

SKILLED MIGRANT TRADESPERSONS

THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSING

What one migrant construction worker contributes to Australia's
detached home building over a career

Scope: this analysis covers detached houses only. It does not cover apartments, townhouses or other multi-unit dwellings.

Australia needs more homes, and more tradespeople to build them. This snapshot estimates the difference one additional skilled migrant, working in a construction trade, makes over a full 30-year career: how many detached houses they help build, and what that is worth to the economy.

21.7	\$1.88m	95%
additional detached homes built over a 30-year career	Gross Value Added (GVA) added to Australia over that career	of this contribution is genuinely additional, not replacing an existing worker

In brief

- Modelled on a skilled migrant working full-time in a construction trade from the day they arrive in Australia.
- Assumes an uninterrupted 30-year career. In practice, most tradespeople move between trades, sectors or careers well before this, so this is a best-case figure, not a typical outcome.
- Builds in the productivity gains the industry is targeting over the next five years through better technology, methods and procurement.
- Counts only the extra value this worker adds to the labour market, over and above what would have happened anyway under current migration settings (95%).

Methodology

Key assumptions

Assumption	Detail
Dwelling scope	Detached houses only.
Occupational base	Core residential construction occupations identified by BuildSkills Australia (trades, project management, estimating and related roles specialised to home building). Residential-specific workers in these occupations account for 23 per cent of workforce made up of these occupations.
Career length	30 years, full-time, from the day of arrival, with no gap or ramp-up period.
Additionality	95%. Assumes the migrant is genuinely additional to current migration settings, not simply replacing a worker who would have left anyway.
Value measure	Gross Value Added (GVA), a standard measure of economic contribution, not wages paid.
Productivity	A 5% industry-wide productivity gain, phased in over 5 years and held constant afterwards, consistent with Master Builders' Blueprint modelling.
Discount rate	7% real (central case), used to express future value in today's dollars.

Central case result

Metric	Result
Net additional detached homes, 30-year career	21.7
Net present value of economic contribution (GVA, 7% real)	\$1.88 million (2024-25 dollars)

The occupations covered

BuildSkills Australia identifies the core specialised trades and roles that deliver home building, distinct from generic support roles (e.g. accounting, IT) that also sit within construction firms. The occupations identified were solely used in this analysis.

Electrician (General)	Home Improvement Installer	Loader Operator
Carpenter	Interior Designer	Industrial Spraypainter
Construction Project Manager	Earthmoving Plant Operators (nfd)	Drainer
Plumber (General)	Crane, Hoist or Lift Operator	Stonemason
Project Builder	Excavator Operator	Solid Plasterer
Builder's Labourer	Roof Plumber	Building Insulation Installer
Painting Trades Worker	Fencer	Carpenter and Joiner
Building Associate	Land Economist	Joiner
Handyperson	Cost Clerk	Fire Protection Equipment Technician
Concreter	Glazier	Steel Fixer
Civil Engineer	Scaffolder	Airconditioning and Mechanical Services Plumber



Landscape Gardener	Floor Finisher	Lift Mechanic
Cabinetmaker	Gasfitter	Quantity Surveyor
Contract Administrator	Building and Engineering Technicians (nfd)	Electrical or Telecommunications Trades Assistant
Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic	Construction Rigger	Concrete Pump Operator
Architect	Construction Estimator	Construction Trades Workers (nfd)
Fibrous Plasterer	Civil Engineering Draftsperson	Earthmoving Labourer
Wall and Floor Tiler	Electrical Engineering Technician	Plumber's Assistant
Bricklayer	Roof Tiler	Bricklayers, and Carpenters and Joiners (nfd)
Electronic Equipment Trades Worker	Building Inspector	
Architectural Draftsperson	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications Trades Workers (nfd)	

What this figure does not tell you

- This is a best-case, full-career figure, not an average outcome. Around 8% of construction workers leave the industry each year.
- Additionality (95%) is an informed judgement, not a figure measured directly from migration statistics. It reflects a reasonable upper limit for economic and productivity gains from an unfilled domestic space based on the activation of a skilled migrant from arrival to retirement.
- GVA per worker is estimated by combining ABS industry data with BuildSkills Australia's workforce shares.
- All figures are in constant 2024-25 dollars (Present Value). Future inflation is not accounted for.

Sources

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Industry, 2024-25 (Cat. 81550DO001)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Building Activity, March 2026 (datacube_Building Activity: Australia)
- Australian Government, Office of Impact Analysis, discount rate guidance
- BuildSkills Australia, Housing Workforce Capacity Study, 2025
- Infrastructure Australia, 2025 Market Capacity Report
- The CIE / Master Builders Australia, Productivity Report, 2024