

Department of State Development

CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE PLAN

FEBRUARY 2026



Cover image: Sarah Constructions
& TRP Photography



Government
of South Australia

Department of
State Development

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of State Development acknowledges and respects Aboriginal people as the state's first people and nations and recognises Aboriginal people as traditional owners and occupants of South Australian land and waters.

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Foreword

As South Australia's economy continues to grow, with record exports, low unemployment and an increase in building approvals, so too does our need for skilled workers.

While the state frequently outperforms the rest of the nation when it comes to construction work, labour market competition is fierce, with other sectors such as defence and mining both delivering new construction projects but also competing for the same skills needed in the construction sector.

We are entering a once-in-a-generation infrastructure boom, with major projects such as the AUKUS initiative, the River Torrens to Darlington Project, and the new Women's and Children's Hospital just a few examples of the transformative developments underway.

At the same time, under our ambitious Housing Roadmap, the South Australian Government has committed to delivering thousands more homes for more South Australians.

To meet these infrastructure demands, the building and construction industry is at the forefront of our economic future. One of the biggest contributors to employment and the economy in South Australia, the construction industry now employs around 90,000 people – growing by 44 per cent over the past decade – and contributed more than \$11.75 billion to the economy in 2024-25.

However, the industry still faces workforce pressures that we must overcome to keep our major infrastructure projects on track and deliver more housing for South Australians. Workforce modelling shows that the major infrastructure and housing projects will employ around 20,000 workers over the next five years, creating significant new job opportunities.

The construction industry needs a strategic, coordinated approach to addressing workforce needs – and that is what this plan is all about. The Construction Workforce Plan identifies three key outcomes – to grow a strong pipeline of workers, increase diversity, and support existing workers to upskill or reskill to remain in the industry.



The Plan harnesses initiatives across the spectrum of pathways and industry programs, apprenticeship support, university pathways, migration projects and more to achieve these outcomes, while increasing support for tailored construction pathways, addressing barriers to employment, and driving innovative and modern methods of construction to reorient skills and labour needs.

We've already seen strong growth in the construction workforce since coming into government, providing significant investments focused on this nationally important sector. Our collective efforts are producing a skilled and industry-aligned workforce enabling businesses to scale up and meet the challenge.

Small businesses, along with the bigger industry players and associations will all have a critical role to play, in partnership with government, in attracting and retaining workers.

Together, we can build a strong, skilled and future-proof construction industry workforce to meet South Australia's ambitious infrastructure goals and create greater economic prosperity for our state.

Hon Joe Szakacs MP
Minister for Trade and Investment
Minister for Industry, Innovation
and Science

Introduction

The construction industry is important for South Australia's economic and social development – contributing labour and capital to the economy, as well as providing infrastructure and housing critical to our quality of life in South Australia.

The construction industry covers building trades, but also plumbing, electrical, air-conditioning and other trades, as well as professional roles in project management, engineering, and supply, distribution and procurement.

The industry plays a key role in delivering on private investment in infrastructure, including for housing and commercial need, as well as the South Australian Government's major infrastructure projects. These major projects, cutting across transport, planning, energy, defence, and health will help us to realise our ambitions as a smart, sustainable and inclusive state and include the:

- River Torrens to Darlington Project
- Osborne Precinct Expansion
- Northern Water Supply
- New Women's and Children's Hospital

South Australia also has significant commitments under the National Housing Accord and South Australia's Housing Roadmap.


A construction workforce that is large and skilled enough to deliver on the infrastructure and housing needs of our state over the coming years is crucial. We know that the range of projects already in market will create significant demand for workers. The major projects provide the opportunity to grow a legacy construction workforce, but it is not without its challenges in an industry that is already experiencing workforce shortages.

Government, industry and other stakeholders all have a role to play in supporting the attraction, training and retention of construction workers. The vast number of businesses, range of stakeholders, and the timeframes for action highlight the need for a unified, cohesive vision to drive this.

The Construction Workforce Plan is that vision. The purpose of the Plan is to outline how government, industry and education and training will build a long-term and sustainable skilled workforce for the sector. This will ensure the industry is in a strong position to deliver on the major projects over the next 5 years, while setting up the industry for long-term growth and success. It is complemented by activity underway in the Defence Industry Workforce and Skills Action Plan, which supports development of related skills in fields such as engineering and metal fabrication that also benefit the construction industry.

Increased demand for housing supply and infrastructure will drive increased demand for apprentices and build the talent pipeline for the long-term benefit of the industry. Other initiatives, such as accelerated apprenticeship pilots and skilled migration will play a role in supporting industry to meet the short term demand driven by the major projects.

The Plan has been developed in collaboration with industry to specifically respond to the needs of South Australia's construction industry. It is complemented by national priorities and effort outlined in BuildSkills' 2024 Workforce Plan, and the National Construction Industry Forum Building and Construction Industry Blueprint in development.



