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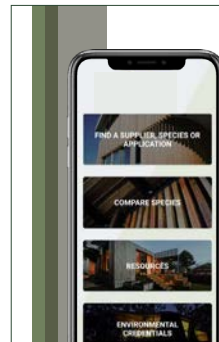
COVER STORY P2

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9,000 jobs threatened by unnecessary 'Great Koala National Park'

OVER 9,000 jobs will go in the hardwood industry if the 'Great Koala National Park' is imposed on north coast communities, say forestry workers.

They gathered at NSW Parliament House to plead with MPs not to create the park given the latest research shows healthy koala numbers.

The latest CSIRO research from 2024 shows koala populations are stable and thriving with 748,000 of the animals in NSW.

That's double the number from an outdated 2016 study by Adams-Hosking which estimated populations at 331,000 and led to calls for the establishment of the park.

Hardwood is used for power poles, wharfs, walkways and flooring. Hardwoods are used for these mostly outdoor applications as they are stronger and harder wearing than softwoods.

Softwoods are generally sourced from pine plantations and used for internal ceilings and furniture.

Hardwood sourced from native forests is already heavily restricted. By law no harvesting

occurs in old growth forest, and clear felling is also outlawed.

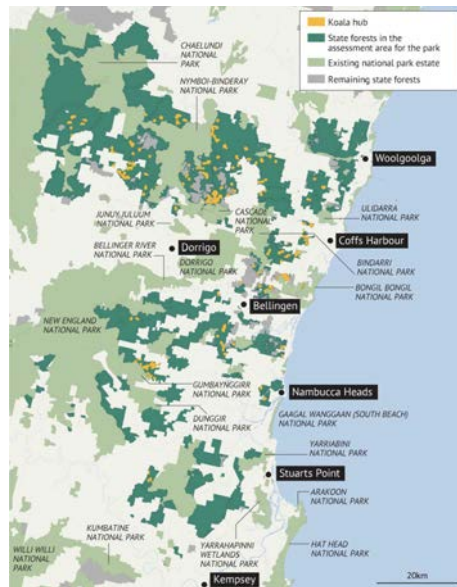
Only a small proportion of trees are harvested and are immediately replanted.

88% of NSW Public Forests are already protected, and of the remaining 12% only 0.2% are subject to selective timber harvesting.

There are five competing models for the 'Great Koala National Park', with Forestry workers supportive of models which don't endanger forestry communities.

Any radical changes to forestry practice in the north will cripple south coast processing facilities where most of NSW's forestry products are made.

Australian Workers' Union NSW Secretary Tony Callinan recognised the state of the koala population saying, "The latest CSIRO research shows



The proposed Great Koala National Park. Image source: NSW EPA, DCEEW

koala numbers in NSW are stable and thriving and that's great news."

"The key here is balancing the need to protect native species while providing future generations the raw materials for housing and infrastructure.

"9,000 north coast locals have jobs in the timber supply chain with their healthy pay cheques going directly into their small communities, it's imperative we get the balance right or we'll endanger this \$3

billion industry.

"The worst possible scenario would be to get timber from parts of the world with no environmental standards, or to use more climate change intensive products for our power poles, wharves and flooring.

"Timber is quite literally nature's carbon capture and storage; we should be harnessing it as much as possible while ensuring healthy populations of native species.

"Forestry workers from the north coast are here in NSW Parliament House...to make sure decision makers know we have to get this balancing act right to ensure their communities' survival.

"They've been meeting with Labor Party MPs and telling them not to abandon their core constituency of hard-working Australian families on this issue or they might find themselves an endangered species."

On the cover: The 2024 CSIRO study found that there are 748,000 koalas in NSW. This is more than double the 331,000 estimated by the 2016 study by Adams-Hosking that called for a park to be created.
Image: Shutterstock

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AFPA's Federal Election platform launched

Australian Timber. Australia's Future.

THE Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) has launched its Federal Election policy platform aimed at illustrating the role Australian timber can play addressing the current housing crisis and supplying our nation's future housing needs, the importance of securing the future of Australian grown and recycled timber and wood-fibre to enhance our sovereign capability, and promoting healthy and sustainable native and plantation forestry to provide Australians with the timber they need and fight climate change.

AFPA Chief Executive Officer, Diana Hallam said, "I'm proud to launch *Australian Timber. Australia's Future*. This document lays the groundwork for what the full supply chain of Australia's forestry sector needs to thrive and I encourage all political parties to commit to the platform's requests in full."

A summary of the policy requests under our three themes includes:

MEETING AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS AND SOLVING THE CURRENT HOUSING CRISIS

- Delivery of a Prefabricated and Innovative Housing Summit and Wood First Policy, as well as policies to boost land supply, encourage greater take-up of modular and prefabricated timber dwellings and



1/ **Australia has the potential to meet more of the growing need for construction materials.**

2/ **The forestry industry in Australia is needed to help address the housing shortage.**

Images: Shutterstock

incentivise more timber in construction

- A commitment for an Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme to incentivise timber used in the built environment and greater uptake of modern methods of construction

STRENGTHENING OUR SOVEREIGN CAPABILITY BY PROMOTING AUSTRALIAN GROWN AND RECYCLED PRODUCT

- Introducing Country of Origin Labelling for timber
- \$200 million to fund a Wood and Fibre Innovation,

Recycling and Energy Efficiency Program

- Developing a National Fire Response Plan and National Timber Security Agreement
- \$200 million to extend the Plantation Establishment Grants Program

ENSURING HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FORESTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

- Continued Federal Government support for native forestry consistent with IPCC advice
- \$40 million to help crack-down on illegally logged timber

- Establishment of a market demand mechanism for the National Nature Repair Compliance Market that enhances sustainable timber

"Australia's forestry sector has enormous potential to contribute more to the national economy, provide new, skilled employment as we innovate our use of wood and fibre, help address national housing shortages and meet national emissions reduction targets through

fighting climate change," Diana Hallam said.

"We strongly welcome and acknowledge the industry support provided by recent Federal Governments, Oppositions, other political parties and independents over recent years. We need a continued partnership with government and policy makers, to

make the most out of our world leading forest industry here in Australia.

"AFPA will advocate strongly for our platform ahead of the Federal Election and we look forward to positive conversations with all sides of politics," Diana Hallam concluded.

