



5 January 2026

Mr Steve Georganas MP  
Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration

Submission lodged through portal

Dear Minister,

**Re: Inquiry into the value of skilled migration to Australia**

Clubs Australia welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Inquiry into the value of skilled migration to Australia.

Clubs Australia represents over 5,000 licensed clubs that employ more than 140,000 people across all states and territories. Clubs are not-for-profit, member-owned organisations. Clubs are integral to their communities, offering social, economic, and community benefits.

**Importance of skilled migration to clubs**

Migrant workers are and will continue to be critical to staffing clubs, particularly in regional and remote clubs across Australia, helping them fill positions in their workforce, particularly for the skilled positions of chefs and cooks.

Clubs Australia' data indicates that in the past two years, over 87% of clubs have experienced skill shortages across a range of skilled positions across different areas of operations at their club. Clubs rely heavily on skilled migration to help fill skilled labour shortages in their club operations that they cannot fill from the domestic market. Over 79% of clubs have indicated they would either use or consider using skilled migration in the next 12 months to support filling these positions.<sup>1</sup>

A survey of Clubs Australia members found over 96%<sup>2</sup> of clubs that used skilled migration over the last two years did so to hire chefs and cooks. Clubs also provided evidence that they struggle to recruit trade-qualified chefs from anywhere domestically within Australia.

Food offerings serve as a critical revenue stream for regional and rural clubs and support their ongoing financial viability, and as such, clubs rely on migration to fill these positions. Food offerings by clubs are also key to creating social opportunities for the

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<sup>1</sup> Clubs Australia, *Club Industry Workforce & Skills 2025 Survey (2025)*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



local communities, particularly in regional and rural areas, as they provide a place to meet with friends, family and for the community to gather.

The low completion rate for food trade apprenticeships influences this shortage. In the most data released from NCVER in September 2025, food trade apprenticeship completions have dropped 28.6% from 2024.<sup>3</sup> Factors contributing to low food trade apprenticeship retention include poor working conditions (e.g., customer abuse), unappealing work hours, off-the-job training inflexibility, and minimal support for employers and employees. Clubs Australia has also received feedback and real-life examples where clubs will engage and train an apprentice and then on completion of the apprenticeship, the apprentice will often leave the club.

The reliance on skilled migrants to fill the gap in the domestic market for chef and cook positions is critical. In a recent Clubs Australia survey 69% of respondent clubs advised they had used migrant and/or employer-sponsored visas to fill chef and cook shortages.<sup>4</sup>

All respondents to the Clubs Australia survey last year noted they intend to use the migration system to fill skill shortages for chefs and cooks in the future. Clubs have also indicated they will struggle to sustain their food offerings in the future if they cannot utilise the skilled migration system to recruit qualified chefs and cooks.<sup>5</sup>

Clubs also use skilled migration to fill other key operational positions within their workforces, including licensed club managers who are responsible for organising and controlling the club's operations and play an important leadership role within the club.

Furthermore, clubs do face challenges using the skilled migration system, especially in regional areas, where the process can be administratively and financially burdensome and there is typically uncertainty of whether the process will succeed.

### ***Recommendations to enhance the skilled migration system***

#### ***Fast-tracking visa processing for regional and rural areas***

Chefs, cooks and other positions that can be filled by skilled migration at clubs should be fast-tracked for rural and regional visa processing, with simplified sponsorship available to “trusted employers” such as not-for-profit clubs with strong compliance records.

Clubs Australia recommends that changes are made to the existing mechanisms to support rural and regional clubs using skilled migration. Comparable trusted-employer fast lanes are in place overseas, such as Canada’s Recognized Employer Pilot and New Zealand’s Accredited Employer Work Visa.

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<sup>3</sup> NCVER, *Apprentices and trainees 2025 March quarter (2025)*.

<sup>4</sup> Clubs Australia, *Club Industry Workforce & Skills 2025 Survey (2025)*.

<sup>5</sup> Clubs Australia, *Draft CSOL Survey (2024)*.



To make the Skills-in-Demand visa effective for regional clubs, Job and Skills Australia should recommend three reforms: (1) ensure key hospitality roles remain on the Core Skills Occupation List, (2) formalise a Regional Accredited Sponsor pathway with template packs and helpdesk support for not-for-profits, and (3) introduce instalment payments of the Skilling Australians Fund levy for SMEs. These measures would be low-cost, administratively simple, and deliver faster workforce access for clubs as employers.

### *Housing*

Feedback from regional clubs indicates that recruitment often fails not due to wages, but because there is a lack of suitable housing available.

Evidence from comparable programs shows that housing availability is a critical determinant of workforce stability. The Victorian Government's Regional Worker Accommodation Fund has successfully delivered modular housing for essential workers in towns such as Omeo, while Round 2 funding is supporting over 750 additional bedrooms across regional Victoria.<sup>6</sup>

Internationally, Whistler in Canada has introduced planning levers to fast-track the development of employee housing and mandates that 75 per cent of its workforce be housed locally.

These precedents demonstrate that housing-linked workforce measures are both effective and cost-efficient, converting the high cost of staff turnover into a structured investment that secures workforce retention.

Clubs Australia recommends the Government consider integrated workforce housing models, such as short-term staff accommodation partnerships or supported leasing arrangements, as part of regional workforce planning. A broader Regional Employer Housing Partnership model where clubs, councils and community housing providers co-invest in modular or repurposed worker accommodation, helping to lower vacancy durations and improve retention, should also be considered.

### **Further Information**

For further information regarding Clubs Australia's submission, please contact Daniel Mitchell,

Kind regards,

Daniel Mitchell  
Clubs Australia

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<sup>6</sup> Regional Development Victoria, *No place like home: worker housing arrives in Omeo, 2025*