Its implementation will be supported by a refreshed approach to construction workforce planning and training introduced through changes to the Construction Industry Training Fund Act 1993, with the Construction Industry Training Board a key partner in driving change under the plan. It aligns with the broader Skilled. Thriving. Connected. Skills Direction and its approach to combat persistent skills shortages, the Jobs and Skills Outlook and Investment Blueprint, all of which support South Australia's obligations under the National Skills Agreement – the multi-lateral agreement which provides funding for vocational education and training in all states and territories.

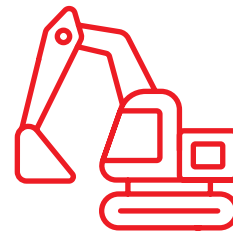
The Plan's specific focus on trade roles and professional and technical roles will see effort focused on the parts of the workforce where there is most need, and distinguishes it from other national plans, which consider the broader built environment sector.

Continued effort, partnership and uplift from all stakeholders will be critical to achieving industry's objectives.

South Australia's construction sector and workforce

The construction industry makes a significant contribution to the South Australian economy, in terms of goods and services produced and employment. The backbone of the industry is small business.

Sector

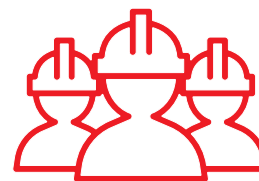


Contribution to the economy

- In 2024-25, construction recorded a gross value add of \$11,747 million to South Australia's economy - growth of 5.0% on the previous year, and higher than the national growth of 0.1%.

No. of businesses

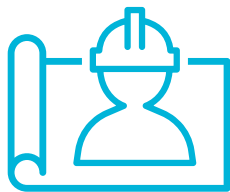
- There are around 27,600 construction businesses in South Australia.
- Nearly 92% of construction businesses employ four people or less.
- 1.4% of construction businesses employ 20 or more people.



Employment

- Supports around 90,000 jobs and represented 9% of total employment in South Australia in 2025.
- Over the past decade, employment in the sector grew by 44%, and by 10% from 2022.

Workforce



Apprenticeships & completions

- 2,400+ construction and electrical trades apprenticeship commencements each year.
- Individual completion rates for construction workers are around 63%.
- Industry highlights that apprenticeships are the main entry point for workers.



Qualification levels

- The highest non-school qualification for the majority of the construction workforce is a VET qualification.
- Training organisations and industry highlight a shortage in the construction trainer workforce, which is critical for ensuring a workforce pipeline.



Diversity and flexibility

- The median age of the construction workforce is around 39.
- In 2024, 19.2% of the construction workforce was aged over 55.
- Around 88% of the construction workforce are men – and estimates suggest as little as 4% of trades employees are women.
- Around 84% of the workforce is full time – and the majority who work part time are women.
- Around 1.5% of the workforce identify as Aboriginal – and in 2024, around 2.3% of total apprenticeship completions were Aboriginal students.

Sources:

NCVER (2025), Apprentices and trainees – March 2025, accessed through VOCSTATS

NCVER (2024), Completion and attrition rates for apprentices and trainees 2023: data tables

ABS (2021), Census

DSD internal data

Workforce demand and opportunities

The construction industry currently employs around 90,000 people – growing from 62,000 workers over the past decade.

While there was a decline in employment due to COVID-19 pandemic, there has been strong growth in the last few years which has exceeded projections. This includes significant growth the residential building construction workforce, which has trended upward consistently since the beginning of 2024.

With continued demand for housing and investment in major civil and commercial projects over the next 5 years, the sector is expected to show strong continued growth. The major projects (including South Australia's housing targets) will require around 20,000 workers over the next five years to fulfill immediate needs.

When factoring in turnover and retirement there will be a need to continue to focus on growing the new entrant pipeline into the industry, to meet immediate and future workforce needs.



20,000 workers required for the major projects.



Around 45 per cent of construction workforce demand will be driven by the residential sector. The housing pipeline, and the timing of workforce demand, will be influenced by factors such as land release, housing approvals, trunk infrastructure and services.



Strongest demand for construction and electrical trades.



Existing and emerging technologies - including modern methods of construction - provide opportunity to enhance productivity and reduce workforce demand.

Case study

River Torrens to Darlington Project

The River Torrens to Darlington Project is the final 10.5km section of the North-South Corridor, and will complete 78km of non-stop, traffic light-free motorway between Gawler and Old Noarlunga.

The Project, jointly funded by the South Australian and Australian governments, will be delivered by the River Torrens to Darlington Project Alliance, a consortium consisting of John Holland, Bouygues Construction, Arcadis Australia, Jacobs and Ventia, in partnership with the South Australian government.

The River Torrens to Darlington Project involves constructing two separate sections of tunnels – the Southern Tunnels and the Northern Tunnels – connected by an open motorway. The motorway and tunnels will have three lanes operating in each direction.

Preliminary works started in late 2024, with major works commencing at the Southern Precinct in Clovelly Park in May 2025. The Project is scheduled for completion in 2031.

