

Workforce Action Plan



Building capacity.
Building Tasmania.



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Minister's foreword

The Building and Construction sector is critical to Tasmania's economy and never more so than during our recovery from COVID-19. Our \$5 billion infrastructure investment program will help deliver around 25,000 jobs and is the largest ever investment announced by a Tasmanian Government. It clearly indicates our intent to rebuild Tasmania.

Following the Premier's Building and Construction Industry Skills Roundtable in July 2020, work immediately commenced on the development of a plan to deliver the skills needed for the sector.

Consultation and industry support has again demonstrated that we must work together to identify and tackle sector-wide issues including attracting, retaining and sustaining a skilled-up and work-ready labour force. Government and industry working together on skills, training and workforce development are key to the success of this plan and will help realise the broader community benefits.

Skills Tasmania and Keystone Tasmania, formerly known as the Tasmanian Building and Construction Industry Training Board, have worked collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders in development of this plan. As we continue to grow our economy and rebuild a stronger Tasmania, it is critical that we continue to build on our strengths and ensure that all Tasmanians have the opportunity to benefit from this intergenerational infrastructure investment.

As Minister for Education and Training, I am acutely aware of the importance of ensuring that our training and workforce development system has the capacity to meet priority industry demand. With this in mind, I welcome the delivery of the Tasmanian Building and Construction Industry Workforce Action Plan.

The Hon Jeremy Rockliff

Deputy Premier

Minister for Education and Training

Chair foreword



On behalf of Keystone Tasmania – the newly-renamed Tasmanian Building and Construction Industry Training Board - it is my pleasure to jointly present the 2020 Building and Construction Industry Workforce Action Plan.

This Action Plan is the culmination of a great deal of collaborative effort, and we are indebted to the staff of Skills Tasmania and Keystone Tasmania who have led the process of its development in response to the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19 this year.

I extend Keystone Tasmania's thanks also to all members of industry, and Industry Associations, who provided input, insight and comment on various drafts of the plan, and who generously participated in the Planning Session on 28th August 2020.

Keystone Tasmania recently finalised its 2020-2022 Strategic Plan. In the coming years, our activity will be focused on promoting pathways into industry careers, building workforce capacity through upskilling and multiskilling, and supporting initiatives that increase diversity and innovation in all sectors. These themes are consistent with those in the Action Plan, and indeed some of the programs proposed are already under development in collaboration with industry and government.

As the peak organisation facilitating workforce development and training in the building and construction industry, Keystone Tasmania will be leading the implementation of the Action Plan in areas where we can provide project oversight and targeted funding to promote successful outcomes.

We look forward to working in partnership with Skills Tasmania and industry on this important work that will benefit all Tasmanians and our communities.

Norm McIlfatrick

Chair

Keystone Tasmania

Background

The Tasmanian Government has committed to an ambitious infrastructure project pipeline. This is reflected in the Government's \$5 billion infrastructure program which is the cornerstone of the recently announced Tasmanian Jobs Plan commitment in the 2020-2021 state budget. This unprecedented investment is expected to be an important stimulus for both jobs and the economy.

To support the building and construction sector post-COVID-19 in delivering the construction blitz, the Premier, the Hon Peter Gutwein, and Deputy Premier, the Hon Jeremy Rockliff, convened a 'Building and Construction Industry Skills Roundtable on 1 July 2020. The Roundtable Taskforce represented key stakeholder groups in the Tasmanian building and construction industry:

- Housing Industry Association (HIA) – Mr Stuart Collins, Executive Director
- Master Builders Tasmania (MBT) – Mr Craig Edmunds, Board Member
- Civil Contractors Federation (CCF) – Ms Rachel Matheson, Chief Executive Officer
- Tasmanian Energy and Infrastructure Workforce Advisory Committee (TEIWAC)– Mr Ray Mostogl, Chair
- Unions Tasmania – Ms Jessica Munday, Secretary
- TasTAFE – Ms Jenny Dodd, former Chief Executive Officer
- Keystone Tasmania – Dr Karin Mathison, Chief Executive Officer
- Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI) – Mr Michael Bailey, Chief Executive Officer
- Tasmanian Small Business Council - Mr Robert Mallett, Executive Officer.





