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MEDIA RELEASE

Skilled Migration Crucial to Housing: HIA

“Recent proposals to make changes to the ‘457’ skilled working visa will not address the bigger problem of how to fill the shortage of skilled trades people available to build new homes and apartments,” said HIA Managing Director, Graham Wolfe.

“The focus of any reforms should be on creating a new visa category for skilled workers that is not bound to an employer but can operate as a trade contractor independent of a single employer.

“The housing industry is more vulnerable to skill shortages than many other industry sectors due to an ageing labour force, the physical nature of work, the ongoing demand for new housing and the often cyclical nature of activity.

“The housing industry is vital to the wellbeing of Australian society. Australia will need to build over 2.3 million houses by 2030 to keep up with demand. In the last year alone there was \$108 billion worth of residential construction carried out in Australia.

“Skilled worker visas have for many years allowed people trained and experienced in other countries to enter Australia and work for an approved business that sponsors the worker. This approach fails to recognize that trade contractors have always operated their own business. The current visa models simply don’t suit the housing industry’s long accepted approach to doing business which relies heavily on the efficient and affordable model of independent contracting.

“HIA’s Federal Election Imperatives call on all parties to remove the caps and limits that currently exist on skilled and business migration categories and to introduce a new skilled migration category for independent contractors in the residential building industry.

“A well thought out migration policy coupled with a strong sector to train future trades people in Australia will go a long way to helping supply the homes we need over the next decade,” concluded Mr Wolfe.

A copy of HIA’s 2019 Federal Election Imperatives is available [online](#).

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