Workforce requirements and skills development

The Project will support approximately 5,500 jobs across the supply chain each year during main construction, with 90 per cent of labour hours to be carried out by South Australians.

Consortium partners and other contractors will meet project workforce needs under a Tailored Industry Participation Plan, as part of the State Government's Industry Participation Policy.

This policy will require 20 per cent of labour hours on the Project to be worked by local Aboriginal workers, apprentices, trainees and long-term unemployed workers. Activities to meet workforce needs under the Project will be delivered by contractors, government, and training providers as the Project progresses.



Roles in high demand

Job roles with the highest growth over the next decade are mostly in site construction. Some roles are in high demand due to the major projects

Table: Top occupations in demand in the construction industry¹

Occupation Group	Job openings for new entrants	Peak major project Employment	Training pathway
Electricians	Strong	Strong	Certificate III, Apprenticeship
Carpenters and Joiners	Strong	Strong	Certificate III, Apprenticeship
Construction Managers	Strong	Strong	Certificate IV or Bachelor Degree
Plumbers	Strong	Moderate	Certificate III, Apprenticeship
Painting Trades Workers	Strong	Moderate	Certificate III, Apprenticeship
Architectural, Building and Surveying Technicians	Strong	Moderate	Certificate III or IV, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Bachelor
Landscapers	Moderate	Moderate	Certificate III Occupational tickets and licences
Earthmoving Plant Operators	Moderate	Moderate	Occupational tickets and licences
Building and Plumbing Labourers	Moderate	Strong	Occupational tickets and licences
Concreters	Moderate	Moderate	Certificate III Occupational tickets and licences
Civil Engineering Professionals	Moderate	Moderate	Bachelor Degree
Structural Steel and Welding Trades Workers	Moderate	Moderate	Certificate III, Apprenticeship
Bricklayers and Stonemasons	Moderate	Strong	Certificate III, Apprenticeship
Wall and Floor Tilers	Moderate	Strong	Certificate III, Apprenticeship
Plasterers	Moderate	Strong	Certificate III, Apprenticeship
Truck Drivers	Steady	Moderate	HR/HC licence

Modelling shows there will be increased demand for job roles that require higher level VET qualifications (Certificate IV or higher) or university qualifications – including conveyancers, planners, surveyors, valuers and architects.

The overall number of higher education qualified workers required is smaller than those identified above, but the relative level of growth required is significant.

1. Strong denotes over 1,000 job openings over 10 years or over 500 peak employment in major projects. Moderate denotes over 200 job openings over the next 10 years or over 100 peak employment in major projects. Steady indicates over 100 job openings over the next 10 years.

Workforce supply pipeline

There has been strong growth in the construction workforce supply pipeline over the past 5 to 6 years. This follows significant investment and targeted approaches across the different entry pathways to the sector. Across education and training, South Australia has seen increases in public funded VET enrolments, apprenticeships and traineeships, participation in VET in schools, and stable enrolments in higher education. Migration has also provided an important pipeline for workers who already have required skills.



Public-funded VET

- 14,470 enrolments in 2024
- 2,800 Fee Free TAFE places between 2023-25
- 50% increase since 2018-19



Apprentices and Trainees

- 4,500+ in training in construction trade occupations¹
- 4,300+ in training in electro trade occupations¹
- 35.3% increase in construction apprentice commencement since March 2019
- 38.5% increase in electro trade commencements since March 2019
- 27.5% increase in construction apprentice completions²



VET in Schools

- 2,500 subsidised enrolments in 2024
- 110% increase since 2019



Higher education

- 4,200+ students in Architecture and Building (2024)
- 8,000 students Engineering and Related Technologies (2024)
- Enrolled students stable since 2019



Skilled migration

- 488 nominations for general skilled migration in 2024-25
- 40% increase since 2019-20



Existing labour market

- Around 90,000 workers
- 10% increase since 2022

Sources:

NCVER (2025), Apprentices and trainees – March 2025, accessed through VOCSTATS

NCVER (2025), VIS Program Enrolments 2006-2024, accessed through VOCSTATS

ABS (2025), Labour Force, Australia, Detailed

Department of Education, Selected Higher Education Statistics – 2024 Student Data

DSD internal data

1. 12 month average to March 2025

2. 12 months to March 2025





Credit: Adelaide Training & Employment Centre

Case study

ATEC Carpentry Centre of Excellence

ATEC's Carpentry Centre of Excellence is an example of the training sector responding to the emerging skill needs of the construction sector.

The centre, which opened in June 2025, has expanded ATEC's Lonsdale training facility by 750 square meters to over 1,000 square metres of practical training workshops, providing an environment safe, all-weather training workshop to cater to apprenticeship educational and skill building needs for the Adelaide South metro area and southern regions, including the Fleurieu Peninsula and Murraylands.

It is a contemporary facility, equipped with the latest technology and training equipment. This is the largest undercover training space dedicated to carpentry in South Australia designed in collaboration with industry to reflect real worksite expectations.

