Friday, 22 September 2023

The Honourable Clare O'Neil MP
Minister for Home Affairs
by email to **clare.oneil.mp@aph.gov.au**

Dear Minister O'Neil

Solving the housing crisis needs skilled migrants

We are writing to you today regarding reports that your Government is moving to exclude skilled tradespeople from the fast-tracked high-income visa processing stream.

The Abundant Housing Network Australia is invested in the success of your Government's agenda to deliver the fastest housing growth possible in places where people want to live.

However, as has widely been reported, Australia is facing a serious workforce problem in the construction industry. Without serious action, it will be impossible to fulfil our national ambition of building our way out of the housing crisis.

To ensure strong growth in housing supply, we should be recruiting skilled construction industry workers and professionals from overseas in the same targeted way we recruit doctors and teachers.

Master Builders Australia estimate we need half a million more construction industry workers in the next three years to meet our housing and infrastructure ambitions.

The Planning Institute of Australia has recently highlighted the planning skills shortage, identifying more than 500 short-staffed local councils across Australia.

A significant proportion of these jobs are highly skilled and high income.

We need to improve migrant workers' rights across the board and make sure employers don't use migrant labour as a method for undermining good worker conditions and protections. But these reforms must be universal, and ensure good outcomes for all, without special carve outs for specific industries.

If we are going to make record increases in housing supply needed to solve the housing crisis, then we must facilitate the scale of skilled migration required to make the Government's ambitious targets a reality.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan O'Brien │ Abundant Housing Network Australia spokesperson
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