

Statement of Response to the Australian Government's 2025-26 Statement of Priorities

BuildSkills Australia welcomes the Australian Government's 2025–26 Statement of Priorities. As the Jobs and Skills Council for the building and construction, property and water industries, we fulfil our functions by providing strong industry stewardship, developing contemporary and high-quality training products, delivering robust workforce planning, and supporting the implementation, promotion and monitoring of nationally recognised training. Through this work, we contribute to national reform, strengthen productivity, and support the development of a skilled, inclusive and future-ready workforce.

This Statement of Response (Statement) aligns with the Government's priorities and outlines what has been delivered, what is underway, and the actions we will progress next.

1. GOVERNMENT POLICY PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES FOR ALL JSCS

1.1 Addressing Australia's productivity challenges; supporting a skilled, adaptable and inclusive workforce

BuildSkills is strengthening the workforce foundations of productivity by improving the quality, relevance and sequencing of training, and by advising on mobility and progression pathways.

BuildSkills has established a structured, evidence-driven workforce planning function that integrates labour market data, employer and union insights, and jurisdictional signals to inform a coherent national view of demand, skills gaps and participation barriers. This capability has enabled substantive input to national forums, bringing sector-validated insights on labour shortages, mobility constraints and the training levers most relevant to productivity uplift.

Productivity considerations are being explicitly embedded in training product reviews and consultation artefacts, so that decisions on scope, sequencing and implementation reflect the practical relationship between workforce capability, project performance and productivity outcomes across the built environment.

BuildSkills will provide targeted occupation-specific workforce intelligence for roles with the greatest potential to influence productivity and supply, strengthening government and industry decisions on investment, pathways and qualification modernisation.

Our Occupational Entry Requirements Mapping project will map minimum occupational entry requirements across building and construction, property and water to surface inconsistencies and barriers to mobility. Findings will be made available via a national, user-centred website to support skills recognition, inform regulatory reform and enable efficient cross-jurisdictional workforce movement.

1.2 Partnering with First Nations peoples to advance Closing the Gap

BuildSkills is embedding culturally safe engagement and shared decision-making into planning and training product work, consistent with the Closing the Gap National Agreement, including through the JSC Cross-Council Closing the Gap Working Group and the Cultural Safety in the Decarbonisation Transition Reference Committee.

A First Nations engagement model will ensure targeted representation in consultations and to reflect local employment and capability priorities in the evidence that guides our program of work. Engagement with employers, unions and equity organisations will help inform this engagement model.

1.3 Improving gender equity in gender-segregated industries

BuildSkills applies an inclusion-focused lens to workforce intelligence and product design to address barriers in entry, retention and progression across priority construction and water occupations.

BuildSkills has embedded gender-inclusive analysis in workforce planning and contributes to the JSC Cross-Council Gender Equity Working Group. To strengthen sector attractiveness and pathway visibility, we are

progressing our Careers Pathways Project, using virtual reality and a national digital media platform to present contemporary, inclusive information about roles across the built environment.

Engagement with employers, unions and equity organisations is deepening evidence on participation and progression, with a focus on translating insights into practice for providers and workplaces.

Gender-inclusive design features will be integrated into relevant training product updates, supported by practical guidance materials to assist consistent implementation by RTOs and employers.

1.4 Building a shared, evidence-based view through strategic workforce planning

BuildSkills has established a state-based engagement model that ensures our workforce planning activities are informed by the realities of local labour markets while operating through a consistent national lens. This model brings together structured engagement with national industry bodies and unions, jurisdictional agencies and regional employers, alongside consultation with training providers and workforce organisations across metropolitan, regional and remote communities. It enables BuildSkills to connect jurisdiction-specific insights to national priorities, to capture the diversity of workplace practices and capability needs, and to translate these insights into coherent, actionable evidence for government and industry.

BuildSkills has also made significant progress in promoting accessible, public workforce intelligence through the release of annually updated on-demand data dashboards on the BuildSkills Australia website. These include:

- Workforce Data and Projections, providing national and jurisdictional labour market modelling;
- Occupational Profiles, offering current and emerging insights across priority building and construction, property and water roles;
- Industry Profiles, summarising workforce characteristics, challenges and opportunities across the built environment; and
- State and Territory Dashboards, which consolidate localised insights to support governments, industry and providers in decision-making.

These tools improve transparency, reduce duplication across jurisdictions, and support consistent and evidence-based planning across the VET ecosystem.