The new, cutting-edge Carpentry Centre of Excellence responds to the rapid growth in demand, allowing ATEC to double its carpentry apprentice intake and ensure its apprentices are well-prepared for successful construction industry careers.

ATEC is a not-for-profit organisation operating as both a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and a Group Training Organisation (GTO) providing recruitment, training and apprenticeship employment solutions across South Australia.

The centre was co-funded by the State Government with \$300,000 provided by Skills SA through the Equipment and Capital Grants (ECG) initiative. This is part of a \$9 million investment by the State Government to support state-of-the-art training facilities, contemporary infrastructure and technology and equipment aligned with areas of skill demand.

What do we want to achieve for the construction workforce?

Based on the strategic importance of the construction industry for our state, what we know about workforce demand and how the workforce currently looks and operates, three key outcomes have been identified.

These outcomes will be progressed by government and industry leading effort against aligned focus areas. The outcomes are interrelated and joined up effort is required across all three to attract and retain workers and ensure the industry has access to the additional workers required to meet demand.

Outcome 1

Grow the pipeline of workers into the construction industry by strengthening pathways and systems that develop skills and talent.

Many systems play a role in supporting entry pathways and delivering a pipeline of workers to the construction industry, including vocational education and training in secondary schools, apprenticeships, higher education and migration.

These systems need to be functioning well to grow the workforce, and may also need to adapt to ensure that a range of cohorts have a clear entry point into the construction industry. With strong labour demand across the different sectors and key projects, it is important for the construction industry to have a variety of entry pathways for new workers, to allow access for a diverse labour force in different stages of their career journeys.

Promotion and awareness of the industry, and functions like more active linking of individuals, and their experiences and ambitions, to training pathways and job roles – including unique or specialised roles, and emerging skills needs – are also required to support people to pursue the right skills and workforce opportunities and ultimately enter the construction workforce.

Importantly, pathways for new entrants need to accommodate the priorities of employers and industry, as well as meeting the needs and objectives of individual workers, to ensure a good fit between new workers and their employers. This could cover a broad range of areas, including working conditions, like wages and safety, as well as the match between values, culture and skills and interests.

Case study

Master Builders SA

Master Builders South Australia is the peak body representing the building and construction industry in South Australia, with over 3,000 members.

Master Builders SA plays a key role in delivering programs that support individuals at different stages of their careers to consider and engage with the industry, supported by South Australian Government funding. These initiatives include:

- **Born to Build**, which promotes the variety of career pathways and options within the building and construction industry, with a specific focus on attracting young people to these careers. Information is available for communities, schools, students and parents and guardians through the campaign.
- **RISE program**, which offers free mentoring and coaching support across a range of areas that affect employers and workers in the industry, with dedicated coaches to meet the needs of people that face additional barriers within building and construction.
- **Keeping Tradies on Track**, a program which offers support for employers and first and second year apprentices to support apprenticeship completions in the industry. Free course modules equip employers with tools and strategies to manage and support an apprentice, while apprentices are supported with mentoring from industry professionals. Demand for this program saw all available places for 2025 filled.
- **BuildConnect**, through which Master Builders will seek to deliver more than 200 employment outcomes by directly connecting trade and construction skilled migrants with employers in the industry.
- **Mature aged apprenticeships**, which is for adults aged 21 years or over seeking to start a new career in the building and construction industry and supports payment of adult rates. This includes people looking to change their careers and seeking a stable profession.





Credit: PEER / Big Sister

Outcome 2

Widen the pool of workers available to the construction industry by engaging diverse cohorts.

Increasing the diversity of the construction workforce will be critical to reaching supply goals. This will mean targeting efforts to support currently underrepresented, or underutilised groups to enter and stay in the industry.

This will include a specific focus on women, Aboriginal people, and skilled migrants, where there is real additional workforce capacity.

There will be a strong intersection between increasing industry attractiveness and activating these cohorts within the construction workforce, as well as supporting system adaptation to ensure individuals from these cohorts don't experience barriers when they want to enter training and education, or the construction workforce.

Attraction and support for diverse cohorts will need to respond to the needs and values of these cohorts, to ensure that efforts to diversify the workforce are effective and sustainable.

There is a strong role for industry in achieving a more diverse workforce and unlocking new talent.

Case study

Building Women's Careers Program Projects

Big Sister: Advanced Mentoring SA/WA

Big Sister drives transformational change in the construction and clean energy sectors by implementing an access and retention program for women apprentices across SA and WA led by women, for women.

The project delivers a pre-vocational training program, mentoring, industry awareness events, and support for employers to improve gender equity in traditionally male-dominated trades. Big Sister will provide pre-vocational training for 80 women in SA, with 80% transitioning into new apprenticeships in the energy trades by 2028.

The project, led by the Electrical Trades Union, is delivered in partnership with PEER, Energy Skills Australia and NSG Boffa, with the project running from 2025-2028.