“ AUSTRALIA'S FORESTRY SECTOR HAS ENORMOUS POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE MORE

FCNSW - Victoria fire deployment update

IN issue #837 of *Timber&Forestry Enews*, it was reported that nine of the Forestry Corporation firefighting trained staff were sent to Victoria to assist with out-of-control blazes. Victoria's Grampians and Little Desert National Parks fires have successfully been contained, and recovery efforts are underway with Forestry Corporation staff lending a hand.

Four of Forestry Corporation's firefighters were on the ground this week clearing dangerous and fallen trees in the Grampians National Park.

Paul Douglas of Wauchope, David McLaughlin of Coffs Harbour, Aden Hitchcock of Dorriggo and Daniel Carey of Taree spent most of their Victorian deployments



Fire crews from NSW, VIC and SA worked together to contain the two extensive fires.
Photo: Hannah Mangnall

clearing hazards on walking trails.

"It was great to serve for a few days in the Grampians as part of a NSW Rural Fire

Service strike team doing the fireground mop-up and working as part of a trail maintenance team helping to improve access in the national park, which has been considerably charred by these fires," Paul said.

Forestry Corporation's Hannah Mangnall, Gary Miller and Bronson Lovett from Wauchope returned from their Victorian deployment last week along with Daniel

Macaree and James Martin from Maitland.

Hannah captured these photos of the fires in full blaze near Goroke, west of Horsham.

"Four of us were embedded into a larger multi-agency strike team run by National Parks firefighters from South Australia," Hannah said.

"While we were there the fire weather conditions deteriorated, so a lot of the

firefighting involved property protection, stopping spot overs from the national parks spreading into neighbouring wheat, barley and sheep farms.

"It's a different type of bush down there, there's not much tall timber but mallee scrub running into cropping and grazing paddocks, so

Cont P 5

A note from the Publisher

In this issue we feature **Specialty Doors: Opening doors to excellence**. The team at Specialty Doors are an Australian owned and local manufacturing operation able to distribute across the country. Specialty Doors have an extensive commercial and residential range, manufacture around 1000 doors a week, offer unique and custom solutions and, they are committed to sustainability. Catch the full

article and read about their two exciting new divisions and vision for the future.

Just in case you missed last week (issue #837) we featured **Vida Wood Australia** celebrating 10 years of growth, commitment and excellence plus our feature article on **Masswood**: Your new partner for glulam and finger jointing solutions. Previous issues can be viewed online or downloaded as a pdf from the magazine tab.



From P 4

we learnt a lot from the other agencies including Victoria's Forest Fire Management, Country Fire Authority (CFA) and NPWS.

"It was really satisfying knowing that our firefighting efforts stopped fire from spreading into huge swathes of country, protecting private properties as well as cultural heritage and floral and fauna values in the national parks."

The Grampians – Wallaby Rocks and Little Desert bushfires were contained following two weeks of incredible work by ground, air

and control centre crews.

The fires began on January 27 after dry lightning started fires in two new sections of the Grampians National Park and at the Little Desert National Park.

The Little Desert fire burnt more than 95,000 hectares while The Grampians fires burnt more than 135,000 hectares.

Four residential properties were lost in the Grampians fires and one property and one business in the Little Desert fire with a total of 42 outbuildings lost.



2



3

1/ Due to the varied terrain, the fires in Victoria differed significantly from those in NSW. For the team that traveled down, it was not only an opportunity to assist but also a chance to learn from other firefighting teams.

2/ With the fires contained, the team focused on clearing trails against the stark backdrop of the charred landscape.

3/ The smoke rising from the fires was extensive. . Photos: Hannah Mangnall



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The Productivity Commission researches housing affordability

Reversing 30 years of poor productivity growth can help.

DECADES of falling productivity in housing construction have restricted the supply of new homes and contributed to increasingly unaffordable housing, research from the Productivity Commission reveals.

A new report, *'Housing construction productivity: Can we fix it?'*, details how productivity in the sector has fallen well behind the broader economy and provides seven reform directions for governments to help make homebuilding more efficient.

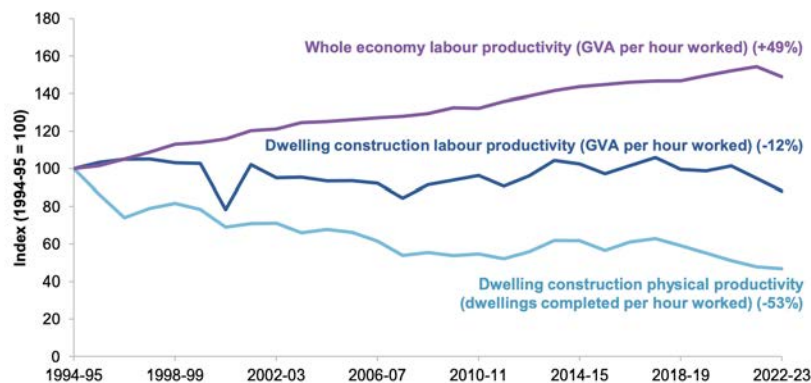
The Productivity Commission's new estimates of physical productivity in housing construction show that we are completing half as many homes per hour worked as we did in 1995.

A more comprehensive measure that controls for quality improvements and increases in the size of housing (gross value added per hour worked, or labour productivity) has declined by 12%.

In contrast, labour productivity in the broader economy has increased by 49% over the same period. To put this 'productivity gap' in perspective, had labour productivity in the broader economy moved in line with the housing construction sector then average incomes in Australia would be about 41% lower than they are now.

'Too many Australians, particularly younger Australians, are struggling to afford a home in which to live,' said Productivity

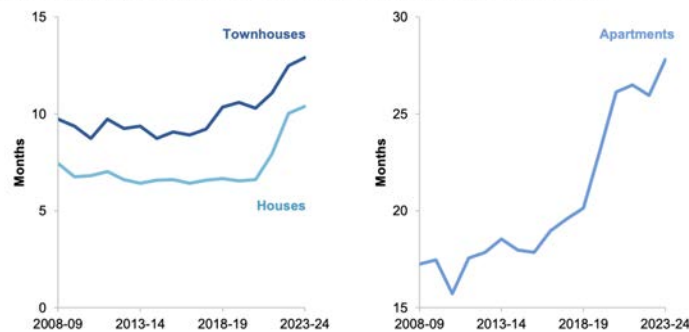
Figure 1 – Dwelling construction productivity in decline



1

Figure 1.2 – Completion times have been rising for all housing types*

Number of months taken to complete apartments, townhouses and houses



a. The average completion times are for apartments in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland only. Source: ABS (2019, 2024e).

