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## More Required To Maintain a Skilled Workforce

The latest HIA-Austral Bricks Trades Report indicates that despite the drop in building activity skill shortages for many trades remain across Australia.

HIA's Chief Executive – Association, Chris Lamont said that even with significantly reduced building activity over the last twelve months, trade availability on a national basis has only seen a very modest improvement over the first quarter of 2009 with many trades still in short supply.

The Housing Industry Association has raised the concern that during periods of downturn in the construction industry there is all too often insufficient attention to training or keeping apprentices in training.

“We must continue to ensure that young people not only get a start, but are allowed to complete training that has commenced. When the industry returns to normalised rates of activity we will be again observing chronic skill shortages,” said Chris Lamont.

As we approach the Federal Budget, HIA has stressed the need for governments at all levels to do more to ensure that training of apprentices and trainees continued over the next twelve months.

“Funding for initiatives like the Federal Government's \$145 million *Securing Apprenticeships*, announced in February this year must start flowing. The original concept behind this measure is very sound however, group training organisations are yet to receive the directed assistance to help keep trade apprentices employed. It is imperative that this and other types of assistance start flowing to ensure apprentices complete training,” said Mr Lamont.

According to the report, trade availability improved in the March 2009 quarter, from -0.06 to -0.05, meaning trades were still in short supply.

“The results are obviously highly influenced by the drop in residential building activity. It is very hard to take a positive out of a very modest improvement in trades availability that is a consequence of a significant drop in building activity,” said Chris Lamont.

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