The Building Women's Careers (BWC) Program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Outcome 3

Keep and develop existing skills and talent in the construction industry

Supporting workers already in the construction industry to see a long-term future for themselves within the industry will play an important role in retention.

This can include supports for workers to upskill or reskill, and recognise experience to gain trade qualifications, or take on new job roles within the industry, including leadership and supervisor roles, as well as supporting workers with high levels of experience and skill to transition into trainer roles that prepare our future construction workforce.

Adjustments to the culture and conditions within the industry – including the integration of innovation and technology – will also support workers to remain in the industry and attract new workers, particularly as they move through different life stages.

Case study

Sarah Constructions

Sarah Constructions (Sarah) is a South Australian family-owned construction company with more than 60 years' experience in delivery quality commercial projects. Their success is built on trusted relationships and a reputation for practical, and collaborative problem-solving. They currently employ approximately 180 staff, with key roles including Project Managers, Site Supervisors, Contract Managers and Contract Administrators.

In recent years, Sarah has introduced a range of digital and manufacturing innovations that are reshaping how their workforce operates.

By using 360-degree cameras and commercial drones, Project Managers can track project progress in real time, from head office.

This technology reduces time spent on site and changes the day-to-day role of managers, requiring new digital literacy skills. Similarly, Building Information Modelling (BIM) software ensures work is delivered to design specifications and schedules. For staff, this means developing capabilities in data interpretation, virtual coordination, and compliance checking. To support these shifts, Sarah upskills Project Managers in compliance standards under the National Construction Code and is exploring accredited training pathways so both staff and contractors can use digital tools effectively and confidently.

Alongside their on-site technologies and digital capabilities, Sarah has also developed a manufacturing system to produce modular housing components. This approach reduces site labour requirements and accelerates project delivery, particularly in regional areas, where trade shortages are common. The shift also creates new types of jobs in Sarah's manufacturing facility, where around 30 staff — including engineers and trades such as carpenters — ensure components meet technical design and national standards. As modular construction expands, Sarah anticipates greater demand for roles in logistics, engineering, and quality assurance, and is planning workforce growth with a strong focus on diversity and inclusion.

Sarah Constructions actively recruits new workers through their in-house graduate program, cadet program, trainee supervisor and trainee Safety Officer programs. Along with their direct employment pathways, Sarah also focuses on building training pathways to support existing staff.



What will we focus on?

Industry, key partners and data tell us that achieving change will require action across a range of focus areas.

- **Pathways into construction:** Providing awareness of and supporting different cohorts to connect with the right pathway into the construction industry, through initiatives like career awareness and school based programs.
- **Construction apprenticeship completions:** Supporting apprentices who enter a contract to stay the course, complete their qualification, and remain in the construction workforce, through initiatives like student support services and mentoring.
- **Diverse cohorts in construction:** increasing representation of different cohorts in the construction workforce through initiatives targeted at priority groups – including women, Aboriginal people, and skilled migrants.
- **Access to a high quality education and training system:** Improving the capability and capacity of our training system to offer high quality training and experiences, and for prospective construction workers (or existing workers looking to upskill) to access these offerings. This includes initiatives to strengthen the VET workforce.
- **Enabling industry capability building and transformation:** Enabling changes to the way the construction industry does its business, including through adoption or better use of new technologies – like modern methods of construction - and streamlining systems or processes, helping to decrease workforce pressures.



What's being done to support industry?

There is a significant amount of activity and investment underway – led by the Australian and South Australian Governments, industry and industry bodies, and other key stakeholders, to support workforce outcomes for the construction industry, as well as activity that is about to commence or planned for the future to continue to grow this sector.

A snapshot of these initiatives aligned to the five key focus areas that will help to drive associated workforce outcomes is presented below. For more information on each, please contact the Department of State Development. Email: DSD.WorkforceStrategy@sa.gov.au

Worker safety is an essential component of supporting construction workforce outcomes, and construction is a high priority industry under the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2033. SafeWork SA delivers responsive, targeted compliance campaigns and educational support for the industry, based on data, evidence and awareness of emerging issues.

Pathways into construction

Career education – including industry immersion and career expos

Technical colleges

Industry pathways through VET in schools, also known as doorways2construction:

- Cert II in Construction Pathways
- Cert II in Resources and Infrastructure Work Preparation
- Cert II in Plumbing (Pre-apprenticeship)
- Certificate II in Electrotechnology (Career Start)

Career Awareness Series

Your Career website

Born to Build Academy and campaign

WorldSkills Australia

Renewal SA Works Program

SA Housing Trust

- Employment Pathway Program
- 250 Apprenticeships Pilot Program
- SA Housing Trust – Building Links Program

Skills Shortage Solution grants

- BrickstartSA Program
- Brick and Block Careers
- Trading Futures

Trade Up campaign

National licensing scheme for electrical trades

CITB Built in the Regions

Construction apprenticeship completions

Success and Wellbeing Services

Apprenticeship Training Support (including completion, Adult and Diversity Apprentice Incentives)