2

1/ The Product Commission's report displays how the productivity of labour in the housing sector has dropped over the past 30 years compared to the growth in productivity across the whole economy.

2/ The decline in productivity is evident when examining the average time required to build different types of homes over the past 30 years. All images: Productivity Commission

Commission Chair Danielle Wood.

'Governments are rightly focused on changing planning rules to boost the supply of new homes, but the speed and cost of new builds also matters. Lifting the productivity of homebuilding will deliver more homes, regardless of what is happening with the workforce, interest rates or costs,' said Ms Wood.

A complicated and slow approval process, lack of innovation, a fragmented

industry dominated by small players (the average residential building firm employs less than two people), and difficulties in attracting and retaining workers are all issues that have dragged on productivity, the report finds.

“PRODUCTIVITY IN THE [HOUSING] SECTOR HAS FALLEN WELL BEHIND THE BROADER ECONOMY

'There is no single thing to blame for this poor productivity performance. But there are steps that governments could take to remove or ease regulatory bottlenecks and encourage innovation in an industry where the way we build

homes has barely changed,' said Julie Abramson Commissioner for the Productivity Commission.

The report outlines seven reform directions, focused on four main areas.

Governments should consider establishing coordination bodies to speed up the development and construction process and address delays. There should be an independent review of building regulations. Barriers to the development and uptake of new building techniques (such as modular housing) should be addressed. And finally, we need a national approach to occupational licensing to boost workforce mobility.

'The sheer volume of regulation has a deadening effect on productivity. If governments are serious about getting more homes built, then they need to think harder about how their decisions unnecessarily restrict housing development and slow down the rate of new home building,' said Ms Wood.

MARCH

22: NTHA QLD State Awards – Brisbane City Hall, Brisbane. Join us in celebrating the QLD Timber and Hardware Industry. Contact Tahlia at events@ntha.com.au

25-28: DANA Global Wood Products Supply and Demand Trends Seminar, Global Forest Investment Conference, and WWII Battle of the Bulge Battle sites tour – Europe. Contact admin@dana.co.nz

APRIL

10-11: Forestry Australia 2025 Forest Carbon Summit – National Press Club, Canberra. For full details and to register, visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/2025-forest-carbon-summit/>

MAY

7-8: Sydney Build 25 – ICC, Sydney. Australia's largest construction and design show. Enews is a media partner for Sydney Build 2025. For more details visit <https://www.sydneybuildexpo.com>

11-17: Japanese Wood

Architecture Tour – Japan. Tour the world's oldest and most impressive wooden buildings. From Hōryū-ji, the world's oldest wooden building to the World Expo in Osaka - home to the world's largest wooden ring building. For more information and view the program, visit <https://www.woodsolutions.com.au/events/woodsolutions-sponsors-tda-japan-study-tour?>

26-30: LIGNA 25 – Hannover, Germany. The world's leading trade fair for woodworking and wood processing plant, machinery and tools. For more details visit <https://www.ligna.de/en/for-visitors>

30: NTHA SA/NT/WA State Awards – National Wine Centre, Adelaide. Join us in celebrating the SA, NT & WA Timber and Hardware Industry. Contact Tahlia at events@ntha.com.au

JUNE

22-26: World Conference on Timber Engineering – Brisbane. WCTE is the world's leading scientific forum for

the presentation of the latest technical and architectural solutions and innovations in timber construction. For more information visit <https://www.wcte2025.org/event/df0d5655-c16d-47df-b4a6-457a7dc63d96/wcte-2025>

29-JULY 2: 5th International Conference on Timber Bridges – Rotorua, New Zealand. The focus is on timber bridges and the current need for resilient infrastructure to support thriving communities. For more information and to register your interest, visit <https://ictb-conference.org/2025/>

SEPTEMBER

2-3: Timber Queensland Biennial Conference "Doing Timber Business in Queensland" – Brisbane. For more information, email admin@timberqueensland.com.au

OCTOBER

13-14: Timber Construct 2025 – Melbourne. To register your interest, visit <https://timberconstruct.org/>

20-22: International Woodchip and Biomass Seminar and Networking Event – Singapore. For more information visit <https://danaevents.co.nz/2024singapore/home>

20-23: Forestry Australia 2025 Conference – Adelaide Convention Centre, Adelaide. The conference theme is 'Restoring forests and landscapes to secure Australia's future' and aims to develop both local and national collaboration. For more details visit <https://www.forestry.org.au/2025-conference/>

22-23: Melbourne Build 25 – MCEC, Melbourne. Victoria's largest construction and design show. For more details visit <https://melbournebuildexpo.com>

23-24: Field Trip – Vietnam. (Follows on from the woodchip and biomass seminar in Singapore.) For more information visit <https://danaevents.co.nz/2024singapore/fieldtrip>

Have some news to share?

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Addressing misconceptions about FSC's certification system

THE Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is committed to maintaining the highest standard of responsible forest management, ensuring that all timber entering FSC-certified supply chains complies with legal and ethical requirements. We recognise the ongoing concerns surrounding illegal timber trade, particularly from sanctioned countries such as Russia, and the need for transparency in global supply chains. All certification systems carry inherent risks of misuse and illegal trade. The complexity of global supply chains - whether in timber, agriculture, or textiles - can expose them to risks such as false claims or illegal trade.

Unfortunately, misconceptions regarding FSC certification and its processes continue to appear in some reports and public discussions, leading to misinterpretations of the system's integrity. As such, it is important to take this opportunity to address these issues and provide a clearer understanding of the robust measures FSC has implemented to prevent illegal timber from entering certified supply chains.

CLARIFYING KEY MISCONCEPTIONS

It is important to differentiate between two distinct issues: false claims about certified products and the trade of illegal timber outside the scope of FSC certification.