Based on Roundtable discussions, a draft Action Plan was developed outlining potential focus areas where intervention might build the health and resilience of the Tasmania building and construction sector.

The Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC) identified several of the draft actions in their Interim report, as part of the State's pathway to recovery from COVID-19. These included: careful management of the construction blitz program to avoid over-heating the industry, careful region-focused planning for the new affordable housing units spending, enforcement of the apprenticeship requirements in the Building and Construction Training Policy, and provision of additional support to group training organisations to fill the gap in the recruitment of apprentices due to building and construction sector employers lacking the confidence to make long-term commitments to training.

The development of the Action Plan was also considered in the context of Keystone Tasmania's 2020-2022 Strategic Plan.

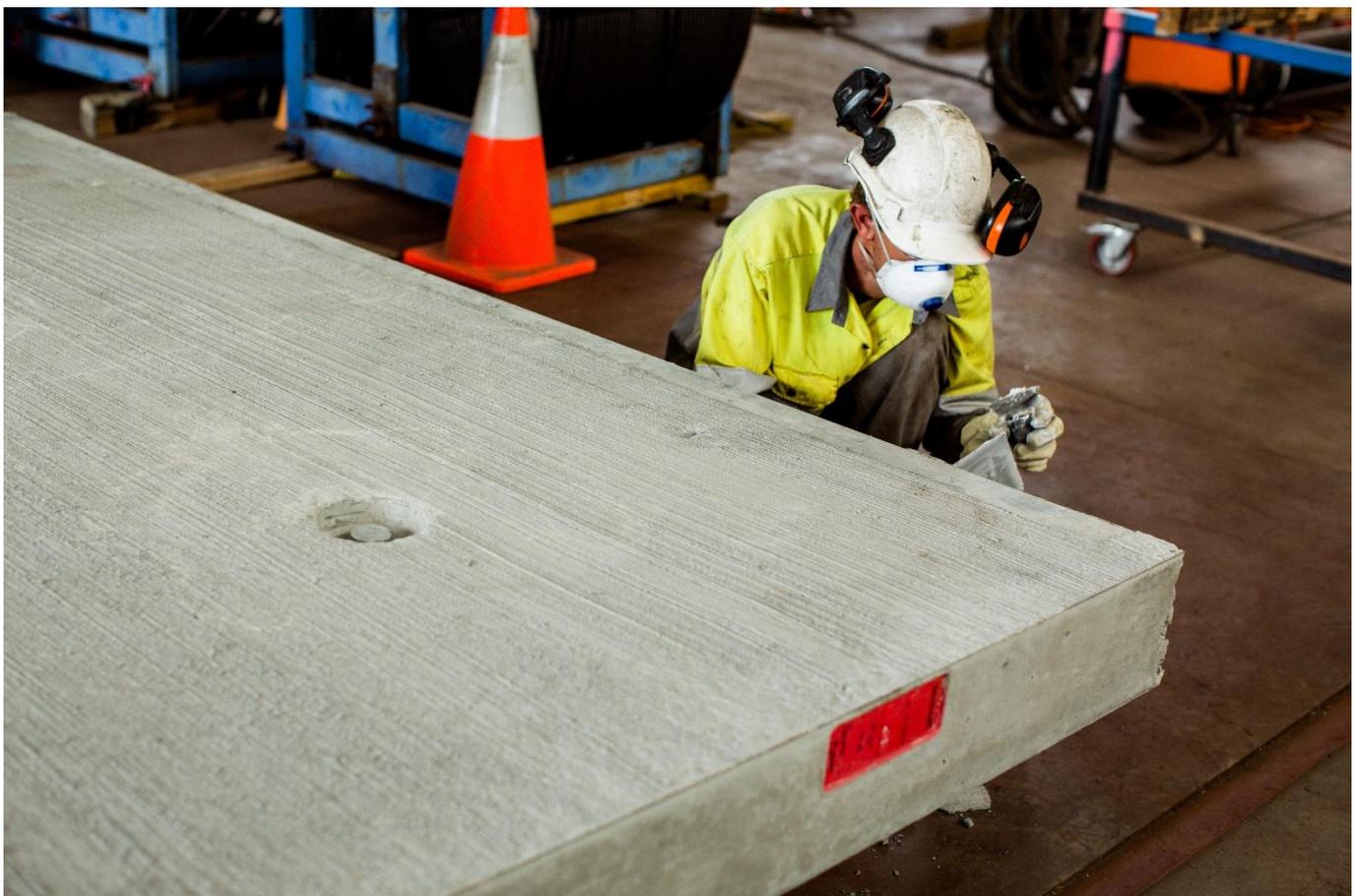
In August 2020, Building and Construction Roundtable Taskforce members were invited to nominate up to five people to attend an in-person workshop to identify next steps to implement the Action Plan. The 50 workshop participants represented a wide range of organisations (listed at Appendix). During breakout sessions, invited panel members shared their experiences of 'what does and doesn't work'. Participants then responded to questions to share information from diverse perspectives and build consensus on priorities for action.

