Australia is at its strongest

when everyone can fully contribute. Our communities and businesses thrive when individuals' skills, expertise and lived experience are fully harnessed. However, many Australians, particularly people who have qualifications from overseas, are blocked from working at their full potential. This hurts everyone – local communities, businesses and especially in the regions.

Activate AUSTRALIA'S SKILLS

The situation

Over a third of occupations face worker shortages while...

44% Almost half of permanent migrants in Australia work below their skill level.

60% arrived through skilled migration stream

1.2x **women** are 1.2 times more likely to be underutilised than men

57% hold **university qualifications**

The implication

90% of CEOs report being affected by skills shortages

~50% expect their business to be significantly impacted

- Prices ↑
- Access to services ↓
- Capacity to innovate ↓

- 200 GP clinics closed last year nationwide
- 90,000 construction workers needed
- 10,000 childcare workers needed
- Worse in regional areas

> Australia is also missing out on $9B in economic activity each year from not harnessing the skills of permanent migrants.

Closing the gap in underutilisation between migrants and Australian born workers would see:

$9 billion additional GDP per year, on average over 10 years

GDP +0.5% higher on average each year than under current conditions

51,130 FTEs additional employment in full time equivalent (FTE) terms over ten years, as industries become more productive.

> Australia already has many skilled workers to fix this – we just need to activate them

The problem

People with valuable experience face a maze of obstacles, not related to their actual skills. Australia's overseas skills and qualifications recognition system is a key barrier and it is not meeting the needs of industries and communities

- The system is **bureaucratic** and **confusing** to navigate

- Regulation is **inconsistent across professions** and **jurisdictions**

- Application **fees and costs** can be prohibitively high

- Information is **fragmented** and **difficult to understand**

The solution

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

Australia must:

1 Establish one national governance system

Establish or empower one national governance body for all overseas skills assessment and qualifications recognition in Australia including:

- An Ombudsman with regulatory power and resources to provide independent oversight and accountability, assess complaints and appeals, compel fairness in assessment processes and pricing, monitor and enforce quality, and collect data and insights to improve the system.
- Empower tripartite (government, industry and unions) oversight of the system as part of a process of continual improvement.

2 Create a seamless process across migration and employment purposes

Recognising professional differences in requirements and standards, the process for recognising overseas skills and qualifications should be connected and seamless, minimising red tape and duplication.

- This would be governed by the above body
- Legislative reform towards one uniform national approach (removing State differences), recognising differences between occupations/trades

3 Remove unnecessary barriers

- Offer means-tested financial support to individuals, removing cost barriers that hold them back from going through the skills and qualifications recognition process.
- Create a national online portal (a one-stop-shop) that provides clear, integrated information on how to get skills and qualifications recognised in certain states/territories and professions, with referrals to services to provide appropriate support.

4 Set up Migrant Employment Pathways Hubs with skills recognition navigators

- Tailored support in getting overseas skills and qualifications recognised through guidance from recognition navigators and wrap-around employment support
- Broad eligibility beyond those unemployed, so overseas-trained professionals who are working below their skill or outside their industry can receive support
- Located in areas with high migrant populations where the hubs will make the most difference