- **False claims** occur when a certificate holder unintentionally or deliberately represents a product as FSC-certified when it is not. False claims can taint entire supply chains and result in



Trees are one of earth's most valuable resources. FSC is committed to helping protect and sustain forests. Image Shutterstock

the immediate suspension or termination of a certificate; a decision made solely by the certification body. Additionally, FSC may block companies by revoking their trademark licenses and preventing re-certification until corrective measures are completed.

- However, the **sale of illegal timber outside the scope of FSC certification** is beyond the authority of certification bodies, as they do not have the mandate to address transactions that fall outside the certified scope.
- If there is evidence that a company may be violating the FSC Policy for Association – such as sourcing wood from Russia outside the scope of certification – FSC may initiate a Policy for Association investigation.

ADDRESSING RISKS IN EURASIAN TIMBER SUPPLY CHAINS

FSC is aware of specific risks regarding the potential illegal entry of Russian birch into certified supply chains through countries in the Eurasian region such as China, Turkey,

and Kazakhstan. In response to this, FSC launched the Eurasia integrity workplan to address this risk through multiple avenues:

- **Transaction verification (TV) loops:** FSC and Assurance Services International (ASI) launched TV loops focusing on birch wood products, including both wood panels and plywood. Over 800 certificate holders are participating in these investigations across 30 countries, with a targeted focus on Eurasian nations. The Eurasia birch wood panel TV loop (launched in 2024) and the birch plywood TV loop (launched by ASI in 2023), complement each other. Preliminary results from the birch plywood TV loop were published last year, while those from the birch wood panel TV loop will be shared soon.
- **Wood sample testing:** To complement the TV loop, Wood samples are being collected from certain certificate holders for testing to verify timber origin from the claimed sources.
- **High-risk cluster investigations:** After

analysing trading patterns within FSC-certified birch supply chains, ASI identifies high-risk clusters and conducts deeper investigations. If any certificate holder is found to falsely and deliberately making FSC claims on non-certified wood, FSC takes immediate action by blocking the certificate holders from the FSC system and addressing any gaps identified in its normative framework. In Kazakhstan, ASI's investigations into the illegal sale of Russian wood using false FSC claims have led to significant outcomes. These included on-site assessments, and transaction verifications, following which two certificate holders voluntarily terminated their FSC certification. Additionally, another company had its certification revoked due to non-cooperation.

- **Calibration workshops for certification bodies** are also being organized by FSC to make sure there is a common level of understanding of the integrity challenges and to improve the quality of audits.

RIGOROUS INTEGRITY MEASURES TO MITIGATE SUCH RISKS

FSC has robust, built-in mechanisms to proactively identify and prevent risks related to illegal timber trade. Accredited certification bodies play a crucial role in managing the certification process and are responsible for conducting thorough annual

Cont P 9

From P 8

audits of certificate holders to ensure conformity with FSC standards.

In addition to FSC standards, we have developed a range of mechanisms designed to prevent illegally harvested timber entering certified supply chains. These include:

• **Technology-based tools:**

FSC is adopting advanced digital record-keeping and traceability systems to enhance transparency within certified supply chains. These tools ensure greater accountability and help verify the origin of timber.

• **Supply chain monitoring and investigation:**

FSC works with ASI to conduct rigorous assessments and investigations to detect discrepancies in the volumes of certified timber traded through

supply chains. ASI, along with the certification bodies, also carries out various types of investigations and assessments, including unannounced visits to certificate holders, to address allegations of wrongdoing.

• **Measures for high-risk species:**

Based on ASI's findings from various TV loops and investigations, FSC has introduced special evaluation requirements for auditing supply chains of high-risk species such as mango, Dalbergia, and Paulownia. These additional measures ensure more stringent checks on species vulnerable to illegal trade and misuse of certification.

• **FSC's Policy for Association:**

The Policy for Association allows FSC to sever ties with certified companies involved in unacceptable activities such as deforestation, illegal logging, or human rights

violations. For example, in the case of WOB Timber, FSC launched a case based on a German court ruling against WOB Timber for illegally trading teak from Myanmar. FSC's board of directors decided to set conditions for maintaining association with WOB Timber – including a compliance audit – that need to be fulfilled, otherwise a disassociation would be the consequence.

MOVING FORWARD

FSC remains committed to upholding the highest levels of integrity of forest certification. Several key actions are in progress in relation to these efforts.

The implementation of the Eurasia integrity workplan is ongoing, with further updates expected on its various components, including transaction verification (TV) loops and calibration workshops.

Additionally, proposed revisions to FSC's main certification body standard (FSC-STD-20-001) include normative changes aimed at enhancing oversight of certificate holders – particularly within high-risk supply chains. Following a consultation process, the revised standard is now in its final stage of preparation.

ASI has also strengthened its normative requirements regarding unannounced on-site visits and plans to conduct additional unannounced assessments in 2025.

We encourage all stakeholders to report any evidence of illegal timber trade by submitting a complaint to FSC, reporting an incident to ASI or – if the illegal trade is taking place outside the scope of certification – by submitting a Policy for Association complaint.

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Red tape impairing productivity gains

THE Productivity Commission released its report into Housing construction productivity: can we fix it?

Peak building and construction industry association Master Builders Australia applauds the Productivity Commission for their comprehensive assessment of productivity issues in the residential construction sector.

The review confirms what builders, and the broader industry have long called for: we aren't going to build the homes Australians need without a focus on improving productivity.

Construction costs have increased by 40 per cent in the last five years and residential build times have increased by up to 80 per cent over the last 15 years.