Five action areas

Industry stakeholders identified five key areas where targeted action would support improved workforce development and training outcomes for the sector:

- Attracting new people to the sector
- Mentoring for success and retention
- Growing and sustaining diversity
- Building business resilience and productivity
- Sectoral strategic planning.

In the following sections of this report, the five action areas are considered in terms of issues driving the need for action (what we heard), activity already underway (what we are currently doing), and the specific actions proposed to address each action area (priority actions).



Attracting new people to the sector

What we heard

Prior to COVID-19, the building and construction sector was experiencing a skills and labour shortage, and there was a need to attract more people into training to be skilled workers in the sector. It was apparent that people outside the sector were not aware of the breadth of roles available in building and construction, or that a 'first job' could be the first step to a long, well-paid and satisfying career path. There was also a perception that vocational pathways were poorly understood and might not be promoted to students as 'first choice' for post-secondary education or work.

We heard that employers and member organisations are active in promoting building and construction careers in schools. Furthermore, there are a number of specific examples whereby schools are working closely with industry and relevant stakeholders in expanding access to real-life opportunities in the building and construction sector. Whilst there are a number of positive examples, there is an opportunity to expand on this work to ensure that there are opportunities for all Tasmanian school students to have meaningful exposure and develop a realistic understanding of what it may be like to work in the sector.

There was a strong appetite to strengthen and expand the scope of the Government's Building and Construction Training Policy, for greater commitment to the use of apprentices and trainees on substantial building and infrastructure projects.

Workshop participants indicated that new sector entrants, teachers, parents and other people with influence needed to send compelling messages about building and construction sector careers, diverse role models, success stories, and clear educational and work pathways into the sector.

What we are currently doing

Department of Education (DoE) – Architecture Construction Package of Learning introduces a school students to construction work via learning aligned with the Australian Curriculum; *Review of Australian Schools Based Apprenticeships*.

HIA – YouthBuild Program where school students learn skills and gain experience in the building industry as a stand-alone experience, or in conjunction with DoE's Construction Package of Learning. It is pre-vocational and often leads to students pursuing vocational education and training (VET) pathways and/or apprenticeships.

MBT and Fairbrother partner on a pathways program, supported by *Keystone Tasmania*, which is presented at more than 50 schools annually, and supports students into the workforce.

Beacon Foundation - Vocational Education Placement Pilot (north and north-west) is developing and trialling a shared VET placement coordination process.

Build Up Tassie – Centacare Evolve Housing's (CEH) construction work readiness program provided one on one coaching, skills development opportunities and site experience in the Brighton, Derwent Valley and Glenorchy areas.

Keystone Tasmania and Skills Tasmania – Launceston Apprenticeship Pipeline Project (led by Keystone Tasmania) and *Building Futures* (led by Skills Tasmania) using a group training model to support apprenticeship pathways for school, in collaboration with Group Training Organisations (GTOs) and DoE.

Keystone Tasmania – review of organisational strategy to lead training and workforce development for the sector, in collaboration with key industry, education and training stakeholders.

Stakeholders will continue to review and evaluate these projects as required, enhancing industry capability to take an evidence-based approach to training and workforce development activity.