SA Group Training Program and Group Training Organisation Boost

Skills Shortage Solutions

- Keeping Tradies on Track

Industry Accelerated Apprenticeships Pilot

Key Apprenticeship Program

Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System

Australian Apprenticeship Support Services

Advanced Entry Trades Training Program



Diverse cohorts in construction

Occupational Recognition Service

Gap training for licensed migrant tradespeople

Skilled Migrant Talent and Industry Connection Program - BuildConnect

Priority visa processing

General Skilled Migration Program

SA Regional Workforce Designated Area Migration Agreement

South Australian Government Skilled Worker Delegation to the UK - 'Move to South Australia Roadshow'

Australian Government Migration Strategy

CITB Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Adult and Diversity Incentives

Skills Shortage Solution grants

- Building Women's Doorways
- Women in Civil
- Fire Protection Apprenticeship Program

Australian Government Skills Guarantee Procurement Connected Policy

National Association of Women in Construction mentoring and education

Aboriginal Building and Civil Construction Academy

Construction Industry Culture Taskforce

Building Women's Careers

Access to a high quality education & training system

30,000 training places over 5 years

Fee-Free TAFE

National TAFE Centres of Excellence

New TAFE SA investment and offerings

Equipment and Capital grants

Skills Shortage Solution grants

- PEER Mobile Electrical Training Unit
- Heavy Industry Multi Skills program
- TAFE SA Cert III Concreting
- Digitisation of dual trade qualifications

Not-For-Profit and Industry Based RTO Grants

- PEER Educator Workforce Development Program and Facility Investment
- Civil Contractors Federation Civil Construction Mobile Training Units
- Housing Industry Association Carpentry Skill Centre Virtual Reality

tradie2trainer Program

National VET Workforce Blueprint

TAFE SA Paid to Learn pilot program

Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning and scholarships

Bachelor of Geospatial Information Systems/Bachelor of Surveying

Advanced Diploma in Conveyancing Traineeship

Para Planner Cadet Program

Enabling industry capability building & transformation

Housing Roadmap

National Competition Policy Intergovernmental Agreement

Modular building for South Australian Government housing programs

SA Government and AMPLIFY roundtable

South Australia's Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan

Building and Construction Industry Review

Collaboration with financial services

CITB Industry Insights Dashboard

SafeWork SA targeted construction industry campaign

Commitments in focus



Fee-free TAFE

Fee-free TAFE and VET places is a joint initiative of the Australian and South Australian Governments.

In 2023, an initial 12,500 places were made available in South Australia and from January 2024, 12,500 fee-free TAFE places over three years were made available to South Australians. From 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2024, there were 2,300 enrolments in fee-free TAFE courses related to the construction sector.

In 2025, an additional 1,340 training places over two years specifically in construction related courses were made available, including up to 340 pre-apprenticeship places.

TAFE SA is delivering 940 of these places, across 16 courses aligned to areas of demand and skill shortage. This includes 10 apprenticeship courses. Non-government providers will deliver 400 of these places, across 35 courses. This includes 23 apprenticeship or traineeship courses.

This is the first time apprenticeships were included on the fee free TAFE list, including carpentry, bricklaying, painting, plastering and glazing.

Construction Industry Training Fund and triennial training plan

The *Construction Industry Training Fund Act 1993* establishes a fund to be used to improve the quality of training in the building and construction industry. It also establishes the Construction Industry Training Board to administer the fund, through the collection of a levy and the funding of appropriate training.

From 2026, this funding will be allocated through a triennial, rather than annual, training plan, to allow for longer term strategic investment that meets the needs of industry. This will allow the CITB to increase the breadth and depth of its support, noting the already significant scope of activity it delivers – including supporting 7,607 apprentices, as well as over 16,600 individuals to undertake subsidised short course training, and reaching over 3,500 secondary students through immersion and other programs in 2023-24.

The triennial plan will focus broadly on using levy funds to support education – including for school students, technical colleges, and pre-employment – and training – which will include apprenticeship and short course training support. Key changes will include improving the timing and transparency around payments. The plan will also have a significant focus on diversity and attracting people from underrepresented groups into the industry.

doorways2construction **Tonsley Technical College**

The Construction Industry Training Board's doorways2construction program, delivered in partnership with the Department for Education, proactively engages school students to prepare them for careers in the industry.

It includes industry immersion experiences, as well as Flexible Industry Programs and associated advanced skills programs. The program also supports students through purchasing personal protection equipment and financial assistance for driving lessons.

Around 1,000 secondary students have participated in doorways2construction each year since 2019.

Building and construction is one of the three industry areas for industry training programs offered at Tonsley Technical College, with industry partners Master Builders SA and Sarah Constructions, and supported by the Construction Industry Training Board.

The \$36 million technical college facility is located in the Tonsley Innovation District and is co-located with Flinders University Factory of the Future.

