

## Fears key trades overlooked for new skilled visa

**EXCLUSIVE**

By **RHIANNON DOWN**  
REPORTER

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The building industry has raised concern it will be worse off than initially thought under Labor's [shake-up of skilled migration](#), amid fears that key trades such as plumbers and plasterers will not even make the second tier visa stream.

Master Builders Association chief executive Denita Wawn has urged the government to ensure [all trades](#) are included under the new core skill visa stream, after a draft list of confirmed eligible occupations overlooked bricklayers, cabinet-makers, stonemasons, painters and roof tilers.

Instead the trades were included on a list of professions under “consultation” to decide if it will be included in the new visa category, which was announced under Labor’s review of the migration system.

Tradies were also carved out of the highest paid visa stream for workers earning more than \$135,000, following pressure from the union movement.

Ms Wawn said without an [adequate workforce of skilled tradespeople](#) the

government would not reach its goal to build 1.2 million homes in five years.

“It seems inconsistent with all the data that departments and government agencies are putting out that we’ve got such a massive shortage of tradies,” she said.

“The government funded Build Skills Australia recently said we need 90,000 trainees in 90 days to be able to build the 1.2 million homes.

“And yet, we’re still on a consultation list for many of the trades for immigration when we know immigration is so incredibly vital.

“It’s definitely perplexing as to the process.”

Australian Hotels Association chief executive Stephen Ferguson has urged the government to include chefs and cooks on the list of occupations eligible for the visa, after the occupations were also included on the list for consultation.

“At present, there is still no certainty that chefs and cooks will be included in the final migration eligibility list,” he said.

“With over 12,000 chef and cook vacancies, it would be a massive loss to the hospitality industry if they were not included in the final list.”

The warnings come amid mounting concern the Coalition’s plan to cut net migration to 160,000 next year, will lead to cuts in the number of overseas skilled workers arriving in the country. Labor has also predicted net migration will fall to 260,000 next financial year.

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive Andrew McKellar warned that dramatically tightening migration could damage the economy, urging both sides of politics to “avoid a boom bust cycle”.

“We need a reasonably stable, sustainable level of migration coming in,” he said.

“We don’t want to bust now. We’ve had a boom in the last 12 months, as we’ve swung out of Covid and the pandemic impact as the borders reopened, they’ve got to get back to a sustainable level.

“There’s got to be some changes to the migration program to get it to that level.”

He cautioned against slashing international student intakes as a measure that would harm the nation’s “largest non-commodity export industry”.

## RHIANNON DOWN, REPORTER

Rhiannon Down is a political reporter in The Australian’s Canberra bureau. She began her career at the paper in the Sydney bureau, where she covered mostly courts and crime, after joining the newspaper as a cadet... [Read more](#)



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