Our “always-on” stakeholder engagement architecture that systematically captures insights from national bodies, unions, employers and training providers while grounding this intelligence in regional and local realities. The publication of BuildSkills’ 2026 Workforce Plan, alongside updated public data dashboards, will provide governments and industry with an accessible and credible evidence base to support workforce reform and program sequencing.

Work is continuing to strengthen the consistency and reach of this engagement model by embedding regional insights into cross-jurisdictional analysis and enhancing mechanisms to synthesise local consultation findings into a coherent national view. BuildSkills is also refining presentation of dashboards and workforce content to improve user experience and enable more effective policy and planning use across government, industry and the training sector.

BuildSkills will progress several research and strategy projects that expand national workforce intelligence, including a national Occupational Entry Requirements Mapping project to improve transparency of minimum entry standards and regulatory settings across jurisdictions, supporting more efficient labour mobility and clearer pathways into priority occupations; and a Demand-Side Impacts of Net Zero study examining how household and community-level decarbonisation trends reshape workforce demand and skill requirements across the built environment. Together, these projects will enhance the evidence base on which governments, industries and providers rely for coordinated workforce planning.

BuildSkills is expanding its project-level workforce planning capability, with early application focused on major national priorities such as workforce requirements associated with the 2032 Olympics. This includes working

closely with government agencies and industry to identify the occupational demand profile, sequencing and regional capacity constraints linked to Olympic-related infrastructure and delivery.

1.5 Responding to Digital and AI Transformation

Digital transformation, AI adoption and Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) are core considerations across BuildSkills' workforce planning and training product development activities. Current analysis highlights impacts on off-site construction, automation, remote monitoring, advanced water technologies and emerging MMC applications across design, manufacture and assembly. This includes insights from our current research project - Skills and Training Implications of Modern Methods of Construction: Across Design, Manufacture and Assembly - which examines the workforce, skilling and training shifts emerging from the increasing use of MMC in the Australian construction industry.

AI and digital transformation impacts are systematically captured in consultations and workforce analysis. A standing agenda item on AI/digital implications ensures stakeholder engagement consistently informs our understanding of role transformation, capability pressures and emerging skill needs across priority occupations.

BuildSkills will publish targeted workforce insights on digital and AI impacts and provide enhanced guidance to RTOs and employers on delivering and assessing digital and AI learning outcomes. This will include practical, workplace-aligned examples to support consistent and effective implementation across the training system.

In collaboration with selected industry partners, our Preparing Australia's Building and Construction Workforce for AI Integration project will map AI use cases, assess role-transformation risks, identify upskilling pathways and produce a National AI Readiness Heat Map to inform workforce planning and future training product development.

1.6 Applying Qualification Reform Principles to Strengthen Training Products

BuildSkills has strengthened its processes to ensure all training product updates consistently embed the Qualification Reform Principles. This ensures qualifications are streamlined, contemporary and future-ready; reduce duplication across the system; align with workforce needs across jurisdictions; and respond proactively to industry and learner expectations.

BuildSkills has introduced stronger governance and assurance practices to ensure Qualification Reform Principles are consistently applied across the training product lifecycle. Stage-gates that align with external Training Package Organising Framework (TPOF) requirements have been embedded, alongside enhanced industry validation evidence standards and comprehensive quality checks. A dedicated internal quality and assurance function oversees compliance and consistency, supported by a live risk register that monitors emerging issues in real time. Newly published products are subject to post-implementation reviews to capture stakeholder feedback and address issues promptly.

A national, cross-jurisdiction approach is being applied to reduce duplication and ensure training products remain aligned with current and emerging workforce needs. Insights from the State-Based Industry Engagement teams help identify alignment opportunities and overlaps across sectors, informing rationalisation of shared or similar training products. Labour market analysis and validated stakeholder intelligence guide prioritisation decisions, ensuring that effort is focused on high-impact updates and avoiding unnecessary or low-value churn across the training system.

BuildSkills is enhancing mechanisms that enable timely, evidence-based responses to industry and learner needs. Quarterly triage of industry insights and intelligence ensures emerging issues are identified and appropriately actioned. A single front-door engagement model provides clear service expectations and improved visibility of stakeholder requests. Fast-track pathways will continue to be used for minor updates and skills-set development where suitable, allowing for agile improvements without requiring a full training product review.

