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Skills for Tomorrow

A Statement by Graham Wolfe, HIA Managing Director

**Speaking at the HIA's 9th Building Better Cities Summit:
"Skills for Tomorrow: technology or training?"**

"A focus on skills and training at this week's meeting of COAG should recognise the significant transformation that is occurring in the residential building industry and how this impacts on future training needs.

"There are a series of technology, demographic and productivity factors that are changing the way we build homes and this will continue to impact on workforce training across the industry."

HIA welcomed the Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships, Steve Irons support in his keynote address to today's Summit for the importance of a trade, and the invitation for industry to work with Government to deliver improvements and support a strong residential building industry.

"Technology is changing the products used on building sites and we are seeing increased specialisation of labour," said Mr Wolfe.

"We need to ensure that those entering the building industry today are able to take on board the digital and building transformations that are underway.

"The evolution of building products is being driven by a shift to automation and pre-fabrication delivering benefits in time, safety and money.

"New products and new building systems will continue to evolve the way in which we build homes.

"This means that the skills for the future of the building industry will involve more offsite work and digital skills, but this can't be at the expense of the key trades and skills we will continue to need to build homes into the future.

"There are over a million people engaged in building and construction and each year we need to ensure our vocational training system attracts and encourages young people looking for a long term and rewarding career.

"Smaller chunks of training and continuous upskilling have become necessary as the industry shifts to new, specialised products and management systems.

"This doesn't mean that the traditional 3 or 4 year carpentry apprenticeship is a thing of the past. In fact, the demand for those diverse skills are more likely to be complemented by shorter, targeted training programs.

"The value of the VET system to the economy is too important to be ignored and untangling of the systems' complexities will have national benefits.

"Australian governments are central to the delivery of trade training and the system needs to continue to evolve efficiently and effectively," concluded Mr Wolfe.

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