

Media Release

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Government priority skilled migration list - a slap in the face to automotive

The Motor Trades Association of Australia (MTAA) says the omission of critical automotive trades as priorities for skilled migration exacerbates existing skills shortages, potentially derailing economic recovery efforts.

MTAA CEO Richard Dudley said the lack of any automotive occupation on the Government's latest Priority Migration Skilled Occupations List (PMSOL) is a slap in the face to thousands of Australian automotive businesses struggling to meet demand and keep the nation moving and connected.

'The failure to include mechanics (light and heavy vehicle and diesel), panel beaters and vehicle painters not only says automotive is not a priority, but industries, infrastructure projects, and the mobility and connectivity of Australians are also not a priority,' Mr Dudley said.

Mr Dudley said the PMSOL list failed to acknowledge a **current shortage of 31,140 skilled positions** across automotive industries, the highest skilled labour shortage ever recorded, and the impact this was causing in the service and repair of the 20 million strong national vehicle fleet.

'MTAA Member Associations constituents across all industries are telling us work ques are growing. Delays to work commencement are stretching to days and weeks. Some work is not getting done at all, and some businesses are opting to sell equipment and downgrade capacity and capability as the only viable alternative to skills shortages, Mr Dudley said.

'We can demonstrate these delays now impacting infrastructure projects, freight, general transport, deliveries, civil works, not to mention Australian's reliance on their car, motorcycle, truck tractor or other vehicle.' he added.

'Automotive businesses are doing everything in their power to address skills shortages. Almost without exception, auto businesses are paying well above award wages, they are incentivising remuneration packages and work-life arrangements, seizing every assistance measure and opportunity to hire. For example, the current apprentice subsidy contributes a near 40% increase in auto apprentices nationally. But it's not enough to overcome the gap filled by skilled migration,' Mr Dudley said.

'Stresses are mounting at a time of significant recovery. For example, one significant automotive business says trading is vibrant – back to pre-pandemic levels – and it could appoint 55 people today across mechanical repair, metal fabrication, and spray-painting occupations. However, after seven months of job advertisements, most applicant interest is from overseas. Almost none of the handful of domestic applicants were suitable due to a lack of experience, skills or because they were only applying to satisfy JobSeeker application requirements. 'Other auto businesses are increasingly concerned a failure to prioritise automotive occupations will further delay skilled migrants who have already been identified and are waiting to arrive to address shortages,' he said.

Mr Dudley said economic recovery could falter if skilled migration for automotive occupations is not included as a priority immediately.

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MTAA Member Associations