Priority actions

1. Develop an industry marketing campaign to promote the building and construction industry and its opportunities to the Tasmanian community (Lead: Keystone Tasmania).
2. Promote VET more generally (including targeted campaigns) as first choice career pathway for Tasmanians (Lead: Skills Tasmania).
3. Work with the DoE and other school sectors on setting annual plans for school engagement and broader access to building and construction sector careers (Lead: Keystone Tasmania in partnership with MBT, HIA and CCF).
4. Ensure compliance with the Tasmanian Building and Construction Training Policy that requires 20 per cent labour hours on in-scope projects to be undertaken by apprentices or trainees (Lead: Skills Tasmania).
5. Review the Tasmanian Building and Construction Training Policy, including consideration of expanding the policy to civil construction projects, Government Business Enterprises and substantial Housing Tasmania projects (Lead: Skills Tasmania).
6. Co-operate to create more appropriate and meaningful work experience and work placement opportunities for school aged learners, job seekers, job shifters, women and migrants (Lead: Industry in partnership with Keystone Tasmania, DoE, Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) and CEH).
7. Support strategies that will increase apprenticeship numbers and improve completion rates (Lead: Skills Tasmania).
8. Review of current pre-employment initiatives for school students and job seekers to ensure all learners have the technical readiness to enter the building and construction sector (Lead: Keystone Tasmania).

Mentoring for success and retention

What we heard

Mentoring is a learning relationship, focused on long-term career development. It can be a powerful tool to improve people's performance and satisfaction in their work. Mentoring can also reduce the attrition of workers including apprentices and trainees.

The average completion rate for Tasmanian apprentices in construction is 53.7% of contracts (National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER), 2019). Construction has the third lowest average completion rate of all sectors. The higher completion rates in allied sectors like electricity, gas, water and waste services at 70.1% and mining at 76.5% suggest the building and construction sector could potentially impact the skills gap by reducing attrition rates. Participants described several factors that contributed to failure of apprentices and trainees to complete: poor initial fit (wrong person, wrong job, mismatched expectations); under-developed processes for inducting apprentices into the workplace or working life; lack of (proactive) support for apprentice during difficult times (challenging parts of the apprenticeship learning, personal life upsets); and workplace cultures that could be challenging or unsupportive (particularly for 'diverse' apprentices).

Mentoring was identified as a potential tool to address some aspects of retention. This applied to apprentice and trainee retention, and also retention, job satisfaction and workplace productivity for a wide range of other workers. Mentoring is a skill which can be learned. 'Near peers' were described as effective mentors for young people. A 'near peer' is someone who has recently gone through a stage of training or learning, like a third year apprentice who might act as a mentor to a first year apprentice. Mentoring was more common, recognised and acknowledged in workplaces with recognised 'good culture' (for example, the Employers of Choice framework).

It was also recognised that there were several types of mentors, including 'near peers'. In considering an appropriate method of mentoring for new and existing workers, it is important to consider the individual needs of that particular worker. Whilst there are examples of best practice across the sector in this space, there is an opportunity for more targeted work across various levels of employment.

Participants suggested current mentoring activity in the sector varies widely between workplaces, and can be quite ad hoc. This meant that those in need of mentoring may be unable to access it, and suggested that mentoring activities in the sector could be better co-ordinated for greater (long-term, wider) impact.

The HIA program 'Industry Specialist Mentoring for Australian Apprentices' is an example of a program that supported apprentices in their first two years, with a focus on improved completion rates. This program was an Australian Government initiative that concluded earlier in 2020. The program is now under review.

What we are currently doing

Group Training Organisations (GTOs) – provide wrap-around support for apprentices, and act as 'labour hire' services to redistribute apprentices away from businesses in down-turn (smoothing/reducing lay-offs, cancellations and contract pauses). GTO apprentice completion rates appear higher than average in comparison to a training contract between employer and apprentice. This higher completion rate can be attributed to a number of factors in the building and construction sector, including the GTO generally promoting a more formal methodology of recruiting new apprentices and trainees.

MBT program – Women Building Australia National Mentoring program provides mentoring support and promotion of career opportunities for women in the building and construction sector through careers fairs and expos.