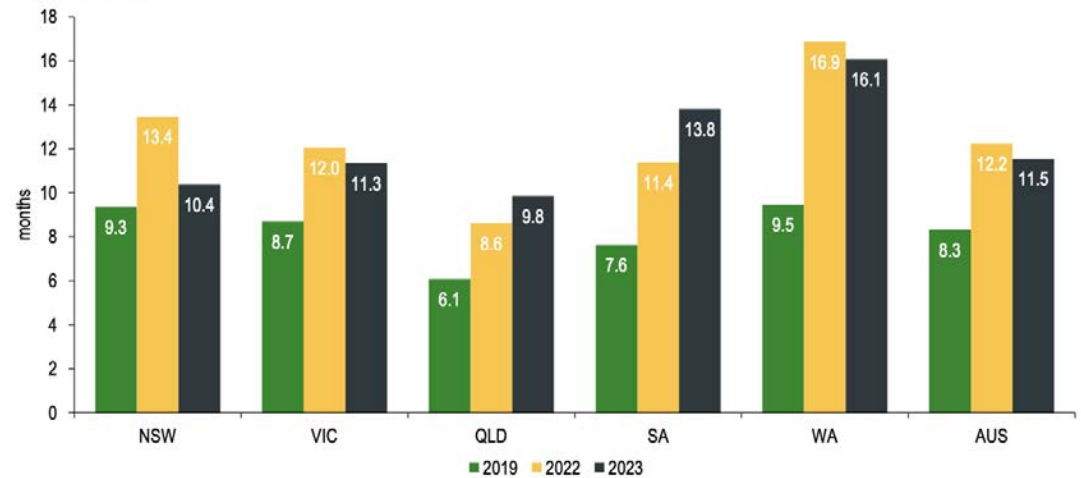
The impact of government policies on housing construction productivity has also been laid bare with the report shining a spotlight on the impact of slow and poorly coordinated regulatory processes, inconsistency across jurisdictions, and policies that have chilled innovation.

While the report acknowledged it did not go into the impact of recent enterprise agreements, Master Builders would like to see further investigation into the impact of recent industrial relations reforms, particularly with independent contractors and enterprise agreements in the near future.

HIA also responded to the newly released report, "HIA calls on the Housing Minister to adopt the recommendations and initiate an independent review of building regulations and

WHAT WAS THE TYPICAL TIME FRAME TO BUILD A DETACHED HOME?

Source: HIA Economics



Every state has seen time frames for builds extend over a four year period, with productivity not increasing but decreasing. Image source: HIA

how these are impairing the government from achieving their goal of building 1.2 million homes over the next 5 years," said Shane Keating, Executive Director Building Policy.

"It's timely to have this Report recommend reducing regulatory burden, streamlining and speeding up approval processes, supporting innovation and improving workforce flexibility to help deliver more homes in an efficient and affordable way.

"The report shows that the extent of declining productivity in the sector is the result of policy settings losing the balance between productivity and other objectives, and a lack of coordination and inconsistency between three layers of government which also discourages innovation.

"The accumulation of slow and complex approvals, the lack of licencing consistency allowing mobility, and limited access to migrant labour are all factors that have led to this decline.

"In October 2024, HIA Submission to the Productivity Commission provided eight detailed recommendations calling on the government to stop increasing the cost of delivering new homes, remove the regulatory barriers, increase prefabrication and land supply and improve access to skilled workers in the industry.

"Increasing rules and regulations add to the cost and time taken to build reducing the productivity of the industry.

"HIA supports the key recommendation that the government commission an independent review of building regulations and that this includes the National Construction Code's amendment cycle, ABCB governance and the array of

approvals processes across the country.

"HIA's pre-budget submission 2025-26 supported a moratorium on regulations that add to the cost of new housing and proposed the following to assist reducing red tape:

- A housing supply Minister to lead these reforms.
- Free access to the top 10 Australian Standards to cut costs for practitioners.
- A doubling of the funding commitment to the ABCB to create capacity to streamline the NCC and more robust impact assessment.
- A five-year amendment cycle for the national construction code to increase certainty for industry and improve education and awareness.

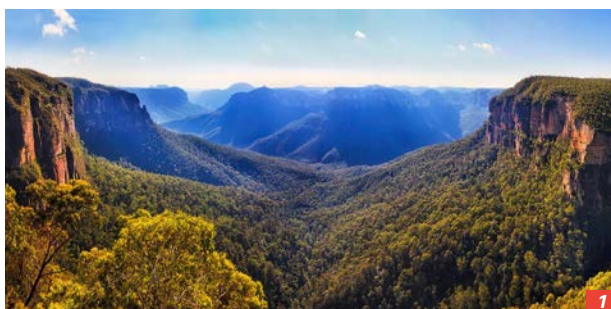
"It is vital that reforms are made now that can support the goal of delivering 1.2 million homes. Moving on the recommendations of this report before the election would be a valuable step forward", concluded Mr Keating.

“INCREASING RULES AND REGULATIONS ADD TO THE COST AND TIME TAKEN TO BUILD

Western Australia's environmental care is contradictory

THE Western Australian government put an end to native logging despite professional management, regrowth, carbon capture and storage, which all comes from sustainably managed forests. Native logging has also been closed down in the state of Victoria. These closures affected not only the harvesting businesses, transport, sawmills all along the supply chain but also the businesses, communities and organisations they support.

The end of native logging was actioned in the name of environmental protection. However, the Western Australian government appears to have a contradictory approach to



1/ **Native forestry harvested less than 1% annually on a rotational basis to ensure proper care was taken of the forest and its ongoing sustainability.**

2/ **Mining strips the land completely bare in order to access valuable materials underneath.** Images: Shutterstock



environmental care. Whilst native logging was deemed too harmful for the forests despite the responsible care taken to sustainably harvest and replant, mining has been deemed acceptable.

South32's bauxite mine was approved an expansion last year by the Western Australian government. This

year Federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek has given South32 the green light for another expansion in the Northern Jarrah Forest, near Boddington. The expansion will destroy over 4,000 hectares of the forest.

Responsible native forestry does not destroy whole sections of a forest

but carefully plans out the harvesting and regeneration of the harvested trees to ensure the ongoing sustainability and livelihood of the forests. It is sad to see forestry restricted under the banner of environmental protection whilst mining is greenlit to destroy thousands of hectares!

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Graduating foresters choose specialist careers in Forestry

THREE foresters have started in specialist roles within Forestry Corporation after completing a two-year graduate training program.

Staff members Lydia Kearns, based at Wauchope, Jack Power at Batemans Bay and Justin Yip at Tumut started with Forestry under the 2022/23 graduate intake.

Over the course of the past two years, they have completed 'on-the-job training' undertaking a series of work rotations across different Forestry divisions.

Graduating at the end of 2024, they have now started in specialist roles within their chosen fields of forest science. Lydia Kearns is now working within the Hardwood Division as a Planner.

"It's a position where I deal with many sides of the business, assisting teams who work across Tourism Partnerships, Roding and Production, Cultural Heritage and Ecology in a role that combines a good mix of time in the office with trips out into the field," Lydia said.