All learning is centred around the industry sector. The facility and programs are designed and delivered in partnership with employers, with guaranteed career opportunities for graduates. Each industry training program covers technical skills, employability skills and capabilities, workplace learning, career planning and student support and mentoring, helping students transition into apprenticeships.

Students learn in facilities that are specifically built like workplaces, using industry-standard equipment, gaining real, hands-on experience with the technologies they'll use every day in their future career – including carpenter/joiner, builder, bricklayer, electrician, painter and decorator or plumber.



What's next under this plan?

Commitment 1: Support tailored construction industry pathways

School students

While there is significant growth in VET for Schools Students programs - including doorways2construction - there is opportunity to improve conversion of participants into construction sector workers. Only around one third of doorways2construction participants generally go on to become an apprentice.

Improving conversion better leverages the upfront investment of industry, the CITB and government through these programs.

Focus areas will include:

- Increasing the number of students converting from VET for Schools Students programs to apprenticeships in construction aligned occupations.
- Supporting those who are unsuccessful in obtaining apprenticeships into other pathways, including direct employment in the sector or further construction related training

A range of additional wrap around training supports – including a work experience platform, facilitating site tours, inclusive career pathways programs, and parent engagement initiatives – available to high school students will be the first step in this approach.

Pre-apprenticeships

TAFE SA will continue to offer its Certificate II Construction Pathways and Plumbing (pre-apprenticeship) courses. As part of the subsidised training list, these courses can also be delivered by other registered training organisations with the South Australian Government subsidising the cost.

The Construction Industry Training Board's inaugural triennial training plan will have an explicit focus on pre-employment activity – including industry immersion and try a trade activities, as well as incentives to drive diversity within the workforce.


Apprentices and trainees

Launching in 2026, the Industry Accelerated Apprenticeship Pilot will support up to 1,000 new apprenticeships across seven critical trade pathways including carpentry, painting, civil construction, plant operations and mechanical engineering and fabrication engineering.

Pathways will be shortened by up to 18 months, with training tailored to real-world job requirements, with intensive on the job learning and quality assurance from Group Training Organisations.

The Construction Industry Training Board will also introduce simplified apprenticeship training support through its inaugural triennial training plan.

The South Australian Skills Commission, in partnership with the Torrens to Darlington Alliance, will identify options for reactivating a traineeship pathway for pre-fabrication processes, which will specifically support requirements of the Torrens to Darlington project while having broader industry benefit.



Undergraduates

With first students enrolled in 2025, the South Australian Government and Flinders University are delivering a nation-leading undergraduate planning program, the Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning. This three-year degree has a greater focus on workplace learning, better preparing students to step straight into the workforce.

The South Australian Government is supporting this new undergraduate pathway with:

- Industry Insight sessions for participating students
- A graduate rotation program across key agencies including Renewal SA, SA Housing Trust, and Planning and Land Use Services
- Urban and Regional Planning Scholarship Program.

A new Civil Engineering Degree Apprenticeship will commence in 2027 at Flinders University, providing undergraduates with the opportunity to work while they study.

This is in addition to the engineering degree apprenticeships – including electrical and structural engineering – being delivered by Flinders University as part of the Defence Industry Workforce and Skills Report and Action Plan 2024-27, which can also support outcomes for the construction workforce.

Commitment 2: Address barriers that prevent specific cohorts from entering and staying in the construction workforce

Through the National Skills Agreement bilateral implementation plans, there is opportunity to support specific cohorts within the construction workforce. Priority areas for action may include:

- Advancing Closing the Gap objectives, which will include a focus on the role of Aboriginal Community Controlled Registered Training Organisations as well as culturally appropriate supports for Aboriginal learners. This will also be supported by an Aboriginal Adult Education and Training Strategy.
- Improving training completions among priority groups – including Aboriginal people and women – and for priority areas such as delivering housing supply. This approach will be informed by students’ voices, and will include working with employers and training providers to try innovative solutions that support learner outcomes and completions while addressing specific workforce challenges.
- Implementing a suite of initiatives to strengthen and diversify the VET workforce by more than 300 – including through scholarships, simpler pathways to become an educator, and upskilling. The Industry Professional to VET Educator pathway pilot has already fast-tracked trade professionals into educator roles in priority areas such as carpentry, concreting, plumbing and electrical.

Community based adult education also provides opportunity to provide pathways into the construction workforce, including through the multi-trades program. The South Australian Government will also consider how existing levers, like the Industry Participation Policy, can drive employment outcomes for women in construction as part of State Government procurements. This policy is already used to support employment outcomes for Aboriginal people in the construction industry.

The Construction Industry Training Board, through its inaugural triennial training plan, will also seek to drive attraction and retention of diverse workers, including women, Aboriginal people, and adult apprentices. For skilled migrants, TAFE SA will be re-instating gap training for individuals who require this training to become licensed electricians in South Australia.