Apprenticeship Network Providers (ANP) – funded by the Australian Government to provide mentoring services (MEGT and MAS National are Tasmanian based ANPs that provides mentoring of apprentices to support their success).

Priority actions

1. Develop programs that promote and support the role of GTOs in supporting apprentices and trainees and their host employers (Lead: Skills Tasmania in partnership with Apprenticeship Employment Network Tasmania).
2. Review existing mentoring programs (accredited/non-accredited) and develop a series of mentoring training modules for workers and managers, to suit specific stages of employment and identified apprentice needs. Including a supporting web repository of available resources, supporting fact sheets, and information sessions (Lead: Keystone Tasmania in partnership with VET providers).
3. Develop more opportunities for building and construction businesses to network and work collaboratively to share best practice. An example of this may be using the Employer of Choice framework and network (Lead: Industry bodies).



Growing and sustaining diversity

What we heard

Currently the building and construction industry has low levels of diversity. For example, less than 3% of construction trade workers nationally are female (Construction Skills Queensland (CSQ), 2018). The building and construction sector also has an aging workforce, with retirements removing skills and experience from the sector. It was widely acknowledged that whilst there have been a number of attempts to address sector diversity (locally and nationally), the building and construction sector remains male-dominated.

Pre-COVID-19, the sector was facing a skills and labour shortage, and if stimulus measures are effective, this skills and labour shortage will need to be addressed. Tapping into a wider talent pool was one way participants suggested to increase the availability of labour. For example, expanding recruitment to attract more women, older workers, job shifters, migrants, and people from a non-trade family background, or from low socio-economic-status (SES) families.

Participants offered diverse views on what caused low levels of diversity in the sector, ranging from a lack of awareness of a building career as an option, to employer understanding of better engaging a diverse workforce. Research has identified several factors that impact differentially on female workers in the construction industry, and may explain why women are under-represented – particularly in more lucrative, secure and senior roles. The Fair Work Building and Construction (FWBC) inspectorate identified factors that can make culturally diverse construction workers more vulnerable to slower career progression, exploitation and workplace accidents (FWBC, 2012).

Historically, pre-employment training leads to strong employment and apprenticeship outcomes. Participants described 'bridging' or pre-apprenticeship preparation activities that had helped diverse entrants feel more confident on worksites, and better able to talk with potential building and construction industry employers. These included: basic certifications (e.g. working at heights, white card), common workplace terms including 'lingo' for migrant workers and technical terms and abbreviations for those with limited trades exposure, basic 'hand skills' (e.g. use of hand tools and power tools, measuring, and reading basic plans), and time on worksites to understand the reality of the work and workplace practices. It was also pointed out that workplaces and supervisors may need education to manage diverse people and work teams differently.

What we are currently doing

MRC Tasmania – with funding support from Skills Tasmania, MRC delivered the 'Stepping Stones' project which bridged migrants into the building and construction sector with local lingo, relevant certification (for example, a white card and working at heights), and on-site experience.

Keystone Tasmania – grants of up to \$2 000 for organisations staging events promoting workplace diversity.

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) – offer pre-employment programs which are usually at Certificate II level. These can increase participants' awareness of the sector and prospective suitability for entry level employment opportunities – including apprenticeships.

HIA's 'Building Women' program – introduces a focus on supporting women in the residential building industry by creating opportunities to enter the industry, recognising the needs of existing female workers in the sector, along with acknowledging the contribution of women to industry.

National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) – established in 1995, NAWIC is an Australian not-for-profit organisation established with the vision of an equitable construction industry where women fully participate. NAWIC facilitates a number of activities that contribute to new and existing women in the construction industry.

Priority actions

1. Ensure that promotion campaigns include a wide range of role models and target diverse audiences (see 'Attracting New People to the Sector') (Lead: Keystone Tasmania and Skills Tasmania).
2. Support MRC Tasmania's 'Stepping Stones' project to facilitate migrant worker entry into the sector. Consider opportunities to disseminate 'Stepping Stones' to other under-represented groups (Lead: Keystone Tasmania in co-operation with MRC Tasmania).
3. Undertake desktop review, stakeholder consultation and analysis of past diversity initiatives and make recommendations for long-term actions to address diversity issues in the industry (Lead: Keystone Tasmania).
4. Ensure mentoring program development (see 'Mentoring for Success & Retention') includes specific focus on 'mentoring diverse people' (Lead: Keystone Tasmania).