Originally from the Blue Mountains, Lydia started with Forestry Corporation after graduating from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Advanced Studies Majoring in Environmental Science, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.

"I really appreciated the opportunity to join Forestry as a graduate here in Wauchope.



Forestry Corporation staff members Justin Yip, Jack Power and Lydia Kearns have taken on specialist roles after completing the graduate foresters program. Photo: FCNSW

It was a great starting point where I got to learn the whole perspective of Forestry both as a science and as an industry," Lydia said.

"The program is a good gateway for anyone wanting to get involved in this style of work, particularly university students who might not necessarily know what silviculture involves.

"Highlights in the job for me have been helping to provide ecology plans and working in the field with ecologists on their wildlife monitoring and trapping programs.

"I have also enjoyed the experience of becoming an accredited firefighter working on wildfires and hazard reduction burns to protect state forests and native wildlife from bushfires."

Justin Yip is now working with the Softwood Division's Forest Resources Team on plantation and tree

improvement programs.

Originally from Sydney, Justin started with Forestry Corporation after graduating from Charles Sturt University with a Bachelor of Environmental Science and Management degree, specialising in Parks, Recreation and Heritage.

"During the two-year program in Tumut, I rotated through Silviculture, Harvest and Roding, Forestry Resources and Fire and Stewardship. During this time, I was given the opportunity to gain an insight into the inner workings of each division," Justin said.

"What I appreciated most about this program was the opportunity to work with a range of talented people in different areas of the business," he said.

Justin said he gained a wealth of professional satisfaction working on

significant state forest projects.

"During my rotation with Fire and Stewardship, I was privileged to be involved with the Bago State Forest Nature-Based Tourism Enhancement project, which is important because it represents the community's ongoing recovery following the 2019-20 Black Summer Bushfires," Justin said.

"I played a part helping with the installation of infrastructure at the new iteration of the Sugar Pines and upgrade to the Lochinvar Rest Area.

"I particularly enjoyed my involvement with these projects as open space management was one of the subjects I enjoyed most during my studies.

"Throughout the program I was completely supported by each team. I felt my work was meaningful and contributed positively to the business with opportunities to develop professionally. I also formed positive working relationships with colleagues and contractors," he said.

For decades, Forestry Corporation has offered pathways to university graduates, who have completed studies in the fields of forestry, agriculture, environmental science and natural resources.

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Opening doors to excellence

Sustainable design meets superior craftsmanship.

By **CAMPBELL McINNES**

A GRAND WELCOME

Entrance doors are far more than simple functional elements, they are the gateways that connect the outside world to the sanctuaries we create within our homes, businesses, and public spaces. These doors do much more than open and close; they serve as the first line of defence, offering security and privacy while also conveying a sense of welcome and warmth. Whether adorned with intricate design or built for sheer practicality, the entrance door sets the tone for what lies beyond.

Specialty Doors, a proud Australian manufacturer, exemplifies the craftsmanship and ingenuity required to elevate these essential elements of every structure. With a comprehensive range of options and a commitment to sustainability, this Melbourne-based company is leading the charge in redefining entrance doors for the modern era.

CUSTOMISED AND CRAFTED FOR EVERY SPACE

Specialty Doors manufactures over 1,000 doors weekly, catering to residential and commercial projects alike. From classic joinery designs to state-of-the-art fire-rated and acoustic-certified options, their doors exemplify quality and precision. For entrance doors, the emphasis is clear: robust construction, stunning aesthetics, and a design ethos that prioritises both



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1/ **Period joinery entry door and leadlight.**
 2/ **Tasmanian Oak entry door set.**
 3/ **Specialty Doors owner and managing director, Marcus Bastiaan.**
 All photos: Specialty Doors

form and function.

Owner and Managing Director of Specialty Doors, Marcus Bastiaan advised, “we have Australia’s largest range of entrance doors and cover all types of doors that they can manufacture”. Specialty Doors make one thousand doors per week. Bastiaan explained, “of those doors, there will be 500 different types of doors, whether that be different in design and or size as one-offs, or a small run of just four or five. We specialist is unique and custom doors, we don’t

added, “we manufacture the most oversized doors in Australia, with up to 400 doors per week, some exceeding 3.6 meters in height”.

Most customers fit into one of two categories: 1) re-sellers, who sell mainly to residential or 2) tier 1 or 2 commercial, who predominantly are doing commercial construction projects such as schools, hospitals, high rise and or multi res projects. As an overall average, the reseller customers make up 60% of production which leaves 40% of the work to commercial customers. Bastiaan said, “our commercial projects often run for up to 6 months, however we often get specs from architects for a range of different projects as well, particularly with pivot entry doors, where we are generally making around ten or more of these doors per week. We also get a lot of the tricky doors to produce, the ones that no one else wants to do, we get those jobs because we have the skills and production process to be able to manufacture these doors”.

SUSTAINABILITY IN EVERY GRAIN

Timber is at the heart of Specialty Doors’ mission. By sourcing 100% of their wood from certified mills, they ensure compliance with industry standards while championing sustainable forestry practices.

As Bastiaan, asserts, “We love Australian hardwood and believe the forestry industry can be a force to preserve our natural environment while maintaining timber supply for our industry.” This



3

want to manufacture the biggest volume of doors, we want to manufacture the best doors”. Specialty Doors also have a range of commercial doors which are more cookie cutter type doors like their fire doors and 6mm internal MDF doors as well as a lot of oversized doors. Bastiaan

Cont P 15

From P 14

ethos permeates their operations, demonstrating that sustainability and manufacturing excellence can go hand in hand.

Specialty Doors only purchase timber that is PEFC and or FSC certified across the whole business, and across all products. Bastiaan said, "we like to meet the minimum standard for any of our resellers. As a Standard, these have been the most widely adopted nationally and the systems of reporting and certification are reliable. The environmental standards are relevant for the practical management of timber and are based off a common-sense approach.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE TIMBER INDUSTRY

While passionate about Australian hardwoods, Bastiaan advised, "the closure of Victorian native forests, by the local VIC Government forced us to adapt and shift much of our timber purchases to imported timber, which also had an influence on making the decision not to expand our Victorian manufacturing operation".

