Pay Bill.

REGULATORY BURDEN IN BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION

- > To alleviate regulatory change pressures, the Government needs to make regulatory frameworks that are mandatory and freely available to access. In particular, all Australian and international standards that are legislated or mandated for use must be available for free to anyone required to implement them. Placing this important content behind paywalls makes complying with mandatory regulation expensive and in some cases impossible. It sets people in the building and construction industry up to fail in their regulatory responsibilities.
- > The functionality of the National Construction Code and its interaction with state and territory legislative frameworks must also be reviewed, as well as the operation of the Australian Building Codes Board to determine if they remain fit for purpose in serving the building and construction industry. Focus should be on whether the way in which regulation is designed, developed and reviewed is hindering the development of high-quality, fit for purpose building regulation and productivity.