Building business resilience and productivity

What we heard

The building and construction sector has experienced a substantial decline in confidence due to COVID-19. Stimulus packages provided by Federal and State Governments are alleviating some of the impacts, but uncertainty remains. Based on previous experiences of stimulus, participants emphasised the need for Government co-ordination (this was also raised in the PESRAC Interim Report). There was also a need for improved business practices to manage the risks to business health from 'over-heating' segments of the sector. Consequences of previous over-heating have been skills shortages and delays to projects, with flow-on effects on business bottom line.

Seventy five percent of Tasmanian building and construction businesses employ less than 6 people. Subcontracting arrangements mean that larger projects are dependent on good management, skills and communication across a 'pool' of subcontractors. Many small organisations lack a range of business skills, including financial management, risk analysis and planning, digital literacy and systems, human resources (HR), industrial relations (IR) and training expertise. This can impact on business success, success as a subcontractor, and on the capacity to employ and retain workers and apprentices.

We heard that larger civil contractors and commercial building businesses have different needs to those of small business, including the need for certainty in planning forward works and capital expenditure, for program management, tendering and documentation of work, and planning/smoothing the volume of work over medium to long time periods.

Participants described independent, expert advice (for example, specialist business consultants or coaches) as important for improving business operations, and also stated that peer-to-peer learning from others in the building and construction sector had been beneficial. Participants said it was difficult (but crucially important) to make time to work 'on the business' while working 'in the business'. Getting access to clear, good quality, building sector-specific resources was useful. Mentoring for business owners, and sharing ways to manage staff and adjust workplace culture were also described as useful.

What we are currently doing

Employer of Choice program – administered by Skills Tasmania to recognise business practices that improve workforce productivity (as per *Training and Workforce Development Act 2013*). Twelve building and construction businesses are currently Employers of Choice.

HIA, MBT and Master Plumbers Association Tasmania (MPAT) – member services. All three entities provide support services to their members. For example, the HIA Business Support program includes access to expert advisors in planning, technical, legal and workplace safety; MBT provides advice on HR/IR, workplace procedures, workplace health and safety and site safety plans, first aid training, financial training and business coaching services, contracts administration and building regulations and standards; MPAT offers continuing professional development and an online register for reporting to Consumer Building and Occupational Services (CBOS).

Keystone Tasmania – subsidies for initiatives including: SALT (see, ask, listen, tell/take) suicide prevention training; critical incident management training for managers; mental health first aid; workplace life skills toolbox.

Department of State Growth – Business Tasmania (business upskilling initiatives like, for example, the ‘Digital Ready’ program and repository of information for small business owners).

Priority actions

1. Promote the Employer of Choice program and develop building and construction specific events to share best practice for positive workplace cultures (Lead: Skills Tasmania).
2. Ensure that programs, services and networking events provide opportunities for micro, small and medium size business to develop their business planning practices and workplace culture (Lead: Industry bodies).
3. Review impact and uptake of past ‘Business Skills’ training on the Keystone Tasmania Training Calendar, and through HIA and MBT member services, identify areas of current and future need/opportunity for bespoke business skills training pertinent to all businesses (regardless of size) in Tasmania (Lead: Keystone Tasmania in co-operation with HIA and MBT).



Sectoral strategic planning

What we heard

Participants indicated that workforce development activity in the building and construction sector had often been reactive. Where workforce planning had been undertaken, it was often at enterprise-level, rather than sector-level. There was a lack of co-ordinated foresight and activity to address skills shortages before they occurred. Participants pointed out that the time lag from needing a new tradesperson, to obtaining one through training is approximately 4 years.