2. GOVERNMENT POLICY PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES FOR BUILDSKILLS

2.1 Supporting the national priority of delivering housing supply

BuildSkills has assembled a strong evidence base to inform practical responses to workforce shortages in residential construction and will continue to support the national priority of delivering housing supply, working with industry to address workforce shortages.

The Housing Workforce Capacity Study (September 2025) set out policy domains and options to expand workforce supply, strengthen pathways and improve productivity across priority trades. The Residential Worker Mobility Study (publication due approximately April 2026) is now going on to examine labour flows into and within the sector to inform mobility solutions.

Engagement with employers, unions and jurisdictions is aligning training product sequencing, consultation and advice with identified housing priorities, ensuring accelerated focus on the trades most critical to delivery.

Findings from current studies will be applied to project prioritisation and targeted advice to governments; BuildSkills will progress qualification and skill set updates consistent with housing workforce needs and support transparent implementation with providers.

2.2 Facilitating industry-led action on skills, training and VET System responsiveness

Technological and economic change is reshaping jobs and skills across the built environment. BuildSkills' VET Future Readiness Review (December 2025) established the foundation for understanding these shifts, drawing on extensive national consultations and data analysis. The Review confirmed the need for a more agile, industry-driven and responsive VET system that can keep pace with changing technologies, work practices and expectations.

This work has been strengthened by the VET Workforce Study for the building and construction, property and water industries (published February 2026). Through further wide-ranging consultations with RTOs across the country, the study highlighted persistent challenges in attracting new trainers, the complexity of the Certificate IV TAE, which is no longer fit for purpose and is a barrier to entry, and the pressure placed on existing trainers by compliance requirements, curriculum design demands and unpredictable Training Package updates. The study identified 12 workforce challenges and 13 practical actions, aligned with the national VET Workforce Blueprint, and confirmed BuildSkills' commitment to strengthening the trainer pipeline and promoting VET teaching as a viable and rewarding career.

These inputs have helped shape current and future national settings related to workforce needs, apprenticeship attraction and completion, and broader VET system responsiveness. Contributions will continue to major VET system consultations, as sought by Commonwealth Government departments and agencies on matters such as the Core Skills Occupation List, the Australian Apprenticeships Priority List, the Advanced Entry Trades Training Program and the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive Review, have reinforced the importance of industry-led insights and the capacity pressures highlighted in the Workforce Study.

BuildSkills will continue to use evidence from our VET Future Readiness Review and VET Workforce Study to guide future submissions, early co-design and policy engagement. A focus on practical, workplace-aligned implementation will help ensure new and updated products deliver meaningful outcomes. Ongoing industry engagement and structured feedback mechanisms will support continuous monitoring, inform adjustments over time and ensure the system remains responsive to both industry and VET workforce challenges.

2.3 Supporting the National Construction Industry Forum (NCIF) Blueprint for the Future

BuildSkills is reviewing the National Construction Industry Forum's (NCIF) Blueprint for the Future to determine how it aligns with the ongoing industry intelligence we collect through continuous engagement. This includes examining areas such as safe and respectful workplace training, nationally consistent skills recognition and

strengthened entry pathways. This ensures BuildSkills remains ready to provide ongoing evidence to NCIF implementation activities and maintains alignment between sector realities and future planning.

BuildSkills will work collaboratively with the NCIF and the referenced Jobs and Skills Councils to support the implementation of approved Blueprint actions. Our contribution will centre on providing ongoing workforce intelligence, aligning training product activity where relevant, and coordinating with other JSCs and jurisdictions to ensure cross-sector consistency.

2.4 Supporting Australia's Transition to Net Zero

BuildSkills is supporting Australia's transition to net zero by providing industry-led workforce intelligence, training product analysis and evidence-based insights that help governments, employers and the training system understand emerging workforce needs across construction-related activities. This includes skills requirements associated with clean energy infrastructure, renewable energy construction, electrification and energy-efficient building upgrades.

To inform national workforce planning, BuildSkills is preparing a draft discussion paper - *Building the Renewables Transition*. The paper examines workforce risks associated with the scale and timing of the renewables rollout, assesses system constraints, and identifies opportunities for more coordinated policy responses. It proposes a "just-in-time" workforce mobilisation framework, drawn from precedents in major public infrastructure delivery, to align workforce development with real project pipelines and reduce risks of overtraining or stranded labour.

