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Minister for Education, Training and Skills

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New accelerated apprenticeships to help build homes faster

South Australia is taking bold steps to build a stronger pipeline of skilled workers to deliver the state's major infrastructure projects – by fast-tracking apprenticeships in key trades through a new pilot program.

Launching in 2026, the Industry Accelerated Apprenticeship Pilot (IAAP) is an Australian-first and will support up to 1,000 new apprenticeships across seven critical trade pathways.

South Australia's construction sector is facing significant workforce shortages, particularly in trades such as carpentry, civil construction, and plastering.

Planning by the Department of State Development shows the state will need an estimated 78,000 additional vocational qualifications over the next five years to meet forecast demand.

The pilot has been designed to meet the demands from projects including the Torrens to Darlington, the new Women's and Children's Hospital, new housing, and defence initiatives such as AUKUS.

The program focuses on seven high-demand trades: carpentry, cookery, painting, civil construction, plant operations, mechanical engineering, and fabrication engineering.

It builds on South Australia's existing flexible apprenticeship framework, which already allows early completion in some trades. Training will be tailored to real-world job requirements, with intensive on-the-job learning and quality assurance from Group Training Organisations (GTOs).

The following pathways will be shortened:

- Certificate III in Carpentry, which includes roles such as joiners and carpenters, will go from 48 to 36 months
- Certificate III in Commercial Cookery, which includes roles such as sous and pastry chefs, will go from 48 to 30 months
- Certificate III in Painting and Decorating, will go from 48 to 36 months
- Certificate III in Civil Construction, which includes road and tunnel construction, will go from 36 to 18 months
- Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations, which includes roles like mobile plant operators, road construction workers and civil construction plant operators, will go from 36 to 18 months
- Certificate III in Engineering – Fabrication Trade, which includes roles like fitters and turners, mechanical fitters, toolmaking and welding, will go from 48 to 36 months
- Certificate III in Engineering – Mechanical Trade, which includes roles like technical fitters and machinists, will go from 48 to 36 months

Host employer safety and quality checks undertaken by the South Australian Skills Commission and allows alignment with national skills reforms and workforce needs.

The South Australian Skills Commission will undertake stakeholder engagement across industry, unions, employers, and training providers to ensure the pilot is responsive to workforce demand and project timeframes.

Quotes attributable to Blair Boyer

South Australia is entering a once-in-a-generation infrastructure boom.

To deliver on our ambitions, we need a skilled workforce ready to hit the ground running.

The fast-track pilot is a proactive solution that accelerates apprentices into areas of critical demand, while maintaining training quality and apprentice wellbeing. It's about meeting the needs of industry and creating strong career pathways for South Australians.

These accelerated apprenticeships will give South Australians a faster pathway to secure, well-paid jobs, while ensuring our major projects stay on track.

Quotes attributable to South Australian Skills Commissioner Cameron Baker

This is a smart, industry-led solution to a serious workforce challenge. The IAAP puts the right people in the right jobs faster –without compromising on quality or safety.

It is backed by strong training, real experience, and the support apprentices need to succeed.

The pilot will operate within South Australia's flexible apprenticeship system, giving apprentices access to all existing supports and incentives.

It targets trades with known skills shortages, where apprentices have historically completed early; proving that faster can still mean better.

By tailoring training durations to suit real project needs, we can give people faster access to trade qualifications and ensure employers get the workforce they need to deliver on time and on budget.

Quotes attributable to Master Builders SA CEO Will Frogley

To beat the housing shortage, we must first beat the trade skills shortage.

We need to attract and train more than new 15,000 skilled tradies by 2028 if we are to build the homes, schools, hospitals and roads needed to support our booming economy.

We won't hit that number unless we make sensible innovations to help get more tradies qualified quicker.

The IAAP recognises the urgency of the workforce shortage challenges and delivers a practical, timely response to industry needs.

By accelerating high quality training in key trades, we can help ensure our state has the skilled workforce required to deliver infrastructure projects safely and efficiently.

Master Builders SA fully supports this pilot.

Quotes attributable to Housing Industry Association SA, Stephen Knight, Executive Director

The IAAP is a gamechanger for South Australia's housing industry which is experiencing unprecedented demand. It will help get more skilled workers into the market faster, without compromising quality and this is vital to delivering new homes on time and to a high standard.

It is also a great opportunity to support mature age apprentices, who are highly valued for their experience, motivation, and commitment to completing their training.

We fully support this initiative and look forward to working with government and training providers to make it a success.

Quotes attributable to The Australian Hotels Association SA, Anna Moeller, CEO

The hospitality and accommodation sectors are under pressure due to the broader skills shortage and the increasing competition for workers.

The IAAP is an important initiative that helps fast-track skilled workers into the economy, supporting not just construction, but industries like ours that rely on strong infrastructure and a vibrant workforce.

A faster pathway to trade qualifications benefits the entire economy and ensures more South Australians are job-ready sooner.