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MEDIA RELEASE

“Workforce Flexibility and Investment Vital Now” says HIA

With Australia’s \$170 billion construction industry workforce now employing a labour force of over one million people, coupled with the problem of a growing skills deficit in the resources sector paints a challenge for investment and policy delivery which enables the growing workforce to dovetail with the mining boom, says the HIA, the voice of Australia’s home building industry.

HIA calls on the Federal Government to ensure that construction trades, largely overlooked in the first \$74 million tranche of the \$200.2 million Critical Skills Investment Fund, are considered in the next round and that the industry access funds from the new \$558 million Workforce Development Fund to keep building Australia’s future construction workforce.

“The construction workforce has grown at a steady 4 per cent per annum over the past 8 years while over the same period the overall value of construction activity has increased by 68 per cent. The time is right to deliver a mix of programs to equip this key workforce to meet skill supply and demand challenges in regions, particularly those in Western Australian and Queensland,” said Nick Proud Executive Director – Industry Workforce Development.

“Construction workers are amongst the shortlist of tradespeople that are being called upon to assist to meet a shortfall of 150,000 skilled workers by 2017 in Western Australia alone. Factors such as the pending resource construction phase and housing activity associated with mining projects are going to require careful planning and precision execution with all available hands at the wheel,” said Mr Proud.

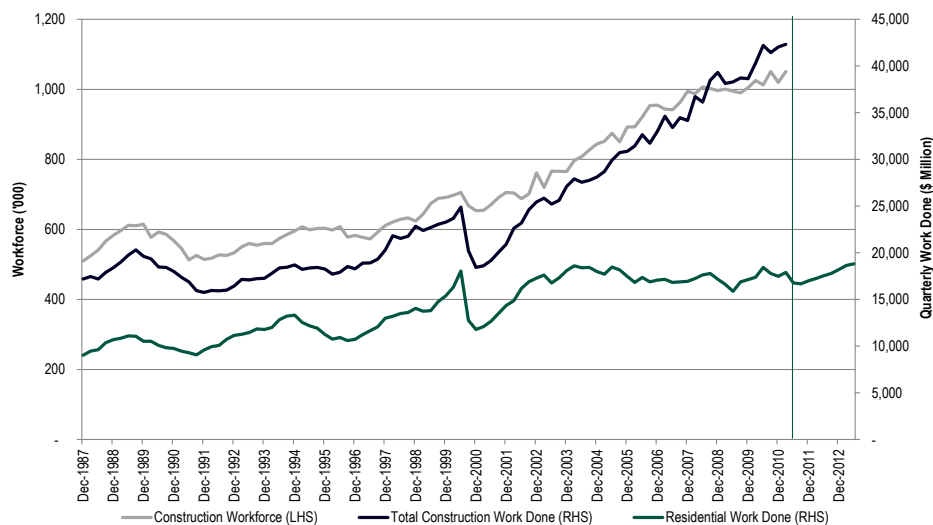
“It is important that Federal Government skills development programs focus on housing needs for the growing resources sector around Perth, Brisbane and Darwin over the next 24 months and to also consider reskilling options being made available to assist with construction phase labour needs. Flexibility around training of skill sets, upskilling and reskilling is the key,” said Mr Proud.

“In the longer term, an underlying demand for new homes, tight rental markets and attrition of baby boomer tradespeople all require a mix of options to encourage new trade apprenticeship starts, upskilling and Industry Sponsored migration. More directly, HIA’s previous forecasts project a modest uptick in residential building activity, requiring continued investment in the industry to meet any future activity,” said Mr Proud.

“The closure of the Apprentice Kickstart program and wind down of the EBPPP and Productivity Places Program is likely to stifle apprentice and upskilling opportunities in 2011-12. The absence of incentives for construction adds pressure on the Government to work with industry to incentivise apprenticeship starts and support upskilling opportunities,” Mr Proud said.

Construction Work Force and Construction Work Done

Source: HIA, ABS



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