Eucalyptus grandis commonly known as Flooded or Rose Gum, and *Fagus sylvatica* commonly known as European Beech, are the two main species imported and used today in production, along with American Oak and Western Red Cedar, for some top end luxury jobs. Marcus said, "today 85% of the timber used is imported. It is a huge shame that we used to be an Australian based manufacture of predominately Australian



1



2

- 1/ Cedar batten entry door.
- 2/ American Oak veneer pivot entry door, with full length steel handle.
- 3/ American Oak custom joinery lining board entry door.
- 4/ Blackbutt lining board entry door. All photos: Specialty Doors



3



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products and are now an international products-based manufacture".

SHIFTING TRENDS

Luxury homes are embracing larger doors with entrance doors often 2700mm

in width or wider. Bastiaan explained, "Pivot and oversize entry doors are becoming more popular. Similarly, the internal doors for medium to high end homes are looking for doors above 2340mm in height, we are seeing a lot of 2500mm,

2700mm and even 3000mm". This is not an industry trend, but more of what Specialty Doors are seeing and relates to the top 10% to 20% of high-end homes.

The entrance door really is the first impression of the house joining the outside to the inside of the home. Bastiaan believes, "if you are going to invest something a little special in

your home, the front entry door is a great place to do this, as it is something you can enjoy every single day. As far as bang for your buck, the entry door is a particularly good place to invest".

A BALANCE OF INNOVATION AND TRADITION

Specialty Doors combines advanced CNC machinery with the skill of experienced craftspeople to produce exceptional doors. Due to most production runs being five or less of doors, a lot of the process is manual. Where Specialty Doors can digitise elements of the business that are efficient and effective, they will. "For custom products, human intervention is crucial. Our innovations optimise material usage without sacrificing craftsmanship," says Bastiaan.

Specialty Doors are currently finalising a range of custom timber door handles, that will be available to the market in early 2025. Where possible they are using beautiful Australian hardwoods like blackbutt, Tas Oak,

Cont P 16

From P 15

Ironbark and Spotted Gum to showcase these species in homes as entrance or internal door handles.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE AND PROCESSES

Specialty Doors attributes much of its success to its skilled team, which employs over fifty staff in Victoria now. By paying staff above-award wages and empowering staff to make decisions, they foster a collaborative and innovative workplace. Bastiaan explained, “we have a very skilled team of both guys and girls who have decades of experience in producing manufactured doors, but they have broader woodworking and custom joinery skills”. This approach enables them to continue manufacturing within Australia, in an industry where many competitors outsource production overseas.

Specialty Doors have three different production lines within the Victorian operation and four different finishing production teams that oversee different types of projects. These teams have support from the office who also coordinate dispatch and delivery to site.

“We are big enough to handle projects like an 80-story high-rise, yet flexible enough to create one-off, intricate designs, at the same time,” notes Bastiaan.

Increasing production to meet the overall market demand is what Specialty Doors have been able to sustain. With moving into new markets, the expectation is that they will maintain that trajectory.

In terms of investment, Specialty Doors prioritises acquiring machinery that meets specific production needs, rather than purchasing equipment based on an array



MDF internal cavity slider. Photo: Specialty Doors

of features that may not be used in the future. Marcus prefers to invest in second-hand machines from the 1980s and 1990s, particularly those built with high-quality steel from manufacturers in Germany, England, and Italy. These machines, like hydraulic presses and ban saws are typically large, durable, and relatively easy to maintain, making them a sound long-term investment for the company.

BRANCHING OUT TO INCREASE PRODUCTION

Specialty Doors have found there is currently no shortage of demand for their doors. Bastiaan believes, “if you can produce a good quality product at a reasonable price in the middle to upper market, the industry will support your endeavours”. With the need to increase production, and concerns about further investment into Victoria, Specialty Doors made the decision to expand the business into other States.

After researching the East Coast for their expansion, Bastiaan explained, “Queensland made the most sense, for our first interstate location. It has huge potential growth, good aspects to the workforce, and I don’t believe this market has been well serviced”. Bastiaan moved to QLD to set up the distribution outlet on the Gold Coast and

find the right location to build their new manufacturing plant, where land has been purchased, the factory is now being built, with expectations to open this facility in mid 2025.

In addition to the Queensland expansion, Specialty Doors have recently set up a small-scale dispatch site in South Australia. They understand there will be several large commercial projects that will start up in SA. Bastiaan explained, “while we are very interested in the reseller and commercial markets, Specialty Doors are also very interested in bringing a new sweet for architectural high end building projects. We like to bring new products to improve the optionality, and we will be looking to do this in SA”. Specialty Doors will be servicing and despatching in early 2025 into SA, and the plan is to set up a production facility potentially in 2026.

Specialty Doors deliver nationally, and with the expansion into Queensland and South Australia will make this task easier particularly for the Western Australian and Northern Territory customers, and at the same time allow the increases in production they seek. In New South Wales, Specialty Doors have commercial customers, which they service via the Victorian operation; however, they will have the flexibility to service this region from either Victoria

or Queensland.

SPECIALTY COMMERCIAL AND ACOUSTICS SET TO LAUNCH

Specialty Group, which Specialty Doors is part of, has launched two new product-based businesses, Specialty Commercial and Specialty Acoustics. Specialty Commercial is focused on timber profiling and custom componentry, while Specialty Acoustics offers a range of acoustic products.

Bastiaan said, “the new product businesses were an answer to sustained enquiry and a chance to expand the Specialty Groups product range. The new companies give us the chance to broaden our existing product range. We have found a growing demand from existing customers for quality timber componentry and a renewed focus on acoustic performance from the Australian and New Zealand building industries.”

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As Specialty Doors expands, their ambition reflects the resilience of Australia’s manufacturing sector. With an unwavering focus on quality, sustainability, and customer satisfaction, they continue to set the benchmark for entrance doors in the Australian construction and building industry.

Whether welcoming guests, standing guard, or making an architectural statement, entrance doors are essential elements of any building. Specialty Doors proves that Australian manufacturing is capable of not only meeting but exceeding global standards. They continue to open doors-literally and figuratively-to a bigger, brighter, and greener future.

Source: TTN

THE SPECIALTY GROUP

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Research burns

Burning with the aim to reduce wildfire readiness and response.

