

Open letter to the Australian Parliament

Australia is a nation built on shared responsibility and hard work. We are diverse and innovative. We work together for the benefit of everyone. From our cities to the regions, our communities thrive when everyone can contribute their skills and expertise to the fullest.

However, many Australians, particularly people who have qualifications from overseas, are blocked from working at their full potential. This hurts everyone.

People with valuable expertise face an endless maze of hurdles that are not related to their actual skills: hugely expensive fees, outdated paperwork requirements and slow, complex processes. Worst of all, the system has become so complicated that the things that matter the most – quality and experience – can get lost in all the red tape.

Australia's skills shortages are hindering local communities and businesses, especially in the regions. Over a third of all occupations are experiencing skills shortages. Essential services, from healthcare to education and housing, are suffering because the talent available is not being fully utilised. People can't access services. Prices are going up. Businesses can't find the employees they need.

But Australia does have the skills to fix this. We just need to activate them. Around half of permanent migrants living in Australia are working beneath their skill level.

By reforming the skills recognition system, we can activate the potential that is currently being wasted, addressing skills shortages and ensuring that our communities are better served. Addressing this could also add \$9 billion to Australia's economy each year and increase productivity and wages across our industries.

The government needs to take responsibility and break down the barriers to ensure everyone can contribute. We need to shift the focus to quality and transparency. We need to put the actual skills and experience of our workforce at the centre of everything.

We need a system that is rigorous and consistent, that protects the integrity of our workforce while allowing all skilled individuals to contribute.

Australia needs:

- One national governance system for all overseas skills and qualifications recognition, including an Ombudsman with regulatory power to provide independent oversight and transparency.
- A seamless process with greater national consistency and reduced red tape.
- Financial support for individuals to remove cost barriers and an online portal with all the information so people know what they need to do.
- Migrant Employment Pathway Hubs with skills recognition navigators to get qualified people working in their professions again.

If we Activate Australia's Skills everyone wins.

Services, wages and economic growth will go up. Prices and waiting lists will go down.

This open letter is endorsed by the following organisations:

