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Time to Build Capacity in Res Construction

The latest HIA-Austral Bricks Trades Report confirms that labour shortages persist despite falling construction activity. Although trades availability improved marginally over the quarter as building activity continued to fall the industry continues to suffer the impact of skills shortages.

HIA's Chief Executive – Policy, Chris Lamont said falling activity is not an appropriate cure for skills shortages and that as underlying demand still far exceeds supply there is a need to invest in better ways to deliver training.

Shortages in skilled labour remain most prevalent in regional centres particularly in regional Victoria, Queensland, and throughout South Australia. In these areas electrical, roofing, and other trades were in shortest supply over the quarter.

To prevent a future skills crunch, it is time to consider alternative skills development and pathways into the industry. While there will always be a place for traditional apprenticeships, there is no chance that the apprenticeship system will deliver the necessary workers in time.

“We need a flexible training pathway that caters to the more than 40 percent of tradespeople who have traditionally acquired their skills outside the formal training system.”

“At some point, economic conditions will improve and activity will pick up. When that time comes, we won't have the skilled people necessary to meet demand,” said Chris Lamont.

HIA has called for more flexible training pathways that would allow new entrants to acquire the latest technical knowledge through specialised industry training courses while working on site as an alternative to indentured apprenticeships. Formal qualifications – and trade licences - could then be issued on the basis of skills assessments based on knowledge and competence.

“Such a pathway would be cost-effective and provide the necessary incentives for new entrants and employers. Importantly, it would deliver the skills our industry needs in a manner in which industry wants them acquired,” said Chris Lamont.

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For a full copy of the HIA-Austral Bricks Trades Report (media only), please contact Kirsten Lewis on (02) 6245 1393 or k.lewis@hia.com.au