SCION is running experimental research burns near Christchurch from March 3 – 14, to test new theories on how wildfires spread under various conditions. This will help improve operational and community readiness for, and response to, future events – and enhance firefighter and public safety.

The research will involve a series of stubble fires (harvested agricultural paddocks that still have standing dry barley and wheat crop stalks). Scientific instruments will be used to collect data on fuels, weather and fire behaviour. It is a collaboration between Scion's wildfire researchers, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, the University of Canterbury, the United States Forest Service and San José State University.

Understanding how fire behaves helps improve the models we use for predicting future wildfires in the NZ landscape and internationally. Better prediction means we can more effectively plan and prepare or future fires and respond more safely to existing ones – to help keep people, property, animals, and the environment safe in the event of a wildfire. Scion fire ecologist Shana Gross says this is important as, globally, wildfires are becoming more frequent and severe, with fire behaviour in real-world conditions often defying existing models.

The burn window is based on paddock harvest dates and the weather. A burn plan has been completed, and a permit will be obtained prior



Scion will test new wildfire spread theories near Christchurch in March. Photo: Scion

to the burns in accordance with the current fire season status and requirements. "Scion will implement rigorous safety measures for each experimental burn regardless of fire season status, in collaboration with Fire and Emergency," Shana says.

Canterbury, New Zealand is currently in a restricted fire season.

Safety measures for this research include having meteorologists and fire specialists on hand to assess weather conditions, having firefighters and equipment on site to suppress fire and creating fire breaks necessary for the conditions during the burns. Standard practice for stubble burns is 6m of fire break on all sides of the fire. Additionally, many of the New Zealand and international researchers

involved are trained wildlife personnel. People are also asked to keep their distance from the fires.

The burn window gives researchers flexibility to burn within suitable weather conditions. "We review weather constantly in the lead-up to this window," Shana says. "We will make a call about the first burn day two to three days before the window, confirm it the night prior, and make a final decision right before ignition. "We will burn when weather conditions align, and

instrumentation has been set up."

Scion aims to burn on five to six days during the twelve-day window.

Stubble fires provide an opportunity to create continuous burns/flame fronts to allow researchers to analyse flame structure and fire behaviour. "The learnings and improved models and predictions gained from experimental research burns aim to enhance NZ's resilience to wildfires, improve safety, enhance response strategies and tactics and reduce the impact and frequency of wildfires," Shana says.

This research is funded by the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment and supported by the Rural Fire Research Advisory Committee.

“SCION WILL TEST NEW THEORIES ON HOW WILDFIRES SPREAD UNDER VARIOUS CONDITIONS”

Skilled trades shortage set to worsen without policy changes

"THE HIA Trades Availability Index recorded -0.47 in the December Quarter 2024, representing only a modest improvement in the availability of skilled trades in the second half of last year," stated HIA Senior Economist Tom Devitt.

The HIA Trades Report provides a quarterly review of the availability of skilled trades and any demand pressures on trades operating in the residential building industry.

"Competition for skilled tradespeople in Australia remains stiff, with the home building industry competing for workers against a large public infrastructure pipeline," added Mr Devitt.

"There is a \$155 billion pipeline of public sector construction work underway that has been absorbing available labour across the country.

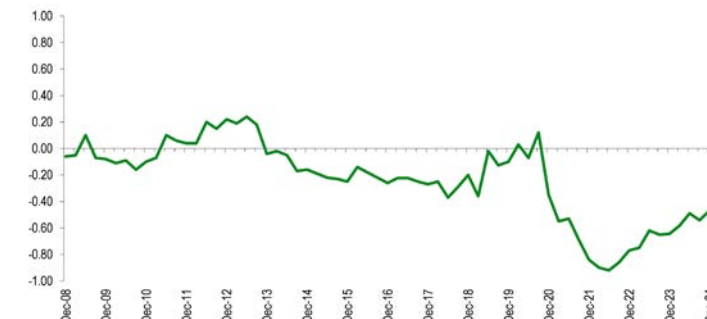
"This competition is producing persistent trades shortages that, while less extreme than recent years, are still more acute than anything seen in the nearly two decades before the pandemic.

"Action is needed from policymakers on skilled migration and domestic workforce development.

"HIA's 'All Hands on Deck' report highlights that Australia needs an additional 83,000 workers in key residential construction trades, a 30 per cent boost on current employment levels, to meet the Australian government's Housing Accord target of 1.2 million new homes over five years.

"HIA's 2025-2026 Pre-Budget Submission outlined a number of critical reforms

HIA TRADE AVAILABILITY INDEX



Source: HIA Trades Report

HIA's report highlights the availability of trades and indicates the dramatic drop in availability over recent years. Image: HIA

needed to address the chronic and long-term skills shortages.

"Key amongst this was to provide apprentice and employer subsidies, targeted funding towards trade ready and pre-apprenticeship training and a comprehensive awareness program to encourage young people to take on a trade. The other key tool is to develop a streamlined and simplified visa program for in-demand trades and the development of a specific construction trade contractor visa tailored to suit the way work is arranged on building sites.

"Failure to address the acute, persistent and potentially worsening shortage of skilled trades will leave a major constraint, not just on housing affordability but on broader productivity and economic growth," concluded Mr Devitt.

The most acute shortages

“COMPETITION FOR SKILLED TRADESPEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA REMAINS STIFF

of skilled trades by capital city (using two-quarter averages to reduce volatility) were in the housing markets showing the greatest improvements in on-the-ground home building activity, including Perth (-0.84), Brisbane (-0.65) and Adelaide (-0.47). Sydney (-0.31) and Melbourne (-0.31) recorded more modest trades shortages. This was also true across the corresponding regions, including regional South Australia (-1.35), regional Queensland (-0.75) and regional Western Australia (-0.59), compared to regional New South Wales (-0.46) and regional Victoria (-0.45).

Bricklaying (-1.02) and ceramic tiling (-0.84) trades saw the most acute shortages of those surveyed, not seeing much improvement in availability over the last 12-18 months. Most other trades have been seeing gradual improvement in availability. Electrical trades have consistently recorded the most 'modest' shortages, being quite close to 'equilibrium' availability at the end of 2024, with an index of just -0.09. This was followed by site preparation (-0.18) and plumbing (-0.19).



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