Case study

Building Women's Careers Program Projects

Building Women

The Building Women: Breaking Barriers for a Diverse SA Construction Workforce initiative is a transformative program designed to increase women's skilled participation in South Australia's construction sector. Recognising the historical underrepresentation of women in the industry, the initiative addresses both structural and cultural barriers through a framework built on three key pillars:

- **Educate** – providing tailored pre-employment training to equip women with industry-specific skills.
- **Empower** – delivering employer education programs to foster safe and inclusive workplaces.
- **Employ** – connecting women with sustainable career opportunities and industry pathways.

At the heart of Building Women's education stream is a series of five construction taster programs, rolled out across three years.

These programs are structured to provide women with a safe, supported, and flexible environment to explore opportunities in construction. Delivered during school hours (3 days per week over 7 weeks), they reduce participation barriers and allow women to balance family or caring commitments.

Participants complete the Introduction to Construction Skill Set (SSDIS01008) and benefit from structured mentoring support.

Over the three years, a total of 75 women will complete the programs, with 15 participants in each intake.

Building Women's employer education program is a social competency framework designed to help construction employers create safe, inclusive, and supportive environments where women can thrive.

Between 2025 and 2027, a total of 20 employers will undertake the program. By the end of the program, these employers will have positioned themselves as employers of choice, ready to support Building Women participants as they transition into meaningful careers.

Through Building Women's coordinated partnerships and employer engagement, women who complete the pre-vocational training will be matched with workplaces that have committed to creating inclusive environments. This ensures participants not only enter the industry but are supported to sustain and progress their careers.

The Building Women's Careers (BWC) Program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Commitment 3: Enable innovation in the sector to support increases in productivity and reduce workforce pressure

With new infrastructure and housing projects commencing in South Australia, the South Australian Government is committed to using these projects to drive innovative construction methods within the sector.

The Department for Housing and Urban Development is actively considering future projects that can incorporate this innovation – this includes the tender for the construction of 120 turn-key homes using modern prefabricated construction methods.

The South Australian Government will identify further mechanisms and projects to support industry to take up innovation and modern methods of construction through the life of this plan.

Credit: MyModular

Case study

MyModular

MyModular is a proudly South Australian business specialising in modular, prefabricated electrical solutions for the construction industry. Based in Lonsdale, the company has established itself as a leader in rethinking how electrical wiring systems are designed, manufactured, and installed.

Traditional site-based wiring involves cutting and assembling electrical systems under challenging construction conditions. MyModular has transformed this process by manufacturing pre-designed electrical wiring systems in a controlled facility. Using advanced design and production techniques, MyModular delivers modular wiring products that are mass-produced to precise specifications and can be quickly installed on-site, delivering up to 70%-time savings in installation. This approach significantly reduces on-site labour requirements, lowers reliance on large numbers of qualified electricians, and minimises material waste.

MyModular systems can be repurposed and reused in environments where layouts frequently change - such as offices, hospitals, and retail spaces. This extends product life and supports sustainable building practices. The company employs a team of around 30 people, including engineers and electricians who design systems to meet project requirements and ensure compliance with AS/NZS 3000 and the modular wiring standard AS/NZS 61535. MyModular employs graduate engineers, employs electrical apprentices through a GTO model when additional technical skills are required for projects.





On the manufacturing side, MyModular provides accessible, stable employment opportunities. With no pre-requisite skills required, new workers are trained on the job, through work-shadowing of existing employees and managers on the use of manufacturing equipment and processes. The training and skill threshold for the manufacturing team is significantly lower than other occupations in the construction sector, allowing workers to quickly enter the business and enabling MyModular the ability to quickly onboard new workers.

This model has enabled the company to embrace a non-typical workforce, employing women, culturally diverse workers, and people with a disability - groups often underrepresented in the construction sector. This inclusive approach not only strengthens the business but also demonstrates how manufacturing can create pathways for a broader range of Australians.

By shifting complex wiring production off-site and embracing inclusivity in its workforce, MyModular delivers solutions that are reducing installation time, labour costs, designed for flexibility and reusability produced under controlled conditions improving worker safety. Through this approach, MyModular continues to challenge traditional methods, demonstrating how manufacturing-led innovation can drive efficiency, sustainability, and greater workforce participation across the construction industry.

Keeping the plan on track

The Department of State Development will have responsibility for driving this plan, working closely with industry and business, and South Australian and Australian Government agencies.

This will include development of an implementation plan and a process for monitoring outcomes in line with the outcomes to be achieved through this plan.

The South Australian Government reserves the right to redirect focus and investment to areas of greatest need as new opportunities and challenges arise.

Contact

The Construction Workforce Plan was developed by the Department of State Development's Workforce, Population and Migration Group in consultation with stakeholders including industry associations, employers, unions, training providers, and group training organisations.

We thank these individuals and organisations for their valuable contributions and ongoing commitment to supporting the construction industry as a valuable contributor to economic and social outcomes for our state.

For more information on the commitments described, contact the Department of State Development.

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