Subject to DEWR approval, proposed project concepts will move to initiation to develop practical training solutions and transition pathways for occupations critical to renewable energy construction, electrification and energy-efficient building activity. Insights from our *Building the Renewables Transition* discussion paper and subsequent stakeholder feedback will inform this work.

Following public release of the discussion paper, BuildSkills will engage employers, unions, RTOs, other JSCs and governments to incorporate stakeholder feedback into future policy and program development. We will continue evidence gathering on electrification and energy-efficient construction, and coordinate sector input to support practical adoption of new workforce pathways and training products aligned to real project pipelines.

BuildSkills is preparing a set of targeted initiatives to support national net-zero workforce planning, focusing on skills requirements, transition pathways and workforce mobilisation across construction-related activities. Priority concepts include:

- **Construction Workforce Transition to Renewables:** An evidence-based strategy that identifies required skills, workforce transition pathways and mobilisation levers to support renewable energy construction.
- **Demand-Side Workforce Impacts of Net Zero:** A national analysis of how household and community energy upgrades – such as insulation, solar PV, batteries and efficient appliances – are reshaping workforce demand, with practical implications for policy and training responses.
- **Home Energy Efficiency - CPP41119 Review:** Ensuring the qualification remains fit-for-purpose and aligned to Energy Assessor requirements, particularly as demand grows under the Home Energy Rating Disclosure Framework.

2.5 Advancing the National Water Initiative

BuildSkills is supporting the advancement of the National Water Initiative through targeted workforce planning, national engagement and structured evidence gathering across all jurisdictions. A dedicated National Industry Engagement Lead for Water ensures consistent, high-quality engagement with utilities, operators, regulators and peak bodies nationwide.

BuildSkills' 10-Year Water Sector Workforce Roadmap is a comprehensive, evidence-based project that will identify the sector's workforce challenges and outline actionable strategies for the decade ahead. The project

comprises multiple phases, including detailed quantitative analysis, a national Water Sector Workforce Census, and Industry Co-design Roundtables to validate findings and shape practical, industry-led solutions.

To support governance and continuous insight, BuildSkills has also established a standing Water Advisory Body with representation from every state and territory. This group provides industry-specific guidance, ensures jurisdictional alignment, and strengthens the connection between workforce planning, operations, policy and training system requirements.

BuildSkills has strengthened national engagement through its dedicated Water Engagement Lead and the Water Advisory Body. Early workforce insights have been provided to inform development of the 10-Year Roadmap, including analysis of capability needs related to digital transformation, evolving service standards and the increasing importance of climate and system-resilience skills within critical operations roles.

As the Roadmap moves toward delivery, BuildSkills will provide workforce intelligence and analysis to support implementation and national coordination. This includes identifying training product priorities aligned to digital transformation in water operations, mapping required capability uplift across critical roles and developing transparent implementation support for RTOs and employers.

3. PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

BuildSkills operates a national network of Advisory Bodies to ensure deep industry expertise informs all aspects of workforce, skills and training development across the building and construction, property and water sectors. These seven (7) Advisory Bodies provide technical advice, sector-specific insights and practical guidance on emerging workforce needs, ensuring each subsector has a strong and representative industry voice in shaping training system priorities and sequencing.

This network is supported by a structured engagement architecture, including a state-based engagement model, National Industry Engagement Leads for Water and Property. Regular engagement occurs through a consistent cadence with state training authorities, state and local governments, and industry forums, allowing for coordinated project updates, consultation cycles and jurisdictional alignment.

BuildSkills also participates in and contributes to cross-JSC Working Groups, including those focused on Closing the Gap, Gender Equality, Qualification Reform, JSCs as a Business, VET Workforce, and AI/Digital Capability. Collaboration extends to cross-council projects such as the Civil Construction Review (training product review).

The success of the JSC Program depends on disciplined, transparent partnerships between industry, First Nations organisations, training providers, other JSCs, jurisdictions and the Department. BuildSkills' engagement model is designed to bring these stakeholders together to design and deliver practical workforce solutions and to foster cross-government connections that support effective implementation.

BuildSkills will continue strengthening national stewardship by publishing an annual stakeholder engagement summary and maintaining transparent updates on program progress. Collaboration with other JSCs will deepen where occupation clusters, pathways or shared training priorities span multiple sectors, ensuring insights from Advisory Bodies and jurisdictional engagement continue to inform national workforce planning and implementation.