At enterprise level, there was a range of perspectives on workforce planning. Some businesses were not confident or skilled in identifying staff development needs, and expressed difficulty understanding how to 'find' the right training and how to sign staff up for training (and associated subsidies). Some businesses had developed professional development programs for staff, but these tended to be larger entities with dedicated HR staffing. The processes and organisations associated with putting on an apprentice were generally seen to be very complex (for example: roles and responsibilities of ANPs, Skills Tasmania's Training Consultants, TasTAFE staff, employer, apprentices). Businesses were reluctant to commit to apprentices if their future supply of work was uncertain.

The Government's infrastructure pipeline was identified by participants as potentially providing certainty of work over a time-scale that supports recruitment of new apprentices and trainees. The Tasmanian Energy and Infrastructure Workforce Advisory Committee (TEIWAC) was identified as a key player in setting strategic direction for workforce development to service the needs of the infrastructure pipeline. The immediate program of work for TEIWAC revolves around stage one of their workforce development planning for the Tasmanian energy sector – completed in December 2020. This document complements the workforce development plan delivered in November 2019 by the CCF for the civil construction industry.

Keystone Tasmania was identified as the emerging, guiding voice on strategic planning for skills development specific to the building and construction sector – particularly with respect to the Tasmanian Government's significant infrastructure investment. Whilst this was acknowledged, it was also suggested that Keystone Tasmania had not always taken a proactive role in guiding procurement of skills and training at a sector-wide level.

What we are currently doing

Skills Tasmania – CCF workforce reports and projects; the Energising Tasmania agenda - forthcoming workforce development planning, funding programs and projects; Engineers Australia workforce reports and projects.

Keystone Tasmania – funding and process for small-medium enterprises (SMEs) to develop and commit to training needs analysis and incentive payments for completed training.

TEIWAC – release of two new funding programs (October 2020) to support the capability building of energy and infrastructure sectors pertinent to workforce development and training. These programs, together with the currently available Energising Tasmania Training Fund, are responsive to key themes and recommendations identified in the Civil Construction Industry Workforce Plan (2019-2025) and Workforce Development Plan for the Tasmanian Energy Sector (Stage One).

TasTAFE – building the new Energy, Trades and Water Centre of Excellence at Clarence campus, with focus on expanding and modernising current training and facilities. The new facility will also address emerging needs of

industry including, poly-welding, qualifications in hydrogen, hydraulic services, wastewater systems and fire service training.

Priority actions

1. Develop a dynamic and authoritative source of information on industry trends, pipeline projections and skills demand, including a labour market needs analysis model and regular industry engagement to share and confirm data (Lead: Keystone Tasmania).
2. Roll out of a program that supports small businesses to build their capacity to workforce plan (Lead: Keystone Tasmania).
3. Engage with the education and training sector on developing training offerings and capacity to meet industry demand (Lead: Keystone Tasmania, Skills Tasmania and the VET Sector).
4. Publish and communicate skills and workforce demand, and prioritise activities and investment to respond to the energy and infrastructure pipeline, following the recently released Workforce Development Plan for the Tasmanian Energy Sector - Stage I (Lead: TEIWAC).



Appendix: 28 August 2020 workshop attendees

People from the following organisations attended the workshop, or contributed comments on the draft Action Plan in the lead up to the workshop. Some of these organisations sent more than one representative to attend the workshop.

Keystone Tasmania (formerly the Tasmanian Building and Construction Industry Training Board)	Department of Communities Tasmania (DCT)
TasTAFE	Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Committee (PESRAC)
St Joseph's Affordable Homes	Master Builders Tasmania (MBT)
Melbourne East Group Training (MEGT)	Department of Education (DoE)
Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania (MRC Tasmania)	Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI)
VEC Civil Engineering	Civil Contractors Federation (CCF)
Tasmanian Building Group Apprenticeship Scheme (TasBGAS)	Housing Industry Association (HIA)
National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC)	Tasmanian Energy and Infrastructure Workforce Advisory Committee (TEIWAC)
MeadCon	MSD Constructions
University College (UTAS)	Tasmanian Small Business Council (TSBC)
Shaw Contracting	Blythe Watchorn
Vos Construction	Work and Training Ltd
Stornoway	Unions Tasmania
MAS National	Learning Partners
RY Builders	GP Glass
AJR Construct	DWA Design

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